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Recent Dutch-Language Publications

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Jaco Koehler, *Duivelse dilemma's na de schipbreuk van de Batavia*. Zutphen: WalburgPers, 2019, 197 pp. ISBN: 9789462493230, price: EUR 24.95 (hardback).

The wrecking of the VOC ship Batavia on June 4, 1629 on the inhospitable reefs of West Australia, with more than 300 people on board, set in motion a horrible scenario. After two days, a barge with 48 survivors, including the supreme commander Francisco Pelsaert and captain Adriaen Jacobsz, set sail for Batavia, leaving behind almost 200 under almost unbearable circumstances. The barge arrived in Batavia on July 2. Governor General Coen at once ordered Pelsaert to sail to Australia to rescue his crew, if still alive, and save the cargo. He arrived on September 17. The extreme circumstances had resulted in a reign of terror in one of the settlements. A 'Blood Council' was responsible for the slaughter of 115 men, women, and children, as they were considered useless and only consuming the very scarce food and drinks. Descending slowly to anarchy, and lacking leadership, theft and violence led to terror. Terror was considered a useful instrument to survive. The Council tried to extend its power to another island but was foiled. From the survivors there, Pelsaert was informed about the fateful developments. He arrested the ringleaders, and at the same time acted as prosecutor and executor—thus he sentenced six men to the gallows. He also compiled a journal about his journey, and its aftermath. It was widely acclaimed as a horrible story, attracted a wide readership, and there were many reprints of the journal at the time.

Nowadays a few scholarly and popular books on The Batavia have been published, among these—also in 1993—an edition by the Linschoten-Vereeniging, edited by Vibeke Roeper. In her edition, she calls Pelsaert an illustrious VOC servant. Jaco Koehler, long fascinated by the fate of The Batavia—which even induced him to visit the place of the shipwreck—looks differently at Pelsaert. Pelsaert's sneaky departure certainly could have earned him a lot of blame, and would have jeopardized his shining career until then. But according to

Koehler, Pelsaert found a way to divert attention from his probably cowardly behavior. In the ship's council, administering justice, Pelsaert dominated and extracted confessions from the Blood Council members by torture, preferably through waterboarding, who admitted that before they got stranded, there was a plan by some crew members to take over the ship. He thus hoped to divert attention from his own role to the far worse crime of mutiny. Confessions were signed and the culprits were hanged. No more questions about the improbable mutiny could be asked. Pelsaert submitted his report in Batavia, where the high officials were skeptical, but did not act, although a shining career for Pelsaert was no longer in the offing. His journal, including the forthcoming mutiny, was accepted, with some questioning. Koehler in his well-researched book, submits a convincing claim to re-evaluate Pelsaert's journal. It is the experts' turn to give their opinion. Koehler's book makes good reading, has a lot of illustrations and illuminating appendixes. Fictional elements, like, for instance, the contents of a nightmare of Pelsaert, are included, but would have been better omitted.

Dienke Hondius, Nancy Jouwe, Dineke Stam and Jennifer Tosch, *Gids slavernij-verleden Nederland / Slavery heritage guide The Netherlands*. With a foreword by Wayne Modest. Volendam: LM Publishers, 2019, x + 166 pp. ISBN: 9789460225048, price: EUR 15.00 (paperback).

This bilingual publication is an impressive effort to bring together information on the role slavery played between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries in the Netherlands. The book takes stock of the manifold activities of a group of dedicated researchers, who endeavor to make public the impacts of colonialism and slavery, as part and parcel of the Dutch presence in the East and West Indies. This was not a popular stance, and it is only in recent decades that the full extent of role of slavery has begun to be realized. 'Hidden or silenced, elided or disavowed' are the words Wayne Modest uses in this connection. The book is part of a world-wide project called 'Mapping Slavery', which examines present-day sites that have some relationship with slavery. The book concentrates on the Netherlands, and succeeds in bringing together a diverse range of memorial places and objects, which continue until now. The authors rightfully give a fair share to slavery in the East Indies, long neglected in comparison with the West Indies slavery—both East and West Indian Companies (VOC and WIC) were active participants and based their profits on the indispensable slave labor. (The extent of slavery in Batavia, which is estimated on p. 4 as 400,000 men in 1780, strikes me as inaccurate.)

A popular and successful part of the activities of 'Mapping Slavery' was the publication of walking guides along the vestiges of the slavery past for a rising number of towns. This book is not primarily such a guide, although part of it may be used as such. Thus, for 13 towns five memorial sites are selected, all worth a visit. This guide brings together 100 sites, from all Dutch provinces, and provides full-color illustrations and text, based on thorough research, accounted for in extensive notes. The selection is varied: many houses and offices paid for by profits extracted from slave labor, as well as a lot of attention for quite a few people of color who landed in the Netherlands, whose exceptional experiences are now slowly being recovered during scrupulous archival research. Vocal pro and anti-slavery men and women are presented as well. Almost all sites originated before 1900. But the criteria for inclusion or exclusion is unclear. Why is the post-war Surinamese organization Wi Masanga included, while an Indonesian organization like Perhimpunan Indonesia is not? And why is there no mention of the contract 'coolies', living and working in semi-slavery circumstances in East Sumatra and elsewhere, and whose fate was debated in the Netherlands? Maybe in a forthcoming publication?

Nonja Peters, *Depok, de droom van Cornelis Chastelein*. Fotografie: Geert Snoeijer. Volendam: LM Publishers, 2019, 144 pp. ISBN: 9789460225246, price: EUR 24.50 (paperback).

Conelis Chastelein (1657–1714) was a wealthy VOC official, with an estate in Depok, outside Batavia. After he died, through his will, he freed 150 of his slaves and gave them the usufruct of 1200 hectares of agricultural land in Depok. This proved to be a lasting concept, in an unobtrusive history. The Christian enclave prospered, as its citizens became well-educated, influential and well-to-do. It all changed in 1942 when Japan occupied Indonesia. The turmoil became worse in 1945. Unruly army groups roamed the countryside outside Batavia, in what Dutch historiography calls the *bersiap*. The Christian inhabitants of Depok were suspect because of their sympathy for the Dutch. They inevitably became the victims of violence. In October 1945, armed supporters of the Indonesian Republic attacked Depok. Dozens of its inhabitants were killed in an atrocious way and the village was burned down. The survivors were evacuated by British and Dutch troops. It was the effective end of autonomous Depok. Ultimately, the greater part of the Depok descendants landed in the Netherlands, where they still uphold their history, and meet regularly to that end.

This book, by Australian anthropologist Nonja Peters, published to accompany an exhibition in the Westfries Museum in Hoorn—it is, however, not

a catalogue—writes in detail about the Chastelein inheritance and the legal complications of it. Next is a focus on the *bersiap*, with all its horrendous details. The accommodation to a life in diaspora is another main theme. On the basis of no less than 47 interviews with descendants, themes like assimilation, integration, and identity are explored, and attest to the resilience of the Depok community. Another component of this book is represented by 55 full-scale portraits of present-day descendants by professional photographer Geert Snoeijer. Altogether this is a useful book, in a fine lay-out. In total, however, it is somewhat unbalanced.

Jaak Henri Poortman, *Voor den Oost-Indiën en Batavia getekend: Het vergeten verhaal van de mennekes: De historie der 23.400 Belgische vrijwilligers in het Koninklijk Nederlands Indisch Leger 1816–1930*. Soest: Boekscout, 2019, 281 pp. ISBN: 9789463890809, price: EUR 23.00 (paperback) (to order from www.boekscout.nl).

Poortman (1955) was and is fascinated by the involvement of Flemish and Walloon (later called Belgian) soldiers in the Dutch colonial army, from 1825 on named Koninklijk Nederlands Indische Leger (KNIL). During many years of research he managed to collect a wealth of material on the soldiers sent to the Indies, after the Netherlands and Belgium became one kingdom, and those who remained in colonial service and enlisted in the KNIL, until the recruitment of foreign soldiers was put to an end in 1908. Until then the KNIL enlisted 23,400 Belgians, before and after Belgium became an independent kingdom in 1830, which lived in an undeclared state of war with its northern neighbor until 1839. The total number of Belgians as registered in the notorious KNIL recruitment center is about six percent. After Belgian independence, according to Poortman the result of a geopolitical British conspiracy, the flow of Belgian candidates abated as a result of the Belgian prohibition of entering a foreign military service, with strong sanctions, which precluded returning to the mother country. The result was prolonged KNIL service, if only they lived long enough to register again. The death toll in the great conflicts of the nineteenth century was astounding, with illness taking even more victims than armed battle.

Poortman gives an extensive sketch of the great conflicts of the nineteenth century: the Java War, the Padri Wars, and the Atjeh War, which he illustrates by narrating the experiences of the Belgian soldiers. He quotes from all kinds of contemporary sources, fictional as well as newspapers, many of them not published before. These amply show that the treatment of the soldiers by their superiors was horrible and their fate was that like convicts. As a main source,

Poortman has used the KNIL Register as kept in the National Archives. Through time-consuming research, he constructed his overview from the Belgian soldiers. Moreover he compiled lists of the dozens of them who were honored with the Military Order of William, or those few hundred soldiers buried in the Peutjut Cemetery in Aceh, or the two hundred who enjoyed a pension in Bronbeek in the Dutch city of Arnhem. Seventeen of the most distinguished career soldiers are given a separate biography. Moreover, scattered through the book are paragraphs on, for instance, the recruitment and its excesses in Harderwijk, daily life during war or in the barracks, illness, concubinage, discipline and punishment, desertion, and a number of others aspects. Poortman's story, from his new perspective, opens new facts and possible understandings. The book is somewhat unbalanced, but therefore also results in surprises. The absence of an index is a pity, especially as the book is a trove of genealogical information. Belgian authors on Dutch colonial rule are rare; Poortman is a welcome newcomer.

Martin Fink, *Besturen in de desa: De binnenlandse bestuursambtenaar in Nederlands-Indië en Nederlands Nieuw-Guinea*. Soest: Bookscout, 2018, 200 pp. ISBN: 9789402249538, price: EUR 20.49 (paperback) (to order from www.boekscout.nl).

Martin Fink, a Navy commander working as a military legal adviser, as a sideline from his professional tasks, published a concise history of the civil service in the Netherlands Indies. In 1940, this elite corps (of merely 600 people) managed to successfully administer the vast Indonesian archipelago. The mostly young men had great responsibilities, and based themselves on knowledge and insight, partly acquired through academic studies in 'Indology'. Fink intends to sketch a profile of these civil servants, against the background of the Netherlands Indies history, basing himself on the many publications in which these men related their experiences. He briefly describes the legal framework within which the servants had to function. Their duties were manifold. Most important were regular inspection tours, to justly apply adat law and tax collection. The corps took form since governor general Daendels took office in 1808, at first as a means to extract as much as possible for the benefit of the mother country, later mitigated when the ideals of the Ethical Policy gained ground. In short, the goals were to pioneer, to explore, to administer. It all came to an end in 1942, when Japan occupied Indonesia. The toll among the servants was high: a quarter of them died. After 1945, 'normal' circumstances never returned, although until 1962 New Guinea still gave civil servants ample oppor-

tunity to pioneer and explore. Fink has done a good job, which summarizes, also from an international perspective, the extraordinary role of these servants. An extensive bibliography as well as notes and an index make the text accessible.

Nizaar Makdoembaks, *Foute dokters en de tabaksindustrie van Sumatra: (K)NMG en de tientallen miljoenen overzee*. [Leeuwarden: Elikser], 2019, 514 pp. ISBN: 9789076286686, price: EUR 35.00 (paperback).

The author, formerly active as a practitioner, has published a number of books about forgotten and dark pages of the Dutch colonial past. He recently turned his attention from the West to the East Indies and published a book about the role of women in the KNIL army in 2017. A rightful moral indignation has at times made his argument less strong. In this new book, he strikes a good balance between personal involvement and scholarly research and conclusions. Based on thorough research, Makdoembaks focuses on the role of the medical staff regarding the 'coolies' of Chinese and Javanese descent working on the tobacco plantations in East Sumatra. They were tied to the plantations by contract, and were obliged under penal sanction to remain where they were and perform their duties. Transgression of the rules was severely punished, with the Dutch staff exercising its authority at will using extreme violence. Most popular were beatings with rattan sticks, inflicting horrible wounds. It was a racist society with workers in a state of semi slavery.

With *Koelies, planters en koloniale politiek*, published in 1987 by KITLV, Jan Breman was the first to disclose the truth behind the economic success story of the plantation society of East Sumatra, causing great commotion. Makdoembaks builds on Breman and extensively quotes from his sources. Moreover, he looks at this history with a new and specific focus. What was the role of the medical practitioners in approving, condoning, and opposing mistreatment of 'coolies'? They were deeply involved and, for instance, it was standard practice to examine 'coolies' whether they were fit for a rattan beating. Afterwards they were brought to a hospital, often understaffed and ill-equipped, and given treatment. There was criticism addressed at the doctors, but as it was not backed by the higher officials of the plantations and government agencies, nothing came of it. There was no organization, in the Indies or the Netherlands, who raised the subject. The Netherlands organization of doctors, the Nederlandsche Maatschappij tot bevordering der Geneeskunst (NMG), also did not want to take a position, and thus condoned it, forgetting about the solemn oath sworn when finishing medical studies.

It is curious, or rather reprehensible, that the present-day NMG, now KNMG, refused Makdoembaks access to its archives. Makdoembaks did not restrict himself to the role of practitioners in East Sumatra, but included extensive chapters on the development of thought on tropical medicine in the mother country, the discussion on the penal sanction, from its introduction in 1880 until its abolition, and the organizational setup of the plantations. In this connection, he also discusses at length the school project of the Senembah Company. These plantation schools, a true Ethical project, of course also had the intention to educate its pupils to become Senembah employees. Interestingly, (something not included by Makdoembaks) the radical Indonesian Tan Malaka was in charge of this project in 1920–1921. Disillusioned and radicalized, he left his job after a year, narrating his bitter experiences in his autobiography. Senembah was also the employer of W.A.P. Schüffner, the leading practitioner of East Sumatra, who did his best to improve conditions, but who was not in principle opposed to the ‘coolie’ system, informed by his paternalistic perspective. His work and ideas are discussed at length.

Makdoembaks also allows himself to include chapters on the convicts who were forced to work for the KNIL army, especially on expeditions and patrols, and suffered heavily, as their death rate attests. The doctors rarely raised their voices. At last, Makdoembaks looks at mining enterprises on Sumatra, especially at the state enterprise of the Ombilin coal mines in Sawahlunto, West Sumatra. The state enterprise’s treatment of contract ‘coolies’ and convicts was even worse than in East Sumatra’s private enterprise. For instance, rattan beatings were a rule, not an exception, with criticism covered up by a coalition of government officials, from high in Batavia to low in Sawahlunto, with practitioners sharing in it. In June this year, the mine complex of Ombilin was designated by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site. According to the newspaper reports, the technological aspects dominate among the motives to do so. One may hope that the thousands of Indonesians who perished as mine workers as a result of Dutch colonial enterprise are given memorial room in this site. The book is amply illustrated with photos and drawings, but sadly lacks an index.

John Klein Nagelvoort, *Toean Stammeshaus: Leven en werken in koloniaal Atjeh*. Volendam: LM Publishers, 2019, 232 pp. ISBN: 9789460224157, price: EUR 24.50 (paperback).

Willem Stammeshaus (1881–1957) was the son of a KNIL physician and his Chinese concubine. After his secondary school in the Netherlands, he signed

to become a KNIL soldier in 1903. He was based in Aceh, still a “rebellious province” after decades of Dutch efforts to pacify it. Until 1907, Stammeshaus took part in bloody expeditions directed at Acehnese resistance settlements. The Dutch, armed with their superior repeating rifles, left hundreds of victims. Even by contemporary standards, a line was crossed. In press and parliament, the expedition and its notorious leader G.C.E. van Daalen were taken to task. Stammeshaus had increasing misgivings about this approach, also because he felt attracted to land, people, and culture of Aceh. He started to collect cultural objects. He reported this all in the diaries he wrote during his life, and which also served as source material for his memoirs, written many years later. The early diaries are interesting as they show the hardships of war in inhospitable surroundings. It is a pity a detailed map of the expeditions is not included.

In 1909 he quit the KNIL and became a civil servant. The entire time he was a passionate collector of Achenese cultural artifacts. In 1914 his expertise and collection were used to build and decorate an Aceh pavilion at the Colonial Exhibition in Semarang. The building and its contents were next moved to Kutaraja, where in 1915 the Atjeh Museum was opened with a lot of public acclaim, and Governor H.N.A. Swart as the main supporter. Stammeshaus' career in government was rather capricious, as he had not met the official requirements, while, moreover, some of his superiors clearly disliked Stammeshaus and his purported pro-Acehnese stance. Thus he was posted for seven years in remote Calang, where he did a lot, as a true Ethical official, to improve living conditions. In the meantime, his Musuem did not fare well, and he had his first contact with the Colonial Institute in Amsterdam, Professor J.C. van Eerde, to discuss the sale and removal of his collection to Amsterdam. As the colonial government was not ready to pay 8,000 Dutch guilders, the deal with Van Eerde was concluded. In 1931, more than 2,000 objects were packed and shipped. On that same ship sailed Stammeshaus, now a pensioned civil servant. In Amsterdam he was as a curator put in charge of his collection. He remained in service until 1947, writing his memoirs and describing museum objects. Author Klein Nagelvoort, affiliated with Bronbeek Museum, has written Stammeshaus' biography, basing himself mainly on diaries and memoirs, supplemented with information from other sources. He probably remains too close to his sources, resulting in a somewhat uneven narrative. But this is only a minor criticism, counterbalanced by the numerous and handsome illustrations.

Henk Mak van Dijk, *Jazz in Indië 1919/1950 / Jazz in the Dutch East Indies 1919/1950*. Den Haag: West, Yogyakarta: Limasan Musik, 2019, 304 pp. ISBN: 9789083009001, price EUR 24.95 (paperback).

The anthropologist and musician Henk van Dijk (1955) has made laudable steps to rediscover and give shape to the musical world of the Indies. Only bits and pieces were known, and these were on the brink of oblivion. After publications on classical music in the Indies and on Dutch composers inspired by Javanese music, especially *gamelan* and *kroncong*, he has now turned to the history of jazz in the Indies. The result is a large-format oblong and bilingual book, in an attractive lay-out, in full color, with about 600 illustrations. Mak van Dijk also succeeds in filling in many blank pages on the Indies jazz. His book could not have been written without the help of *delpher.nl*, which opens the collected Dutch-language newspapers in the Netherlands and the Indies for a digital search. Hundreds of facsimiles thus are included in the book. With *delpher.nl*, historical research in a number of fields and subjects has changed forever, and for the better. Mak van Dijk gives *Depher* credit, by naming chapters 'Jazz and the Dutch East Indies Press 1919–1929, 1930–1935 and 1936–1942'.

In Medan in June 1919 a film orchestra with an Italian pianist played the first jazz songs on Indies soil. The success was immediate. Soon visiting bands from overseas, and newly formed bands in the Indies, often composed according to racial criteria of European, Eurasian ('Indo-European'), and Indonesian members, performed on a grand scale. The main protagonists, individuals as well as bands, are given their history. Moreover, Mak van Dijk shows the wide setting of jazz music. It was of course performed in theaters, but many hotels organized popular music and dancing as well. And musicians played on the great steamers, in swimming pools(!), in cinemas, along with silent films (until the sound film made them superfluous), on the radio and on records. Many of the jazz players had classical schooling, but effortlessly moved to jazz music. Bands, for instance, played a classical program before the break, and continued with jazz and dance after the break. Crossovers thus were no exception, with the classical repertoire, with Hawaiian songs and with *kroncong*.

There was a lively exchange of bands and musicians throughout East and Southeast Asia, a network that still needs to be further explored. In support of the Indies jazz music, shops opened, a jazz magazine was published, and even the Indo-Europeesch Verbond, the strong political party of Indo-Europeans, actively organized competitions to discover and encourage Indo talent in *kroncong* and jazz. Here there is a positive connection between music and politics, but the jazz scene was also the target of very negative comments. The fascist and national socialist supporters saw jazz as the perverted expression of

Negroes and Jews, and feared their influence on innocent youth. Prohibition was proposed but ignored. Of course, the jazz scene suffered from the economic crisis, with less money available to engage bands. But, in dark times, music was also an outlet from the daily worries. When there was a chance, it functioned also during the Japanese occupation, in internment camps, and in convicts camps along the Burma Railroad and the Trans Sumatra Railway. After 1945 there was a revival, involving an influx from the Netherlands, with musicians hired by Military Welfare to entertain the Dutch troops in Indonesia. Separately, the Indonesian musicians went their own way—again with a barrier in politics preventing them from fruitful cooperation.

Mak van Dijk only sketches these developments in a few lines. Before, he also excused himself for not describing jazz as played by Indonesian musicians, as he was lacking sources (and no delpher equivalent is available to help him with Indonesian-language newspapers and journals). Thus, the story of Soep-ratman, the composer of the Indonesian national anthem, is only mentioned in passing. The arrangement of the anthem by conductor Jos Cleber is also narrated in a version that is controversial. The correct information on this subject is available in Indonesian monographs. This book thus deserves a lot of praise. However, I cannot fathom why in this book, which is in no small measure a reference book, there is no index of personal names and jazz bands. It would be difficult to do so, but the rewards for the effort would be enormous.

Theo Huting, *Beckings gouden bergen: Een krantenkroniek*. Amsterdam: Brave New Books, 2019, 130 pp. ISBN: 9789402189452, price: EUR 20.00 (paperback) (to order from theodorushting@gmail.com).

Theo Becking (1887–1945), after graduating as an officer at the Military Academy in Breda, started his KNIL career in 1911. In November 1926 he made a name for himself as the ruthless oppressor of the communist insurrection in Banten. He was next assigned the task of finding a place in New Guinea where an internment camp could be set up. He selected a spot which became known as Upper Digul. Becking became its first commander, but soon resigned as he did not agree with the lenient camp regime, prescribed by the Batavian government. He retired in 1932, and earned a living delivering lectures. He had sympathies with theosophy and developed a sympathy for fascism. In the Indies branch of the Nationaal-Socialistische Beweging (NSB) he held a high position, and accompanied Dutch leader A.A. Mussert during his Indies tour. His withdrawal in 1939 could not safeguard him against government measures to intern Dutch NSB sympathizers when in May 1940 Germany occupied the Netherlands. Beck-

ing was among the suspects who were shipped to Suriname, and after suffering harsh treatment there, were only liberated at the end of 1945. Becking did not recover from the prison hardships and died in hospital in Paramaribo. The author relies heavily on contemporary newspaper articles, but does not give these enough content. Moreover, he embarks on tangents, such as expeditions to New Guinea to find gold deposits in the 1930s. Thus, Becking as a person remains obscure. Looking at the impressive amount of sources Huting has consulted, this could have been avoided.

Ing Lwan Taga-Tan, Patricia Tjiook-Liem and Yap Kioe Bing (eds), *Een foto vertelt: Vijftig familie verhalen van Chinezen uit Indonesië*. Den Haag: Stichting Tong Tong, in cooperation with Leiden: Chinese Indonesian Heritage Center, 2019, 191 pp. ISBN: 9789078847106, price: EUR 25.00 (paperback).

In 2011, the Chinese Indonesian Heritage Center (CIHC) was founded to keep alive the heritage of the Indonesian Chinese community, as it had been uprooted from its Indonesian origin. Many found a new home in the Netherlands, and were well integrated but still eager to uphold their past. Thus, the CIHC operates a website (www.cihc.nl) with miscellaneous information on the Chinese Indonesians, or *peranakan*. Among other data, it publishes old photographs with brief explanations. Fifty of these entries, by almost thirty authors, are now brought together. They give a kaleidoscopic image of *peranakan* life, ranging from the beginning of the last century until the 1960s, when life became extremely difficult during the New Order. The stories are independent of each other, and are evenly divided between pre and post 1945. Its coverage is far greater than pictures from the family album. The illustrations, as well as newspaper advertisements and artifacts, are rare. They tell stories about the students in the Netherlands, organized in the Chung Hwa Hui, and about the ambulance sent from Java to support the Chinese army in 1937 to fight the Japanese. Chinese organizational activities on Java are also covered. After 1945, the position of the *peranakan* was under threat, with departure as the best option for those who could afford or arrange this. The book's layout is fine and attests to its high quality. In the debate about Dutch racism, often references are made to 'dogs and natives' being prohibited from swimming pools. No definite photographic proof has been found. Racism, however, was there. For instance, Hans Go, a pupil at a grammar school in Bandung, had to obtain special permission in the 1940s to be allowed to take part in the swimming lessons, as the pool was open for Europeans only.

Michael Riemens (ed.), *Majesteit, U kent het werkelijke leven niet': De oorlogsdagboeken van minister van Buitenlandse Zaken Mr. E.N. van Kleffens*. Ingeleid en geannoteerd door Michael Riemens. Nijmegen: Vantilt, 2019, 511 pp. ISBN: 9789460044298, price: EUR 29.95 (paperback).

Van Kleffens (1894–1983) started his career in the Dutch foreign service in 1922 and rose to its highest ranks. In 1939 he exchanged his diplomatic rank for that of Minister of Foreign Affairs. He occupied this function until 1946, during the turbulent years of World War II, residing then in London with his fellow-ministers as the Dutch cabinet in exile. Queen Wilhelmina had also left her kingdom. She regularly was in conflict with her cabinet, whose members she did not hold in great respect. An exception was Van Kleffens, who was regularly commissioned to appease the queen, and let her observe the rules of constitutional law.

Van Kleffens kept a detailed diary during four extensive foreign journeys. He was in the US when Japan conquered the Indies (January–March 1942). He accompanied the queen twice on her visit to the US and Canada (June–August 1942, May–July 1943). And he attended the San Francisco Conference where the United Nations Organization was founded (April–June 1945). Apart from these, he kept another diary, running from February 1943 until April 1945. It comes close to a thumbnail agenda, with a list of subjects he had dealt with and its conclusions, probably to function as reminders. Historian Michael Riemens has edited and published these diaries, adding 70 pages with more than 1,000 notes, attesting to a deep knowledge of the subject. In Riemens' general introduction, he considers the new light he shines on Queen Wilhelmina as one of important new findings. She was unstable and willful, and out of touch with everyday realities. Hence the title of the book: 'Your Majesty, you are not aware of what real life involves'.

One may ask whether Van Kleffens was himself aware of the hardships of war: his diaries list an unending number of parties, lunches, and dinners ... The subjects raised in the diaries are numerous, but relatively little attention is paid to the Indies. H.J. van Mook is mentioned quite a number of times, concerning subjects like appeasing the anti-colonial mood in the US, laying a new framework for the Indies (with an enduring Dutch rule), and preparation of an expeditionary force to fight the Japanese. Van Mook, Minister of Colonies and Lieutenant Governor General, is described by Van Kleffens (p. 371): 'it is a pity that this very gifted and competent man speaks so badly. All in a subdued ruffling voice'. Van der Plas, the second man of the Indies government in Australia, is also named, and Van Kleffens cannot hide his familiar feelings of superiority when he writes that Van der Plas 'bored him with his endless "profound chatter"' (p. 72). Other Indies officials get one or two mentions only.

An extensive index, with personal information added, is a merit of this book. But, Van Mook's presence on 35 pages in the text is not recorded in the index. That is a serious shortcoming that hopefully did not afflict other individuals. Two questions still remain. Van Kleffens wrote his memoirs (*Belevenissen*, 2 volumes). Riemens only mentions these in passing, as being of lesser interest, and compiled when at an advanced age. A few paragraphs to give an impression of the contents and shortcomings would have been helpful. And what about the diary of Van Kleffens' wife, M.H. Horstmann, referred to a few times—doesn't that contain additional information? All in all, this is a useful supplement to the information on the London Cabinet.

Jan Schneider, *In de hel van Birma: Ooggetuigenverslag uit de kampen langs de Birma-Siam Spoorlijn 1942–1945*. Woord vooraf Geert Mak. Bezorgd door Hans D. Schneider. Amsterdam: Balans, 2019, 159 + 16 pp. ISBN: 9789463820066, price: EUR 19.99 (paperback).

Jan Schneider (1905–1981) was a teacher at the secondary school in Bandung, when he was mobilized as a KNIL reserve officer to fight the Japanese. Due to illness, he never entered combat, and was made a prisoner by Japan in March 1942. His internment, not too far from his wife and three children, changed dramatically when he was transported to Rangoon, on board a ship with 1650 fellow-soldiers, 300 of whom died during the three-weeks' journey. Schneider barely survived. He was set to work on the notorious Birma-Siam Railroad (415 km). Its construction took from June 1942 until October 1943. Under extremely harsh circumstances, of the 61,000 Allied soldiers 12,500 died, while of the Asian convicts roughly half (about 100,000 men) perished. After the Railroad was ready, the prisoners of war had to stay in their 55 camps along the railroad for maintenance labor. By sheer luck and a strong faith in a better future, Schneider managed to survive. Thus he was a close co-worker with Reverend C. Mak, whom he regularly replaced as a minister. He also often met Wim Kan, a famous cabaret artist, who boosted morale by performing.

Schneider kept a diary, which was confiscated by the Japanese. He himself destroyed a new diary, as he did not want to risk the severe penalties he might face. Only when the war ended and Schneider moved to Bangkok to recuperate and await reunion with his family, did he start to write down his memories, based on a chronology he had kept. This is not just a factual account, but also a contemplative personal search—about optimism, about formative experiences, about his faith, and about love for his family. Of course, it is not clear how far the diary conformed with the reminiscences recorded in Bangkok,

which he left unfinished. Fortunately, missing episodes were touched upon—too briefly—in two letters he wrote to his family. All these documents were only discovered by his sons after he passed away. It took more than 30 years before his son Hans began to edit, introduce, and explain the backgrounds concerning his father's years in Birma and Siam. He has done an exemplary job, with notes, bibliography, chronologies, and an index. The book shows how a strong will may help to survive atrocious circumstances. Of course, after the numerous publications on the Railroad, new facts or views are not to be expected, but every personal account is welcome. By the way, the year 1945 should be changed to 1946 at two points (illustration 18 and p. 119).

Gert M. Knepper, *Floresmens: Het leven van Theo Verhoeven, missionaris en archeoloog*. Soest: Boekscout, 2019, 270 pp. ISBN: 9789463892476, price: EUR 22.00 (paperback) (to order from www.boekscout.nl).

Theo Verhoeven (1907–1990), born in a large Catholic family of eleven children in the pious province of North Brabant, had longed to become a missionary already from a young age. The intelligent Theo was admitted to the minor and next major seminary of the Society of the Divine Word (SVD), and ordained as priest in 1933. To his deep frustration he was not assigned to a mission field, but ordered to study classical languages at Utrecht University, to fill in the shortage of qualified teachers at the SVD seminary. After fifteen years of living in an abnormal closed male community, he enjoyed the freedom his academic studies allowed him. He was a self-willed and conceited young man, who had a history of conflict with his SVD superiors, who demanded unconditional obedience of their priests. Against their will—they did not want the SVD to be in jeopardy—he was actively engaged in the Dutch resistance against the German occupation, especially in finding hiding addresses for Jews, who wanted to escape from the deadly deportations. To avoid further incidents, the SVD, after the war, decided to send him to Flores, the main mission field where the SVD was active, to teach Latin at a minor seminary. He was first asked to take a doctor's degree in classical studies, which he did in 1948.

In Flores he met some colleagues who were interested in the prehistory of Flores. Verhoeven, who did a minor on archaeology in Utrecht, was at once interested. Findings were abundant and looked to be unique. The priests were not experts and turned for advice to the few Dutch archaeologists still active in Indonesia, among them H.R. van Heekeren and R. von Koenigswald, and to the Anthropos Institute, where Verhoeven published his first scholarly articles. However, he soon ran into conflict with the authorities. They treated Verhoe-

ven as an amateur with no formal training, but with an enthusiastic and critical mind. Thus, an uneasy relationship, with ups and downs, developed. Jealousy was also involved. Verhoeven discovered the bones of prehistoric dwarfish animals, as well as human bones, much older than hitherto found. But there were also skulls of giant rats, along with human remains, much more recent, of a dwarfish humanoid. At the time Verhoeven was not aware of the magnitude of his findings, and the scholars in Indonesia and the Netherlands were still ignorant of the wide range of these prehistoric remains. There were a few sensational newspaper reports on Verhoeven's findings, but there was no conclusive report as the quarreling among the prehistory experts and 'amateurs' like Verhoeven went on.

Verhoeven, in guarding his findings and striving after the recognition he deserved, also became embroiled in these conflicts. Moreover, he was again at odds with SVD, who were not willing to grant him time for his prehistoric excavations. He was assigned the task of compiling a Latin-Indonesia dictionary. After a car accident in 1967 he returned to the Netherlands, never to return to Flores. He had a conflict with D. Hooijer about the return to Indonesia of bones Verhoeven had sent to the Netherlands to be examined. It almost became a court case. He found welcome support with Paul Sondaar. To earn a living he taught classical languages at some grammar schools. One of his pupils was Gert M. Knepper (1953), the author of this book, who also became a classicist. Verhoeven died in 1990. Already in 1973, at his request, he was relieved of his priestly duties, including the celibacy demand which had always weighed heavily. This book is a fine biography, sailing between empathy and critical observation. Its sketch of the SVD education shows a self-contained totalitarian state within the state, to which intelligent young men willingly subscribed. After their ordination not much changed, as Knepper relates about the SVD in Flores. And to conclude Knepper gives insight in the world of Indonesian and Dutch prehistory studies, likewise a snakepit.

Arend Noordam, *Een adelaar in Nederlands-Indië*. Soesterberg: Aspekt, 2019, 597 pp. ISBN: 9789463385763, price: EUR 27.50 (paperback).

From a pious Protestant and poor family, Arend Noordam (1916–1985) left the Dutch countryside in 1936 when he signed to become a common soldier in the KNIL colonial army, looking for better prospects than being a farmhand. He was to remain in the Indies until 1958, when he repatriated to the Netherlands. His experiences in the Indies left an indelible mark on him. He started to write down his experiences when back. He kept on rewriting these, compiled notes

and reorganized his manuscript that he clearly intended to be published. When he died, the manuscript was far from ready for publication. Only now, 35 years later, has his son edited and organized the mass of paper to become a book, almost 600 pages in tight print. Editing has been moderate, and has not resulted in an abridged edition, which might have appealed more to readers. An introduction about the background of the book and Noordam's biography since 1958 might likewise have been helpful. Exact information on time and place is often lacking, there are no captions to chapters and subchapters, and the sparse Indonesian words and names are often misspelled. This is all a pity as the book itself has some remarkable stories to tell.

Most valuable are the pages—about 200—on his KNIL years. Noordam was stationed first in Surabaya, with tasks on Madura, and then transferred to Borneo. His sketch of KNIL life in these years contradicts all such accounts that are positive and romanticizing the soldier's life. Noordam mentions the camaraderie as a positive point, but for the rest it is an ink-black picture. The soldiers' only outlets were getting drunk and Indonesian prostitutes. Venereal diseases were common. The soldiers were treated harshly by their superiors, who belittled them and punished them arbitrarily, thus ensuring their hopeless fate. Noordam also gives illuminating reports of the regular patrols his unit was ordered to perform. He managed to survive in these surroundings, helped a lot by his unshakeable faith. As such he was an outsider, which probably also accounted for his aptitude to observe and record his KNIL years. In 1940, after an accident, Noordam was declared unfit for military service. He entered service as an overseer at a tea and rubber plantation in West Java. He has a lot to say about colonialism and about Indonesian women, whose attraction he often could not resist. As such he was a prototype of an orientalist. He was mobilized when the war with Japan broke out. About the Dutch and KNIL performance against Japan, he only writes with deep contempt. Noordam was interned in Bandung, then Jakarta, and again back in Bandung. His camp experiences are not very different from those that already appeared in print, but useful as an additional source. In 1945 he returned to his plantation work, which he sustained, with a lot of difficulties and threatening incidents, until the curtain of the Dutch presence in Indonesia fell definitively. With his wife and four children he fled Indonesia in 1958. He recreated Indonesia in this voluminous manuscript, now published, as an account to process his drastic experiences.

Anneke van Loggem, *Toen ... vroeger ...* Harderwijk: Gopher, 2019, 669 pp. ISBN: 9789492984876, price: EUR 32.50 (paperback).

Anneke van Loggem-Kouwenhoven (1922–2017), daughter of a civil servant of the Dutch East Indies government, followed her father in his postings on Java and Celebes, before she settled in Bandung in 1934, where she finished her secondary school. The war threat loomed ever larger. In 1942, Japan occupied the Indies. Van Loggem's family was imprisoned in internment camps for women and children, first in Tjihapit (Bandung), then in Struiswijk (Batavia). Her father died when on transport aboard a Japanese ship; her fiancé Ros van Loggem, a KNIL pilot, managed to escape, and survived the war, which ended on August 15, 1945. In a spectacular air action on September 4, he discovered where Anneke was held and next arranged a reunion. Java was in chaos and the *bersiap* claimed many victims. Ros and Anneke moved to New Guinea, where they got married in November 1945. Soon thereafter, Ros was assigned a post in Australia, to be moved again to Balikpapan. As Balikpapan was in ruins, Anneke was able to join him only in May 1946. In 1947, another switch followed, now to Batavia. And in August 1948 the final move was made to the Netherlands, never to return to Indonesia. Ros had a shining career in the Dutch Air Force.

Anneke kept a lot of letters and a diary, which she started to arrange as a book around 1980. Anneke was not content with the result and put it aside. Only in 2014 did she resume her labor and finish her task. In this respect, she was prompted by the publication in 2014 of the novel by Charles den Tex and Anneloes Timmerije, *Het vergeten verhaal van een onwankelbare liefde in oorlogstijd*, on the air action of Ros van Loggem, which she felt was in need of addition. To tell her first 28 years, she used a generous 669 pages, comprising memoirs, a diary kept in Struiswijk from January 1 until September 7, 1945, and exchanges of letters of Anneke primarily between her husband and family members. Anneke is an able writer and the part on life as a child and young adult in the colonial Indies reads well. Also, her diary on the last nine months of internment in Struiswijk is a valuable addition to the knowledge of camp life. It is striking but not unusual that information and contemplation on the war between the Netherlands and the Republic of Indonesia are almost absent in Indies memoirs and camp diaries. In this case, notwithstanding Ros van Loggem's role as a liaison officer in the 1948 negotiations between Indonesia and the Netherlands, this holds true, as well. The texts on Indonesia 1945–1948 are in fact less important and coherent, and often contain a lot of trivial content. Abridgement of the text would have been useful, but this was probably not a good proposition.

Gregor Vincent, *De man die Nagasaki overleefde: Het ongelooflijke verhaal van soldaat Dick Büchel van Steenbergen*. Meppel: Just Publishers, 2019, 304 pp. ISBN: 9789089757937, price: EUR 20.99 (paperback).

Dick Büchel (1920–2019) was a photographer with the KNIL when Japan occupied the Indies in 1942. He was interned as a prisoner of war in Bandung, where he used to live (in Cimahi and Batavia), before being shipped to Singapore (Changi) in February 1943 under horrible circumstances. The next ordeal was a similar journey to Nagasaki in April 1943. Together with 300 partners in this misfortune, he became a convict laborer at the Mitsubishi wharf, where their lives were continually threatened by the illness, hunger, and violence inflicted on them by their Japanese overseers. Büchel had a strong urge to survive and adapted cleverly. In June 1944, another 200 POWs were brought in. In June 1945, 200 left, but Büchel stayed on. He was there with 200 Allied workers as a witness of the second atomic bomb, dropped on August 9, 1945. Miraculously, he survived unharmed, and was involved in the rescue and clearing operations, before he was evacuated himself by a US warship in September 1945, and subsequently enlisted again in the KNIL. It was only in 2017 that Büchel and freelance historian Vincent agreed to record his war experiences. Intensive interviewing has resulted in this book. As such, it is an addition to the few personal memories of Allied forced labor in Nagasaki. Vincent has included fictional elements such as invented dialogues in Büchel's life story. Next to this, he introduces two fictional characters: a US Navy photographer and a Japanese Air Force pilot, who served to tell the course of the war, and make the flow of his story easier to follow. Vincent hardly explains how he went about all this and does not mention which sources he used. As such, the story reads well, although rather perfunctorily. To get an impression of Büchel's reminiscences: the website of Just Publishers comprises a 24-minute interview with him. Büchel died in June 2019, and lived to see the publication of this book about his extraordinary war experiences.

Arjan Hoks, *Afscheid van Java: Het verhaal van Johannes Hoks: tabaksplanter, KNIL-sergeant en krijgsgevangene tijdens de Tweede Wereldoorlog*. Uithoorn: Karakter, 2019, 415 + 16 pp. ISBN: 9789045218649, price: EUR 21.99 (paperback).

Johannes Hoks (1904–1973) left for the Indies in 1927 to look for brighter prospects. He became a successful tobacco planter on an estate in Jember (East Java). His pleasant life, with a wife and three children, ended abruptly with the outbreak of war in the Pacific. Hoks was mobilized as a conscript and sent to Banyuwangi to build coastal defense works to resist a Japanese invasion. This

would have been an impossible task for the badly trained and armed soldiers. Luckily they did not see action and were dishonorably imprisoned in a Japanese internment camp in Malang. In January 1943, he was transported to Batavia where he boarded a ship, under the most miserable conditions. From the destination of Changi in Singapore, he was brought to the starting-point of the notorious Birma Railway. He managed to survive, despite the hunger, illness, and violence, thanks also to his service at a base camp, which saved him from the hard construction tasks. After the railway was ready in October 1943, conditions improved. Following Japan's surrender he moved to Bangkok, where he was reunited with his family. In May 1946, they all returned to Amsterdam. In the last years of his life he set himself the task of his memoirs, writing at length about his experiences as a coastal guard and as a convict laborer in Thailand, though he did not finish this part due to his sudden death. His grandson Arjan Hoks (1964) took it upon himself to publish the memoirs. His method involved a rewriting of the memoirs, as well as adding information and context. He does not give information on the method and the criteria he applied to include, exclude, or change the original text. For a historian, as well as other readers, this all distracts from its value. Arjan Hoks calls the memoirs refreshing and objective, but does not give the reader any chance to support this judgement. He also introduces fictional elements, as a common procedure, it appears. All in all, except for its serious shortcomings, this is a readable story, with extensive information (especially on the railroad) given in the footnotes.

Dirk Vlasblom, *Papoea een geschiedenis*. Leiden: Sidestone Press, 2019, 541 pp. Second printing. ISBN: 989075937890, price: EUR 95.00 (hardcover); 9789088907616, EUR 39.95 (paperback).

In 2004, Vlasblom (1952) published his comprehensive history of West New Guinea, later known as Irian Jaya and now Papua. The remote island had long been forgotten and neglected, but as a last remnant of colonialism it became a bone of contention between Indonesia and the Netherlands, the former eager to retain its status as Asian power. Vlasblom published the first modern history of Papua. He did so by way of telling the stories of the inhabitants, and fitting their testimonies into a structure. He earned a lot of praise from the scholarly field as well as from the general readership. A competitor or alternative monograph has not been published in all the fifteen years since *Papoea* was published. As the original publisher was discontinued, a new publisher was found. Sidestone Press boasts that the second edition is completely revised, that new literature is taken into account, and the state of affairs is brought up

to date. Of course, for commercial reasons publishers like to emphasize the extent of new contents in reprinted books. In this case the claim looks unfounded: in fact, the text of the book is unchanged. Added are an introduction of four pages, and a closing chapter of twenty pages, titled 'Bureaucrats, Mountain People and Exiles (2003–2018)'. This last chapter identifies the major trends of the last fifteen years as: the deteriorating position of the Papuans; the still growing immigration from other parts of Indonesia; the exploitation of natural resources; the conflicts between Christians and Muslims; the corruption of the government and the disproportionate violence used by the army and police to suppress Papuan wishes for more autonomy and independence.