Recent Dutch-Language Publications

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In 1619, VOC Governor-General Jan Pietersz Coen founded Batavia, which was intended to become the center of all VOC activities in Asia. Batavia succeeded in maintaining itself in armed combat with indigenous rulers and European competitors. In 1627, the town had firmly established its position. In that year, a detailed map was drawn of Batavia (format $172 \times 316$ cm), which still survives as part of the collection of the Westfries Museum in Hoorn. Bea Brommer, well-known for her studies on the cartography of the VOC, has taken the map as a starting point for a description of the daily culture of Batavia. Together with information from published sources and archival material, a comprehensive picture is evoked in 21 chapters. Thus, VOC trade, the city’s executives, church, and school, and the status of Dutch citizens, Chinese, Japanese, Indonesians, mixed-blood citizens, and slaves all receive attention. Eight chapters have the life story of a particular citizen as their subject, with surprising information. Dozens of maps are included, as well as a walking tour guide of Batavia. A rare catalogue of a public auction in 1626 covers 14 pages (in Old Dutch). The book ($30 \times 30$ cm) is beautifully formatted, and Brommer adds her scholarly expertise to make it an exemplary publication. A bibliography, 494 notes, an index, and a list of all Dutch citizens residing in Batavia in 1623 complete the book.

Vilan van de Loo, the author of the biographies of J.B. van Heutsz and Pa Van der Steur—now regarded as controversial Dutchmen involved in the violent colonization of the Indies—has endeavored to write “the history of the KNIL, 1814–1950.” The article *de* here reveals Van de Loo’s ambitious intention, yet in her introduction the tone becomes a bit more cautious and she even writes that the story of the KNIL might be told in a thousand variations. And that is what Van de Loo does. She does not present a monograph with a fixed organization based on a specific theme or time, but collects a mass of contemporaneous documents: diaries, letters, press articles, reports and official notes, novels and songs. Van de Loo thus reconstructs the pivotal role of the KNIL in the establishment of the Indonesian colony. A history in documents is the result. To preclude any critique ascribing to her too positive a stance on the matter at hand—as was occasionally done in response to her Van Heutsz monograph—Van de Loo adds that the colonial system was intrinsically wrong. Her approach allows her to include sources from a wide range and from a highly diverse outlook. She maintains a sensible balance of the sources included, and her introductory paragraphs serve their purposes well. As expected, Van de Loo has a special interest in the sad fate of the KNIL women, whose role as concubines is highlighted.

The KNIL was an armed force with the task to quell internal disturbances. It failed at this task when the Japanese attacked in 1942. When revived in 1945, it took part in the war between the Indonesian Republic and the Netherlands, which was doomed to fail for the Dutch. For the greater part, an integration of the KNIL with the Indonesian army came to nothing—resulting in fighting in East Indonesia and an order for Moluccan KNIL soldiers to demobilize in the Netherlands. This Moluccan community found its place in the Netherlands with great difficulty, as did the other KNIL veterans. Eventually, an appropriate format for the remembrance of the KNIL was found.

Van de Loo has certainly succeeded in offering a kaleidoscopic image of the KNIL and its role in Dutch colonialism. A reader may disagree with her selection of sources, but praise is due for a balanced and surprising account of the pre-eminent colonial instrument the KNIL had become. Unfortunately, the organization and reference system of the notes is poor. In another recent Prometheus title (Van der Jagt, *Engelen uit Europa*) this is done far better. Is editorial organization not a subject of discussion in Prometheus? And why is there no index?

The career of A.W.F. Idenburg (1861–1935) has no equivalent in contemporary Netherlands and its colonies. In 1878, he enlisted as an officer with the KNIL. His army career was unobtrusive, but landed him in Batavia as an adjutant of the general staff (1891–1901), where he was respected as an officer, but also as a publicist on military and other matters. In that capacity he also met J.B. van Heutsz, Ch. Snouk Hurgronje, and H. Colijn. He was an active member of the orthodox Protestant Church, as well as a rising politician of the Antirevolutionaire Partij (ARP), wherein Prime Minister Abraham Kuyper was most prominent. He was asked by the ARP to fill in a seat in the Second Chamber of the Dutch parliament as an expert in colonial affairs. By coincidence, and not a year later, he was the sole candidate to fill in the vacant position of Minister of Colonies. It was the starting point of more than thirty years of close and influential involvement with colonial affairs—three times as a minister, as a governor of Surinam (1905–1908), as a governor-general of the East Indies (1909–1916), and as a member of the First Chamber and the Raad van State.

Idenburg has not been the subject of scholarly attention commensurate with the roles he played in Dutch colonial policy. This study by Hans van der Jagt, a revised edition of his 2021 PhD defended at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, is a convincing effort to give Idenburg his rightful place in the development of views concerning the Dutch colonies. He has indeed succeeded in illuminating Idenburg’s role, situated in a wider context—the length and breadth of Van der Jagt’s research is impressive. However, in reading its title and subtitle, prospective readers will wonder what the book is all about. They will need Van der Jagt’s lengthy explanation to grasp its meaning. In summary, the book is a study of Idenburg’s thought and deeds regarding the colonies, and as such it is best called an intellectual biography. To use such a description in the title might have made it less of a puzzle. From the scattered biographical details Van der Jagt includes, these readers might wonder why its scope has not been broadened to make it a full-fledged biography.

Idenburg became the minister on whose shoulders rested the task to put into practice the Ethical Policy, proclaimed by the Dutch cabinet as the guideline for Dutch colonial policies. His “ethical imperialism” involved a program that, in an evolutionary way, was to lead Indonesia and the Indonesians to increasing involvement in their own government. As a governor-general he took measures to this effect, but he also curbed political activities, for instance of the Sarekat Islam, and, in a strange paradox, supported bloody military actions.
to subjugate parts of the Indonesian archipelago which were not willing to acknowledge Dutch sovereignty and join the “Western civilization.” Aceh, Bali, Lombok, and Sulawesi were the most notable cases in this respect. In the longer run, Idenburg’s policies were not able to stop the rising tide of revolution inspired by socialism, nationalism, and Islam. To a significant extent, these were also influenced by international developments: the Russo-Japanese war, China’s awakening, and the démasqué of the Western colonial powers in World War I. In Indonesia, the Volksraad, a semi-parliamentary body, was inaugurated in May 1918—an initiative of Idenburg, but also considered as incompatible with Dutch constitutional law, as Idenburg himself and Colijn both contended. Idenburg had his own ideas on the role of the Christian religion. In his view, an alliance between Christian and Islamic thought might give counter-weight to revolutionary politics, also sustained by democratization and a cultural renaissance. Idenburg fought a lost battle, as his association policy coined as Rijkseenheid (Unity of the Kingdom) became a failure, too.

Van der Jagt’s approach is helpful and may give some new impetus to the imperialism debate, which has lingered on for more than a century. His point of departure is different from related studies, as he emphasizes the ARP colonial stance, highlighted by the pivotal role of Idenburg. In comparison, his treatment of the growth of Indonesian nationalism is rather limited. In this respect he also heaps together socialists, social democrats, and communists, with awkward results such as “socialistisch-democratische weekblad De Tribune,” where “communist daily De Tribune” would have been correct.


Interest in colonial Dutch architecture has only grown in the last decades, resulting in practical and scholarly efforts to describe and preserve this heritage. Indonesian and Dutch scholars have cooperated to reach their goals. Academic interest was seen in 2008 with the PhD by C.J. van Dullemen, published in English in 2010 as Tropical Modernity: Life and Work of C.P. Wolff Schoemaker. This C.P. (Charles) Schoemaker (1882–1949) had a younger brother Richard, whose career mirrored that of Charles in a number of respects. Both were KNIL officers, and initially, beginning in 1912, were preoccupied with designing military buildings. Their activities extended to offices and private houses. They founded an architectural bureau and were counted among the most influential architects. Richard was also active as a member of the municipal council and in
the boards of professional organizations and vocational journals. He was a pro-

fessor at the Technical University in Bandung from its opening in 1919. In 1924,
he moved to the Technical University Delft, from where he made a few trips
abroad, also to the Indies, in particular to supervise the building of the enormous
office of the Nederlands Indische Handelsbank in the center of Batavia.
After Germany occupied the Netherlands in 1940, Richard was involved in the
organization of a resistance movement. He was arrested in May 1941 and given
the death penalty. In May 1942 he was shot.

Van Dullemen was undoubtedly the best author to write this monograph. In
the process, he sorted out the roles of Richard and Charles in their respective
construction activities. The book is the result of commendable research, pub-
ished in a grand format (24 × 29 cm) and lavishly illustrated. As to the Schoe-
makebrothers, Van Dullemen has produced the definitive work. More archi-
tects deserve such studies.

Aleid Truijens, *Leven in de verbeelding: Hella S. Haasse 1918–2011*. Amsterdam:

Hella S. Haasse made her debut in the Dutch literary world in 1948 and her writ-
ing career spanned more than six centuries. She was a prolific writer of novels,
poetry, essays and plays on a wide array of subjects. Haasse had an Indies back-
ground, which influenced or even determined her writings in a number of texts.
She was born in Bandung as the daughter of a high government official and a
pianist. After a leave of office to the Netherlands in 1922, the family returned to
the Indies, where Hella spent her early years at secondary schools in Bandung
and Batavia. She was sent to the Netherlands again to study in 1938. She was not
to meet her family again until 1945. In the Indies she enjoyed the upper-class
life of the Dutch elite, and was unaware of the colonial and racist divisions. She
was, however, overwhelmed by Java’s landscape. This fascination never abated.
It found expression in the novel *Oeroeg* (1948), focusing on the impossibility of
an equal relationship between a Dutch and an Indonesian boy, as soon as the
struggle for an independent Indonesia reinforced the lines of race. Haasse was
severely criticized by the “settled” circle of Indies writers, among them Tjalie
Robinson and Rob Nieuwenhuys, who excluded Haasse from their literary field
of study. It took a long time before Haasse was granted her legitimate place in
the pantheon of *Indische Letteren*.

Truijens has carefully documented and analyzed Haasse’s literary as well as
private life. Privately, Haasse was almost continuously embroiled in marital
危机, as Truijens truthfully reports. She also detects in Haasse’s writings an
indispensable reference to the latter’s own experiences and those of her family and acquaintances, not rarely annoying the “victims” of her razor-sharp portrayals of certain characters. At the appropriate places, the Indies connection is given due attention in the book: the trips to Indonesia, the travel notes—for instance, *Krassen op een rots* (1970)—and the successful novels *Heren van de thee* (1992) and *Sleuteloog* (2002). Truijens has done a solid and fine job, adding important revelations that certainly shed new light on the personality and works of Hella Haasse. Publisher Querido has not considered it necessary to check the use of Indonesian words, names, and places, and thus a number of small errors mar the book. Unfortunately, editorial competency did not involve the introduction of some simple mechanisms to enable the reader to find and check the notes.