Between People and Statistics

Essays on Modern Indonesian History

Presented to P. Creutzberg



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Coverphoto: The 'Centraal Kantoor voor de Statistiek' (Central Statistical Office) and its European management staff. Batavia, 1935. 2<sup>nd</sup> From the right: P. Creutzberg at the age of 31.

# Between People and Statistics Essays on Modern Indonesian History

## Presented to P. Creutzberg

Editorial Committee

Francien van Anrooij Dirk H.A. Kolff Jan T.M. van Laanen Gerard J. Telkamp This publication was made possible by grants from the *Prins Bernhard Fonds* and the *Royal Tropical Institute*, Amsterdam

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#### Preface/7

#### Introduction

 Piet Creutzberg: from ethical economics to economic history Ivo Schöffer/11

#### Early outside influences

- De oudste Indonesische maiscultuur Jouke S. Wigboldus/19
- Trojan horse of lead: the picis in early 17th century Java Leonard Blussé/33
- The ritual lancing of Durga's Buffalo in Surakarta and the offering in the Krendowahono forest of its blood
   Stephen C. Headley/49

#### Economic trends and the interwar years

- Het vervoer via de spoorlijn Semarang-Vorstenlanden als welvaartsindicator voor de bevolking in Java's Vorstenlanden (1874-1883)
   Irawan/59
- The economic structure of an outpost in the outer islands in the Indonesian archipelago: Portuguese Timor 1850-1975

  Gerard J. Telkamp/71
- De ontwikkeling van Semarang als koloniale uitvoerhaven van Midden-Java sinds 1900 en zijn tegenwoordige betekenis Theo Stevens/91
- De copra-olieindustrie in Nederlands-Indië gedurende en kort na de Eerste Wereldoorlog (1914-1921)
   Robert N.J. Kamerling/101
- Crisis en financieel beleid in Nederlandsch-Indië (1920-1925) Francien van Anrooij/119
- Het bestedingspakket van de 'inheemse' bevolking op Java (1921-1939) Jan T.M. van Laanen/133
- A note on the history of the textile industry in West Sumatra Akira Oki/147
- De depreciatie van de Nederlandsch-Indische gulden in 1936
   Willem L. Korthals Altes/157

#### Colonial administration and its reactions

- De kontroleur G.K. Baron van Hogendorp (1844-1879): een enthousiast statisticus
  - Dirk H. A. Kolff/175
- Association in theory and practice: the composition of the regency council (ca. 1910-1920)
  - Elsbeth Locher-Scholten/207

- Cane-burning in the Pasuruan area: an expression of social discontent Robert E. Elson/219
- The Bengkalis hunger riots of 1935
   William J. O'Malley/235
- The collapse of Java's colonial sugar system and the breakdown of independent Indonesia's economy

  Alec Gordon/251
- Een wissel op de toekomst: de rede van Koningin Wilhelmina van 6/7 december 1942
   Cees Fasseur/267

### Perspectives in historiography

- De plaats van de biografie in de koloniale geschiedenis. Van der Wijck bijvoorbeeld . . .
  - Jur van Goor/283
- 'Changing Economy' en Bataviaasch Genootschap: de 40-jarige voorgeschiedenis van een publicatie Jaap Erkelens/291
- The study of economic history in Indonesia Thee Kian Wie/303

Notes on the contributors/313

Perhaps Piet Creutzberg is and essentially always has been an artisan and an admirer of the best in craftmanship. The emphasis on the practical side of things seems to pervade whatever he undertook during half a century. Anyway, it is as a trader of the historical craft - wielding a Chinese abacus or an electronic computing device that, from about 1965 onwards, an increasing number of younger students of Indonesian social, economic and political history have met him in the depot of the 20th century colonial archives in The Hague or at the Royal Tropical Institute in Amsterdam. Of the scores of Dutch, Indonesian, British, Scandinavian, German, American, Australian and Japanese historians he inspired and advised some were writing a master's thesis, others had already made part of their academic career in Indonesian history or related topics, but most of them were in the critical phases of collecting published or archival materials with a view to their incorporation in doctoral dissertations. Creutzberg initiated them into the hidden treasures of library and archival collections; they were given permission to peruse his typescripts of the source publication on 'Economic Policy in the Netherlands Indies' and of the statistical series for connoisseurs entitled 'Changing Economy in Indonesia', but, above all, they were enlightened on the mechanisms of Indonesian socio-economic systems during the late colonial period, on the ins and outs of colonial statistics and budgeting, and on such arcane subjects as Chinese contract law and the economics of the Indonesian fishing industry.

Despite Creutzberg's apparently privileged position as one who had played a part in the conduct of economic policy during the difficult years of the world depression of the 1930's and after, as one, therefore, who could argue on the basis of his own experience, these discussions were never one-sided and they often stretched beyond meals. A fair proportion of those with whom Creutzberg spent these long sessions did not remain in permanent contact with him. They worked the mass of material to which they had found access at least partially through the help of Creutzberg into theses and doctoral dissertations. Since the sixties, the body of literature on modern Indonesia has been growing at a fast rate and, after 1972, authors could include in their bibliographies Creutzberg's own published works as well.

Most people whose work consists mainly of extensive digging operations in libraries and archives necessarily lead an inconspicuous existence. Creutzberg at first shared in this fate. Considering the late stage in his life at which he got actively engaged in the study of modern Indonesian history, considering, moreover, the fact that he has never held a teaching job, a surprisingly large number of Dutch and non-Dutch historians became indebted to him for his advice and supervision during the course of their historical research. Those whose articles are printed in this volume are not alone in feeling lastingly indebted to this 'lonely entrepreneur'. His place has been central in the 'invisible college' of historians of modern Indonesia that preceded the - still rather informal - Dutch Studiegroep voor Niet-Westerse en Koloniale Geschiedenis (Study Group for Non-Western and Colonial History) set up

in 1974. This group in a way reflected the end to the trauma of decolonization and the new interest in the Dutch universities in the history of European expansion. Creutzberg often enlivened its meetings, as he did elsewhere, with his vigorous queries, drawing our attention to research work being done by others and pillorying narrow-minded individualism. Meantime, though far senior to all other members of the group, his attitude remained one of curiosity rather than that of a teacher. Many of the younger generation would probably not object to be dubbed Creutzberg's bibit (i.e. his seedlings). They have become so either directly through long and personal cooperation or indirectly through the exchange of the results of their research.

In the beginning of 1978, an editorial committee emerged from amongst this group of historians which started work on a felicitation volume to be presented to Creutzberg on the occasion of his 75th birthday on December 8, 1979. The response to the circular letter sent out by the committee was quick and most encouraging. The final result of this appeal, published in this volume, is a collection of twenty articles, thirteen by Dutch contributors and seven from authors living as far away as Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, Australia, Japan and the United States of America. Eleven publications are in Dutch, nine in English. The bilingual character of the book and the variety of the authors' nationality reflect the post-war internationalization of Indonesian studies.

When the editors asked for contributions for this Festschrift, they had in mind papers on the social, economic, cultural and political history of modern Indonesia. The division into four categories that shows on the table of contents is simply an arrangement post facto. The first three papers deal with the impact on the Indonesian archipelago of Islamic culture, Chinese trade and new economic crops as mediated by the European seapowers. The second category is concerned with economic trends emphasizing the interbellum period. No doubt these papers are closest to Creutzberg's own research interest. The third set of articles has in common an interest in colonial administration and its impact on Indonesian society; the authors seem to share to a degree a consciousness of the missed opportunities of Dutch rule. Fourthly, three contributors take up the issue of historiography - focussing on biography, historical statistics and the academic profession respectively. The title of this volume, Between people and statistics, is born from the intention to convey an idea of the wide range of subjects covered as well as of the slight emphasis on economic history.

The publication of this volume is the result of the cooperation of many institutions and individuals and we deem it appropriate to mention them as completely as possible.

Plans for this book would not have gone far without the aid of the institute where Creutzberg has been able to ensconce himself since he returned to the Netherlands, first in a little room near the cloakroom and later in his present spacious office. During this period, he proceeded from tolerated outsider who still dabbled in colonial documents to honorary affiliate of the Department of Social Research with a regular staff. That institute is the Royal Tropical Institute in Amsterdam. P.J. van Dooren, director of the Department of Social Research, and F. Deeleman, director general of the Institute, both involved in early discussions over our 'project', made the decision that the Festschrift could be published as an Institute's publication and guaranteed the allocation of the necessary funds for alleviating financial risks. A. van der Wal, head of the Central Library, agreed to make available

the publication facilities of his department. H.F. Kleibrink contributed the lay-out, A. Bijhouwer-Welling typed the texts on the composer, A.A. Duyverman did the proof-reading, H. van den Born assisted in secretarial work, and, finally, F. Pattipilohy translated Irawan's contribution from Indonesian into Dutch.

Outside the Royal Tropical Institute we thank R. Ross and G.D. Winius of the Centre for the History of European Expansion in Leiden for advisory work on English usage and M.Th. de Kock for re-typing several papers. We are also very much indebted to those who gave information on Creutzberg's life and thus assisted in finding material for Schöffer's introductory chapter. They are D. Creutzberg in Utrecht, F. Creutzberg in Den Helder, H. Dikkers in Zwolle, P.F. van Haastert in Doorn, W.H. van Helsdingen and J.E. van Hoogstraten in The Hague, E.P. Kuiper in Bergen, A. Oudt in Hilversum, J. Reuter in Bilthoven, A. Rijpperda Wierdsma in Nijmegen, and J. Tinbergen in The Hague.

We would have been at a loss without the capable work of M. van Doorn of the African Studies Centre in Leiden who translated Schöffer's introduction and took great care in revising English usage of various papers in this volume. We are very grateful to I. Schöffer, professor of Dutch history of the University of Leiden, who is a member of the editorial committee of the Changing Economy series and was willing to write the biographical introduction.

Finally we are greatly indebted to the *Prins Bernhard Fonds* in Amsterdam whose considerable subsidy made it possible to offer this book to students of Indonesian history at a reasonable price.

Our task as self-appointed editorial committee for this Festschrift has been a pleasant and occasionally even exciting one. We have attempted to present this book with a minimum of discrepancies in style and bibliographic detail. Yet we invoke the readers' clemency for any flaws that may remain.

The editors

Deep splits and sudden turns mark the life and work of Piet Creutzberg and, as with so many of his contemporaries, the Second World War was largely responsible. The war broke careers and shattered plans and expectations of a lifetime. People were scattered, driven away from countries where they had lived and from work they held dear, forced to flee societies in which they had felt safe and at home. Those who survived were lucky. Three times over Creutzberg had to start a new life, and he did so without undue complaint. Maybe he swallowed his sorrow at his great loss in the awareness that he remained nonetheless privileged because each time there were new opportunities to find satisfying work and there was an ever changing circle of sympathetic friends. Moreover, he had two sons, whom he could see growing up to live their own lives, and he was healthy and energetic enough to go on working, although unfortunately his health was not strong enough to withstand the Australian or tropical climate and later on he had to be very careful in this respect. But above all he was privileged in having the lasting companionship of his wife, who stood by him, and her recent death must have stricken him deeply.

Looking back now on Creutzberg's past and his career one is forced to the conclusion that perhaps those breaks and turns give special colour and lustre to his life and work, Without the war, Creutzberg would probably have had an honest career in the Netherlands East Indies administration and afterwards returned to Holland to settle in retirement. Yet it is difficult to imagine even then that Creutzberg would have spent his retirement in idle dignity; maybe something of his fighting spirit and tenacity might now be lacking, something too of his wisdom, still so seemingly naive, and a little of all that vitality and zest for work which radiate out to others. The war disorientated him and forced him time and again to set his own course, under his own steam, more than would otherwise have been the case. Before the war Creutzberg was a dedicated Netherlands Indies civil servant; after the war he worked wholeheartedly for the building of the young Indonesian Republic; subsequently he became a first-rate gardener and nurseryman in Australia; and finally an active scholar and teacher. It is this last phase in particular in Creutzberg's life which has occasioned the present Festschrift and biographical introduction. As a scholar, Creutzberg deserves special attention and as a scholar he is being paid this honour.

Piet Creutzberg was born on 8 December, 1904, the son of Karel Frederik Creutzberg and Helena Margrieta Rijk, in what was then Buitenzorg in the Netherlands East Indies. His father was a top civil servant in the government administration and would finish his career as Directeur van Onderwijs en Eeredienst (head of the Department of Education and Religion), a position he held from 1916 to 1922, and as a member and later on vice-president of the Raad van Indië (Council of the Netherlands East Indies), from 1923 to 1929. It is important to note in this respect that Creutzberg's father can be considered a warm supporter and staunch defender of the Ethical Course in Netherlands Indies politics, which left such a deep mark on

government policy during the first two decades of the century and which especially under governors-general Idenburg and Van Limburg Stirum appeared so influential. The interests of the indigenous population were central to 'ethical' thought and according to this view, the Dutch in the East Indies had the special task of 'raising' an Indonesian elite to take part in governing the country. Besides the more technical modernisations, which would be introduced throughout the pacified archipelago by various government services and enterprises, it was above all the extension and development of education which played an important role and which was the task par excellence of Creutzberg's father, 'Ethical' thought also meant a particular attitude and a different mentality, which entailed striving to have Indonesians treated by the Dutch on a basis of equality. Imbued with these ideas, K.F. Creutzberg wrote his Beschouwingen over de staatsrechtelijke toekomst van Nederlandsch-Indië (Observations on the constitutional future of the Netherlands East Indies) in 1933, during his retirement and shortly before his death. Much later his son was to find these Beschouwingen and make them available for publication. Written as they were in a period when a strong conservative patriotic wind was blowing in Holland and the Indies, they appear now to have been in many respects prophetic in nature and tremulously relevant<sup>1</sup>.

Piet Creutzberg grew up in this kind of 'ethical' family sphere characterised by humanity, liberality and an explicit openness towards Indonesians. Typical perhaps of his general attitude and his striving for real fellowship and cooperation among young intellectuals of Indonesian and Dutch origin was Piet's participation as a youth in the Boy Scouts movement in Batavia. In the early twenties he became patrol leader of the *Groene Troep* and some of 'his' scouts would later become leaders of modern Indonesia. In this way Piet Creutzberg belongs to the last generation of Netherlands East Indies administrators who lived in an 'ethical' ambiance not only so that a strange and immense country and an enormous population could be ruled with tact and caution by a handful of civil servants, but also because they were imbued with a strong respect for Indonesian culture. This very respect led them to approach Indonesians with an accommodating determination in carrying out what they saw as their task and duty - to lead and guide, as advisers pointing out the way to modernisation.

Creutzberg must have been spoonfed with the idea that Indonesia itself had the potential ultimately to stand on its own two feet, fully independent. As it turned out, he certainly did not welcome the violence which was apparently necessary and at the very least he must have been disappointed that so soon after the transfer of sovereignty he could no longer render assistance, but whatever he may have thought about the way in which suddenly, within the space of a few years, post-war decolonisation became a fact, his confidence in the good of 'the' Indonesian, almost in naive Rousseauistic sense, remained. In the seventies, when Dutch-Indonesian scientific cooperation on a basis of equality again became possible, Creutzberg was one of the first to welcome Indonesian scholars with open arms, and he began at once to see to their reception in Holland and their guidance in institutes and archives. Only considerations of health prevented him, undoubtedly to his regret, from revisiting Indonesia to attend historical congresses.

Having grown up in the ambiance of a Netherlands Indies civil servant's family it was natural that Creutzberg would follow in his father's footsteps and also choose a career in the Indies. He completed primary school and part of the H.B.S. (Hoogere Burger School = a high school where the emphasis was on subjects such as modern

languages, commerce and mathematics, which would be useful later on in finding a job) in the Netherlands East Indies and in 1922 came to Leiden, where he finished the H.B.S. He spent a year preparing for the state examination which those without a classical education required for entrance to university. From 1924 onwards he studied law in Leiden (final examination 3 May 1929). Creutzberg must have found the atmosphere in the Leiden of those days congenial. The university was still living in the tradition of humanitarian liberalism and the 'ethical' current was represented by such well-known professors as C. van Vollenhoven, C. Snouck Hurgronje, and H.T. Colenbrander. Among the lectures Creutzberg attended as a student were the courses in law given by H. Krabbe, E.M. Meijers and Van Vollenhoven. The Leiden days meant a whole lot more for Creutzberg. In Leiden he met Johanna Jacoba Cornelia Eerdmans, who was studying classical languages and who helped him prepare his state exam. They became engaged and were married in Leiden on 3 January, 1930, before the young couple left for the Indies in July of the same year.

Creutzberg was not returning to the Indies empty-handed. In early 1930 he had been appointed assistant at the Centraal Kantoor voor de Statistiek (CKS: Central Statistical Office) in Weltevreden and in preparation for his new position he had worked for several months in the Central Bureau of Statistics in the Hague, to which J. Tinbergen was attached since 1929. He stayed with the CKS until his promotion in 1937 to graduate civil servant in the Department of Economic Affairs in Batavia, from 1940 onwards in the grade of senior civil servant. For an industrious and enthusiastic man such as Creutzberg this early contact with economic policy must have been a stroke of good luck. The Netherlands East Indies administration had realised much earlier than the government in Holland that a carefully considered official economic policy, based on theoretical insight and empiricism, was essential. The decline in the welfare of the indigenous population had long been a source of anxiety and it was precisely in the Indies that the economic crisis was to hit hard. In the Indies civil servants were accustomed to calling the tune and taking the lead, more so than in the mother country, and officials such as E.P. Wellenstein, J. van Gelderen, and H.J. van Mook had the opportunity of deliberately and thoroughly planning and coordinating their policies, on the grounds also of modern economic theories and insight. It is as if Creutzberg, through his contact with and participation in this circle, became charged with an energy and vision which he would never again lose.

Indeed the interesting thing about the economic policy in the Netherlands East Indies before the war was that here, as it were, an experimental garden was being cultivated for an économie dirigée in a developing country long before concepts such as 'development strategy' or 'development aid' became commonplace. It is to Creutzberg's credit that later on in his major publication of documentary sources he would be able to provide so much information about this period, revealing all its ins and outs as it were. At the time he had, it is true, started off in a subordinate position, but in the small world of department and office he nonetheless came into contact with and was inspired by such researchers and policymakers as J. van Gelderen, J.J. Ochse, and W.M.F. Mansvelt. When Creutzberg took up his appointment at the Office for Statistics, the preparations and arrangements for the 1930 Netherlands East Indies Census had already been completed, but he was able to help work out and publish the results. The first of his own publications, which appeared in 1931, dealt with the Census, which was unique in the history of the Indies<sup>2</sup>. Practically all of Creutzberg's publications would follow the same economic and

statistical bent - both the early ones which appeared in his pre-war period as official<sup>3</sup>, as well as those of later years, after he had once again settled for good in Holland.

In this respect Creutzberg's meeting with the economic historian Mansvelt must have been of exceptional importance for him. Mansvelt never was an 'ethicus' but that did not prevent Creutzberg from admiring and greatly appreciating his ideas and initiatives and his ability as an economic historian. Perhaps it was Mansvelt who made a historian of Creutzberg, or at least gave him his conviction that real economic insight into the present and the future can be gained only by examining experiences from the past over a long period of time, since only then can economic cycles and developments be fully fathomed. In any case, Creutzberg certainly never forgot Mansvelt's historical statistical tables on the Netherlands East Indies in the nineteenth and twentieth century, which he had begun publishing at the end of the thirties in the Mededeelingen van het Centraal Kantoor voor de Statistiek (= CKS Mededeelingen; Communications of the Central Statistical Office) and which, at the time, no one as yet found particularly spectacular. At the time of the Japanese invasion, nine such volumes had been published as a result of Mansvelt's diligent work and with the help of 'his' Office. Creutzberg had Mansvelt's important initiative in mind when he started his own series of 'Changing Economy in Indonesia' and he explicitly intended this to be a thoroughly revised edition of Mansvelt's publications. And Mansvelt was given due credit in these new editions though as the volumes appear, one can of course see that a great deal more work has had to be done than that Mansvelt found time for, in addition to completely new calculations which had not occurred to him4.

The surprise attack on the Netherlands East Indies brought adversity for the Dutch in the colony. Creutzberg, his wife and their two sons also disappeared into camps. Suffice it here to say that the Creutzberg family survived. The first years after the war were difficult for the Creutzbergs personally as well as for Creutzberg's own career in the administration. Creutzberg himself stayed in Indonesia and remained on the staff of the Economic Department, also after the transfer of sovereignty. Working as adviser to the Department of Economic Affairs, he prepared, among other things, several monetary reforms. But this post-war phase lasted only briefly. The rapidly mounting tensions between Holland and Indonesia in the aftermath of the transfer of sovereignty made a long stay for those Dutch still remaining behind in Indonesia extremely difficult. Creutzberg too was forced prematurely to relinquish his task at the end of 1951 and to begin a new life as emigrant in Australasia. Initially he hoped to earn a living in Australia or New Zealand as a landscape gardener. It became clear to him, however, that there was little employment in this field and so he decided to become a nurseryman. Creutzberg has always been a keen gardener and in the Netherlands East Indies he had made and planted his own garden from scratch each time he moved house. For friends and acquaintances he was a walking reference book on gardening matters. Now it was to become his profession. He bought a house and land in Boronia, a suburb of Melbourne, and his wife, who had gone to Holland on leave, joined him. For the time being Creutzberg hired himself out as general hand in an Australian nursery so he could learn how to grow alpines and perennials under Australian soil and climatic conditions, which were so different from those of his Indonesian experience. Only in his spare time could he clear his own land - heavy work in forbidding country - and terrace a sloping area suitable for the nursery. It's so easy

in the telling! But the Australian environment is not always kind to the independent newcomer and only too quickly sees him as an intruder and rival. Creutzberg had to sweat blood and tears, but in due course he became not only an expert gardener but also an alert dealer and supplier. He succeeded in making his business prosper, sales agents were found and prospectuses were printed with detailed descriptions of the many kinds of alpines and perennials and their prices. Creutzberg's plants became widely reputed<sup>5</sup>. After almost fifteen years, however, there was a new setback. Creutzberg's health could no longer stand up to the heavy work and the Australian climate. In 1965 Creutzberg and his wife had to leave for Holland where he settled as a pensioner in Maarn and in connection with his health took things easy.

However, Creutzberg interpreted 'taking it easy' differently than most pensioners. He was not looking for real rest. Now that heavy physical labour was out of the question he could settle down to research work, thereby picking up the thread which he had dropped on his departure from Indonesia. This time he worked on his own, under his own steam and without any direct contact or support from others, apparently only as a way of passing time but in reality as a new life fulfilment. His old interest in economics, his work in statistics, and his memory of what Mansvelt had at the time begun in the CKS-Mededeelingen, led him to what he himself came to call amateur history and economic hobbyism. Amateur in the strict sense of inexperienced and untrained he was of course not, hobbyist he would always be. Thanks to connections he was able to get a little cubbyhole-cum-niche in the Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen (Royal Tropical Institute) in Amsterdam, and from then on, Creutzberg travelled regularly from Maarn to Amsterdam to work in the Institute, close to the library which was so important for his research. So he began what initially seemed an independent and solitary study, with the intention of revising and republishing Mansvelt's economic historical statistics on the Netherlands East Indies in the nineteenth and twentieth century.

Before long this plan was crossed, although a first publication of Creutzberg's own work did appear in 19696. One of Creutzberg's acquaintances and colleagues from the former Netherlands East Indies, I.J. Brugmans, asked him to compile a selection of documentary sources on 'economic policy in the Netherlands Indies', one of the publications of sources being planned by the Commissie voor bronnenpublicatie betreffende de geschiedenis van Nederlandsch-Indië 1900-1942 (Committee for Netherlands East Indies Historical Sources 1900-1942). S.L. van der Wal was charged with the other volumes in the series, but for this more specialist economic work the Committee thought it wise to seek an expert. This request, which Creutzberg accepted in early 1969, probably gave him the self-confidence to crawl out of his home-spun cocoon of research and also to emerge in the circle of other scholars. The undersigned, at any rate, remembers seeing him then for the first time at meetings and being immediately impressed by his bubbling enthusiasm and his convictions, based on experience and knowledge. Maybe there was more in common, for we both thought that a fresh historical analysis of the former Netherlands Indies was extremely important, and we were both 'remigrants' from Australia, without that rancour against the former host country which is so common. Creutzberg's enthusiasm was catching, his perseverance and zest for work were impressive, and there was something moving about his desire to make contacts and especially to find a hearing in historical circles, whose quality and expertise he tended to overestimate. Now too that a lot of archival work took him out of his

little room in the Institute, he soon came into contact with others working in 'his' field, especially young research workers, whom he was happy to help. Just as before in the Indies on matters of garden layout and growing plants, he became an oracle for many whom he taught the ropes of the Colonial Archives or the Institute library, with great patience and continued keen interest. He also took an active part in congresses and meetings<sup>7</sup>.

By no means, however, did Creutzberg neglect the task he had undertaken and from August 1969 until early in 1974 he worked on his source book. Het ekonomisch beleid in Nederlandsch-Indië (Economic Policy in the Netherlands East Indies), which was published between 1972 and 1975 in four large volumes<sup>8</sup>. While it was still in the press, he went through with his plans for the publication of his 'Selection of Statistical Source Material from the early 19th Century up to 1940', which would appear in separate volumes under the general title of 'Changing Economy in Indonesia'. To this end he managed to get together an editorial committee and, in cooperation with this committee and supported by the board of directors of the Royal Tropical Institute and the Netherlands Organization for the Advancement of Pure Research (ZWO), he succeeded in getting the series started. Since 1975, four volumes have appeared, while two others are in the press<sup>9</sup>. The tempo in which these publications were completed is impressive, and an enormous amount of information has been made available for research. But above all the quality of this work commands respect. Of course, nothing is ever perfect, so criticisms and discussion are always possible. The selection of documents for inclusion in the publication of documentary sources turned out a bit wide, although in this case a little too much is always better than too little, while theoretical economic details in Creutzberg's introductions to the volumes of 'Changing Economy' do not always seem wholly tenable, which of course does not detract from the importance of the statistical material itself. And this does not alter the fact that Creutzberg's tenacious spadework provides sound and carefully collected raw materials for the economic history of Indonesia in the nineteenth and twentieth century. It will be the basis for much historical writing and research, and will form the groundwork for deeper insight into the problems of developing areas in general.

For Creutzberg is not motivated by pure love of information alone, though his thirst for knowledge is great, nor is he moved solely by his love and esteem for Indonesia, and his grateful appreciation of what he learnt from others while he was a civil servant in the Netherlands East Indies, though he has always remained aware of all this. Through his series Creutzberg also wants to provide material for the benefit of the future of South East Asia in particular and the Third World in general. In this respect he has remained the 'ethical' Creutzberg of his youth and career. It was and is his deep conviction that greater knowledge of long-term economic developments, measured in terms of decades and preferably reaching back centuries to the past, is the real school in which the alpines and perennials of any present and future development policy can grow and flourish. To that end he is clearing the ground, grubbing out stones and stumps, laying out the terraces of his volumes and serial publications, and providing the prospectuses of indexes and registers in which everything can be looked up and consulted in orderly fashion. So it is in fact possible to strike cuttings, and to deliver sprigs and shoots. And the buyers will keep on coming, thanks to the work of Creutzberg, the 'ethical' nurseryman.

Ivo Schöffer