Han Bing Siong
Captain Huyer and the massive Japanese arms transfer in East Java in October 1945


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The interested layman surveying the historiography of Indonesia in the period immediately following the surrender of Japan will soon be struck by the obvious anti-Japanese bias of most Dutch historians (for examples see Han Bing Siong 1996, 1998, 2000, and 2001b). Many of them interpret the part played by the Japanese in events in the post-surrender period negatively, as being antagonistic to the Dutch and supportive of the Indonesian cause. And where the Japanese did fight against the Indonesians and protected the Dutch, these authors often trivialize the Japanese actions and describe them as being too hesitant and ill-timed, as being inspired by concern for their own safety or by vindictiveness, or as following on direct orders from the Allied authorities. A few exceptions aside – such as the diaries or memoirs of H.E. Keizer-Heuzeveldt (1982:77), J. van Baal (1985:368, 1989:512), and G. Boissevain and L. van Empel (1991:305), and several other contemporary publications – there is a noticeable reluctance to acknowledge that Dutch people in some cases in fact owed their lives to the Japanese.¹ This is curious, as many of these Dutch historians belong to a younger generation or have

¹ According to Wehl (1948:41) the situation in Bandung especially was very dangerous for the Dutch. Van Sprang (1946:28) confirms the hypothesis that many Dutch people here owed their lives to the conduct of the Japanese army. Fabricius (1947:129) says that some Dutch felt so relieved when the Japanese came into action that they applauded the latter in the streets. How proud this must have made the Japanese, as a defeated army, feel. Van Delden (1989:106-7) does not say a word about this, however, although she gives an account of the Japanese military operation in Bandung. Bouman (1995:235) also keeps silent about the Japanese actions to ensure the safety of the Dutch in Bandung, and the significance of these. The British did not as a rule require Japanese officers to surrender their swords as long as it was necessary for them to maintain control of their forces, whose assistance the British still needed badly. In the case of the Japanese commanders of Bandung and Semarang, there was special cause for gratitude and leniency. Rijpma (1999:140), although acknowledging that the Japanese in Bandung were the protectors of the Dutch, claims that there is no record anywhere of what Major General Mabuchi Itsuo of Bandung did to deserve the privilege of keeping his sword. She furthermore downplays the

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