



Historisch Nieuwsblad
(a Dutch historical magazine)

Johannes Benedictus van Heutsz,
founder of Indonesia

Comment on an article in the magazine Historisch Nieuwsblad (Historical Newspaper) called "Geweldadig militair, menselijk bestuurder (violent soldier, human governor), Jo van Heutsz 1851 - 1924" by Maurice Blessing, April 2006. (Our comment is protected by pdf.)

A short biography of Van Heutsz by
drs (msc) D. Teeuwen



P.1 Aceh 1878 P.2 governor-general >
Private collection Dirk Teeuwen

Van Heutsz was born February 3rd 1851 in Coevorden, near the German border, in The Netherlands. His father was a professional military officer. At the age of sixteen Van Heutsz joined the army. In 1873, the year of the outbreak of the war between the Dutch and the Sultanate of Aceh, he asked for a transfer to the colonial Dutch East-Indian Army.

The Aceh War war didn't go off smoothly for the Dutch. The Acehnese used their military guerrilla methods successfully. Dutch generals were biting off more than they could chew. Van Heutsz -he climbed the military ranks from bottom to top- changed the Dutch tactics.

- a. He used scientific knowledge about Islam.
- b. He organized a very efficient contra-guerrilla.
- c. He offered the Acehnese a liberal colonial government based on respect to Acehnese adat (common law).

Peace was settled officially in 1903 (!). But, incidentally, fighting continued.

Even nowadays the Acehnese are the cause of serious headaches with Indonesian officials. Their fighting for independence has a legal ground, because the Dutch declared war to the independent Sultanate of Aceh in 1873. Because of that the transfer of Aceh to the Indonesians, by the Dutch in 1949, was an act of doubtful kind.

P.3 Aceh, the battle of Batu Iliq in 1901, painting by Hoynck van Papendrecht

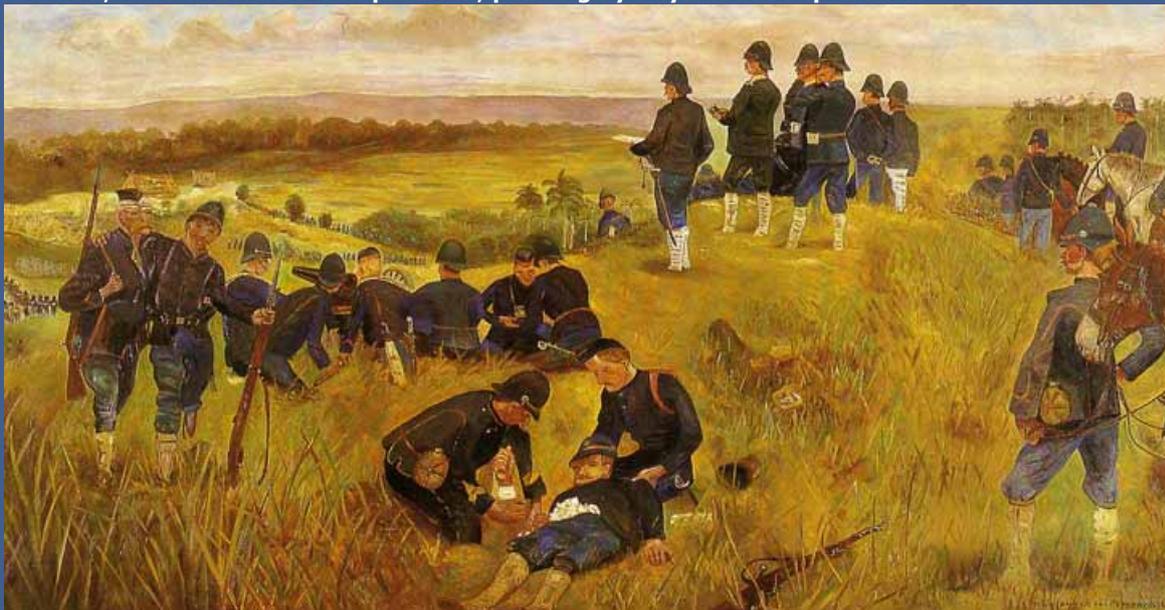
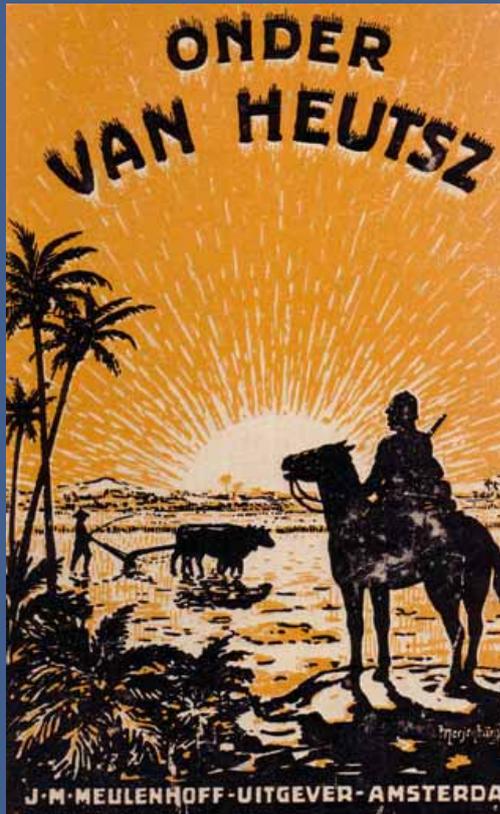


Photo bought at an antiques fair. I (D.T.) don't know the source.



In 1905 the Dutch Queen Wilhelmina appointed Van Heutsz to be governor-general of The Dutch East-Indies. Van Heutsz carried out ethical politics to realize welfare for the benefit of the native population. His government meant a crucial turning-point.

- a. He advocated to convert raw materials, found in the archipel, in the Dutch East-Indies itself. For example the refining of oil (found in Aceh) near the winning location in Aceh.
- b. He supported the foundation of organizations with the aim to reevaluate the culture of Java. For example the support of the Budi Utomo Foundation and the magazine Bintang Hindia.
- c. He stimulated school-education on behalf of natives. For example the organization of so-called desa-schools.
- d. He stimulated participation of natives in local and provincial governing bodies.

Nevertheless Van Heutsz was a man of law and order. He was not to be trifled with. Revolutionary natives as well as conservative Dutch colonials were afraid of him. He was frank and he larded his comments with a lot of curses. Van Heutsz was a married man and a father of six children. That did not alter the fact that Van Heutz was very interested in beautiful women. He had some passionate affairs.

P.4 Serving faithfully Van Heutsz, a boy's book from 1920 (private collection Dirk Teeuwen)

During his government Van Heutsz established the boundaries of Indonesia from Sabang, North Sumatra as far as Merauke, New Guinea. In this respect Indonesians owe him many thanks.

In Holland political leftist simpletons and opportunists saletjonkers, without any knowledge about the matter, took the dubious courage to deface historical monuments dedicated to the memory of this great Dutchman. It is unthinkable that anything of this kind could be done in the U.K., the U.S. or France.

Maurice Blessing in Historisch Nieuwsblad

Let's have a look at the magazine-article by Maurice Blessing. Blessing tells us about the youth of Van Heutsz, his character and military career. He treats of the relation between Van Heutsz, the conqueror of Aceh, and the Dutch (Islam-)scientist Snouck Hurgronje as well as the political relation between Van Heutsz and the tough military commander and governor of Aceh Van Daalen.

Useful is Blessing's contribution to a well-balanced image of Van Heutsz: the violent, but excellent, military man and the governor-general changing a lot of things in the colony for the benefit of the Indonesians.



P.4 Van Heutsz Monument at Coevorden, Holland before demolition in 1975 (private collection Dirk Teeuwen)

Maybe Maurice Blessing made the first step to stop the revilement of governor-general Van Heutsz.

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