

KONINKLIJK INSTITUUT  
VOOR TAAL-, LAND- EN VOLKENKUNDE

# BIJDRAGEN

TOT DE TAAL-, LAND- EN VOLKENKUNDE

---

DEEL 152

2e AFLEVERING

1996



JOURNAL OF THE ROYAL INSTITUTE OF  
LINGUISTICS AND ANTHROPOLOGY

These introductory chapters contain useful information, such as an overview of the national and regional seminars in the field of history. Obviously, historical research in Indonesia is impeded by the many extra-curricular activities historians have to pursue to make ends meet, diverting their attention from the essentials of their profession. Students have to occupy themselves with obligatory courses on political education, which consume much of their time.

Dengel chose a number of central items in modern Indonesian historiography around which to group the literature. Some of these items are treated fairly briefly. One good example of this is the Indonesian revolution, a topic which could easily fill a whole monograph, but which has less than two pages devoted to it.

The factors which are adduced above, must lead us to conclude that Dengel's bibliography suffers from a lack of accessibility and elaboration. Moreover, it displays a carelessness in spelling matters; Dutch names and phrases especially are the frequent victims of misspelling. On a more positive note, some important developments in the historical field are described. These are necessary for an understanding of the position of history in Indonesian education and research, and, not at least, the role of the government in designing a picture of the past.

---

Hans Antlöv and Stein Tønnesson (eds), *Imperial policy and Southeast Asian nationalism 1930-1957*. Richmond: Curzon Press, 1995, xiii + 323pp. ISBN 0.7007.0319.5. Price £ 35.-.

HARRY A. POEZE

This well-edited volume brings together ten papers, which were read in Copenhagen in May 1993 at a conference of the Nordic Institute of Asian Studies. They examine the role of the European empires in the process that transformed Southeast Asia from a collection of colonial states into independent nations. The introduction, a single bibliography and two indexes, all meticulously compiled, are intended to create the impression that the volume is more than just a collection of ten, rather diverse, papers on a crucial period in Southeast Asian history. In their introduction Antlöv and Tønnesson rightly conclude that it was not an imperialist-nationalist dichotomy, but a far more complicated pattern that determined the course of events, and they bring forward a number of triangular relations – colonialism, communist, and non-communist nationalism; colonial power, local nationalist movements, and Japanese or Chinese occupation forces; local, national, and international levels; colonial, national, and dynastic leaderships; colonial power, nation-state, and ethnic minorities. All of which find their way into the contributions in the volume but, unfortun-

ately not in a coordinated or inclusive manner. The editors have grouped the articles into five pairs; the effort is brave, but in vain, and leaves the reviewer admiring their inventiveness in attempting to unite what cannot be united. The 'artificial' pairings should not distract from the high quality of most of the articles, based on thorough research in archives and literature, also written in Vietnamese, Chinese, and Indonesian/Malay, where appropriate.

Five may be said to use a comparative perspective extremely useful in the Southeast Asian context, but the efforts in this respect often did not succeed as real expertise on more than one or two of the highly different states is rarely to be found combined in one person. This is true of the fairly sketchy survey that Anthony Short presents in the first contribution, and to a lesser extent, for Anders Tanstrup, who points out the common feature of 'village wars' in the region. Stein Tønnesson on the 'filling of the power vacuum' in 1945 in Indonesia, the Indies, and Malaya, Hans Antlöv on the role of three traditional rulers – Sultan Ibrahim of Johore, Emperor Bao Dai of Vietnam, and Sultan Hamengku Buwono of Yogyakarta – and Anne L. Foster on the French, Dutch, British, and US reactions to the Nghe Tinh Rebellion in Vietnam, 1930-1931, are among the rare successful examples of comparative history for this period.

Four other articles are detailed studies which supply new information or revise and reappraise present interpretations on their specific subjects. William A. Frederick 'debunks' the enigmatic, high-ranking, Dutch colonial government official Charles van der Plas, a (semi-)legendary figure among his Indonesian counterparts during the thirties and forties – 'A man who knew too much'. Lin Hua writes about the Chinese occupation – on behalf of the victorious Allied armies – of Northern Vietnam in 1945-1946, while Oscar Salemink analyses the tragic lot of the Montagnards, ethnic minorities in the strategic highland of Vietnam, who were courted by the French as well as by the communist Viet Minh. Karl Hack argues convincingly that local forces determined the outcome of Malayan decolonization, rather than the efficaciousness of British designs, *inter alia* also introducing some new accents concerning the Malayan Emergency or Civil War. An interesting point of view is developed by Jan Aart Scholte who stresses the international dimension in the construction of Indonesian nationality, which by analogy would also hold true for other countries in the region. It is a refreshing reversal of the way in which colonialism is generally looked upon, but on the other side of the coin probably not as new or original as suggested. As a whole the volume is, thus, a diverse, inspiring collection, that unfortunately is far too highly priced.

---