
Willem Blaeu (1571–1638) and his son Joan (1598/9–1673) earned their lasting fame by publishing maps and atlases, with *Theatrum orbis terrarum* (1635) and *Atlas maior* (1665) as their highlights. Most publications on Willem Blaeu focus on this part of his prodigious activities; curiously, although he had a rich and storied life, a full-fledged biography remains unpublished. In this revised edition of her PhD dissertation, Djoeke van Netten demonstrates Blaeu’s versatility through the range of his vocations. He was a printer, publisher, and bookseller, a ‘koopman in kennis’, a merchant in knowledge, a scientist-printer. Van Netten analyses his prominent role in the print culture of the time. Blaeu was an able mathematician, which explains why he published so many titles in this field. His place in the international network, scholarly as well as commercial, is shown by a number of case studies. Commercial success he scored with seaman’s guides like *Het licht der zee-vaert* and *Zeespiegel*, of which more than fifty editions appeared since 1608, and which were also translated. Other maritime activities involved the production of globes, instruments and tables. He was an examiner for the VOC, a lucrative and prestigious task. Apart from the chapter about the seaman’s guides, Van Netten only mentions Blaeu’s maritime and VOC connection in passing—on purpose, as she rightfully concentrates on hitherto neglected aspects of the activities of Willem Blaeu.

Professional artists rarely visited seventeenth-century VOC Indies. One of the few was Andries Beeckman (1628–1664), who left Deventer and his well-to-do family in 1652 to enlist as a VOC soldier. He survived the hardships of travel and stay, must have visited Japan, and returned in 1658. He brought back sketches and notes which he used to make watercolours depicting Indies natives, Chine­se and Japanese people, and mestizos, as well as tropical animals. He did the same with material he collected on Madagascar and the Cape Colony. He sold two large paintings of Batavia, which are now showpieces in the Rijks­museum. His watercolours became instantly popular, and were regularly copied and adapted and used in publications on the Indies, as faithful representations of the tropical reality. A set of 55 of the 57 original watercolours was rediscovered in a Paris museum, and with the availability of two sets of copies, there was enough incentive to make Beeckman subject of a project at Radboud University Nijmegen. Its outcome is an exhibition in the Kunsthal Rotterdam, and this scholarly monograph. Six essays by six authors give the scant details of his biography, a survey of the scale and way his watercolours were used in books, and a closer look at the paintings on Moluccan warriors, Chinese and Japanese, Albinos and exotic animals. And more than half of the book shows Beeckman’s watercolours with extensive and expert commentaries.


Anthologies of Indies poetry have been rare. Samuel Kalff and E. du Perron were early compilers, while Joop van den Berg collected *Indië-Indonesië in honderd gedichten* (1984), but with its own premises. Now, Bert Paasman and Peter van Zonneveld, the two most qualified experts on the subject, have collected 220 poetical works, from the early VOC period, mostly anonymous, till the third generation of the present day. They have organized the poetry in ten categories: the journey to the Indies; nature, town and village; colonial daily life; life and culture of the Indonesians; colonial wares; love and eroticism; historical