

“Het zal echt geen vacantiereisje zijn”

Scientific expeditions to Dutch New Guinea and the articulation of ‘race’ in
the years 1935-1960



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Chapter One

Introducing Science and Empire

“Een expeditie moet beheerst worden door het doel, wetenschap te bedrijven.”¹

This sentence was written in 1954 by the governor of Dutch New Guinea, Jan van Baal, about the upcoming scientific expedition. He emphasized the fact that an expedition should be guided by the overall goal of practicing science. This shows that this was not self-evident. The fact that the governor had an opinion about a scientific expedition, shows that perhaps other interests than science were at stake. And what kind of science should be practiced during an expedition to the Dutch colony? In the story that follows we will unravel this curious citation.

Introduction

In 1939 a group of Dutch natural scientists set out to look for three lakes in the thick jungle of Dutch New Guinea. The discovery of the Wisselmeren (Wissel lakes) gave a certain urgency to reach this area. Twenty years later, in 1959, the same curiosity initiated a new jungle expedition. An ambitious group of scientists went to the unknown Sterrengebergte (Star Mountains).² Here the only snow-covered mountain tops of the tropics were to be found. The purpose of these late-colonial expeditions was to fill in the ‘white spots’ on the map of the Dutch colonial world in addition to gaining more knowledge about the land and the people. On the borders of the Dutch colony scientists encountered people who were significantly different from themselves. In this paper we will look at the knowledge that was produced by the scientists who participated in this venture about the Papuans. ‘Race’ was used as the methodological framework to analyse exotic people. The scientists came from different disciplines: Zoology, botany, geology, anthropology and many other sub-disciplines were well represented. From all those sciences anthropology (and ethnography) were most concerned with the study of people. The scientists of the expedition were connected to the Dutch Royal Geographic Society (*Koninklijk Aardrijkskundig Genootschap* or KNAG) which organized these enterprises.

During these colonial expeditions existing knowledge about the people of New Guinea was used and new knowledge was constructed. What makes these expeditions interesting, is the fact that they have not been researched in depth.³ Moreover their location in time and space makes them interesting case-studies. (Scientific) expeditions to the interior of Dutch

¹ Translation: “An expedition should be guided by the overall goal, to practice science.” From: Utrechts Archief, Archief van het Koninklijk Nederlands Aardrijkskundig Genootschap 1873-1967, entry 74, inv.no. 181, ‘Letter Van Baal to Eggink, 14-04-1954’.

² The Dutch and English names of the expeditions will be used interchangeably.

³ Overviews of the history of KNAG expeditions: A. Wentholt (ed.), *In kaart gebracht met kapmes en kompas. Met het Koninklijk Nederlands Aardrijkskundig Genootschap op expeditie tussen 1873 en 1960* (Heerlen/Utrecht 2003); P. van den Brink, *Dienstbare kaarten: een cartografische geschiedenis van het Koninklijk Aardrijkskundig Genootschap en het Tijdschrift, 1873-1966* (Houten 2010).

New Guinea were regularly organized in the period 1900-1960 and were intensified in the second half of the 1930s.⁴ Their late location in time, with the Second World War in between, makes our case studies interesting gateways to investigate race thinking in science.⁵ New Guinea itself has provided anthropologists with an inexhaustible supply of research material since the early twentieth century because of its diverse population. Dutch New Guinea was a colony on the edges of the late-colonial Dutch empire with a distinct nature and population. The lives of the local population were dramatically altered by this fast pace of discovery. New Guinea was a 'place' where the Dutch could project their fears and desires upon – a place where Dutch colonialism could get a fresh start after the war. Therefore this highly dynamic place on the borders of the Dutch Empire, almost a 'modern' frontier, is an interesting case for further analysis.

Another reason to take on these expeditions is because they can provide gateways to study larger themes as colonialism, the history of anthropology, the idea of 'race' in science, and Dutch 'Orientalism'. The researcher looking at 'race' in a colonial setting cannot get past Edward Said's 'Orientalism' (1978).⁶ In this influential book Said explained how images of the Arab 'other', the 'oriental', were constructed by Western authors. This oriental discourse was very powerful and enduring and could not be separated from colonialism or imperialism as a historical reality. The construction of the imagined 'other' also reflected back on the construction of the European 'self'. By essentializing this binary opposition the 'other' was pushed into a lesser position of power vis-à-vis the European.

The expeditions represent larger themes but are also very localized. The scientific enterprises were located in a colonial time and place. They elicit questions about the relation of science and empire on a local level: To what extent were science and empire entangled in Dutch New Guinea during the scientific expeditions of 1939 and 1959 and what kind of knowledge about 'race' was produced by these connections? Guided by this question we will reconstruct this forgotten episode in Dutch colonial history.

Historiography

Since the 1960s and 1970s an academic debate has developed about this connection between science and empire. Objective academic knowledge was no longer self-evident. Post-colonial critiques and the near completion of the global decolonization process demanded critical reflection. What role had global colonial relations played in the making of scientific knowledge?

Said in 'Orientalism' pointed out the (past) interconnectedness of culture, science and politics. The Western academy was no less influenced by an oriental mindset than for example popular opinion or travel literature. The discourse of Orientalism pervaded the

⁴ See Appendix I for an overview of the most important scientific expeditions to Dutch New Guinea in the twentieth century.

⁵ Therefore an expedition like the first KNAG expedition of 1904-1905 is not included in this story. See: C. van Brien, *Een kostbare picknick? De gevolgen van de Nieuw Guinea expeditie (1904-1905) van het Koninklijk Nederlands Aardrijkskundig Genootschap voor de rol van het Genootschap in het Nederlandse imperialisme* (unpublished MA thesis Leiden University, 2003).

⁶ E.W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York 1978).

academy and was at the same time made there.⁷ Oriental ideas about the ‘other’ spread to all kinds of sciences, not only the sciences of men like anthropology.⁸ Oriental thinking about race and the ‘other’ was not always manifest, but often a latent discourse.⁹ Especially the latter had a longevity beyond colonial times.

There have been many critiques of ‘Orientalism’ since its publication. One of the main critiques was about Said’s own presentation of the ‘other’ or the ‘oriental’. In his line of argument the ‘oriental’ was not a real entity but a construction, entirely made by Western discourse. This representation of the ‘other’ can become problematic because it reproduces the dichotomy posed by the oriental scholars in the past. One of Said’s merits was that he set in motion post-colonial critiques on contemporary knowledge by showing how this was constructed by the interaction of science and empire in the past.¹⁰ The other major critique of *Orientalism* was its lack of time and space specificity. Said was originally talking about the construction of the Arab in the Western mind, but his hypothesis is valuable because it provides tools to analyse new case studies.

In Said’s view the (scientific) construction of ‘other’ was completely entangled with imperialism. Subsequent scholarship has pointed out the dialogic nature of the making of knowledge in colonial or imperial settings. Post-colonialism investigated the imperial legacy and its discursive power on cultures and societies (especially post-colonial states). This school pointed out the ambivalence in colonial discourse. On the one hand there was a manifest and conscious representation of the ‘other’. On the other hand there always was an irrational element rooted in desire and fantasy. This school agrees too that the imperial imaginary had long-term consequences.¹¹

A sub-discipline of post-colonial studies was the Subaltern Studies group. This school aimed to research groups who had traditionally been muted by history, a concept adopted from Antonio Gramsci.¹² The group tried to discover the voice of the disempowered in South Asian History, especially in the context of empire. New methodologies have resulted in interesting insights into the history of empire and the possibility of counter-knowledge to a hegemonic discourse. Still post-colonial studies and Subaltern Studies made a dichotomy between the West and the rest (implicitly) a starting point for their research.

The book ‘Tensions of Empire’ (1997) and the New Imperial History movement (since the 1990s) have criticized the polarization in previous literature. ‘Tensions of Empire’ by Frederick Cooper and Ann Stoler analysed the contradicting claims of Europe that colonialism brought to the surface.¹³ On the one hand colonialism brought to the forefront the universalizing claims of bourgeois culture and imperial modernity. On the other hand the

⁷ R. Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (London 1995) 160.

⁸ Young, *Colonial Desire* 93.

⁹ Said, *Orientalism* 206.

¹⁰ C.A. Breckenridge and P. van der Veer (eds.), *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament: Perspectives on South Asia* (Philadelphia 1993) 1-2.

¹¹ Young, *Colonial Desire* 161.

¹² B. Ashcroft, G. Griffiths and H. Tiffin, *Post-Colonial Studies. The Key Concepts* (New York 2007) 198-201.

¹³ F. Cooper and A.L. Stoler (eds.), *Tensions of Empire. Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley 1997).

articulation of difference, the politics of inclusion and exclusion by inscribing the categories of sex, class and race upon the rulers and the ruled were daily realities in European empires. Ambivalence is again the key word.

'Tensions of Empire' made two methodological innovations.¹⁴ First Cooper and Stoler connected what happened in the metropole to encounters on the ground in the colonies. A question like 'How did race discourse reverberate between metropole and colony, and how does it influence the world even today?' is very relevant for our case studies. Second the authors analysed the colonizer and the colonized in one framework. This is a shift away from for example Subaltern Studies, which focused on ways to make the colonized speak. Stoler and Cooper rather preferred to ask questions like: What mechanisms were used to divide colonizer from colonized? In addition contrary to other critical works, 'Tensions of Empire' gave serious attention to the colonizer.

The body of literature from the New Imperial History school took this interconnectedness one step further. New Imperial History tried to trace networks of persons, ideas and objects throughout imperial spaces.¹⁵ New Imperial History wanted to abandon dichotomies like centre-periphery, colonizer-colonized. It looked at the interaction between culture and empire. With this literature in mind, the expeditions will be analysed by looking at the interaction between science and empire and the ambivalence this brought in the making of knowledge.

Oriental Science

-Race

The making of knowledge about the 'other' was essentially making knowledge about 'race' in this story. This way of viewing humanity presumed a classification in distinct types based on different factors.¹⁶ It connected mental and physical characteristics to each other and assumed a hierarchy or a binary opposition. This framework of thinking about the 'other' was still dominant in the period we are looking at. Moreover the term did not only have scientific dimensions. Scientific research on the races of New Guinea, was firmly grounded in the daily realities of the colony. It was a divided society: The lines between Dutch, Indonesian and Papuan were running through the colonial world.

The dynamic of 'race' in the Netherlands Indies is often underscored in Dutch historiography. Recently Susie Protschky illustrated this in a review article for *Bijdragen tot Taal- Land- en Volkenkunde*.¹⁷ In this article she discussed Bosma and Raben's work, which

¹⁴ Cooper and Stoler (eds.), *Tensions of Empire* 1.

¹⁵ Overviews: K. Wilson (ed.), *A New Imperial History; Culture, Identity and Modernity in Britain and the Empire 1660-1840* (Cambridge 2004); S. Howe (ed.), *New Imperial Histories Reader* (London 2010).

¹⁶ Ashcroft a.o., *Post-Colonial Studies* 180.

¹⁷ S. Protschky, 'Race, Class and Gender. Debates over the character of social hierarchies in the Netherlands Indies, circa 1600-1942', *Bijdragen tot de Taal -, Land en Volkenkunde* 167 (2011) 543-556; cited works: J. Taylor, *The Social World of Batavia. European and Eurasian in Dutch Asia* (Madison 1983); A.L. Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power. Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley 2010); U. Bosma and R. Raben, *Being 'Dutch' in the Indies. A History of Creolisation and Empire, 1500-1920* (Singapore 2008).

essentially gives primacy to 'class', Stoler's work which is all about 'race' and Taylor's work which draws attention to 'gender'. The first two are the most controversial, as most scholars would probably agree by now that gender gives an important perspective. The debate about race and class is very illustrative for the scholarly background, archival expertise and theoretical immersion of the two schools. Dutch scholars still seem to find it difficult to debate if 'race' was just as important in the Netherlands Indies as it was in other European empires. 'Race' is often approached from a socio-economic perspective but more important it also had a strong imaginative (Orientalist) and a scientific (or pseudo-scientific) connotation. Most scholarship also stays in the centre of the colony, Java and Sumatra, and rarely takes the colonial imagination of 'race' to the edges of empire. In addition recent scholarship has demonstrated that race was a topic under heated discussion in the Netherlands in the 1930s, only becoming controversial in the 1940s.¹⁸ The dynamic of 'race' at the borders of the Dutch empire or in Dutch science has not been researched in depth. Ineke Mok used the physical anthropologist Hendrik Bijlmer as an example of the dominant racial discourse that reverberated between colony and metropole in the mid-twentieth century.¹⁹ Later on we will encounter him again. A book on race in colonial science in Dutch New Guinea has not been written yet.

-Dutch Orientalism.

Said is an important starting point for this story. But is there such a thing as Dutch Orientalism? Oriental scholars like P.J. Veth and Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje have been researched in depth. However the late exponents of Oriental science or the Dutch view on New Guinea and the Papuans have not been a popular topic of research.

There is one example of a book that gives serious attention to Dutch Orientalism and can be helpful for this case study. Marieke Bloembergen in 'Colonial Spectacles' analysed the Dutch entries at the world exhibitions in the light of the Dutch Empire.²⁰ Although the image of 'other' was always present according to Bloembergen it never came out of a single narrative in the period 1880-1931. Different historical circumstances demanded other approaches to the challenges of administration and civilization.

Colonial administration looked very different on New Guinea than it did on for example Java. Empires depended on strategies of difference.²¹ The representation of 'other' was never coherent and changed through time. As we will see later on the image of the Papuan shifted significantly between primitive (in the 1930s) to children in need of guidance

¹⁸ I. Mok, *In de ban van het ras. Aardrijkskunde tussen wetenschap en samenleving 1876-1992* (Amsterdam 1999) 289; B. Henkes, *Uit liefde voor het volk. Volkskundigen op zoek naar de Nederlandse ideniteit, 1918-1948* (Amsterdam 2005); M. Eickhoff, B. Henkes and F. van Vree (eds.), *Volkseigen. Ras, cultuur en wetenschap in Nederland 1900-1950* (Zutphen 2001).

¹⁹ Mok, *In de ban* 279.

²⁰ M. Bloembergen, *Colonial Spectacles. The Netherlands and the Dutch East Indies at the World Exhibitions 1880-1931* (Singapore 2006).

²¹ J. Burbank and F. Cooper, *Empires in World History. Power and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton 2010) 11-13.

and development (1950s). This concurs with the politics in that period: Exploration in the 1930s and consolidation in the 1950s.

-Anthropology in Dutch New Guinea

Race and Orientalism become most manifest in the science of anthropology as it was a science focused on people. This story therefore will be mostly about the sciences of men around the expeditions. Anthropology in the Netherlands developed out of a distinct tradition of its own. Part of this singularity is due to the role the colonies played in the making of science in the Netherlands. Dutch scholarly interest in the 'other' and the outer world had a strong regional focus on Indonesia even before the nineteenth century.²²

After the independence of Indonesia Dutch anthropology shifted its field of interest to New Guinea. A distinct Dutch research tradition was still lacking in this area. The war had also created a generation gap: Older colonial officials with a keen interest in ethnography were now operating in the same spaces as young academic specialists.²³ Young scientists came from a different background than their older peers. The anthropological tradition here was just starting out.

The Population Office (Kantoor voor Bevolkingszaken 1951) in the capital Hollandia initiated and facilitated much research on the local population. The Population Office had two goals: gaining more knowledge about the population for better governance and changing the population for their best interest.²⁴ Therefore this kind of research always focused on specific aspects of culture. It often lacked a long term vision and in depth analysis.²⁵ Colonial governance demanded many exploratory studies in new areas.

In Dutch New Guinea anthropological fieldwork was carried out by colonial officials, academics and missionaries as described by Sjoerd Jaarsma.²⁶ Building on Asad's 'Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter'(1972)²⁷, he set out to discover whether colonial anthropological knowledge can still be useful. Jaarsma does this by looking at the precise circumstances in which knowledge about the 'other' was formed in colonial New Guinea. The colony was approached as a local knowledge network, a social process controlled by individuals.²⁸ Researchers employed by the government often had practical goals and their research was used to *change* the Papuan population.²⁹ Academic researchers also moved in

²² H.F. Vermeulen and J. Kommers, 'Introduction: Histories of Anthropology in The Netherlands', in: H.F. Vermeulen and J. Kommers (eds.), *Tales from Academia. History of Anthropology in the Netherlands* (Saarbrücken 2002) 4.

²³ S.J. Jaarsma, *Waarneming en interpretatie. Vergaring en gebruik van etnografische informatie in Nederlands Nieuw Guinea (1950-1962)* (Utrecht 1990) 107.

²⁴ Jaarsma, *Waarneming en interpretatie* 42.

²⁵ Ibidem 101.

²⁶ Ibidem xvi.

²⁷ T. Asad (ed.), *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter* (London 1972).

²⁸ Jaarsma, *Waarneming en interpretatie* 10-11.

²⁹ Ibidem 42.

colonial circles but rarely took the opportunity to study them.³⁰ Jaarsma concluded his research by naming colonial New Guinea as a particular environment of making knowledge. What makes anthropological knowledge here colonial, is the fact that the colonial framework was always present. Because of the close cooperation, the goals, the results etc. Even if this knowledge was deemed objective or even useful to our standards. This colonial way of gathering knowledge had been normal in the Netherlands Indies, in Dutch New Guinea it was intensified.

The anthropological work carried out in New Guinea was very much a science *in the making*.³¹ This relatively new tradition in colonial anthropology came to a sudden stop after 1963.³² For most Dutch anthropologists it was made impossible to carry out fieldwork in the area after the transfer. Publications on New Guinea of course continued to appear in international academia, however Dutch anthropologists would never research New Guinea with the same intensity. On this level the colonial situation had definitely been decisive in setting research goals.

Anthropology went through a significant transformation in the late-colonial period. Exactly the time period in which the two expeditions were situated. In the 1930s anthropology was already fully institutionalized in the Dutch academic system. At this moment in time racial thinking was at its height, inside and outside the academy. The analysis ends in 1960, although the difference between people remains a category of analysis in the science of physical anthropology to this day, its racist connotations had been discarded at this point in time. What does this shift in anthropological thinking in the period 1930-1960 to the image of the Papuans seen through Dutch eyes? What kind of knowledge was generated in the colonial encounter? Was colonial anthropology a story of rupture or continuity in this period?

The research question of this paper closely resembles some of the debates within the history of anthropology. The first debate is about the origins and the coming of age of the discipline of anthropology itself. To what extent was there an interconnectedness between anthropology/ethnography and the colonial state? Has this relationship influenced or even tainted the scientific discipline? Second: When did major ruptures take place in the past century in anthropology? The initial incentive to start this research was amazement: Why was there a physical anthropologist present at the 1959 Sterrengebergte expedition? Was his work taken seriously at the time? It might be more useful to look beyond ruptures and continuities.³³ Clear is that the period from 1930 to 1960 is a period of transition. A third question concerns the position of the Netherlands in this story. Which place does Dutch anthropology take vis-à-vis its colonies and vis-à-vis international academia?

In this story I will use a very broad definition of ‘anthropology’ and use different sources and genres to answer my main question. Anthropology first of all is the overarching

³⁰ Jaarsma, *Waarneming en interpretatie* 129.

³¹ Ibidem 201.

³² J. de Wolf, ‘Anthropology at Utrecht University’, in: Vermeulen and Kommers (eds.), *Tales from Academia* 433.

³³ R. Brown, ‘Anthropology and Colonial Rule: Godfrey Wilson and the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute, Northern Rhodesia’, in: Asad (ed.), *Anthropology* 174.

scientific discipline concerned with the study of humanity, divided into different sub-specializations.³⁴ Ethnography regularly occurs in this story as well. Ethnography is a subfield of anthropology which consists of fieldwork on the one hand and making descriptions on the other hand.³⁵ Ethnographic descriptions are systematic writing exercises that try to give a picture of an alien society as complete as possible.

Expeditions to Dutch New Guinea

Expeditions were no unique phenomenon to the Dutch Empire or to New Guinea. Expeditions or journeys of discovery had been utilized since the Early Modern period to collect material and knowledge about the non-European world. In the nineteenth and twentieth century scientists increasingly joined expeditions themselves, instead of depending on a network of information suppliers. In the mid-twentieth century there were few areas on earth left that had not been explored by Europeans. New Guinea was an unique exception herein, most of its isolated communities were only 'discovered' in the mid-twentieth century.

The Dutch fascination with the island of New Guinea can be traced back to the seventeenth century. The snow covered mountains in the interior of the island were sighted by Captain Jan Carstenz in 1623. This sighting elicited a lot of debate and speculation about the possibility of snow covered mountains in the tropics. This discovery was often referred to in later sources as a sort of mythical starting point for New Guinea explorations. Up until the twentieth century however most attempts to penetrate further into the interior of the island were unsuccessful. A governmental outpost had been established in 1828 but quickly abandoned after living conditions proved to be unhealthy.³⁶ Missionary activities took off from 1855; governmental activity was renewed from 1898 onwards.³⁷ Improvements in technology (helicopters and planes) and medicine (quinine) made it possible to undertake more expeditions into the tropical jungle in the twentieth century.³⁸ Especially the possibility to map unknown areas from a plane greatly accelerated all kinds of expeditions in the second half of the 1930s up to the start of the Second World War. It was 'discovered' that half of the New Guinea population was actually living in the highlands.³⁹ The character of these explorations varied. Some were a form of governmental or military penetration and

³⁴ T.H. Eriksen, *Small Places, Large Issues: An Introduction to Social and Cultural Anthropology* (London 2010) 1-2.

³⁵ Ashcroft a.o., *Post-Colonial Studies* 79.

³⁶ Primary Sources: J. Modera, *Verhaal van eene reize naar en langs de zuid-westkust van Nieuw-Guinea, gedaan in 1828, door Z.M. Corvet Triton, en Z.M. Coloniale schoener de Iris* (Haarlem 1830); S.Müller, *Reizen en onderzoekingen gedaan in den Indischen Archipel, gedaan op last der Nederlandsche Indische regering, tusschen de jaren 1828 en 1836* (Amsterdam 1857).

³⁷ Jaarsma, *Waarneming en interpretatie* ix-xii; M. Kuitenbrouwer, *Nederland en de opkomst van het moderne imperialisme. Koloniën en buitenlandse politiek 1870-1902* (Amsterdam 1985) 157.

³⁸ See Appendix I for an overview of the most important scientific expeditions to Dutch New Guinea in the twentieth century.

³⁹ J. Diamond, *Guns, Germs and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies* (New York 1997) 318.

pacification. Others were carried out by missionaries or even had a sportive character.⁴⁰ Last but not least the Wisselmeren expedition of 1939 had a distinct scientific character. Each exploration however, whether military or governmental, always tried to gain more knowledge about ‘Land en Volk’ (the land and the people). Jaarsma, in his dissertation about the parameters of ethnographic research in Dutch New Guinea, distinguished three groups involved in the process of knowledge formation: government, missionaries and scientists.⁴¹ In this paper we will mostly look at scientists and their relations with the colonial government, however the lines between the groups can be blurred. The ‘European’ community in colonial New Guinea was small, means were scarce and information a precious good.

The scientific element in this story is further complicated by the existence of the Dutch Royal Geographic Society (KNAG). This Society was founded in 1873 by the oriental scholar P.J. Veth. Its goal was to collect knowledge about geographic topics both at home and abroad.⁴² In practice more sciences were involved and the Society’s journal *Tijdschrift van het Aardrijkskundig Genootschap* (1874-1967) published material on a variety of topics and areas. From the beginning an important part of the Society’s activities were scientific expeditions, to Dutch colonies but also to other exotic regions of the world. After the Second World War a reorientation took place in the Society’s activities and the publications in the *Tijdschrift*.⁴³ The predominant focus on the Netherlands Indies that had existed before disappeared, and the articles published on Dutch New Guinea in the 1950s and the 1960s were of a short-lived colonial revival.

The Society took an active role in collecting, processing and producing more knowledge about the colonies for scientific purposes. However the Society and its journal also had a strong link to colonial realities. According to Mok this scientific ideal was very imperial:

“Zou men hiervan nog kunnen beweren dat topografische vorderingen slechts ‘de’ wetenschap zouden dienen, in verschillende artikelen zijn kolonialistische drijfveren onmiskenbaar aanwezig, bijvoorbeeld in de verslagen van ontdekkingsreizen en expedities. Daarin wordt steevast niet alleen de ontvangst en de verhouding met de oorspronkelijke bevolking besproken, maar ook, direct aansluitend, de mogelijkheid van exploitatie. Dat expansiedrift het geografische klimaat beïnvloedt, is evident.”⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Referring to the Colijn expedition of 1936. A.H. Colijn climbed the Carstenz peak together with F. Wissel and engineer J.J. Dozy. UA, KNAG 1873-1967, 74, inv.no.145, ‘correspondence January 1936’; Ibidem, ‘correspondence October 1936’; Ibidem, inv.no.146, ‘Letter Le Roux to Heldring, 14-01-1937, 1; A.H. Colijn, *Naar de eeuwige sneeuw van Nieuw-Guinee. De bestijging van het Carstenzgebergte* (Amsterdam 1937).

⁴¹ Jaarsma, *Waarneming en interpretatie* xvi.

⁴² A biography of P.J. Veth: P.van der Velde, *Een Indische Liefde: P.J. Veth (1814-1895) en de inburgering van Nederlands-Indië* (Amsterdam 2000).

⁴³ Van den Brink, *Dienstbare kaarten* 12.

⁴⁴ Translation: “About this you could still claim that topographical progress would only serve science, however in various articles the colonialist motives are unmistakably present, for example in reports of journeys of discovery and expeditions. There not only the reception and the relation to the indigenous people are always discussed, but immediately after, the possibilities for exploitation. That expansionism influences the geographical climate is evident.” From: Mok, *In de ban* 98.

Indeed promoting science, geography and trade had been among the founding principles of the KNAG.⁴⁵ The founding of the Society coincided with a period in which particular initiative was more welcomed in the Netherlands Indies than before (after 1870).

Official KNAG expeditions were organized in the Netherlands by a committee of men from various scientific disciplines and backgrounds. Often they had experience in the tropics or in New Guinea themselves. This organizing committee was in contact with people who worked for the colonial government, military officials, scientists and many others. There had been one other official KNAG expedition to New-Guinea in 1904-1905. This expedition had explored part of the snow covered mountains in the New Guinea highlands.

What did an expedition typically look like? Expeditions to New Guinea were enormous enterprises. Not only did scientists from various disciplines participate, they were accompanied by military, Papua police men, carriers and sometimes convicts.⁴⁶ A careful balance with the supplies had to be made. It was especially difficult to give a correct estimate for the number of *draggers* (carriers). In the late-colonial period (from the 1920s onwards) helicopters and small (water) planes could be used to bring most of the supplies to the bivouacs or to perform a dropping in the jungle. However for the day-to-day exploratory work many men were needed to cut a path through the jungle and carry supplies. An expedition generally took several months. Local guides and interpreters were essential for the success of an expedition on the spot. Communication with the outside world was only possible via the radio. The KNAG expeditions distinguished themselves by their scale, ambition and resources. Jungle explorations however were a daily phenomenon in New Guinea. Missionaries, administrators and scientists regularly journeyed into the interior. Going on a *tournee* (tour) was part of the job description for colonial administrators in New Guinea.⁴⁷ The infrastructural situation did not allow it any other way, the way to get somewhere was by foot. Even in 1959 roads were almost non-existent and flying somewhere was unreliable because of the rainy weather.

It is important to note that the Royal Geographic Society was not the only organization involved in organizing expeditions to Dutch New Guinea. The 1959 expedition was a joined effort of the KNAG and the Treub Society. Individual researchers, from the Netherlands or other countries, conducted smaller enterprises. In the years 1907-1915 the colonial army (*Koninklijk Nederlandsch-Indisch Leger* or KNIL) led explorations mainly aimed at mapping. In 1926 Dutch and American forces were joined in the Stirling expedition. In 1938 the American Museum of Natural History initiated the Archbold expedition, which led to the discovery of the densely populated Baliem valley. New Guinea was, and still is, a popular destination for scholars from a variety of scientific disciplines.

⁴⁵ Van den Brink, *Dienstbare kaarten* 269.

⁴⁶ Carriers were referred to as *draggers* or *koelies* in contemporary sources. In 1939 the expedition worked with 78 convicts (Dajaks from Borneo among others), in 1959 Papuans from other regions were recruited. Expedition leaders often complained about the impossibility to hire local Papuans.

⁴⁷ J.W. Schoorl (ed.), *Besturen in Nieuw-Guinea 1945-1962. Ontwikkelingswerk in een periode van politieke onrust* (Leiden 1997).

A Declining Empire?

This story of the expeditions took place on the edges of the Dutch colonial world: the highlands of New Guinea were unknown territory.⁴⁸ The political situation was very different in the 1930s and 1950s. Before the Second World War the colony resorted under the authority of the governor of the Moluccas, H.J. Jansen at the time. He in turn had to report to Batavia. New Guinea was only one of many *buitengewesten* (Outer Territories). After the Second World War Dutch New Guinea was a colony standing on its own and became the focal point of Dutch colonialism.

This part of the archipelago had been colonized relatively late, only at the beginning of the twentieth century (1898) a serious attempt was undertaken to install a governmental outpost. New Guinea remained on the edges of the Dutch Empire; colonial administrators reluctantly went there and left a great deal of work to missionaries (beginning in 1855).⁴⁹ The late-colonial period was still a period of exploration for Dutch New Guinea. The interior became more and more known after 1930 and more attention was paid to the land and the people. However it was not considered a special area worthy of much attention for a long time.

The Netherlands Indies were drawn into the conflict of the Second World War in 1942. New Guinea was occupied by the Japanese as well, although the area never completely yielded. It was the only place in the Indonesian archipelago where the Dutch flag never disappeared during the war. Remaining Dutch colonial administrators in the interior continued a guerrilla war together with the indigenous population.⁵⁰ At this point in time the eventual independence of the Netherlands Indies was a vague thought, a threat lingering on the edges of the major bureaucratic enterprise. Concerning Borneo and New Guinea, the queen had said during the war, it would take at least a hundred years before they would be able to exert some kind of self-governance.⁵¹

The declaration of independence of Indonesia followed directly after the war, in August 1945. The Dutch vehemently disagreed and their reluctance marked the following years. New Guinea was drawn into this new conflict between the new Indonesian Republic and a revitalized Dutch colonial state. According to Wim van den Doel the years after the war had a distinct dynamic. To contemporaries it was not that clear whether the chaos and the independence struggle would inevitably lead to an Indonesian nation state.⁵² Negotiations between the Republic of Indonesia and the Netherlands started in early 1946 on the Hoge Veluwe and were taken up afterwards by general H.J. van Mook at Malino (Sulawesi) in July.

⁴⁸ On word use: Throughout this thesis the geographical names New Guinea and Dutch New Guinea are used most often the denote the former Dutch colony which became known later as Irian Barat (West Irian, 1963-1966), Irian Jaya (1966-2000) and Papua (2000-now).

⁴⁹ Schoorl (ed.), *Besturen* 8-11; Jaarsma, *Waarneming en interpretatie* ix-xii.

⁵⁰ Thanks to the nearly heroic efforts of colonial official Vic de Bruyn Merauke on the Southeast coast remained unoccupied. A biography of Vic de Bruyn was written by A. van Kampen, *Jungle Pimpernel: Controleur B.B.* (Amsterdam 1949). Vic de Bruyn himself also wrote a book about his experiences: J.V. de Bruyn, *Het verdwenen volk* (Bussum 1978).

⁵¹ W. Van den Doel, *Afscheid van Indië. De val van het Nederlands Imperium in Azië* (Amsterdam 2001) 61.

⁵² Van den Doel, *Afscheid* 16.

Here Van Mook was especially concerned with the status of the Eastern part of the archipelago. An alternative to the Republic of Indonesia was formulated; Indonesia would become a federal state.⁵³ At a diplomatic meeting at Linggadjati (Java) in November 1946 the first steps towards a solution were taken. The Dutch delegation negotiated about the recognition of the Indonesian Republic and the formation of a Dutch-Indonesian Union. In the process of working out the details, Dutch politicians decided to grant New Guinea a ‘special’ status.⁵⁴ What this would entail was not clear.

The failure of the state East Indonesia, the unwillingness in Dutch political circles and the insistence of the Indonesian Republican forces continued the conflict. Linggadjati could not bring the two parties to a decisive agreement. Two ‘police actions’ were carried out in the summer of 1947 and from December 1948 to January 1949. The two parties were brought together again at the Round Table Conference in The Hague in August 1949. The status of New Guinea was one of the issues on the agenda. Different political and economic considerations probably played their part in convincing the Netherlands to hold on to New Guinea. There was even strong disagreement within the Dutch delegation about what to do with the territory. On Australia’s insistence it was decided that the area was to remain under Dutch authority for now. A decision was postponed.⁵⁵ The Round Table Conference heralded a new period for the formerly ignored part of the Dutch Empire.

There were more implicit reasons to hold on to New Guinea after the decolonization of the Netherlands Indies. First the Netherlands could keep up the image of a colonial power, after the painful ‘loss’ of Indonesia. Without the colonies the country would be reduced to a second rate status in international politics. Second the last remaining colony could also serve as a refuge and a new home for part of the *Indisch* (Creole) population.⁵⁶ However among them there was great reluctance to go there and they preferred to go to the Netherlands.⁵⁷ Pioneering in Dutch New Guinea was difficult and the circumstances hard. Third the Netherlands had the unique opportunity to redeem themselves from their tainted imperial past: they could take up the ‘white men’s burden’ once again and guide Papuans towards a future in which the Indonesian Republic would not feature.⁵⁸ Fourth the possibility of economic riches to be found and exploited might have influenced the decision.

The Round Table Conference had postponed a solution on the New Guinea territory. The status of Dutch New Guinea remained insecure and unresolved during the 1950s.⁵⁹ Indonesia did not relinquish its claim on the last remaining piece of the former Netherlands Indies. The Dutch on the other hand were determined not to abandon New Guinea, for their sake but also

⁵³ Ibidem 143.

⁵⁴ Ibidem 172-175.

⁵⁵ Van den Doel, *Afscheid* 314-317; C.L.M. Penders, *The West New Guinea Debacle. Dutch Decolonisation and Indonesia 1945-1962* (Honolulu 2002) 49.

⁵⁶ Penders, *The West New Guinea Debacle* 62

⁵⁷ W. Willems, *De Uittocht uit Indië, 1945-1995* (Amsterdam 2001).

⁵⁸ Van den Doel, *Afscheid* 314-315.

⁵⁹ Ibidem 325.

for the sake of the local population. The Dutch administration started consolidating and expanding the governmental structure on the island. Investments in healthcare, education and infrastructure were undertaken to develop the land and its inhabitants. Van den Doel sees this as a period of renewed Ethical Policy.⁶⁰ The ultimate goal however was to prepare the Papuans for eventual independence (in a distant future), especially after 1958.⁶¹ Towards the end of the 1950s increasing controversy and international political pressure started to influence daily realities in Dutch New Guinea.⁶² In Dutch politics there were debates about New Guinea's utility; it was a costly enterprise with little returns yet. Why invest in a 'lost' cause and an insecure future? International politics also played its part in the controversy: pressure increased from the side of Australia, the United States and the United Nations. Internationally there was a decreasing support for a continuation of colonialism and a fear of communism (middle of the Cold War!). Indonesia's pressure became more vehement as well. All this led to the transfer of authority to the United Nations in 1962 (UNTEA administration). A year later Dutch New Guinea would become part of Indonesia, as the province West New Guinea. Promises for eventual self-governance were made. In 1969 there would be a referendum to decide New Guinea's political status. The period after 1963 would bring nothing of the kind. The Dutch were haunted by a sense of failure and felt that they had been tricked by international politics. The Papuans perhaps felt abandoned, others might have been excited about the incorporation in the Indonesian state. After 1963 a whole new episode in the history of this area began.

The late-colonial period is a time period deserving more scholarly attention. The late-colonial period is often seen as a period of empires in decline on an inevitable path towards decolonization. Dutch New Guinea seems to contradict this narrative. The traditional story about imperialism has been problematized most recently by Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper in 'Empires in World History'.⁶³ Their hypothesis is that empires formed the most common and effective political unit throughout history. Europeans in the mid-twentieth were in the midst of their colonial enterprise and as they were in the middle of it, they did not know that the end was near. In the interwar period and after the Second World War, European colonial empires found a new vitality and longevity. European colonialism reinvented itself and actively sought new directions. Even if this involved new conflicts, like the 'police actions' in Indonesia, or holding on to territory against the currents of history, as in Dutch New Guinea.

⁶⁰ Van den Doel, *Afscheid* 327.

⁶¹ A. Brand, 'Fluiten in het donker. Bestuur onder de Verenigde Naties', in: Schoorl (ed.), *Besturen* 572. Citing Robert Bone (1958) about the Netherlands' "deep concern to safe-guard the right of the peoples of New Guinea to self-determination at some unstipulated time in a vague and indefinite future".

⁶² Van den Doel, *Afscheid* 327-332.

⁶³ Burbank and Cooper, *Empires in World History*.

Sources

This story is for a large part based on primary sources. The archive of the Royal Geographic Society in Utrecht gave the most information about the two expeditions. In this archive there are many reports, correspondence, notes and pictures. A large pile of information, with many more things than just the clues I was looking for: first connections between the colonial government and the expedition, second statements about the people encountered during the journeys. Just as important were the published contemporary sources: journals, diaries, dissertations, travel accounts and scientific monographs written by the expedition members. I tried to extract the ways in which ‘race’ was implemented as the methodological tool. To get at the image of the ‘other’ a variety of sources was used because I believe that scientific Orientalism manifested itself across a broad spectrum. The story of the two expedition is not a full-fledged comparative history, certainly it aims at illustrating a shift in both science and empire. However the two events are not so much positioned vis-à-vis each other in terms of a continuity or a rupture.

Outline

This narrative is divided into two parts corresponding with the structure of the main research question. The first part zooms in on the parameters of ‘science’ and ‘empire’. After this introductory chapter in which the framework for this project was set out, I continue in the next chapter with an in-depth analysis of the case studies. I look at the 1930s and 1950s and see if there is evidence for the interaction between science and empire in the archival material: In what way and to what extent were science and empire connected during these expeditions? The second part of this thesis turns to the construction of knowledge about ‘race’ during these colonial encounters. The third chapter mainly serves as an elaboration on the history of anthropology. How does the anthropological knowledge production of the expeditions relate to scientific developments on a national and international level? The last chapters take on the topic of colonial knowledge. What kind of image of the ‘other’ or Papuan was constructed by colonial anthropologists on expedition? Who were these scientists going to Dutch New Guinea and what did this knowledge circuit mean for themselves? Finally I will explain my own findings in the light of existing literature. On the next pages we will find out what these two expeditions can tell us about knowledge, ‘race’, the development of anthropology, colonialism, Dutch New Guinea and the people involved.

Chapter Two

Two Expeditions between Science and Empire

Introduction

The Dutch Royal Geographic Society organized the multidisciplinary expeditions in key historical moments. The Wisselmeren expedition took place from June to November 1939. The Second World War started in Europe while Charles Le Roux (1885-1947) and his team were doing research in the highlands of New Guinea. Twenty years later in 1959, after a World War, the decolonization of the Netherlands Indies and while the New Guinea controversy was starting to make headlines, the last big multidisciplinary expedition went to the Star Mountains from March to September 1959.⁶⁴ What these two expeditions had in common was their scale and their ambition. Multidisciplinary teams set out to fill in the white spots on the map and gain as much knowledge as possible about the land and the people of the New Guinea highlands. In the meantime the world around this outpost of empire had altered. New Guinea had changed from being a pre-war imperial outpost to a focal point of Dutch colonialism in the 1950s.

In this chapter we will compare the two expeditions in the light of the relation between science and empire. In what way and to what extent were science and empire connected during these expeditions? Rather than giving a complete account of these enterprises from A to Z, we will look at the (possible) connections between colonial government and scientific activities. We will see that these connections not only took place on a practical level, but engaged the colonial state and the Society on an ‘ideological’ level as well. What was an acceptable level of interconnectedness? The influence of the relation between science and empire on the making of knowledge, was a question already asked by colonial officials and scientists of the time as well.

To the Wisselmeren: To the Edges of the Dutch Empire

The lakes were discovered because new technology (planes) had made it possible to fly over the highlands. Pilot Frits Wissel flew over them by chance on the 31st of December 1936, his day off. Although the discovery had been an accident, the subsequent exploration was quickly organized in a professional manner. At the time the task of mapping new areas was carried out by the *Topografische Dienst* of the colonial army (KNIL). Aerial surveys of the inlands were

⁶⁴ Wisselmeren named after their ‘discoverer’ pilot Frits Wissel. The Star Mountains had this particular name because mountains were named after the zodiac and stars. For the rest, local names were adhered to as much as possible: “Om aan meren, rivieren, bergen, die voor het eerst door ons worden bezocht – laat staan overvlogen, Hollandsche namen te geven, ondanks het feit dat zij bij de plaatselijke bevolking en in wijden omtrek, eigen Inheemsche namen hebben, getuigt slechts van groote onkonden over den plaatselijken toestand, en doet bepaald ridicuul aan (...)”/ Translation: “To give lakes, rivers, mountains, visited for the first time by us, let alone flew over, Dutch names, despite the fact that they have local names with the local population and for miles around, testifies only to great ignorance about the local circumstances, and seems ridiculous (...)” From: UA, KNAG 1873-1967,74, inv.no.149, ‘Verslag van een tocht naar het Bernard meerdistrict in Centraal-Nieuw Guinea door den Assistent-Resident van West-Nieuw-Guinea Dr. W.J. Cator, 21 november 1937 – 14 januari 1938’ 21.

undertaken from 1937 to 1939 and they formed an important part of the preparatory work for the expeditions on the ground. Although expeditions on foot could take months to get through the thick jungle, they were still a necessity to get to know the land and the people living there. The Royal Geographic Society used these KNIL pictures to make plans for a new expedition. The photographs were sent to the Society on a highly secretive basis by KNIL commander Vreede.⁶⁵

Plans for a new expedition were laid out by the Society's preparatory committee in 1935.⁶⁶ Before the discovery of the actual lakes different regions in the mountainous areas of the New Guinea interior were considered for scientific exploits. Climbing the Carstensz peak was a significant challenge, however that was achieved by Wissel, J.J. Dozy and A.H. Colijn in 1936. In order to demarcate the eventual research terrain of the scientific expedition several smaller explorations were undertaken first. In a way a 'white spot' on the map was only a metaphor as it had to be superficially facilitated by government actions first.

The plans were accelerated by the discovery of the Wissel lakes. Assistant-resident of Fakfak Writser Jans Cator went on an exploratory *tournee* in the fall of 1937.⁶⁷ The goal of this preparatory expedition was to get into contact with the local population and look for the lakes. Cator went on another expedition to the lakes a few months later together with R.R. van Ravenswaay Claassen.⁶⁸ This time they also wanted to see if a government settlement would be feasible. The outcome was positive and a *bestuurspost* (governmental outpost) was established on the shores of lake Paniai: Enarotali. J.V. (Vic) de Bruijn was appointed government official. His name often pops up in descriptions of the 1939 expedition as he was of great help to the scientific team.⁶⁹ During the KNAG expedition simultaneous *tournees* were carried out by Jan van Eechoud and L. van Krieken.⁷⁰ Opening up a new area happened on different levels: government and science being only two of them.⁷¹

⁶⁵ UA, KNAG 1873-1967, 74, inv.no. 152, first file 'Stukken betreffende de voorbereiding en uitvoering van expeditie Nieuw-Guinea II'; Ibidem, 'Letter Vreede to KNAG, Batavia 28-12-1938'.

⁶⁶ The committee existed out of the following persons: E. Heldring (president), J. Sibinga Mulder, H.J.T. Bijlmer, L.A.C.M. Doorman, J. van Hinte and E.J. Voute. See: E. Heldring, 'De expeditie van 1939 van het Koninklijk Nederlands Aardrijkskundig Genootschap naar het Nassau-gebergte op Nederlandsch Nieuw Guinea', *Tijdschrift van het Aardrijkskundig Genootschap* 57 (1940) 305.

⁶⁷ UA, KNAG 1873-1967, 74, inv.no.151 'Verslag van de tocht door het bergland en het bovenstroomgebied van de Oetarivier door de assistent-resident van Fakfak (Cator), 14 sep. - 21 oct.1937'.

⁶⁸ Ibidem, inv.no. 149, 'Verslag Cator'; Ibidem, inv.no.150, 'Verslag van de expeditie naar het Merengebied van Centraal Nieuw Guinea door W.J. Cator en Ravenswaay Claassen, dec. 1937 – jan. 1938'.

⁶⁹ Nationaal Archief, Archief Ministerie van Koloniën: Kantoor Bevolkingszaken Nieuw-Guinea te Hollandia. Rapportenarchief 1950-1962, entry 2.10.25, inv.no. 249, 'R.R. van Ravenswaay Claassen, Verslag' 19; C.C.F.M. Le Roux, *De expeditie van het Koninklijk Nederlandsch Aardrijkskundig Genootschap naar het Wisselmerengebied en het Nassau-gebergte op Nederlandsch Nieuw-Guinea in 1939. Volgens het dagboek van den expeditieleider* (Leiden 1939-1940) 665, 767, 784-785.

⁷⁰ NL-HaNA, Kantoor Bevolkingszaken Nieuw-Guinea, 2.10.25, inv.no. 246, 'Verslag van de Exploratie naar het Wisselmerengebied, onder leiding van J.P.K. van Eechoud'; Ibidem, inv.no. 247, 'J.P.K. van Eechoud, Journaal doorsteek'; Ibidem, inv.no. 250, 'Verslag Ch. F. van Krieken, patrouiltocht Siriworiver Centraal Nieuw-Guinea'.

⁷¹ Other elements were the economy, the mission, education, healthcare, infrastructure and agriculture. A development policy often had to be carried out by one colonial official on an outpost. See Schoorl (ed.), *Besturen* for a description of the kind of work that had to be done.

Outposts like the one at the Wisselmeren were lonely enterprises. Often they were inhabited by one government official, a few missionaries and perhaps one or two other foreigners who were there on for example an anthropological or agricultural mission. A large team of scholars accompanied by *draggers*, police and soldiers was an anomaly. On a side note: with the ‘pacification’ of New Guinea no large scale military efforts were required. Most highland Papuans generally lived in small isolated communities. Generally an expedition took some soldiers or police men with them and sometimes small skirmishes were reported. Colonialism in New Guinea happened on a very small scale. Close cooperation between individual government officials, scientists, police men and locals almost seems inevitable.

The explorations from the air and on the ground brought together new information about unexplored areas and unknown people. The Society’s preparatory committee started considering the Wissel lakes as a serious option in the course of 1938.⁷² The possibility to land on the lakes with planes would make an expedition cheaper and the supply chain faster. Their initial intention was to explore the white spots on the map with the smallest group of explorers possible.⁷³ The following citation by future expedition leader Le Roux sheds light on some of the motivations:

“Wil het genootschap een aandeel van betekenis nemen in de verdere ontdekking van Nieuw-Guinee’s binnenland, dan dient naar mijn gevoelens het oog gericht op de belangrijkste onderzoeksobjecten, die daar nog voor het grijpen liggen, namelijk de groote onbekende gebieden. Met de ontdekking daarvan is eer in te leggen, niet alleen voor den goeden naam van Nederland als koloniseerende mogendheid in het algemeen, maar ook voor dien van het Koninklijk Nederlandsch Aardrijkskundig Genootschap in het bijzonder. Nog staan wij wat de totale oppervlakte der onbekende gebieden betreft, niet ten achter bij onze Oostelijke naburen. Dagelijks dringen echter de Australiërs met behulp van hunne vliegtuigen van den staart van het eiland uit dieper in het onbekende hart van hun gebied door. In het aanstaande voorjaar vertrekt een grootsch opgezette wetenschappelijke Amerikaansche vliegtuigexpeditie naar de Oostelijke helft van Nieuw-Guinee met het doel alle onbekende streken in het stroomgebied der Sepik (Kaiserin Augusta-rivier) te verkennen en op de kaart in te vullen. (...) Forsche daden zijn thans ook bij ons noodig, willen wij niet hopeloos ten achter raken.”⁷⁴

Opening up the unknown areas would not only benefit science but would also reflect back on their reputation. In Le Roux’s letters a combination of national honour, scientific curiosity and practical concerns comes to the forefront.

⁷² UA, KNAG 1873-1967, 74, inv.no. 147.

⁷³ Ibidem, inv.no. 145, first leaflet 18.

⁷⁴ Translation: “If the society wants to keep a role of importance in the further exploration of New Guinea’s interior, than in my opinion we need to keep an eye on the main objects of research, that are still up for grabs, namely the great unknown areas. With the discovery of these there is honor at stake, not only the good name of the Netherlands as a colonial power, but also for that of the Royal Dutch Geographical Society in particular. We are not yet lagging behind our Eastern Neighbours, when it concerns the total area of unknown territories. Every day however the Australians, using their aircraft, penetrate from the tail of the islands deeper into the unknown heart of their territory. In the upcoming spring a grand scale scientific American aircraft expedition will depart for the Eastern half of New Guinea with the purpose of exploring all the unknown areas in the basin of the Sepik and to fill in on the map.(...) Bold action is now also necessary with is, if we do not want to get hopelessly behind.” From: Ibidem, first leaflet 1-2.

Not much is known about the Wisselmeren expedition, as not much has been published about the event by either historians or contemporaries. Different sources can attribute to a reconstruction of the actual expedition. In Le Roux' correspondence weekly reports are to be found, his diary was published in the journal of the Royal Geographic Society together with short reports by the other expedition members and in Le Roux' lifework 'De bergpapoea's' there are hints about the whereabouts and the results of the journey.⁷⁵ In addition the commander of the expedition's police force, Van Ravenswaay Claassen, left a minute day-to-day report.⁷⁶

The expedition finally started at the end of June 1939. In the month before Le Roux had made the final preparations in Batavia and on the Moluccas. The scientific team consisted of Le Roux (ethnography and topography), R. IJzerman (geology), D. Brouwer (anthropology), J.P. Eijma (botany) and H. Boschma (zoology). Part of the team were also the *mantris* M. Saleh and H.J. Hoeka, two Javanese trained in cartography⁷⁷, and Sitanala, the interpreter. They were assisted by marine forces and accompanied by a group of police men, 18 in total, led by Van Ravenswaay Claassen.⁷⁸ Last but not least a group of 78 convicts were put to work as *draggers*. A very comprehensive and multidisciplinary team but smaller than the 1959 enterprise.

It is difficult to designate the exact starting or ending point of the whole enterprise. Getting people and supplies to and from the Wissel lakes was a complicated logistic effort, for which Van Ravenswaay Claassen and the marines were responsible. The supply chain was in place after one or two weeks, a feat never accomplished before remarked Le Roux in his diary.⁷⁹ The base camp was at Enarotali on Lake Paniai. Once in the area the expedition was constantly moving. A tour to the Araboe bivouac was undertaken first, followed by a tour to the West and one to the East in the last months. The scientists and the *mantris* were doing smaller exploration on foot or by boat only accompanied by police men and a few *draggers*. On his first tour to the Prauw bivouac Brouwer stayed away for a month and was only able to communicate with Le Roux via notes.⁸⁰ Father Tillemans, a catholic missionary living in the area, actively participated in the expedition as well as interpreter and *explorateur* (explorer). Towards the end the KNAG expedition encountered Van Eechoud and Van Krieken as well.⁸¹

⁷⁵ UA, KNAG 1873-1967, 74, inv.no. 148, 'Dagboek van den expeditieleider'; Le Roux, *De expeditie*; Heldring, 'De expeditie van 1939' 305-320; P.J. Eyma, 'Verslag van den tocht ten noorden van het Paniai meer, 3 Oct – 4 Nov 1939', *Tijdschrift van het Aardrijkskundig Genootschap* 57 (1940) 423-440; C.C.F.M. Le Roux, *De bergpapoea's van Nieuw-Guinea en hun woongebied, part I-II* (Leiden 1948-1950).

⁷⁶ NI-HaNA, Kantoor Bevolkingszaken Nieuw-Guinea, 2.10.25, inv.no. 249, 'Van Ravenswaay Claassen, Verslag'.

⁷⁷ *Mantris* are mentioned most of the time as male nurses, in the context of the expedition however the broader definition of 'assistant' is more fitting. Hoeka and Saleh were trained cartography professionals helping the scholars with the topographical work.

⁷⁸ See Appendix II for an overview of all the participants.

⁷⁹ Le Roux, *De expeditie* 669.

⁸⁰ *Ibidem* 781.

⁸¹ NI-HaNA, Kantoor Bevolkingszaken Nieuw-Guinea, 2.10.25, inv.no. 250, 'Van Krieken, Verslag'; *Ibidem*, inv.no.247, 'Van Eechoud, Journaal doorsteek'.

The outbreak of the war on the first of September 1939 put the expedition in an insecure situation. The geologist IJzerman left for the Netherlands in early September⁸², the rest continued without the help of the marine planes for supplies for another three months. In the highlands of New Guinea the new war was a very distant event, in Le Roux' diary there are only scant references to be found.

At the end of the journey, Van Ravenswaay Claassen concluded optimistically: "De verkregen resultaten, de geest en onderlinge verstandhouding in aanmerking genomen, mag deze proef als volkomen geslaagd beschouwd worden."⁸³ The police commander mentioned some animosity with the local population and logistic problems; however this did not impede the whole process of knowledge gathering. Also Le Roux was positive about the participants, the local officials and the amount of scientific work done. Le Roux would finish his life work 'De bergpapoea's' after the war.⁸⁴ However no comprehensive multidisciplinary work was published about the results of the expedition. The fact that not much is known about this expedition is perhaps due to the outbreak of the war. This slowed down the use of the expedition's results for scientific research. During the war a large part of the zoological and botanical collections got lost, and were only in 1945 found back in the Netherlands Indies.⁸⁵

The Colonial State Helps

Let us leave the expedition members for now and look at to what extent they depended on 'empire' for their expedition to succeed. The collaboration of the government was sought early on, from the moment planning started in 1935 until the actual year of the expedition, 1939. In the first phase assistance was mainly needed for providing information about the area and sharing aerial footage made by the *Topografische Dienst* of the KNIL⁸⁶ and for providing the *tournee* reports written by colonial officials.⁸⁷ Expedition leader Le Roux wrote to resident Jansen of the Moluccas requesting the help of the colonial government:

"Het welslagen van de expeditie hangt voor een groot deel af van de hulp en medewerking die wij van de zijde van het Binnenlandsch Bestuur zullen ontvangen. De groote energie, waarmede dat Bestuur zich in de laatste jaren op de ontwikkeling van het groote eiland geworpen heeft, doet ons vertrouwen, dat ons plan de sympathie van UHoogedelgestrenge en uw onderhebbende bestuursambtenaren op Nieuw-Guinea ten volle zal wegdragen(...)

⁸² The geologist IJzerman left for 'private' reasons, these never becoming entirely clear. See Le Roux, *De expeditie* 783.

⁸³ Translation: "Taking into account the results obtained, the atmosphere and the mutual understanding, this experiment may be regarded as a great success." From: NI-HaNA, Kantoor Bevolkingszaken Nieuw-Guinea, 2.10.25, inv.no. 249 'Van Ravenswaay Claassen, Verslag' 76.

⁸⁴ Le Roux, *De bergpapoea's*.

⁸⁵ Van den Brink, *Dienstbare kaarten* 212.

⁸⁶ UA, KNAG 1873-1967, 74, inv.no. 152, 'Luchtfoto's van Zuidwest-Nieuw-Guinea en de Wisselmeren, gemaakt tijdens militaire vliegtuigverkenningen, 1937-1938'; Nationaal Archief, Collectie 135 Le Roux, entry 2.21.097.02, inv.no. 19, 'Verslag verkenning Merengebied 1937'.

⁸⁷ UA, KNAG 1873-1967, 74, inv.no. 148, 'Letter resident Jansen to Le Roux' 1.

Ik zou in de eerste plaats Uw hooggewaardeerde hulp en medewerking willen inroepen voor de verstrekking van alle mogelijke inlichtingen, die voor de voorbereiding en de uitvoering van de toekomstige expeditie van belang kunnen zijn. (...)

Voorts zou ik gaarne worden ingelicht omtrent den steun op personeel en materieel gebied, dien het Bestuur te Ambon en op Nieuw-Guinea aan onze expeditie kan verlenen.”⁸⁸

The Society and Le Roux responded to the already existing wish of the government at the end of the 1930s to further extend Dutch influence in the New Guinea interior. Attention for Dutch New Guinea had been scarce up until the 1930s and it was certainly not a favorite destination for government officials. However governing the Netherlands-Indies demanded controlling the Outer Territories too. For the Royal Geographic Society the government was the designated source for information and assistance, not necessarily for money only.

The organizers communicated with different departments of the government in the Netherlands (for example Commerce, War and Infrastructure). There were different industries that had a potential interest in Dutch New Guinea. There was for example the NNGPM (Nederlandsche Nieuw Guinea Petroleum Maatschappij, part of Shell). The 1936 Colijn expedition to the highlands, had been part sportive part designed to discover ores. Ores and fossil fuels were definitely an interest of the government of Dutch industry but they had to be discovered first!

In the course of 1938 the correspondence of the preparatory committee and Le Roux turned more to financial and practical matters concerning the expedition to the Wisselmeren, for which no date was set at that moment.⁸⁹ The colonial government was expected to give their financial contribution and provide policemen for protection and Dajaks from Borneo to carry supplies. The KNAG simply provided the colonial government with a list for of all the things they wanted awaiting them upon arrival.⁹⁰ However a full cooperation was not in the Society's interest as it would slow things down.⁹¹ Still the government (both Dutch and Netherlands-Indies) did get a say in who could participate in the expedition. The anthropologist Brouwer was especially recommended.⁹² He was already in the service of the colonial government and had done satisfying work in the Alor islands a few years before. There was not much debate about who to hire. Experience in the Netherlands Indies seemed to be the most important thing.

⁸⁸ Translation: “The success of the expedition depends to a large extent on the support and cooperation we will receive on the part of the colonial administration. The energy, with which the administration has put itself to the development of the big island in the past years, makes us confident, that our plan has the full sympathy of Your Excellency and your subordinates on New Guinea.(...) In the first place I would like to call on your help and cooperation for the provision of all possible information which might be of interest for the preparation and execution of the future expedition. Furthermore I would like to be informed about the personnel and material support the administration on Ambon and New Guinea can provide our expedition.” From: UA, KNAG 1873-1967, 74, inv.no. 148, ‘Letter from Le Roux to resident Jansen, 2 January ?’ 1-2.

⁸⁹ Ibidem, inv.no.147 ‘Stukken Le Roux betreffende de voorbereiding Nieuw-Guinea II, 1938’.

⁹⁰ Ibidem, inv.no. 148, ‘Letter Middelaer to Governor-General, 30-12-1938’ 4.

⁹¹ Ibidem, inv.no.147, third file 6.

⁹² Ibidem, ‘Letter from Ministerie van Economische zaken to Governor-General, 1938(?)’ 4. ; Ibidem, ‘Letter from Natuurwetenschappelijke raad Nederlands-Indië to Departement van Economische Zaken, 14-12-1938’.

Cator, who was sent out by the government to make initial explorations of the Wisselmeren area, presented his findings in such a way as to give a positive advice for government settlement. The people were represented as welcoming and friendly in his final advice, although in the rest of the report they did not make such a favorable impression. Cator concluded:

“De factoren voor het vestigen van daadwerkelijk bestuur zijn gunstig; een goedwillende bevolking waartegen geen kracht van wapenen noodig is, een uitstekend klimaat, een bodem met vele goede landbouwmogelijkheden.”⁹³

“Van vele zijden wordt een groot opgezette expeditie naar dit deel van Nieuw Guinea gepropageerd. Het is m.i. niet overeen te brengen met de plicht en de waardigheid van het Gouvernement indien een dergelijke expeditie in dit uitgestrekte, behoorlijk bevolkte veilig te bereizen gebied zou komen, en het ongeoccupeerd door de overheid zou aantreffen.”⁹⁴

In short the colonial government was left with no other choice than to open up this area. According to Le Roux the government had to do even more. He wrote a polite request to resident Jansen: “Het zou voor onze expeditie ongetwijfeld van groote waarde zijn, indien die post voor onze komst was ingericht.”⁹⁵ The success of the expedition depended on the willingness of the local colonial government to invest in information gathering and facilitating a settlement. With both our case studies the colonial government was more than willing to do this, as scientific exploration would mean the benefit of simultaneous colonial settlement.

The expedition to the Wisselmeren was dependent on the very recent governmental and missionary settlements in the area. Le Roux started his diary by elaborately thanking for the help on the side of the colonial government. Especially the planes provided were essential for the logistics. Unfortunately the outbreak of the war later on meant that the planes and some of the marines had to return to Java.

The dependence on the colonial government went further than only infrastructure. The possibility to do research depended on the delicate balance with the local population. A relationship colonial officials and missionaries had already worked on for some time before the arrival of the expedition. The following citation clarifies some of the constraints of a scientific expedition:

“Dr.Brouwer, die mij verzocht heeft van Koegapa verder de vallei berginwaarts te trekken naar de landstreek Doemandora, moet ik teleurstellen, daar het Hoofd van plaatselijk bestuur

⁹³ Translation: “The factors for the establishment of effective governance are favourable; a willing population against which no force of arms is necessary, an excellent climate, a soil with a lot of agricultural potential.” From: UA, KNAG 1873-1967,74, inv.no. 149, ‘Verslag Cator’ 57.

⁹⁴ Translation: “From many sides a large-scale expedition to this part of New Guinea is propagated. In my opinion it cannot to be reconciled with the duty and dignity of the government, if such an expedition would arrive in this vast, populated, safe to travel area, and would find it unoccupied by the government.” From: Ibidem, 60.

⁹⁵ Translation: “Undoubtedly, it would be of great value to our expedition, if the settlement would be ready prior to our arrival.” From: Ibidem, inv.no. 148, ‘Questionnaire from Le Roux for resident Jansen’ 5.

met dien tocht nog gaarne even wil wachten, omdat met die bevolking nog geen aanraking verkregen is.”⁹⁶

It hints at the dangers that were also present in exploring a new unknown area. Therefore the scientists worked closely together with the colonial official Vic de Bruijn and the catholic missionary Tillemans. Also the cooperation with the police and the marines was very pleasant according to Le Roux.⁹⁷

An Imperial Expedition?

However pleasant the day-to-day cooperation with the colonial government was, this relation resulted in many contradictions. Although (colonial) science aimed at being as neutral and objective as possible, too much cooperation with the colonial government could slow the whole process down and give other priorities to research. A feat the preparatory committee of the Society already recognized. In addition science is, and was, an international enterprise while colonialism in New Guinea depended on a certain image of Dutchness, certainly after 1950. The KNAG expeditions were not an open or a neutral undertaking, but full of symbolism.

In an article about imperial expeditions Gordon Stewart wrote about the British Everest expeditions in the period 1921-1953 that they were a way of “gaining insight into the shaping of British imperial identity from the apparently secure Edwardian period to the era of decolonization.”⁹⁸ Exploring and mapping the white spots on the map went hand in hand with pacifying and civilizing the empire.⁹⁹ In the second part of his article Stewart goes on problematizing this symbolism of empire. In the 1953 Everest conquest there was also a significant counter-narrative. Sherpa Tenzing’s voice challenged the narrative of the white explorer and was emblematic for the period of decolonization.

The difference with the KNAG expeditions is that these British Everest expeditions were already quasi-imperial enterprises and did not have a scientific motivation only. Competition with other European empires was an intrinsic part of the race to the Everest. Stewart’s article was the starting point for a scholarly discussion about the symbolic connotations of Empire in these alpinist enterprises.¹⁰⁰

The connection between imperialism and the KNAG expeditions was more elusive on a symbolic level. In prewar New Guinea Dutch scientific undertakings did not have priority

⁹⁶ Translation: “I have to disappoint dr. Brouwer, who requested to travel from Koegapa further into valley towards the mountains to the Doemandora area, as the head of the local administration wants to wait a little longer with such a trip, because no contact has been established with the local population.” From: Le Roux, *De expeditie* 672-673.

⁹⁷ *Ibidem* 224-225.

⁹⁸ G.T. Stewart, ‘Tenzing’s Two Wrist-Watches: the Conquest of the Everest and Late Imperial Culture in Britain 1921-1953’, *Past & Present* 149 (1995) 171.

⁹⁹ Stewart, ‘Tenzing’s Two Wrist-Watches’ 173.

¹⁰⁰ P.H. Hansen, ‘Debate: Tenzing’s Two Wrist-Watches: The Conquest of Everest and Late Imperial Culture in Britain 1921-1953’, *Past & Present* 157 (1997) 159-177.

over foreign ones necessarily. Foreign teams could ask for permission to conduct research and this did not lead to a clash of interests. In 1926 a joint Dutch-American expedition had been undertaken, in which Le Roux had been a participant as well. In 1938 the American Archbold expedition followed. In retrospect the Dutch colonial government had been wise hesitating to allow Japanese scientific teams into the territory in the 1930s.¹⁰¹ It seems that expeditions from nations that had no direct political interest in the region were allowed. The 1939 expedition existed solely out of Dutch scientists with their Javanese helpers and convicts from Borneo. The physical anthropologist Brouwer had worked as a doctor at the military camp Tjimahi on Java, while botanist Eijma was already conducting research in the Wisselmeren area. Resident Jansen of the Moluccas wrote to the KNAG that he was glad a Dutch team would conduct research once again.¹⁰²

Before the war the KNAG could find human resources abundantly either in the Netherlands or in the Netherlands Indies. Apparently enough expertise was already present in the Dutch scholarly sphere. Foreign teams were allowed into Dutch New Guinea, the KNAG chose to keep their expedition in a ‘Dutch’ sphere. Pride, prestige and perhaps practical considerations led them to this decision.

It was important what the world thought about Dutch New Guinea. In the 1930s this had been in the context of colonial competition for control over the overseas dominions. The Outer Territories had to be effectively occupied in order to be acknowledged as Dutch. During the period of New Imperialism (up to the First World War), expansion had been more violent and aggressive. The interwar period was directed towards consolidation especially in the Outer Territories. That is where the occupation of the Wisselmeren became vital:

“Nog afgezien van de langzamerhand erkende plicht van het Gouvernement – en zulks niet alleen uit buitenlandsch politieke overwegingen – om niet langer groote en bevolkte deelen van Nederlandsch-Indië zonder meer aan het eigen lot over te laten, zijn bovendien in dit geval omstandigheden van dien aard, dat alle aanleiding bestaat, om over te gaan tot de daadwerkelijke vestiging van ons overheidsgezag.”¹⁰³

Cator was in fact referring to a trend set in around 1900: Expansion and consolidation of Dutch authority throughout the Netherlands Indies. The reasons Cator gave were manifold. One of this deliberations was the international reputation of the Netherlands, other reasons were a moral obligation towards the local population and the reputation of the colonial government vis-à-vis the expedition. In short Cator presented governmental penetration of the hinterland as both necessary and desired by the locals. His superiors were less subtle about their motives for exploration of the Wisselmeren area: “(...)niet het minst omdat de exploratie

¹⁰¹ UA, KNAG 1873-1967, 74, inv.no. 146, ‘Letter Le Roux to Archbold, 12-01-1937’.

¹⁰² Ibidem, inv.no. 148, ‘Letter Jansen to KNAG, 05-04-1939’ 1-2.

¹⁰³ Translation: “Apart from the gradually recognized duty of the colonial government to no longer leave large and populated areas of the Netherlands to their own fate, not only out of foreign policy considerations, are in this case the circumstances of such a nature, that there is every reason, to proceed with the actual establishment of our governmental authority.” From: Ibidem, inv.no. 149, ‘Verslag Cator’ 57.

van Nieuw-Guinea geen landschapsbelang maar een imperiaal belang is,(...)”.¹⁰⁴ New Guinea’s scientific worth was measured in the context of the whole Dutch *Empire*: both territorial and scientific gain reflected back on the Dutch imperial enterprise. A national rhetoric was not necessary when it concerned New Guinea. In the 1950s international diplomatic relations were at stake. At that time the reputation of the Netherlands as a ‘colonial’ power had influence on the way the Sterrenbergte expedition was executed.

Intermezzo

The government played an important role in facilitating the exploratory *tournees*, setting up government outposts, providing the expedition with convicts to carry their supplies and helping them with many other small contributions. There were also ideological reasons behind the whole enterprise: Scientific penetration of New Guinea was part of the larger imperial effort to effectively control the Outer Territories. Knowing the highlands could add to scientific and territorial prestige. The Wisselmeren expedition must be seen in the totality of colonialism in the Netherlands Indies. In fact everybody in the expedition group had a connection to the colony. It seems that in 1939 science and empire found each other during the expedition. What happened to the ideological importance of an expedition in the years to come? Did the Sterrenbergte expedition try to do something ‘new’ compared to the expeditions that had taken place in the 1930s?

To the Sterrenbergte: Exploring the Last White Spots on the Map

The Sterrenbergte expedition started exactly twenty years later, in March 1959. This expedition would be the last in a long Dutch tradition of exploring and gathering knowledge in the tropics. On the one hand it was a very late and the very last exponent of colonial science as it used to be practiced in the Netherlands Indies. On the other hand it was profoundly ‘modern’ in scope, ambition and technology. The whole enterprise attracted a great deal of media attention and incidentally still does now.¹⁰⁵ Sometimes the expedition is perceived as an anachronism, however that is not how it was perceived in the 1950s.

Board member E. Heldring had starting making plans for a new expedition directly after the Second World War.¹⁰⁶ In 1953 the Society started planning a new expedition, this time a real tour de force.¹⁰⁷ The Star Mountains were quickly chosen as the destination: it was the last white spot on the map. The organization of the expedition was a joint effort by the Royal Geographic Society and the Treub Society who invested a special committee, Stichting

¹⁰⁴ Translation: “Not in the least because the exploration of New-Guinea is not of landscape/national (?) importance but of imperial importance, (...)” From: UA, KNAG 1873-1967, 74, inv.no. 148, ‘Letter Jansen to Vreede, (no date)’.

¹⁰⁵ Every scientist on the team got assigned a newspaper for which he would write short articles about the expedition. Next to that a few journalists from national and international media got permission to visit the Ok Sibil. In recent years two short documentaries about the Sterrenbergte expedition have been made for television: Andere Tijden, 28-10-2003, EenVandaag, ‘De laatste Nederlandse ontdekkingsreizigers’ 10-04-2009.

¹⁰⁶ Van den Brink, *Dienstbare kaarten* 234.

¹⁰⁷ UA, KNAG 1873-1967, 74, inv.no. 175.

Expeditie Nederlands Nieuw-Guinea (SENGG), to make this expedition happen.¹⁰⁸ Due to practical and organizational reasons, mainly financial, the enterprise would be delayed until 1959. Even during the expedition, the enterprise would be plagued by money shortage and would be in need of financial help from the government and private investors.¹⁰⁹

Correspondence and notes from the SENNG archive reveal an elaborate network of scientists, government officials and benefactors coming together in the organizational process.¹¹⁰ Resources were sought after mainly in the Netherlands, although invoking foreign subsidies was sometimes considered an option.

The organizational center was in the Netherlands; preparatory work was also done on the spot. From 1955 the Ok Sibil in the Star Mountains was taken into consideration as a possible location for the base camp. The spot could be reached either by foot, by helicopter or by plane from Tanah Merah or Merauke in the south. Colonial officials Pim Schoorl, Nol Hermans and Jan Sneep received orders to explore the Sibil valley and to construct an air strip for planes to land on.¹¹¹ They were even relieved from their normal duties. The expedition leaders Leo Brongersma (1907-1994) and G.F. Venema made an exploratory trip to New Guinea in 1956. Venema returned there in 1958 to assess the Ok Sibil as there were doubts about the suitability of the site. This time again the so-called ‘white spots’ had been facilitated by government people first and had even been visited by expedition members. However around the Sibil and in the mountains there were many areas left where even the government had never been.

The team consisted out of fifteen scientists. Brongersma concerned himself mainly with the scientific side of the enterprise. In practice he took on many of the communication tasks and worried constantly about financial issues.¹¹² Venema was responsible for the technical aspects of the enterprise. The rest of the team came from all kinds of different scientific disciplines. There was an anthropology team, a group for geology and related sciences, zoologist and botanists, and cartographers from the *kadaster* (land register).¹¹³ In the camp there were not only scientists but also marines, Papua police men, the *draggers* and of course the local population from the Sibil who had to accept the presence of the base camp in their midst for six months.

The expedition was not a continuous nor a coherent event. The basis of the expedition was the camp at the Ok Sibil site (‘the Sibil river’). From there smaller expeditions took place. In the surroundings of the Sibil smaller bivouacs were constructed to facilitate the fieldwork. The anthropology team visited the neighboring *kampongs* (villages) and quietly

¹⁰⁸ UA, KNAG 1873-1967, 74, inv.no. 177, ‘Notariële akte oprichting SENNG, 1956’. The SENNG was a joint venture of the KNAG and the Treub Society (its goals was scientific research in the tropics). Members of the committee were among others: H.J. Lam (president), H.J.T. Bijlmer (secretary), H. Muller (treasurer).

¹⁰⁹ Ibidem, inv.no. 180, 194.

¹¹⁰ Ibidem, inv.no. 176, 178, 179, 180.

¹¹¹ J. Sneep, *Einde van het stenen tijdperk . Bestuursambtenaar in het witte hart van Nieuw-Guinea* (Amsterdam 2005); Schoorl (ed.), *Besturen*; J.W. Schoorl, ‘Wetenschappelijke expeditie naar het Sterrengebergte’, *Nieuw-Guinea studiën* 2 (1958) 28-41.

¹¹² UA, KNAG 1873-1967, 74, inv.no.194, ‘Letter to SENNG from Brongersma, 04-06-1959’ 5.

¹¹³ See Appendix II for an overview of all the participants of the two expeditions.

performed their research on the locals. Other disciplines, for example the geologists, looked further away for their research material. Expedition men climbed the Antares mountain in July, and a snow covered mountain the 'Julianatop' was reached in September. Geologist Bär and government official Dasselaar finished their research with a *doorsteek* (a cross-country tour): they walked from the Ok Sibil to the capital Hollandia on the north coast. It was a spectacular and an unspectacular end at the same time. The other participants had already left and the camp at Ok Sibil was being dismantled. During the expedition individual participants had a great deal of freedom to decide their whereabouts and research goals. Incidentally they went to Hollandia or Tanah Merah to visit a hospital or collect material. Brongersma regularly flew to Hollandia to discuss the dire financial situation.¹¹⁴ Although it makes sense to treat the Sterrenbergte expedition as a coherent whole, in fact it consisted of many different actions. Contacts between the different groups and participants were also not as frequent as one might expect.

The goal of the expedition was to collect scientific data about the land and the people. Zoologists and botanists assembled collections during their fieldwork. For the bigger animals the scientists employed the local Papuans to collect for them in exchange for a machete. The anthropology team took notes about the way of living and the physical measurements of the different tribes. André de Wilde also took fingerprints, while Lourens Nijenhuis was mainly concerned with taking blood samples. Geologists crossed country and mountains to gather data.

Nothing did exactly go as planned. Although most of the time scientists could get along fine and were occupied by their daily work, often practical problems impeded a smooth working environment. Especially because the supply chain, Venema's responsibility, caused the most problems.¹¹⁵ There were no major fallouts between scientists, although it was known that Venema and Brongersma did not always get along.¹¹⁶ Moreover the financial situation worsened by the day. Luckily in August business man C. Verolme saved the day and offered a guarantee of about f.200.000,-.

Right after the expedition ended, Brongersma drew a positive conclusion:

“Daarmee komt een einde aan de ‘expeditie van de tegenslagen’. Niettemin kunnen wij volkomen tevreden zijn over hetgeen in deze maanden is bereikt. Uitgebreide verzamelingen zijn bijeen gebracht en vele gegevens zijn verzameld. Zelfs de beklimming van de Antares en de Julianatop, die men misschien in de eerste plaats als sportieve prestaties ziet, hebben interessante wetenschappelijke gegevens opgeleverd. De doorsteek zal belangrijke gegevens op geologisch gebied en even belangrijke gegevens over de bevolking opleveren. Ondanks alle pech is voor ons de expeditie geslaagd. De pech zullen wij wel vergeten en dan blijven alleen de prettige herinneringen en de wetenschappelijke resultaten over.”¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ UA, KNAG 1873-1967, 74, inv.no.194, ‘Expeditiebericht XI, 136-1959’.

¹¹⁵ Ibidem, ‘Letter to SENNG from Brongersma, 29 and 30-5-1959’ 4.

¹¹⁶ Ibidem, ‘Letter Lam to Brongersma, 25-08-1959’.

¹¹⁷ Translation: “This puts an end to the ‘expedition of setbacks.’ Nevertheless we can be very satisfied with what has been achieved in these past months. Extensive collections have been gathered and many data have been collected. Climbing the Antaras and the Juliana peak, which one might primarily see as a sportive performance, has resulted in interesting scientific data. The cross-country tour will provide important information on geology

“De bereikte resultaten zijn zeer behoorlijk en als men de tegenslagen in aanmerking neemt is het merkwaardig, dat nog zoveel kon worden gedaan.”¹¹⁸

What happened to the results of this spectacular expedition? A popularized account by Brongersma and Venema was published with the title ‘Het witte hart van Nieuw-Guinea’.¹¹⁹ No comprehensive multidisciplinary scholarly publication ever came out of the enterprise, although individual scientists were able to use the data they gathered in their later scholarly career. In the media the expedition was often framed as a failure, most participants however adhere to another opinion.

Not a Self-Evident Cooperation

The scientific activities during the Sterrenbergte expedition resembled the kind of scientific work undertaken by the colonial government in Dutch New Guinea closely. The Population Office, based in Hollandia, was concerned with research and knowledge production about the indigenous people.¹²⁰ Colonial administrators made explorations and extensive travelling part of their work.¹²¹ A small group of bureaucrats ruled an enormous landmass of which large parts were not yet under a governmental gaze. The Sterrenbergte scientists were only able to fill part of the ‘white spots’ on the anthropological map.

We have seen that during the 1930s there was a certain degree of cooperation between the scientific effort and the colonial government. In the case of the Sterrenbergte expedition the connection between science and empire was more outspoken but also more contradictory.

For example Governor Jan van Baal (r.1953-1958) attended some of the meetings of the SENNG and if he was unable to attend, he contributed in the form of a letter. He made his opinions about cooperation between governmental penetration and scientific activity clearly known during one of the first meetings:

“In het aan Dr. Van Baal gezonden interim-rapport van Feb. 1953 werd er op gezinspeeld (...), dat gelijktijdige bestuurspenetratie wenselijk zou kunnen zijn. De Gouverneur had hierop zeer positief geantwoord, dat hij het samengaan van een wetenschappelijke expeditie met bestuurspenetratie minder gewenscht achtte. De vergadering meende zich bij dit standpunt te moeten neerleggen.

Gouverneur van Baal zag de leiding der expeditie gaarne in handen van een wetenschappelijk man met rimboe-ervaring.”¹²²

and equally important data about the population. Despite all the bad luck, for us the expedition has succeeded. We will forget all the setbacks and only the pleasant memories and the scientific results will remain.” From: UA, KNAG 1873-1967, 74, inv.no. 194 Verslag Brongersma, ‘Expeditiebericht XIX, 20-09-1959’ 4.

¹¹⁸ Translation: “The achieved results are more than adequate and, taking into account all the setbacks, it is remarkable that so much has been achieved.” From: UA, KNAG 1873-1967, 74, inv.no. 194, ‘Letter Brongersma to governor-general, 08-09-1959’ 9.

¹¹⁹ L.D. Brongersma and G.F.Venema, *Het witte hart van Nieuw-Guinea* (Amsterdam 1960).

¹²⁰ Jaarsma, *Waarneming en interpretatie* 42.

¹²¹ Snee, *Einde van het stenen tijdperk*; Schoorl (ed.), *Besturen*.

¹²² Translation: “In the interim report of February 1953 sent to dr. Van Baal it was alluded to (...), that simultaneous governmental penetration would be desirable. The governor gave a very positive answer to this, that he found the amalgamation of a scientific expedition with governmental penetration less desirable. The

“Wat uw tweede vraag aangaat, de combinatie van expeditie met bestuursvestiging gelijk Van Eecloud in zijn jongste boek suggereert, daar ben ik niet zulk een voorstander van. Dat is ook weer zo'n geval, waarbij óf de doeleinden der expeditie óf die van het bestuur in het gedrang komen. Wat ik wel graag wil doen is een bestuursambtenaar meegeven, die zijn ogen gebruikt. (...) zou het zo uitkomen, dat dit contact leidt tot bestuursvestiging, dan beschouw ik dat als een toevallige bate.”¹²³

These citations show clearly how according to the colonial government, here in the person of Van Baal, discouraged the intermingling of scientific and colonial interest. At the same time however Van Baal meddled intensively with the preparations and offered to send an official along. Also, the advice of other persons in the service of the colonial and the Dutch government was needed. Financial and logistic assistance from non-scientific sources was essential to make the expedition a scientific success. The Dutch government would contribute substantially to the expedition.¹²⁴ Private funding initially remained hesitant and not very significant.¹²⁵ Eventually the costs of the expedition would amount to one million guilders.¹²⁶ In order to get funding, the expedition was presented as a matter of national pride, next to emphasizing the scientific value and the possible economic discoveries.¹²⁷ When the expedition was already halfway, the enterprise was out of funding and needed to be saved by a significant financial guarantee by Verolme.¹²⁸

Early on the SENNG committee met with the minister of Foreign Affairs to ask for his opinion on the expedition.¹²⁹ Their wish was to: “(...) dit onderzoek tevens betekenis te doen hebben voor de door Nederland in het huidige tijdsgewricht in Nieuw Guinea te verrichten taak.”¹³⁰ They asked governor Van Baal the same thing; the expedition could stick to plans already made by the government.¹³¹ Van Baal's answer was negative, although sending along a capable government official would still be a possibility.¹³²

committee felt they had to accept this opinion. Governor van Baal liked to see the leadership of the expedition in the hands of a scientific man with jungle experience.” From: UA, KNAG 1873-1967, 74, inv.no. 176, ‘notes first meeting’ 1.

¹²³ Translation: “Concerning your second question, the combination of an expedition with governmental settlement, like Van Eecloud suggests in his last book, I am no proponent of. That is another case where either the goals of the expedition or the goals of the government would be put in jeopardy. What I do want to provide is a colonial official, who uses his senses. (...) if this would result in governmental settlement, I would consider it an accidental benefit.” From: Ibidem, inv.no. 181, ‘Letter Van Baal to Eggink, 14-04-1954’.

¹²⁴ Ibidem, inv.no. 180, ‘Wervingsbrief, October 1958’.

¹²⁵ Ibidem.

¹²⁶ Ibidem, inv.no.183.

¹²⁷ Ibidem, inv.no.180, ‘Wervingsbrief, October 1958’.

¹²⁸ Ibidem, inv.no. 194.

¹²⁹ Ministerie van Uniezaken en Overzeese Rijksdelen.

¹³⁰ Translation: “(...)this research to have meaning for the task ahead to be performed by the Netherlands in New Guinea in the current era.” From: UA, KNAG 1873-1967, 74, inv.no. 181, ‘Letter from Smit Sibinga and Vening Meinesz to minister Minuor, 10-06-1953’.

¹³¹ Ibidem, ‘Letter from Smit Sibinga to Van Baal, 18-02-1954’.

¹³² Ibidem, ‘Letter from Van Baal to Eggink, 14-04-1954’.

The main goals of the expedition were defined as purely scientific. In order to achieve these goals the assistance of the government was needed. First of all the colonial government in New Guinea already explored the possibilities in the Sibil valley in the second half of the 1950s.¹³³ Second the Dutch government contributed substantially to the expedition.¹³⁴ The whole enterprise was estimated to take thirty weeks and the total staff was estimated to consist of ten scientists, ten scientific assistants, thirty police men and fifty carriers.¹³⁵ A thoroughly modern, yet expensive, enterprise.

Attracting foreign scientists was not considered a viable option, just like in 1939, as we will see in the next section.¹³⁶ The possibility of *bestuursambtenaren* joining the expedition was not welcomed too heartily either. Although they were often academically trained and considered as a serious option as a participant (Schoorl, De Bruijn), they were needed for governmental tasks as well.¹³⁷ The expedition had to be content with a minimum of government assistance. In addition in 1959 the colonial network had disappeared, many scientists came fresh from Dutch academia. Some members already had work experience in Dutch New Guinea, but were unfamiliar with the pre-war Netherlands Indies. Geologist C. Bär had been working in the Sterrengebergte area before, Geomorphologist Herman Verstappen had worked as a scientist in independent Indonesia and Jan Pouwer and Johannes Anceaux had been employed by the Population Office in Hollandia.

Let us return to the Ok Sibil. Here the cooperation with the ‘colonial government’ was even closer because the connections mainly played out on a personal level. Jan Sneep was the responsible government official for the daily affairs at the Ok Sibil settlement.¹³⁸ He was assisted by two other officials on the spot. This expedition attracted the interest of higher officials as well. Governor Pieter Platteel (r.1958-1962), his wife Margaretha Laseur and *resident* A. Boendermaker visited the Ok Sibil in July 1959. The atmosphere was relaxed and informal, although Brongersma used this opportunity to discuss some financial problems.¹³⁹ Brongersma frequently appealed for more funding with the governor and at the end of the expedition he sent him an account of the results.¹⁴⁰

¹³³ UA, KNAG 1873-1967, 74, inv.no. 176, ‘Notes sixth meeting’ 1.

¹³⁴ Ibidem, inv.no.180, ‘Wervingsbrief, October 1958’; Ibidem, inv.no.183, ‘Begroting’. The Dutch government contributed over f300.000,-.

¹³⁵ Ibidem, inv.no. 179, ‘Memorandum expeditie Nederlands Nieuw-Guinea, written by Venema’.

¹³⁶ Ibidem, ‘Notulen conferentie met minster Minuor, 11 september 1957’.

¹³⁷ Ibidem, inv.no. 176, ‘Notes fifth meeting’3.

¹³⁸ Sneep, *Einde van het stenen tijdperk*.

¹³⁹ UA, KNAG 1873-1967, 74, inv.no. 194, ‘Letter Brongersma to SENNG, 10-07-1959’.

¹⁴⁰ Ibidem, ‘Letter Brongersma to Governor Platteel, 02-07-1959’; Ibidem, ‘Letter Brongersma to Governor Platteel, 08-09-1959’.

An Expedition of National Pride?

The connections between science and empire were more problematic and more outspoken because an entirely different set of parameters was influencing (the organization of) the scientific expedition. Towards the end of the 1950s the Dutch claim to New Guinea was heavily debated in international diplomacy. This political dynamic was also felt by the organizers. They were more outspoken about the *national* character the future expedition should or should not have. Some scientists were more passionate about it than others. For example professor Schermerhorn wrote back to the KNAG after he accepted his membership of the preparatory committee:

“Nu nl.de politieke leiding van het Nederlandse volk, (...), heeft gemeend de vervulling ener uiterst pretentieuze taak t.a.v. Nieuw-Guinea als last op de schouders van ons volk te moeten leggen, acht ik het de plicht van alle werkers op het gebied van techniek en wetenschap ertoe bij te dragen, dat Nederland althans een maximum van deze pretentie tracht te realiseren. Realisme en besef van medeverantwoordelijkheid voor het prestige van Nederland in de internationale wereld nopen ook mij tot een maximale bijdrage aan de ontwikkeling van Nieuw-Guinea met gebruik van de mogelijkheden en middelen, die mij op het gebied van mijn vak ter beschikking staan.”¹⁴¹

From the beginning the expedition was seen primarily as a project that could enhance Dutch *national* (scientific) prestige, and no longer *imperial* prestige

The cooperation of both the Dutch government and the local bureaucracy in New Guinea was sought because of the political importance of the expedition: “(...)waar iedereen het er over eens is, dat Nieuw Guinea om staatkundige redenen op alle manieren aangepakt moet worden, ook wetenschappelijk.”¹⁴² As New Guinea was an area that was previously neglected, the KNAG tried to convince the government of the political and scientific significance of the area. This was an unique chance to do it right and therefore they should use all possible resources.

Side goal of the expedition was to look for precious ores. A prewar expedition had been looking for gold in the Sterrengebergte and in the *Vogelkop* area oil had been found.¹⁴³ Zoologist and expedition member John Staats told an anecdote about the search for uranium. In case the team would find uranium, they would have to refer to it as ‘bamboo’ as both materials can be split.¹⁴⁴ In the international controversy Dutch New Guinea was involved in,

¹⁴¹ Translation: “Now that the political leaders of the Dutch people (...), are of the opinion that the fulfilment of the extremely pretentious task concerning New Guinea should be put on the shoulders of our people, I consider it the duty of all who work in the field of technology and science to contribute to this, in order for the Netherlands to realize a maximum of this claim. Realism and a sense of a shared responsibility for the prestige of the Netherlands in the international world require me to contribute to the development of New Guinea using the possibilities and resources which are at my disposal in my field.” From: UA, KNAG 1873-1967, 74, inv.no. 181, ‘Letter Schermerhorn to KNAG, 31-05-1953’.

¹⁴² Translation: “(...)there is general agreement about the fact that New Guinea for political reasons should be put central stage in all ways possible, also scientific.” From: Ibidem, inv.no.147, ‘Letter from (?) to Voute 25-02-1938’ 3.

¹⁴³ See Appendix III for a map of Dutch New Guinea.

¹⁴⁴ Interview John Staats, Leiden 10-05-2012.

finding or not finding precious ores could be vital. As became clear later exploitation of its natural resources never reached its full potential during the colonial period.

The international reputation and the role in world politics of the Netherlands and their colony were thus referred to in the earlier citations. In the meetings of the SENNG the possibility of inviting foreign expertise was also discussed. However in a meeting with the minister of Foreign Affairs the committee's reluctance became clear:

“(…) De voorzitter legt de nadruk op de in ons Bestuur heersende tegenzin buitenlandse hulp in te roepen; hij meent dat een verzoek om zodanige hulp eigenlijk een schande voor ons land zou betekenen en ook ongewenste gevolgen zou kunnen hebben, bijv. t.a.v. de verzamelingen, publicaties.”¹⁴⁵

This citation is a rather bold indication of the international competition the Dutch organizers feared when letting a foreign scientists into the team or accepted other resources from abroad. From the notes of the SENNG committee spoke a clear wish to let the expedition be a Dutch affair. Not only would the results be beneficial to Dutch scientific practice, also the Dutch as a nation should be able to organize such an event.¹⁴⁶ The possibility of attracting foreign capital was definitely discussed, but for the most the members were reluctant or dismissive.¹⁴⁷ The notes show that the organizers were very aware of the national reputation and the international competition at stake with the Star Mountains expedition.

This reluctance was mainly about the scientific part, in the end the American photographer Dominis was allowed to stay at the expedition base camp for a while, documenting the locals for *Life* magazine in exchange for a sum of money for the SENNG. Scientific team and New Guinea government did not always agree on issues of international competition and media attention.

“De mededeling over de verhouding tussen wetenschap en overheid is ook een verdraaid geheel. In een van mijn vorige brieven heb ik al gezegd, dat ik wel eens de indruk heb, dat het Gouvernement de propagandazijde belangrijker vindt dan de wetenschappelijke zijde. Er zijn over het contract misverstanden gerezen. Nu is de nieuwe gouverneur anders dan zijn voorganger. De heer van Baal vond het allang goed als wij zelf iets voor elkaar konden krijgen; de nieuwe Gouverneur wil overal in gekend worden.”¹⁴⁸

“De ernstigste grief van de Gouverneur is dat de expeditie niet voldoende aan publiciteit doet.”¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁵ Translation: “(…) The president emphasizes the prevailing reluctance in our board to call in foreign aid: he believes that a request for such assistance would be a shame for our country and would have all kinds of undesirable consequences, especially concerning collections, publications.” From: UA, KNAG 1873-1967, 74, inv.no. 179, ‘Notulen van de Conferentie met Z.E. de Minister van Zaken Overzee 11-09-1957’.

¹⁴⁶ Ibidem, inv.no.178, ‘Second Meeting 15-06-1956’.

¹⁴⁷ Ibidem, ‘Eleventh Meeting 08-05-1957’.

¹⁴⁸ Translation: “The announcement about the relationship between science and government is completely twisted. In one of my previous letters I already said, that sometimes I have the impression, that the colonial government finds propaganda more important than science. Misunderstandings have arisen about the contract. The new governor is different than his predecessor. Mr. Van Baal always agreed if we organized things ourselves; the new governor wants to meddle in everything.” From: Ibidem, inv.no.194, ‘Letter from Brongersma to SENNG, 03-05-1959’ 2.

¹⁴⁹ Translation: “The Governor’s most serious grievance is the fact that the expedition does not engage that much in publicity.” From: Ibidem, ‘Letter from Brongersma to SENNG, 11-06-1959 and 13-06-1959’ 6.

The last citations about the two governors show that individual connections could decide the relation between science and empire. While governor van Baal, an anthropologist by training himself, emphasized the independent character of scientific research, his successor governor Platteel used the expedition to gain more publicity for Dutch New Guinea. National sentiments were also articulated during the expedition, although there was no agreement on this matter. Climbing the Antares and the Juliana peak were sometimes perceived as prestige projects. The colonial government was pleased with the extra publicity these alpinist enterprises generated. Governor Platteel even used the photo taken on the Juliana peak for his official New Year's card. Geomorphologist Verstappen however re-emphasized the scientific meaning climbing the mountains had for the team.¹⁵⁰ The expedition generated plenty of attention in Dutch and international media. This was not always a positive thing, as the financial and logistic problems became widely known as well.

Did everyone feel or understand the national character and the scientific prestige the expedition had in 1959? They probably did, as the whole scientific team and all of the assistants came either from the Netherlands or were recruited locally. The scientists must have been aware of the controversy raging around Dutch New Guinea at the time and the colonial connotations the enterprise might have had. Enhancement of national prestige was a side effect of the expedition however not one of their major goals. The citations mentioned in this paragraph are just indicators of a sentiment that might have had a wider resonance.

Conclusion

The connections between the government and the scientific enterprise were more heavily debated in the preparation for the Sterrengebergte expedition. Governor Van Baal did not agree with the intermingling of the two. In practice however, the government played an important role facilitating the enterprise. Moreover the expedition had a strong aura of national and scientific prestige around it. More depended on the enterprise than on the Wisselmeren expedition. New Guinea had changed from an outpost of empire to an area pivotal to the international esteem of the Netherlands. The scientists themselves put their scientific interests first. With both expeditions science and empire were certainly not independent entities but mutually influenced each other. The limit of the available facilities and the small network of New Guinea forced both parties to cooperate with each other. Did the government put a colonial framework on scientific research as Jaarsma suggested?¹⁵¹ Or did the expeditions stimulate governmental settlement in the New Guinea highlands? This ambivalent situation created a certain particularity in the context in which new knowledge was produced in Dutch New Guinea. The two expeditions were no anachronisms, but particular moments of practicing science in a modern colony. Although they have been perceived as failures, this is perhaps due to their unlucky timing in history. A more complete comparison of the two events can only be reached by also looking at the content that was produced.

¹⁵⁰ Interview H. Verstappen, Enschede 11-04-2012.

¹⁵¹ Jaarsma, *Waarneming en interpretatie*.

Chapter Three

Science: A Short History of (Colonial) Anthropology

Introduction

“Nieuw Guinee is van quantité négligeable een mogelijkheid geworden. (...) Of op zijn grond een welvarende kolonie zal kunnen gedijen, we kunnen het slechts wenschen. De rol van Blank en Geel ligt hierbij in het duister. Eén ding staat vast, de rol, die Zwart erbij te spelen krijgt, is die van figurant.(...) Nieuw Guinee is het domein der Papoea’s. Wild en oorspronkelijk is dit volk, dat zijn leven slijt in de eindelooze wouden en moerassen, welke het land overdekken.(...) het volk van Nieuw Guinee draagt de stempel van een land, dat tot de uithoeken der wereld mag worden gerekend en dat voor een groot deel, met het nabije Australië, gespeend bleef van de groote cultuurgolven, die van Azië de Zuidzee kwamen binnenrollen.”¹⁵²

These sentences about the people of New Guinea were written by the Dutch physical anthropologist Hendrik Bijlmer (1890-1959). In his book ‘Naar de achterhoek der aarde’ he reflected on his time as the leader of the 1935-1936 Mimika expedition to the New Guinea highlands.¹⁵³ The eye-catcher here, is the centrality of race in his anthropological narrative. This book is a strange mixture of a traveling account, physical anthropological data and statements about the past, present and future of the Papuan ‘race’. On an academic level Bijlmer wanted to contribute to the debate about the status of the tribes in the highlands: Could they be counted among the so-called ‘pygmies’? He hoped that his anthropological data could shed more light on the position of these ‘pygmies’ in the hierarchy of the races of New Guinea and of the world. The language he used was drenched with racialized descriptions of the ‘other’.

This image of the ‘other’ was partially made during a scientific expedition. The knowledge that was made in the context of the late-colonial expeditions was not only made on a political level, as we have seen in the last chapter. In the next part of the story we will first look at some general developments in anthropology and science (this chapter) and afterwards look at the images of the ‘other’ and the anthropological ‘self’ that were produced in this particular environment. In this short chapter we take a look at the development of the anthropological discipline on an international and national level. As many books have already provided good overviews of the history of anthropology, this chapter only takes a very limited look at this story. Moreover for clarity’s sake the different sub-specializations of anthropology are integrated in one story. Anthropology is generally regarded as the overarching scientific

¹⁵² Translation: “New Guinea has transformed from being a negligible quantity to a possibility. (...) Whether on its grounds a prosperous colony will ever thrive, we can only imagine. The role of White and Yellow hereby lies in the dark. One thing is certain: The role that Black will play in this, will be superfluous. (...) New Guinea is the domain of the Papuans. A people wild and aboriginal, that spends its life in the endless forests and swamps, which cover the land. (...) the people of New Guinea are marked by this country, that can be counted among the far corners of the world and that, together with nearby Australia, has been deprived of the great cultural waves, that came from Asia to the Pacific.” From: H.J.T. Bijlmer, *Naar de achterhoek der aarde: de Mimika-expeditie naar Nederlandsch Nieuw-Guinea* (Amsterdam 1938) 9-10.

¹⁵³ Bijlmer, *Naar de achterhoek*.

discipline in the study of man, ethnography more as the ‘tool’ to describe these people and culture. This literature study beforehand is necessary to answer the question: How does the anthropological knowledge production of the late-colonial New Guinea expeditions relate to international and Dutch scientific developments? In addition this chapter will focus in particular on the conceptual role ‘race’ played in the scientific discourse. Expedition anthropology is thus placed in a larger context.

Race and the Making of Anthropology

In the course of the nineteenth century anthropology with its present name and form came into being. The study of men became more institutionalized and more demarcated from other branches of natural history. It is difficult however to point out a starting point of the discipline. Some scholars have looked at predecessors before the nineteenth century: Starting points range from the descriptions of Herodotus to the travel accounts of Columbus.¹⁵⁴ Narratives in which other lands and people were studied, could be counted as early anthropological attempts.

Anthony Pagden analysed the emerging discourse about the ‘other’ after the discovery of the Americas in his classic work ‘The Fall of Natural Man’.¹⁵⁵ Herein he documented the shift from the medieval worldview of seeing the world in terms of sameness (Aristotle’s system of natural law) to seeing the world in terms of difference and relativity. Spanish scholars in early modern Europe debated about the humanity of the Indians. Famous thinkers like Las Casas offered for the first time an ethnological framework to compare the races of the world.¹⁵⁶ Indians were perceived as clearly different and as a race that defied the standards of Europe. Also they were clearly human but placed on some lower step of humanity. Thus a hierarchy of men was created and the Indians were seen as a ‘race’ living in the world’s past.

Pagden demonstrated that describing non-Europeans in terms of difference and wonder certainly predated the modern period. Systematic studies, detailed ethnographies and a scholarly fascination with race and classification however only came into being from the end of the eighteenth century onwards. The medieval and early modern inclusive worldview made way for an exclusive worldview in which the European white race took a superior position:

“(…)the metamorphosis of prevailing Enlightenment ideas about externally induced variation within an essentially similar humanity into a science of race that reified human difference as permanent, hereditary, and innately somatic.”¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁴ H. Liebersohn, ‘Anthropology Before Anthropology’, in: H. Kuklick (ed.), *A New History of Anthropology* (Malden MA 2008) 18.

¹⁵⁵ A. Pagden, *The Fall of Natural Man. The American Indian and the Origins of Comparative Ethnology* (Cambridge 1982).

¹⁵⁶ Pagden, *The Fall* 123.

¹⁵⁷ B. Douglas, ‘Climate to Crania: science and the racialization of human difference’, in: B. Douglas and C. Ballard (eds.), *Foreign Bodies . Oceania and the Science of Race 1750-1940* (Canberra 2008) 33.

The word 'race' was slowly normalized and essentialized.¹⁵⁸ It became the classifier of humanity into a 'chain of being' over the course of the nineteenth century. Deciding the racial position of a group on the 'chain of being' depended on a wide range of characteristics: from bodily features to character, from mechanic tools to beauty. Up to the end of the eighteenth century most Western thinkers were convinced that humanity was essentially equal. All civilizations were believed to have an inherent capacity to progress to the same level as Western society. The Age of Enlightenment was an important turning point for racial thinking.

The interest for race and primitive societies was accelerated by new discoveries in Oceania.¹⁵⁹ The people encountered in these new territories, Australian Aboriginals and Papuans among others, were deemed particularly primitive and debates ensued about the origins of men and its internal differences.¹⁶⁰ This discovery provided European scholars with new research material to form theories about race.

At the dawn of the nineteenth century (1800-1850) ethnographic descriptions were still mainly auxiliary to other disciplines. First and foremost ethnography was part of the natural history tradition. Gillian Beer describes the anxieties of the nineteenth century natural historian and early anthropologist:

“What are the boundaries of natural history? Are human beings within its scope? Are they one species or several? Are they separate from all other species because created as souls by God? And do all, all savages, have souls? Or are they - here danger lies - a kind of animal?”¹⁶¹

The line between humanity and nature was blurred when encountering 'savages' who were deemed closer to nature. The methodology of natural history was instrumentalized for the sciences of men. Ethnographic artefacts and information about indigenous people were collected as if those were natural specimens.¹⁶² Collecting human skeletons and skulls or displaying living people must be seen in the context of attempts to explain the totality of nature.¹⁶³

Darwinism had a significant influence on the development of anthropology. Darwin brought more consensus in the notion of a single origin of humankind, but left the possibility of currently existing races open. He did not bring about a sudden rupture; his work was firmly embedded in nineteenth century debates.¹⁶⁴ Instead the races of the world were brought into

¹⁵⁸ Douglas, 'Climate to Crania', in: Douglas and Ballard (eds.), *Foreign Bodies* 44.

¹⁵⁹ H. Liebersohn, 'Anthropology Before Anthropology', in: Kuklick (ed.), *A New History* 25, 28.

¹⁶⁰ B. Douglas, 'Introduction. Foreign Bodies in Oceania', in: Douglas and Ballard (eds.), *Foreign Bodies* 8.

¹⁶¹ G. Beer, 'Travelling the Other Way', in: N. Jardine, J.A. Secord and E.C. Spary (eds.), *Cultures of Natural History* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1996) 327.

¹⁶² M.T. Bravo, 'Ethnological Encounters', in: Jardine a.o.(eds.), *Cultures* 338

¹⁶³ Bravo, 'Ethnological Encounters', in: Jardine a.o. (eds.), *Cultures* 338

¹⁶⁴ Douglas, 'Climate to Crania', in: Douglas and Ballard (eds.), *Foreign Bodies* 68.

an evolutionary scale which allowed for debate about the past, present and future of the world's race. A context in which the future of 'primitive' people was severely doubted.¹⁶⁵

The nineteenth century saw the development of anthropology into a full-fledged scientific discipline. The classic work on the history of Victorian anthropology has been written by George Stocking over 25 years ago.¹⁶⁶ Since that time many works on the nineteenth century development of anthropology have been published. Stocking emphasized too that the study of man came out of the tradition of natural history.¹⁶⁷ Up to the mid-nineteenth century ethnographic issues were mainly studied in scientific societies or in museums. Towards the end of the nineteenth century separate anthropology chairs at the university came into being in the United States, Britain and also in the rest of Europe.¹⁶⁸ The Netherlands followed in the early twentieth century.

It is important to keep in mind that national traditions could diverge significantly from the British or the American school, for example in Germany and France.¹⁶⁹ In continental Europe 'anthropology' was mainly used to denote the 'physical' component of anthropology, while ethnography study the social and cultural aspects.¹⁷⁰ In the Anglo-American world a strong division existed between social anthropology and physical anthropology.¹⁷¹ It is the Anglo-American tradition that is most prominent in historical writing about the topic.

Anthropology originated out of the contact between different cultures, most of the time a colonial encounter. Anthropology mainly studied non-Western societies. In the nineteenth century scholars tried to make sense of other people by placing human kind in a 'chain of being'. Race was the issue anthropology evolved around, however the field never gained consensus about the nature and the diversity of the races:

"The debate over race was, of course, vitiated by an inability to mark the boundary between race and culture, or between biological, social and cultural factors as they affect race. (...) Race was an issue marked by lack of ontological control."¹⁷²

This was not only the case for physical anthropology; other specializations had the same problematic relationship with colonialism and race. Even social or cultural anthropology depended on a notion of 'other' as 'savage' or 'primitive'. By placing the colonial subject in a

¹⁶⁵ B. Douglas, 'Novus Orbis Australis': Oceania in the Science of Race, 1750-1850', in: Douglas and Ballard (eds.), *Foreign Bodies* 132.

¹⁶⁶ G.W. Stocking jr., *Victorian Anthropology* (New York 1987).

¹⁶⁷ Jardine a.o. (eds.), *Cultures*.

¹⁶⁸ Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology* 265.

¹⁶⁹ See A. Zimmerman, *Anthropology and Antihumanism in Imperial Germany* (Chicago 2001); Kuklick (ed.), *A New History*.

¹⁷⁰ H. Glenn Penny, "Traditions in the German Language", in: Kuklick (ed.), *A New History* 80-81

¹⁷¹ A. Kuper, *Anthropology and Anthropologists. The Modern British School* (London 1993) 190.

¹⁷² T.F. Glick, "The Anthropology of Race Across the Darwinian Revolution", in: Kuklick (ed.), *A New History* 240.

different time and space trajectory, anthropology became the study of a racialized 'other'.¹⁷³ In addition by not going against the dominant paradigm anthropology perpetuated a relationship of domination. Race thinking was not confined to the academy, but permeated through all levels in society as Said emphasized.

Around the turn of the century anthropology became more and more institutionalized.¹⁷⁴ Still the discipline was still very much an armchair discipline. In Britain and in the rest of Europe anthropology depended on networks of informants in the European colonies.

Things changed under the influence of simultaneous developments in the United States and Great Britain. In the United States the takeoff of modern anthropology can be placed with Franz Boas who in his long career rejected racial hierarchies and biological determinism.¹⁷⁵ Stocking placed the 'classic' period of modern anthropology in the period 1920-1960.¹⁷⁶ Boas and his followers (Margaret Mead among others) resisted the dominant paradigm of race but did not immediately ignite a paradigm change themselves.¹⁷⁷ Boas advocated, although studying individuals and societies as a whole, a strong separation between race, language and culture.¹⁷⁸ Race was not a signifier of a subject's character and therefore Boas resisted the anthropological classification of groups. Certainly at the beginning of his career (around 1900) his views were deemed somewhat particular.

The other important development was set into motion by Bronislaw Malinowski, a Polish national teaching in London. He made fieldwork the method for anthropological research during the interwar period: "(...) the lone anthropologist became an embodied scientific instrument."¹⁷⁹ At the moment it is almost impossible to imagine any kind of anthropology without fieldwork. Different schools came out of this new fieldwork methodology after the First World War. Malinowski is generally seen as the founder of modern social-functional British anthropology. He united a strong theoretical holistic view on primitive society with solid fieldwork (in Oceania).¹⁸⁰ On the other hand British anthropology was heavily influenced by Radcliffe-Brown. He brought French sociology to British anthropology and introduced structuralist concepts to ethnographic fieldwork.¹⁸¹ He can be seen as the precursor to structuralist anthropology, propagated by Lévi-Strauss after the Second World War.¹⁸²

¹⁷³ Kuper, *Anthropology and Anthropologists* 113; J. Fabian, *Time and the Other. How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (New York 1983/2002).

¹⁷⁴ Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology* 265.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibidem* 287.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibidem* 289.

¹⁷⁷ O paradigms: T. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962).

¹⁷⁸ G.W. Stocking jr. (ed.), *A Franz Boas Reader. The Shaping of American Anthropology 1883-1911* (Chicago 1974) 15.

¹⁷⁹ H. Kuklick, 'The British Tradition', in: Kuklick (ed.), *A New History* 65.

¹⁸⁰ Kuper, *Anthropology and Anthropologists* 1, 7, 32.

¹⁸¹ *Ibidem* 35.

¹⁸² *Ibidem* 160.

Before the 1960s there had been several strong national traditions in anthropology. After the Second World War the American school became more dominant.¹⁸³ In existing literature the European (continental) traditions are often banned to the footnotes. The American school divided anthropology in four sub-disciplines: physical or biological anthropology, archeology, linguistics and social or cultural anthropology.¹⁸⁴

New Directions

After the events of the Second World War anthropology was not finished with the concept of 'race'. Even after the Unesco Declaration on Race in 1950.¹⁸⁵ Herein it was clearly stated that all humans belong to a common stock with more similarities than differences (from a social and a biological viewpoint). The statement suggested to drop the word 'race' altogether. However the daily (political) realities of the post-war world were witness to the power the concept of 'race' still had. Therefore it is not surprising that 'race' did not immediately disappear out of school curricula and academic textbooks.¹⁸⁶ 'Race' gradually disappeared out of anthropological curricula after 1960. Cultural/social anthropology and physical anthropology further diverged, a process visible to our day.¹⁸⁷ This slow disappearance of 'race' happened in the Netherlands as well.¹⁸⁸ Decolonization and the critical reflection on the colonial past brought discontinuity rather than the Second World War.

The real 'rupture' came in the 1960s and 1970s.¹⁸⁹ The book 'Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter' edited by Talal Asad came out of this moment of uncertainty in the field of anthropology. Anthropologists in the 1970s became aware that the professionalization of their discipline had been strongly connected to the history of empire. Anthropologists had occupied a very ambivalent role ('double ambivalence'): on the one hand the colonial state allowed for anthropological fieldwork to take place, on the other hand the researcher crossed the colonial divide and immersed him or herself in indigenous society.¹⁹⁰ Had anthropologists been the tools of empire? The book does not give a decisive answer to that question. For example contributor Wendy James argued that anthropologists were no mere tools of colonialism and that there was conflict rather than agreement between anthropologists and officials.¹⁹¹ Asad himself on the other hand concluded in his essay that anthropologists helped perpetuate colonial domination because the imperial framework was always present in their

¹⁸³ Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology* 289.

¹⁸⁴ A. Barnard, *History and Theory in Anthropology* (Cambridge 2000) 2-3.

¹⁸⁵ Unesco Declaration on Race, 1950.

¹⁸⁶ Mok, *In de ban* 11.

¹⁸⁷ J. Marks, 'Race Across the Physical-Cultural Divide in American Anthropology', in: Kuklick (ed.), *A New History* 254.

¹⁸⁸ Mok, *In de ban* 11; D. van Duuren (a.o.), *Physical Anthropology Reconsidered. Human Remains at the Tropenmuseum* (Amsterdam 2007) 17.

¹⁸⁹ T. Asad, 'Introduction', in: Asad (ed.), *Anthropology* 12-13.

¹⁹⁰ Asad, 'Introduction', in: Asad (ed.), *Anthropology* 16-17.

¹⁹¹ W. James, 'The Anthropologist as Reluctant Imperialist', in: Asad (ed.), *Anthropology* 46.

research.¹⁹² A certain image of ‘other’ was formed by a process of omission and selection.¹⁹³ This volume was a real starting point for the debate about anthropology and empire and has been taken up by almost all major works published after.

Sometimes applied anthropology is added as a fifth sub-specialization. The origins of this specialization were definitely bound up with colonialism, but it is not a straightforward connection. Applied anthropology had too many scientific pretensions to ever become fully occupied by the colonial administration.¹⁹⁴ Anthropologists also knew that they would not get into high academic positions by doing too much (colonial) applied anthropology.¹⁹⁵ This situation was different for the Netherlands as we will see in chapter four.

Adam Kuper asked the opposite question: To what extent was knowledge formation influenced by the existence of empire?¹⁹⁶ It is exactly this question that we want to answer in the following three chapters. Because in asking the question whether anthropology was ‘complicit’ with empire, takes the analysis almost to a moral ground. It is far more interesting to look if knowledge was clearly influenced or altered by the connection to empire. We will return to Kuper’s question in the next chapter.

The Netherlands: Knowledge of the ‘Other’ Made in the Colonies

In the introduction we saw that anthropology in the Netherlands was strongly embedded in a colonial tradition. Dutch science and with it Dutch orientalism had a strong focus on the Netherlands Indies. Herein New Guinea played only a marginal role, this fascination would only gain strength from the mid-1930s.¹⁹⁷

Ethnography was inextricably linked to natural history up to 1850. Authors writing about the Dutch tradition do not contradict this connection but point out other links that were important as well. Rudolf Effert saw early ethnography mainly as an essential part of Dutch imperial expansion in the first half of the nineteenth century. Ethnography “expressed the utility and applied advantage which could be gleaned for agriculture, arts, crafts, statecraft, natural resources, war skills, trade, natural history, and literature or other branches of civic or religious enlightenment or civilization.”¹⁹⁸ Donna Mehos saw the rise of ethnographic museums and the anthropological discipline in the Netherlands also in the light of trade interests.¹⁹⁹ According to her the rather arbitrary interest in people was most of the time

¹⁹² T. Asad, ‘Two European Images of non-European Rule’, in: Asad (ed.), *Anthropology* 118.

¹⁹³ Asad, ‘Two European Images’, in: Asad (ed.), *Anthropology* 114.

¹⁹⁴ James, ‘The Anthropologist’, in: Asad (ed.), *Anthropology* 56.

¹⁹⁵ Kuper, *Anthropology and Anthropologists* 107.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibidem* 111.

¹⁹⁷ Vermeulen and Kommers, ‘Introduction’, in: Vermeulen and Kommers (eds.), *Tales from Academia*. 4.

¹⁹⁸ R. Effert, *Royal Cabinets and Auxiliary Branches: Origins of the National Museum of Ethnology 1816-1866* (Leiden 2008) 34.

¹⁹⁹ D.C. Mehos, ‘Colonial Commerce and Anthropological Knowledge: Dutch Ethnographic Museums in the European Context’, in: Kuklick (ed.), *A New History*.

overruled by trade interests. Also Marieke Bloembergen linked the representation of the colonies to colonial policy and non-academic interests.²⁰⁰

In existing literature early ethnography is presented as connected to other (natural) sciences and the colonial enterprise with all its commercial interests. The expeditions from the Royal Geographical Society almost always had an ethnographer or anthropologist on board for most of the time. However their intentions were scientific in the first place, although according to Ineke Mok there was a strong connection to colonial expansion as we earlier.²⁰¹

The academic discipline of ‘anthropology’ came out of eighteenth century *volkenkunde* and ethnographic descriptions. *Volkenkunde* heavily leaned towards the German tradition of *Volkskunde* and *Völkerkunde* which studied folklore and culture at home and abroad.²⁰² The ‘modern’ tradition of Dutch anthropology started with P.J. Veth (also founder of the Royal Geographic Society). He became the first professor of geography and ethnography in 1877.²⁰³ He was the expert of his time about the Indonesian archipelago.

The connection to the Indies was also strong because ethnographic information became part of the curriculum for future colonial civil servants.²⁰⁴ In comparison to other countries institutionalization took place late in Dutch academia. Only in the early twentieth century did chairs for anthropology come into being at the university.²⁰⁵ Kuklick said about this:

“At the other extreme is the situation in the Netherlands, in which future colonial officials were given formal instruction in practical knowledge about subject peoples and museums were created in which colonies’ commercial values was made evident; but anthropology did not develop in the Netherlands as an esoteric discipline until the end of the colonial era.”²⁰⁶

On the one hand The Netherlands was relatively late with institutionalizing anthropology as an academic discipline, on the other hand there was the quite *unique* situation that future colonial servants had to learn about anthropological issues during their training.

With Veth anthropology as a scientific specialization entered the university in the 1880s. Together with the institutionalization of the discipline came the interest for racial theories and classifying people. The discipline was named ‘ethnology’ and after the independence of Indonesia renamed ‘cultural anthropology’. Dutch anthropology had very utilitarian origins; under influence of J.P.B. Josselin de Jong it also gained more theoretical strength in the interwar period.²⁰⁷ He was the most important proponent of structuralism in the

²⁰⁰ Bloembergen, *Colonial Spectacles*.

²⁰¹ Mok, *In de ban* 98.

²⁰² Barnard, *History and Theory* 2.

²⁰³ Effert, *Royal Cabinets* 3.

²⁰⁴ Vermeulen and Kommers, ‘Introduction’, in: Vermeulen and Kommers (eds.), *Tales from Academia* 5.

²⁰⁵ *Ibidem* 6.

²⁰⁶ H. Kuklick, ‘Introduction’, in: Kuklick (ed.), *A New History* 9-10.

²⁰⁷ Mehos, ‘Colonial Commerce’, in: Kuklick (ed.), *A New History* 187; R. Schefold, “Indonesian Studies and Cultural Anthropology in Leiden: from Encyclopedism to Field of Anthropological Study”, in: Vermeulen and Kommers (eds.), *Tales from Academia* 85-89.

Netherlands. He would also influence a generation of colonial scholars, amongst them Jan Pouwer who joined the Sterrenbergte expedition for social and cultural anthropology.

Intermezzo

At the beginning of this chapter we saw which role Oceania played internationally in the making of modern anthropology. Famous anthropologists like Malinowski, Mead and Radcliffe-Brown all did important parts of their fieldwork in the area. The small isolated unexplored communities of New Guinea were ideal case studies for anthropological fieldwork. The diversity of societies, languages and people provided an inexhaustible source of anthropological research material. The anthropological discipline was not unambiguous and could differ substantially with every national tradition or region. The Netherlands had a distinct tradition of its own. The next chapter will be about the knowledge that was produced in the context of the expeditions to the New Guinea highlands, in line with these international, national and regional developments in anthropology.

Chapter Four

Making Knowledge: Constructing the Ethnographic 'Other'

Introduction

“Kortom, het doorgronden van de geestesgesteldheid van autochtone volken als onze Bergpapoea's is tijdens vluchtige expedities uitgesloten. Een goede bestudering van hun primitieve mentaliteit is slechts mogelijk, wanneer men zich geheel in hun gedachtegang weet te verplaatsen, die als regel veel logischer en ingewikkelder zal blijken te zijn dan wij wel denken.”²⁰⁸

Getting to know the Papuans was a daunting task according to the leader of the Wisselmeren expedition Charles Le Roux. Not only was the time span of the expedition too short to gain a solid knowledge of the Papuan character, the people in the highlands formed an inscrutable category of their own. The encounter was complicated by an enormous linguistic and cultural distance, a fact which Dutch anthropologists often complained about. A short stay could shed light on the material culture, but more the complicated things like character and rationality remained elusive according to Dutch anthropologists on expedition. Special strategies had to be devised to know the mind and the body of the Papuan.

In the next part we will look at how anthropological knowledge was formed in the particular research space set by the relation between science and empire. In this chapter we will ask the following question: What kind of image of the 'other' or Papuan was constructed by the anthropologists of the late-colonial Dutch New Guinea expeditions? By using the same structure as in chapter two, the anthropological construction of the 'other' will be put alongside the story about the interaction of science and empire. We will look at the debates and questions these anthropologists were struggling with, the images of the 'other' that were circulating at the time and that were reinforced or changed by their experiences, finally we will look at the scientific impact their work had.

The analysis of the construction of the 'other' is of course heavily indebted to Said.²⁰⁹ According to him the image of the (Arab) 'other' was entirely constructed by the West. This construction did not exist in reality but did manifest itself in a world where imperial power relations were a reality. The 'other' was not constructed in one place: Knowledge was made among others in science, culture and politics in a play of discursive power. By subtle mechanisms of imperial power, encapsulated in language, images and practices the 'other' was pushed into an inferior opposition to the West.

Therefore different genres are used here to analyse how Dutch scientists dealt with the encounter with the 'other'. This selection might seem random, but even contemporary administrators and scientists drew from different genres to extricate information about

²⁰⁸ Translation: “In short, understanding the mental state of indigenous people like our Mountain Papuans is out of the question during short expeditions. A good study of their primitive mentality is only possible, if one can fully immerse oneself in their thinking, which as a rule can prove to be more logical and complicated than we might think.” From: Le Roux, *De bergpapoea's* xx.

²⁰⁹ Said, *Orientalism*.

sparsely researched places. Anthropological information was not only made by academically trained scholars, but also by the government sponsored Population Office in Hollandia, individual administrators, travellers and missionaries. For his standard work on the highland Papuans Le Roux read both the *tourneeverlagen* (tour reports) by Jan van Eechoud and Vic de Bruijn, next to scientific publications by Bijlmer and Lam and popularized scientific accounts by Bijlmer.²¹⁰ Anthropological research about the inhabitants of the New Guinea highlands was still at the very beginning in the 1930s. Basic knowledge about people, language and culture had to be collected by using all possible (re)sources. Following Said, when researching a discursive image of the ‘other’ a strict definition of science is not enough. Information gathered by government officials with an interest in ethnography or popular books by anthropologists also belonged to this space of constructing knowledge. Naturally over an entire academic career, scholars produce different publications and over a longer period of time can become influenced by new perspectives.

The Wisselmeren: The Appeal of ‘Race’

-Definitions, Debates and Questions

Anthropology can be broadly defined as the overarching scientific discipline concerned with the study of humanity. Academic anthropology has many different sub-specializations nowadays. In the 1930s however the word ‘anthropology’ had a slightly different meaning. The term ‘anthropology’ was used in the notes and correspondence about the Wisselmeren expedition to denote physical anthropology.²¹¹ Ethnography was seen as a separate discipline close to contemporary social and cultural anthropology. Both ethnography and physical anthropology were an integral part of the Wisselmeren expedition: the scientists made ethnographic descriptions and anthropometric photographs and collected material (both human remains and ethnographic artefacts).²¹²

In contrast to many earlier government explorations, the Wisselmeren expedition had (academically) trained people in charge of knowledge gathering about the local Papuans. The organizational committee preferred professional scientists over government officials to do the ethnographic and anthropological work. However the possibility to employ government officials or doctors was left open.²¹³ Eventually the committee chose Doeke Brouwer for the physical anthropological work. At that time he was working as an army doctor at Tjimahi on Java so he could function as the expedition’s doctor as well. This combination was not unusual for KNAG expeditions. Le Roux, an academic from the Netherlands and director of the Ethnology museum in Leiden, concentrated on the ethnographic work. His other tasks were leading the expedition and performing topographical tasks.

²¹⁰ Le Roux, *De bergpapoea’s* xvii-xviii.

²¹¹ UA, KNAG 1873-1967, 74, inv.no. 147 ‘Plan voor de expeditie’, 2; Glenn Penny, ‘Traditions’, in: Kuklick (ed.), *A New History* 80-81.

²¹² UA, KNAG 1873-1967, 74, inv.no.147 Plan voor de expeditie (typed) 14.

²¹³ Ibidem.

Filling in the ‘white spots’ on the map was deemed the most important by the Society. Filling in the unknown spots on the anthropological map came second.

“Het is echter voor de wetenschappelijke resultaten van de expeditie van groot belang, dat ook de anthropologie goed tot haar recht kan komen, al blijf ik mij het primaire belang van het invullen van de witte plekken op de kaart steeds voor ogen houden.”²¹⁴

The above citation from Le Roux also points out the descriptive nature of the expedition’s research. This was not only true of the nature of topographical work, the physical anthropological and ethnographic work was also exploratory.

The pressing scientific issue for the Wisselmeren research was ‘de samenstelling van het Papoearas’: the composition of the Papuan race.²¹⁵ Comparative research and quantitative measurements were needed according to the Society to establish more knowledge about the different Papuan races.²¹⁶ The expedition staff was to continue the work set in motion by Bijlmer during the Mimika expedition three years earlier. One of the issues on the agenda was the ‘Pygmies question’: Did dwarf tribes exist in New Guinea and how were they related to other tribes? Research often turned on comparative matters of race. In addition anthropological research on the Papuans was deemed very important as scholars believed it could shed more light on the (contemporary) Stone Age and on humanity as a whole.²¹⁷ In other words: research on contemporary Papuans could solve questions about human relations, human origins and the human past.

-Contextualizing the Wisselmeren expedition

In time the Wisselmeren expedition was situated right before the Second World War and was the last in a series of imperial expeditions to New Guinea. The knowledge that was created must be seen in the context of anthropological knowledge production in the second half of the 1930s.

Reports by government officials were the most frequent instances when new knowledge was generated in Dutch New Guinea. These so-called *tourneeverlagen* were mostly day-to-day accounts of the things and the problems officials encountered in their daily work or on tours. An impression of the local population was an important part of a report. It often depended on the anthropological skills and/or interest of the local officials how long the entry on the population was. These accounts were important because they were readily available for government and for the Royal Geographic Society (on request). Official scientific studies or even popularized travel accounts could take a while to get written and published.

²¹⁴ Translation: “However, it is of great importance for the scientific results of the expedition, that anthropology gets the attention it deserves, although I will keep in mind the primary importance of filling in the blank spots on the map.” From: Le Roux, *De expeditie* 38.

²¹⁵ Heldring, ‘De expeditie van 1939’ 306.

²¹⁶ Ibidem.

²¹⁷ Ibidem 315. See also: Mok, *In de ban* 285-286; Fabian, *Time and the Other*.

An example of these documents are the reports that government official Cator wrote after his exploratory journeys to the lakes. In his function as assistant-resident of Fakfak regular touring was part of the job description. In the fall of 1937 he went on a *tournee* to the lakes together with Van Ravenswaay Claassen, and on another exploration a few months later.²¹⁸

The mountain tribes were described as friendly and welcoming people by Cator. He deemed them suitable to become colonial subjects, although one tribe the Kapaoekoes were more quiet and sedentary than the Zonggoenoes who were described as haughty nomads.²¹⁹ All of them friendly nonetheless and presented in a way to convince the readers of this report that controlling this area would not give too much trouble.²²⁰ The necessary basics, like a sense of economy, were already present with some of the mountain people.²²¹ In addition Cator gave a warning:

“De opening van dit gebied legt ons groote verantwoordelijkheid op tegenover de daar wonende bevolking; indien het zou leiden tot wegwijning der bergstammen, zou het een misdaad zijn.”²²²

In short colonization of the highlands should be prudent, in some sense ‘modern’. Cator let his readers know what mistakes in the past could do: In his view most of the *koelies* (carriers) from the coast were corrupted, lazy and prone to desertion.²²³

These reports often did not circulate outside the bureaucratic or scientific world. New Guinea travel accounts with a touch of adventure on the other hand were highly popular among a larger audience in the Netherlands. Jan van Eechoud published three readable books about his jungle experiences.²²⁴ The popular writer Anthony van Kampen got his inspiration for his New-Guinea series from true events as well.²²⁵ He even asked to be included in the Sterrengebergte expedition. Somewhat later F. Springer found literary inspiration reflecting back on his time in New Guinea (as colonial official Carel Schneider) in the late 1950s and early 1960s.²²⁶

Even scientists like Bijlmer wrote their experiences down in such a way that they were accessible for a larger public. His work is a good example of anthropological fieldwork done

²¹⁸ UA, KNAG 1873-1967,74, inv.no. 149 ‘Verslag Cator’; Ibidem, inv.no. 150, ‘Verslag Cator and Van Ravenswaay Claassen’; Ibidem, inv.no. 151 ‘Verslag Cator’.

²¹⁹ Ibidem, inv.no. 149, ‘Verslag Cator’ 19.

²²⁰ Ibidem 58.

²²¹ Ibidem 41.

²²² Translation: “The opening of this area gives us a great responsibility towards the population residing there; if this would lead to the slow disappearance of the mountain tribes, this would be a crime.” From: Ibidem 42.

²²³ Ibidem 2.

²²⁴ J. van Eechoud, *Vergeten aarde: Nieuw-Guinea* (Amsterdam 1951); J. van Eechoud, *Met kapmes en kompas door Nieuw-Guinea* (Amsterdam 1953); J. van Eechoud, *Woudloper Gods* (Amsterdam 1954).

²²⁵ Van Kampen, *Jungle Pimpernel*; A. van Kampen, *Het laatste bivak* (Amsterdam 1950); A. van Kampen, *De verloren vallei* (Amsterdam 1951).

²²⁶ F. Springer, *Bericht uit Hollandia* (Amsterdam 1962); F. Springer, *Schimmen rond de Parula* (Amsterdam 1966); F. Springer, *Met stille trom* (Amsterdam 2012).

in New Guinea in the late 1930s. Bijlmer was both a doctor and a physical anthropologist. He later became secretary for the KNAG and was involved with the organization of the Wisselmeren and the Sterrengebergte expedition. With his elaborate knowledge about New Guinea he was an authority until his death in 1959. Next to being a scientist, he did a lot of exploratory work in the interior of New Guinea. His boek ‘Naar de achterhoek der aarde’ was written about the Mimika expedition of 1935-1936.²²⁷ Ineke Mok used this document in her dissertation as an example of the racial scientific discourse in the period 1930-1950.²²⁸ The debate on the different races inhabiting the earth was at its height in the 1930s according to Mok.²²⁹ It is important to take a brief look at Bijlmer’s work because subsequent publications about the New Guinea highlands built extensively on his work.

The goal of the Mimika expedition was to verify the existence of the so-called ‘dwarf people’. Bijlmer’s wanted to investigate whether the Tapiro’s, a Papuan mountain tribe, could be considered pygmies. In the introduction to his book he wondered whether these tribes belong to the ‘Negrito’ race: an almost extinct ‘negro’ race scattered throughout isolated locations in Asia.²³⁰

The Papuan dwarf tribes in the interior were analysed in relation to other races. The Papuans were put on a low place on the ‘chain of being’. Bijlmer classified the Papuans in different types: for example ‘Semitisch’, ‘Assyrisch’ and ‘Negrito’. This was mostly based on visual associations and speculation about their origins.²³¹ According to Bijlmer looking at primitive people was like looking back into time.²³² The most primitive race was the Australian, a living fossil from prehistoric times.²³³ What follows was the black race, to which the Papuans were somehow connected although Bijlmer did not know how. He was certain that in the looks of the Papuans the beginning traces of the Caucasian race could be seen.²³⁴

“De Australiër is een dergelijk levend fossiel, de Papoea is er wellicht een van iets jongere datum. Maar beiden lijken mij zich te bevinden op de ontwikkelingslijn, die tot den Blanke heeft gevoerd.”²³⁵

Bijlmer continued with his theories about evolution and hybridity to account for this change. Inevitably the Caucasian race was placed at the top of the ‘chain of being’. The European could recognize his prehistoric ‘self’ in the present Stone Age of the Papuans: “Als in een sprookje ontdekken we ten slotte ons zelf: we zijn hier getuige van onze eigen

²²⁷ Bijlmer, *Naar de achterhoek*.

²²⁸ Mok, *In de ban* 279. According to her ‘Naar de achterhoek der aarde’ was published in 1950, in fact the first edition appeared in 1938.

²²⁹ *Ibidem* 285-286.

²³⁰ Bijlmer, *Naar de achterhoek* 11.

²³¹ *Ibidem* 203-205

²³² *Ibidem* 221.

²³³ Douglas and Ballard (eds.), *Foreign Bodies*.

²³⁴ Bijlmer, *Naar de achterhoek* 222.

²³⁵ Translation: “The Australian is such a living fossil, the Papuan is perhaps of a slightly more recent date. But both seem to be in the line of development that has led to the White Man.” From: *Ibidem* 226.

praehistorie!”²³⁶ The Papuans were presented as a race that had not developed to an accepted culture standard. The jungle was deemed the place for racial stagnation.²³⁷ Bijlmer’s ideas confirm the theory laid out by Johannes Fabian about time perception and the ‘other’.²³⁸ Fabian dubs this the ‘denial of coevalness’: the ‘other’ is pushed into another time zone than the anthropological/Western ‘self’.²³⁹ By using words like ‘primitive’ or ‘savage’ or by placing another race in the past, a hierarchy of races is established. That is exactly what Bijlmer did here, placing the Papuans in the past and presenting them as some form of the prehistoric ‘self’.

Scientific racism was very much present in Bijlmer’s thinking. For the ‘black race’ he saw a side role in the future of New Guinea.²⁴⁰ In the conclusion he summarized his conviction of the inequality of mankind:

“Het tegendeel, dus dat de rassen gelijkwaardig zijn, is echter evenmin bewezen. Voor wie in de evolutie der mensheid gelooft, is het aannemelijk, dat het eene ras in een verder ontwikkelingsstadium verkeert dan het andere, dus verder op de weg der volmaakte menselijkheid is voortgeschreden. (...) De vondsten der anthropologie wijzen in deze richting.”²⁴¹

In other words: The different races are all human but on a different stage of development. This becomes apparent from the very contradictory stance Bijlmer took towards the people he met. On the one hand quite bold racist statements permeated his descriptions (see the citation at the beginning of chapter three). On the other hand throughout the text he seemed to feel the need to convince his readers of the humanity of the Papuans. He drew similarities between the way of living and psyche of the Papuans and modern Europeans.

“Een vriendschappelijk samentreffen onder wilden heeft dit gemeen met dat bij beschaafde Europeanen – men zou deze zin ook om kunnen keeren – dat men onmiddellijk de inwendige mensch gedenkt. (...) Men ziet, ’s menschen hersenwindingen draaien overal op dezelfde wijze!”²⁴²

A few pages later Bijlmer explained why he called these people wild: not because they were beasts but because they lived in nature without any intrusion from Eastern or Western

²³⁶ Translation: “Finally as in a fairy tale we discover ourselves: we are witness to our own prehistory!” From: Bijlmer, *Naar de achterhoek* 137.

²³⁷ Mok, *In de ban* 296.

²³⁸ Fabian, *Time and the Other*.

²³⁹ Ibidem 31.

²⁴⁰ Bijlmer, *Naar de achterhoek* 9-10. This statement he explained again in the booklet *Nieuw Guinee*; His predictions about the side-role for the Black Race were true because the Papuans had been powerless during the Second World War. See: H.J.T. Bijlmer, *Nieuw Guinea* (Deventer 1946) 5.

²⁴¹ Translation: “On the contrary, that the races are equal, is neither proven. For someone who believes in the evolution of mankind, it is likely, that one race is in a further stage of development than the other, in other words further on the road of perfect humanity. (...) The findings of anthropology point in this direction.” From: Bijlmer, *Naar de achterhoek* 241.

²⁴² Translation: “A friendly get together among savages has this in common with that among civilized Europeans – you could swap this sentence – that one immediately recognizes the inner human. (...) One sees, man’s brain works the same everywhere.” From: Ibidem 49.

culture.²⁴³ Still, even in paragraphs where the humanity of the Papuans was appreciated, Bijlmer's frame of thinking was still permeated by race as a reality and as an accepted methodology. It was this tension Stoler and Cooper pointed out: Colonialism brought to the forefront a belief in the universality of humanity but was also dependent on the articulation of difference.²⁴⁴

-The Wisselmeren Expedition meets the 'Other'

We have seen some examples of images of the 'other' that were circulating in the second half of the 1930s. This was the context in which the Wisselmeren enterprise took place. What has been written about the Papuans in connection to the 1939 expedition?

A *tourneeverslag* of the expedition exists and it was written by Van Ravenswaay Claassen.²⁴⁵ He was the commander of the police unit accompanying the scientific team. Keeping a 'diary' was part of his work instruction, in fact this diary was more of a detailed report. First he gave a day-to-day account of the expedition, in which the *koelies* and convicts had a more prominent role than the locals. The journey through the area was a combination of meeting friendly tribes who welcomed the group in their camps and less friendly tribes who tried to attack them ('bepijlen'). He included the thematic reflection 'Aanraking met de bevolking' (Contact with the inhabitants) in his diary.²⁴⁶ He distinguished two groups of lake tribes: the Monis and the Ekaris. The last were not as welcoming at first because of the preferential treatment the Dutch gave to the Moni. A politics of difference however was not in the direct interest of the exploratory group.²⁴⁷ He concluded: "De Ekari en ook in zekeren zin de Moni, kan men misschien beschouwen als een groot kind."²⁴⁸ Treating the lake Papuans as unruly children (with perhaps a gentle politics of difference) was the most effective way to adjust them to authority according to Van Ravenswaay Claassen.

During the expedition Le Roux wrote regular reports for the Royal Geographic Society. These were published in the form of a diary in the journal of the KNAG.²⁴⁹ This diary was highly formalized for a wider audience, narrating only about the (scientific) progress of the expedition and telling us very little personal details. Le Roux was an experienced expedition man. He had participated in the 1926 Stirling expedition to the Mamberano area. During his academic career he became a specialist on the mountain tribes of Dutch New Guinea. An

²⁴³ Bijlmer, *Naar de achterhoek* 77.

²⁴⁴ Cooper and Stoler, *Tensions of Empire* 3.

²⁴⁵ NI-HaNA, Kantoor Bevolkingszaken Nieuw-Guinea, 2.10.25, inv.no. 249, 'Van Ravenswaay Claassen, Verslag'.

²⁴⁶ *Ibidem* 71-74.

²⁴⁷ Burbank and Cooper, *Empires in World History*.

²⁴⁸ Translation: "The Ekari and also the Moni to some extent, one can perhaps regard as a big child." From: NI-HaNA, Kantoor Bevolkingszaken Nieuw-Guinea, 2.10.25, inv.no. 249, 'Van Ravenswaay Claassen, Verslag' 73.

²⁴⁹ Le Roux, *De expeditie*.

earlier version of his diary can be found in the archives of the Wisselmeren expedition.²⁵⁰ Published in the *Tijdschrift* and later collected in one volume, these stories were available for a wide audience of scholars and people interested in Dutch New Guinea. Thematic chapters in this diary were written by other expedition members, amongst others the anthropologist Brouwer who gave more details about the encounter with the local population.²⁵¹

In general the local population does not figure that much in their descriptions. Often when it concerned anthropological practices a short description of the people's character and willingness to submit to research was given. The descriptions in the diary however almost never turn on matters of race, unlike Bijlmer's (of course the genre is a little different). Only once does Le Roux comment on the supposed primitiveness of the highland Papuans:

“Ook hierin, evenals in zoovele andere dingen, is het hedendaagsche steentijdperk in wezen volkomen gelijk aan dat, waarin de moderne mensch leeft. (...) onze Bergpapoea's kennen geen ijzer, maar overigens doen zij in ontwikkeling, en zeker in intelligentie, niet veel onder voor verschillende primitieve volken in het Oosten van onze archipel en elders. Wel brengt het groote isolement, waarin zij tot dusverre verkeerd hebben mede, dat de volkenkundige tal van primitieve volkerengedachten hier nog in haar meest oorspronkelijken vorm bewaard vindt. Een grondige kennis van de helaas zoo groote verscheidenheid der Papoeatalen is de eenige sleutel om deze schatkamer te openen.”²⁵²

According to Le Roux this primitiveness is due to isolation. Moreover this makes their situation unique and an excellent case study for research. Only more research and more knowledge gathering could open a door to new insights about these unique people. The more scientific knowledge became available about New Guinea, the more need to synthesize this knowledge. Before the KNAG expedition a collection of essays in three volumes had appeared under the header 'Nieuw Guinee' in 1935.²⁵³

Le Roux wrote the magnum opus 'De bergpapoea's van Nieuw-Guinea' after the tour to the Wisselmeren. This book can shed more light on the images of the Papuan that were constructed by his generation of scholars.²⁵⁴ He worked on it for many years with a significant delay during the war. It was published after his death between 1947 and 1949. The tone was far more nuanced than 'Naar de achterhoek der aarde' but Le Roux was constantly in conversation with Bijlmer and other (international) scholars, colonial officials and missionaries. The authoritative 1000 page work is an elaborate ethnographic encyclopedic work on the highland Papuans. The chapters about the expeditions (chapter I), the encounters between tribes and expedition (Chapter IV), and Papuan character (Chapter XIV) are

²⁵⁰ UA, KNAG 1873-1967, inv.no.148, 'Dagboek van den expeditieleider'.

²⁵¹ D. Brouwer, 'Kort verslag van het medisch en anthropologisch werk in het Merengebied. 4 juli tot en met 25 augustus 1939', in: Le Roux, *De expeditie* 785-791.

²⁵² Translation: "Here too, as in so many other things the present stone age is essentially the same as that in which the modern man lives. (...) our Mountain Papuans know no iron, but are otherwise in development, and especially in intelligence, not inferior to many primitive people in the East of our archipelago and elsewhere. However the great isolation, in which they have lived thus far, makes that the ethnographer finds the most primitive peoples' customs preserved here in its most original form. A thorough knowledge of the unfortunately great variety of Papuan languages is the only key to open this treasure." From: Le Roux, *De expeditie* 176.

²⁵³ W.C. Klein (ed.), *Nieuw Guinee, part I-III* (Amsterdam 1935).

²⁵⁴ Le Roux, *De bergpapoea's*, part I-III.

especially relevant. Le Roux was astonished to read in the books by Bijlmer and Lam that they were surprised by the humanity of the tribes.²⁵⁵ In the introduction to the chapter about the Papuan character Le Roux explicitly stated:

“Hadden zij dan verwacht, (...) in de onbekende gebieden van Nieuw-Guinea’s binnenland een ander soort mensen aan te treffen dan wij; mensen met sterk afwijkende lichamelijke en geestelijke kenmerken? Dit zou in strijd zijn met de uitkomsten, die de antropologie en de ethnologie ons overal hebben opgeleverd, want deze wetenschappen hebben ons nu wel met zekerheid geleerd, dat de huidige mensheid, ondanks alle verschillen die er zijn, niet alleen naar haar lichamen maar ook naar haar geestelijke eigenschappen een eenheid is.”²⁵⁶

Le Roux emphasized that the denomination ‘wild’ or ‘primitive’ has negative connotations for him and on this topic he distanced himself from Bijlmer and Wirz.²⁵⁷ The apparent low place on the scale of being was in his view due to material and geographical circumstances. “Niet minder dan die volken zijn ook de Bergpapoea’s volop mens, noch wild, noch barbaars, noch dierlijk.”²⁵⁸ These citations by Le Roux show the shifting perception of the Papuan very clearly: still perceived as primitive but clearly part of the same human race as the scientific ‘self’. Le Roux’ work showed that Bijlmer’s work was perhaps already dated.

Much less is known about the physical anthropological results of the Wisselmeren expedition. Doeke Brouwer (1899 - ?) only left a dissertation in his archival trace.²⁵⁹ The problem with the dissertations used in this chapter is the fact that they were not necessarily written with the research material from the expeditions. They were often written before and were about very specialist topics. Besides most dissertations are written at the beginning of a scientific career. Brouwer finished his doctoral work in 1935, so far I have not found any significant publication or other ego document about the expedition except for one contribution in Le Roux’ diary. Brouwer was working as an army doctor at Tjimahi, Java when he was hired to do the physical anthropological research and to work as the expedition’s doctor. In the 1930s the medical and the anthropological profession were often combined during an expedition.

Brouwer’s dissertation on the Alor islands, an anthropological treatise, was written to get the medical doctorate.²⁶⁰ He had to do the research for his dissertation next to his daily work as a doctor on the Alor islands. With the help of his wife (!) he succeeded in measuring

²⁵⁵ H.J. Lam, *Fragmenta Papuana* (Batavia 1927).

²⁵⁶ Translation: “Were they expecting, (...) to find a kind of people completely different than we in the unknown regions of New Guinea’s interior; people with very different physical and mental characteristics? This would conflict with the results, that anthropology and ethnology have provided, because these sciences have learned us with great certainty, that the present humanity, despite all the existing differences, is not only a physical, but also with her mental characteristics a unit.” From: Le Roux, *De bergpapoea’s* 487.

²⁵⁷ Ibidem 489.

²⁵⁸ Translation: “No less than other people the Mountain Papuans are fully human, neither wild nor barbarian, nor animal-like.” From: Ibidem 489.

²⁵⁹ D. Brouwer, *Bijdrage tot de antropologie der Aloreilanden* (Uitgeversmaatschappij Holland, Amsterdam 1935).

²⁶⁰ Brouwer, *Bijdrage tot de antropologie*.

and photographing 1589 individuals, of which 289 were women.²⁶¹ His research in Alor filled up the lacunae of Bijlmer's anthropological survey of the Eastern archipelago. Also in his working method Brouwer followed Bijlmer. His dissertation consisted of anthropometrical data, photographs, research on blood types and some medical data. The main goal of his research was to determine the race of the Alorese. His conclusions pointed to a strong 'Melanesian element'.²⁶² He strongly opposed the notion that any of the Alorese tribes could be counted among the 'Negritos'.

It is unfortunate that Brouwer never wrote a comparable study about the tribes of the Wisselmeren. Short reports were published together with Le Roux' diary in the journal of the Royal Geographic Society.²⁶³ His research on Alor had required 3,5 years to complete, six months in New Guinea could not have resulted in a similar in-depth study. Still Brouwer's goal was to measure up to 1500 people.²⁶⁴

“Dr. Brouwer heeft niet te klagen over zijn menschenmateriaal voor zijn anthropologische metingen. Hij verricht de lichaamsmetingen, bloedgroepbepalingen, vingerafdrukken enz. zeer nauwkeurig; beschrijft uitvoerig de typen en fotografeert ze. Aan een aantal van 20 per dag heeft hij zodoende zijn handen vol.”²⁶⁵

In short the expedition facilitated above all collecting quantitative anthropological data. Brouwer's work schedule consisted of short trips with never enough time to critically select a good sample. What is most curious however is that we know almost nothing about the final results of this anthropological research or the rest of his career. Brouwer indeed took a modest role in the scholarly field about the New Guinea highlands compared to Bijlmer and Le Roux.

Reactions

The described reactions of the Papuans to anthropological fieldwork are very telling of the image of the 'other' that was transferred by the scientists. Anthropologists on expedition, came into contact with tribes who had barely been in contact with the outside world. In 'Naar de achterhoek der aarde' we find a description of the reaction of the Tapiro tribe. The process of measuring was very radical, nonetheless they consented. Bijlmer ascribed the success of his anthropological fieldwork to the fact that he had taken the kaurishells with him as currency and the familiarity of the locals with foreigners.

“Voor een oermensch is dat zeker geen kleinigheid. Zich over te geven aan een vreemden man met een uitschuifbare blinkend stalen meetstaaf van 2 M. lengte, zijn hoofd, zijn neus en zijn kaken te laten omklemmen door scherp gepunte passers, dat moet tooverij zijn van het ergste soort! En dan de camera!

²⁶¹ Brouwer, *Bijdrage tot de anthropologie* 9-10.

²⁶² Ibidem 116.

²⁶³ Le Roux, *De expeditie* 785 – 791.

²⁶⁴ Ibidem 215.

²⁶⁵ Translation: “Dr. Brouwer has no need to complain about the human material for his anthropological measurements. He carried out the body measurements, blood group determinations, fingerprints etc. very accurately; he describes the types in detail and photographs them. He has his hands full with a number of 20 a day.” From: Ibidem 47.

Roerloos te blijven staan, terwijl het glazen oog uit de kleine monstermachine op je wordt gericht.... Desalniettemin lieten zij het toe.²⁶⁶

Le Roux was equally surprised by the ease and the willingness of the Papuans to undergo anthropological measurements:

“Ik heb er steeds versteld van gestaan, hoe betrekkelijk gewillig en onbevreesd de meesten dezer primitieven allerlei maten met de meetlat en de passers van zich lieten nemen aan schedel, lichaam en ledematen. Hoe zij hun gebit lieten bekijken, vingerafdrukken van zich lieten nemen en zich de smaakproeven en prikken in de vinger voor bloedgroepenbepaling lieten welgevallen. Alleen het nemen van haarmonsters ging niet overal even vlot.”²⁶⁷

However in another chapter Le Roux describes a curious reaction from one of the Tigi lake Papuans to Brouwer’s measurements. When Brouwer approaches to take these measurements the person in question faints twice. Is it a trick to take control of the situation and get more kaurishells? Or did the amount of measurements give this person so many anxieties he fainted?²⁶⁸ Brouwer himself attributed this behavior to childlike disobedience and savage play.²⁶⁹

Photography and measurements were part of the same methodological project.²⁷⁰ Photography could record the fast disappearing Stone Age tribes the same way anthropometry did.²⁷¹ It had an air of objectivity around it. Bijlmer describes very different reactions from the local people. According to him the Tapiro were relatively willing to let themselves be photographed in exchange for kaurishells. The population of lake Paniai on the other hand had never seen the technique, reacted fearful and could not sit still.²⁷² In Le Roux’ descriptions the local Papuans were more than willing to participate in the act of photographing. The ethnographer even convinced some of them to reenact traditional dances or make fire!²⁷³ However looking at a photograph or (wanting) to recognize themselves in a picture was more challenging. The descriptions of the reactions enhanced the image of the willing, childlike and primitive Papuan.

²⁶⁶ Translation: “For a primitive man it is certainly no small matter. To surrender to a stranger of 2 meter with an extensible shiny steel measuring tool . To let his height, his head, his nose and his jaws be fixated by a sharp compass, that must be magic of the worst kind! And the camera! To remain motionless while the glass eye from the small machine is pointed at you. Nevertheless, they allowed it.” From: Bijlmer, *Naar de achterhoek* 89.

²⁶⁷ Translation: “I have been amazed again and again, how relatively willing and fearless most of these primitives have undergone measurements of the skull, body and limbs with the ruler and the compass. How they showed their teeth, let fingerprint be taken of them and how they allowed taste tests and pricks in the finger for blood group determination. Only the taking of hair samples did not go smoothly everywhere.” From: Le Roux, *De bergpapoea’s* 500.

²⁶⁸ Ibidem 107-108.

²⁶⁹ Le Roux, *De expeditie* 788-789.

²⁷⁰ “(...)a single initiative in the production, manipulation and consumption of savagery in tropical island colonialism.” See S. Sen, *Savagery and Colonialism in the Indian Ocean: Power, Pleasure and the Andaman Islanders* (London/New York 2010) 181.

²⁷¹ A. Griffiths, *Wondrous Difference. Cinema, Anthropology & Turn-of-the-Century Visual Culture* (New York 2002) 89.

²⁷² Bijlmer, *Naar de achterhoek* 89, 203.

²⁷³ Le Roux, *De bergpapoea’s* 500-501.

Impact

The expedition had been an ambitious plan: a multidisciplinary team was sent to an unknown area to inventory the land and the people. Today the expedition is even more forgotten than the one to the Star Mountains: Was it a successful enterprise? Did it have (scientific) impact afterwards? Were any debates solved?

The research of the expedition added up to the information that had been gathered in the 1920s and 1930s. Useful knowledge was gathered, in all fields, but the time was too short to achieve a scientific 'breakthrough'. The questions about the composition and relations between the (mountain) Papuans would be transferred to the Sterrenbergte expedition twenty years later.

The anthropologists we encountered in this paragraph did have careers after the end of the expedition. Le Roux continued to be the director of the Ethnology Museum in Leiden. In the meanwhile he continued to work on his life work 'De bergpapoea's', although he did not see its publication. A copy of this book was given to every participant of the Sterrenbergte expedition to make themselves familiar with the highland Papuans. This demonstrates that, at least in the Netherlands, it had become a standard work. This thorough scientific work was definitely not unimportant in the scholarly field of ethnography. Not much is known about the expedition's anthropologist Brouwer. Besides his participation in the expedition and a dissertation (1935) his trail stops. Bijlmer had done physical anthropological research in Dutch New Guinea since the 1920s. Thanks to his pleasant writing style books like 'Naar de achterhoek der aarde' were widely read and widely known. Next to that he was heavily involved with the Royal Geographic Society where he was an authority on New Guinea. There was some continuity of knowledge between the two expeditions, both in the academic debate and the personal ties.

Intermezzo

The dominant academic issues that needed to be solved in the second half of the 1930s were the questions about the composition of the Papuan race, the relations between them and the existence of dwarf tribes. The image of the Papuan was marked by ambivalence. According to scholars like Bijlmer the Papuan was primitive and a sort of pre-form of the white race. But the Papuan was also pristine: A contemporary innocent creature of nature that allowed the scientist a peek into the Stone Age. In this period a subtle shift already took place. With scientists like Bijlmer you see the dominant role of race science, in Le Roux' work a transition towards a new vision is visible. Papuans were considered fully human by him and only different because of their isolation. The dominant image of the 1930s can be summarized as follows: The highland Papuan as primitive but willing, peaceful and in an original state of nature. The attention for this corner of the Dutch Empire increased in the 1930s, a prelude to the 1950s. Was race still the predominant methodological tool? And what happened to the image of the Papuan twenty years later?

The Sterrenbergte: To the Stone Age

-Definitions, Debates and Questions

The Sterrenbergte expedition was executed on a much larger scale. The anthropology team was doubled compared to twenty years earlier. Anthropology now comprised of the specializations physical anthropology, ethnography and linguistics. The four anthropologists were young scholars at the beginning of their careers. They all had specialized academic training and were focused on one particular sub-discipline. A great contrast to the different roles Brouwer and Le Roux had to cope with in 1939. André de Wilde did the physical anthropological measurements and took fingerprints. His assistant Lourens Nijenhuis researched Papuan blood types. Jan Pouwer was more focused on the social and cultural aspects of anthropology. Last the linguist Johannes Anceaux was also counted as part of the anthropology team.

De Wilde and Nijenhuis were interested in the relations between the different Papua tribes.²⁷⁴ Actually their questions did not differ that much from the ones scholars had in the 1930s. Their kind of research was often descriptive, their main goal to gain as much data as possible about the local population. Every trip was taken on to measure and collect. Even on detours to the ‘cities’ Merauke or Tanah Merah De Wilde brought his toolkit.

The anthropologists could only perform their work early in the morning and during evenings because the rest of the day the village population was working in the fields.²⁷⁵ Linguist Anceaux and cultural anthropologist Pouwer gained new words and knowledge by talking to people. The process went slowly and both parties could talk for hours without understanding a word of the other.²⁷⁶ Anceaux often sat on a rice can listening to the Sibil language. What the locals thought of the scientists was not asked, a fact they regretted afterwards according to zoologist John Staats who sometimes assisted the anthropology team.²⁷⁷ Because De Wilde and Nijenhuis were more interested in the relationship between the different tribes, they gathered the great number of data (De Wilde reaches the magical number 1000 at the end of the expedition²⁷⁸) needed to determine the relations. Physical anthropological measurements and sampling (blood, fingerprints, hair) were the only two tools available in the 1930s and 1950s. De Wilde actively took measurements of the people with the help of the marines. Nijenhuis was more bound to the base camp, because the complex instruments that were needed to analyse blood samples were difficult to carry around.²⁷⁹

A passage in ‘Het witte hart’ describes a measuring practice. De Wilde arrived in the neighborhood of Mabilabol. His research was constrained by two things: logistics and local

²⁷⁴ Brongersma and Venema, *Het witte hart* 269.

²⁷⁵ Ibidem 78.

²⁷⁶ Ibidem 82-83.

²⁷⁷ Interview John Staats, Leiden 10-05-2012.

²⁷⁸ UA, KNAG 1873-1967, 74, inv.no.194, ‘Letter Brongersma to governor, 08-09-1959’

²⁷⁹ Brongersma and Venema, *Het witte hart* 82, 88-90.

customs. His instruments did not arrive in time and once they did, it appeared difficult to take the 'zithoogte'. Even more difficult was taking samples: "Moeilijk is het ook om de mensen te bewegen een lok haar af te staan. Men is bevreesd dat degene die deze lok haar in bezit houdt een zekere macht over de schenker krijgt."²⁸⁰ Moreover the locals decided when research took place; when they were working in their gardens, the anthropologist and his assistants sat idly. Later in the narrative there are scant references to the practices of measuring ("Elf inwoners van het dorp onderwerpen zich aan anthropologisch onderzoek.", "De inwoners van Kassamgop zijn meegelopen, zodat De Wilde in een keer de mensen van beide nederzettingen kan meten."²⁸¹). The reactions of the Papuans are described as indifferent or a bit suspicious or fearful at the most. Geomorphologist Herman Verstappen reversed the gaze and said that they felt that they were being measured by the Papuans.²⁸² It made the scientists feel like they were in a zoo.

Besides the main questions, physical anthropological practices apparently had not changed that much either since the 1930s, although the team had been elaborated by the specialization of advanced blood type research and linguistics. The scale of the expedition allowed for more specialists, but also the educational system had changed. The long tradition of the 'Indologen' curriculum in Leiden and Utrecht ended in 1950 and this had made specialized academic disciplines more prominent.²⁸³ The four anthropologists in 1959 were less ingrained in the colonial system than their colleagues had been twenty years before. Pouwer and Anceaux had both been employed by the Population Office but prewar Netherlands Indies baggage was lacking. The basic methodologies of anthropology and ethnography were still in place. The methodology, fieldwork, had gained ground since the 1920s. The big questions about the relationships between the different Mountain tribes, were still in place as well in the 1950s. Moreover the short stay in the area did not allow for in-depth anthropological research, but rather for descriptive, comparative and quantitative research.

-Changing Images

There are a number of different publications about the Sterrenbergte expedition. These studies built on prewar academic work but also on reports and studies executed by government officials and the Population Office in the 1950s. There were plans for a big scientific publication, only government subsidies did not suffice and there was discord within the SENNG committee.²⁸⁴

²⁸⁰ Translation: "It is also difficult to convince people to donate a lock of hair. They fear that the person who possesses this lock will hold a certain power over the donor." From: Brongersma and Venema, *Het witte hart* 89.

²⁸¹ Translation: "Eleven inhabitants of the village submit to anthropological research.", "The inhabitants of Kassamgop have walked along, in order for De Wilde to be able to measure the people of both settlements." From: *Ibidem* 124, 125.

²⁸² Interview Herman Verstappen, 11-04-2012.

²⁸³ C. Fasseur, *De indologen. Ambtenaren voor de Oost 1825-1950* (Amsterdam 1993); Schoorl (ed.), *Besturen*.

²⁸⁴ Van den Brink, *Dienstbare kaarten* 262.

The most powerful image of the expedition was transmitted by a book. ‘Het witte hart van Nieuw-Guinea’ was a popular scientific account of the expedition written by the leaders Brongersma and Venema.²⁸⁵ Brongersma was a zoologist and Venema had a military background. Both were from another generation than the team of scientists. The book is a synthesis of the Sterrengebergte expedition. The different scientific activities and discoveries are only described briefly. It is not an interdisciplinary report about the results of the enterprise. The document certainly gives insight into the anthropological activities and the text is interspersed with descriptions of the local population, however these elements were only seen through the eyes of the expedition leaders. ‘Het witte hart’ is written as a story of movement. The expedition had the Ok Sibil valley as a starting point but the book is structured as a tour through the New Guinea highlands. Each chapter offers short descriptions of for example the people encountered or the samples collected.

The most common trope about the ‘other’ in this report about the Sterrengebergte expedition was the ‘Stone Age’ trope. The Papuans were no longer described as ‘savage’ or ‘wild’ but their primitive way of living was seen as an unique opportunity to take a peek into the Stone Age. The local Sibil population was portrayed as friendly and harmless, sometimes cunning when it concerned trade. The negativity about Stone Age people was largely gone from this description. This contrasts to Bijlmer’s book in which all ideas were shrouded in a racial discourse. The intentions for the local people were certainly good, although expedition members afterwards realized they had disturbed that society more than they had intended.²⁸⁶ Turning Stone Age people into modern men is described as an amusing process:

“Je kunt al merken dat de beschaving hier doordringt. Je ziet mensen met lege leucoplast rollen in de oorlel en met een jodiumstift door de neus; een knaap liep met een flesopener en een touwtje om zijn hals. Bandijzer is zeer in trek. Dubbelgevouwen dient het als epileertang om er cleanshaven uit te zien.”²⁸⁷

By denying that the Papuans were part of contemporary time, they were racialized. Their encounter with modernity was made into a farce in the above citation. Fabian’s notion of allochronic discourse enables us to see that racialization also took place with the Sterrengebergte expedition.

In-depth ethnographic analysis is hardly present in ‘Het witte hart’. Customs, physique and character are described albeit very briefly.²⁸⁸ Impressions of the locals were given after a visit to a *kampong*. Most descriptions however were about the interaction with the local Sibil population for example when they visited the camp or when De Wilde was measuring them. Papuans accepted little tokens like beads or kaurishells in order to get measured or

²⁸⁵ Brongersma and Venema, *Het witte hart*.

²⁸⁶ Interview H. Verstappen, Eschede 11-04-2012.

²⁸⁷ Translation: “You can already see the arrival of civilization here. You see people with empty leucoplast rolls in the earlobe and with a iodine pen through the nose; a boy walked around with a bottle opener and a string around his neck. Tire iron is very popular. Folded it serves as epilation tool to look clean shaven.” From: UA, KNAG 1873-1967, 74, inv.no.194, ‘Expeditiebericht IV, 05-04-1959’ 17.

²⁸⁸ Brongersma and Venema, *Het witte hart* 68-75.

photographed. In the descriptions of the scientists they appear as economically smart people or even excessively greedy.

On the one hand it gave the highland Papuans new spaces of negotiation. They would turn the situation at hand to their own advantage. The expedition members could not do without the kauri's. For the assemblage of scientific collections, for anthropometric measurements, for buying food and to pay the carriers these shells were essential.²⁸⁹ The expeditions disturbed the local monetary economy too by bringing too many new kaurishells into circulation. The Sterrengebergte team had many other things to pay with:

“Wij hebben als betaalmiddel: kralen, knopen om op de neus te dragen of om aan een halsketting te rijgen, plastic limonaderietjes om door de neus te dragen, veiligheidsspelden als oorhangers, scheermesjes, doosjes lucifers, tabak. Als pasmunt gebruiken wij biscuits en als groot geld messen, kapmessen, bijlen en gekleurde lappen. Lucifers zijn erg in trek; zij besparen de mensen veel werk bij het maken van vuur.”²⁹⁰

The locals got a reward if they were willing to participate in research: “Over het algemeen laten de Sibillers zich gewillig een paar druppels bloed afnemen. Nijenhuis loert op elk nieuw gezicht dat hij ziet en troont de man mee naar zijn werktafel; als beloning krijgt het slachtoffer een sigaret, een knoop of een plastic limonaderietje.”²⁹¹ Their encounter with modernity was presented as funny and somewhat out of place.

The anthropologists of the Star Mountains expedition have written several interesting works and articles too. Some were directly or indirectly influenced by the experiences they had in New Guinea.²⁹² However their (academic) productivity after the expedition was not that high.²⁹³ In the following section I will discuss their dissertations, articles, speeches and books they wrote over the course of their careers. The path they took in their later careers, some even became university professors, attests to the promise they already showed in the late 1950s.

André de Wilde (1925 - 2002) did the physical anthropological measurements and took fingerprints during the expedition. He had studied medicine in Leiden and obtained his PhD in Medicine in 1953. Four years after the expedition De Wilde accepted the chair of Anatomy and Embryology at the Rijksuniversiteit Groningen and he would remain there for the rest of

²⁸⁹ Le Roux, *De expeditie* 767.

²⁹⁰ Translation: “We have as currency: beads, buttons to wear on the nose or put on a necklace, plastic soda straws to wear through the nose, safety pins as earrings, razors, boxes of matches, tobacco. As coins we use biscuits and for larger sums we use knives, machetes, axes and coloured fabrics. Matches are very popular; they save the people a lot of work in making fire.” Brongersma and Venema, *Het witte hart* 84.

²⁹¹ Translation: “In general the Sibil people are very willing to donate a few drops of blood. Nijenhuis is eager to spot a new face and drags the person to his table; as a reward the victim gets a cigarette, a button or a plastic soda straw.” From: *Ibidem* 90.

²⁹² Unfortunately it was no longer possible to interview either of them in the spring of 2012 as they had already passed away.

²⁹³ Interview H. Verstappen, Eschede 11-04-2012.

his career. His publication trail is limited to an absolute minimum, with nothing on New Guinea and not much on physical anthropology or anthropometry.

In his early work De Wilde mainly researched fingerprints and blood samples, rather than the physical anthropological measurements that were his main task in New Guinea. His dissertation was about the heredity of fingerprints, for which he used population genetics to gain more insight into the diversity of the human races.²⁹⁴ In his words this outlook is a departure from physical anthropologists before 1930 who were mainly interested in proving the differences between the races.²⁹⁵ For his dissertation research he used a sample of Dutch families.

In his study of fingerprints he defines ‘race’ as a scientific population that differs in genes, however in this way “komt de relativiteit van de grenzen tussen de diverse rassen wel scherp tot uitdrukking.”²⁹⁶ Race in his story became an abstract entity decided by genes, rather than culture or climate.²⁹⁷ In his inaugural lecture he addresses the shift taking place in physical anthropology: from a descriptive science to a science close to anatomy and genetics.²⁹⁸

A publication on the results of the Star Mountains is lacking. Perhaps the main cause for this lacuna in his publications is the fact that this way of practicing physical anthropology quickly became discarded. In contrast to the botanical and zoological collections, these particular physical anthropological data are no longer of much interest to researchers.

Jan Pouwer (1924 – 2010) studied *Indologie* at Leiden University, one of the last of a generation.²⁹⁹ He was employed by the Population Office in 1951. In this function he started working in the Mimika region, about which he completed a dissertation in 1955. He was employed by the Dutch colonial government until 1962, after which an academic career as a socio-cultural anthropologist in Amsterdam, New Zealand and Nijmegen followed. Throughout his career he also regularly acted as a policy advisor on Papua. He was a very productive scholar with a life-long passion for New Guinea. Among his mentors were Josselin de Jong and Van Baal.³⁰⁰

His early anthropological career was made possible by his employment by the Population Office. In the preface of his dissertation ‘Enkele aspecten van de Mimika-cultuur’ he explicitly thanks the secretary of Overseas Affairs and governor Jan van Baal for allowing scientific research to take such a prominent position in governing New Guinea.³⁰¹ In his

²⁹⁴ A.G. de Wilde, *De grondslagen der overerving van het vingerpatroon* (Leiden 1953).

²⁹⁵ De Wilde, *De grondslagen* 7.

²⁹⁶ Translation: “(...) the relativity of the boundaries between the different races manifests itself sharply” From: *Ibidem* 16

²⁹⁷ *Ibidem* 37.

²⁹⁸ A.G. de Wilde, *Regelmaat en verscheidenheid* (Groningen 1963) 9-11.

²⁹⁹ Fasseur, *De Indologen*.

³⁰⁰ J. Pouwer, *Het individu in samenleving en cultuur Enkele methodologische beschouwingen* (Groningen 1962) 24-25.

³⁰¹ J. Pouwer, *Enkele aspecten van de mimika-cultuur* (The Hague 1955) VI-VII.

inaugural speech at the University of Amsterdam in 1962 he is critical of anthropological work done by others than trained academics:

“Een bestuursambtenaar, missionaris of zending, die jarenlang in een zelfde gebied heeft gewoond en op zeer goede voet staat met de bevolking, merkt daarom soms zelfs op de voorgrond tredende verschijnselen, zal een matrilineale verwantschapsverhouding, niet op of interpreteert zijn gegevens ethnocentrisch”³⁰²

The trained anthropologist can recognize and analyse the things he sees and come to a synthesis of a societal structure.

The Sterrenbergte research resulted in a thematic article about social organization in the New Guinea highlands in the *American Anthropologist*.³⁰³ This is a detailed study on kinship in which he differs between ‘organization’ and ‘structure’.³⁰⁴ He found some incongruities with existing studies on kinship and he concluded that the relation between siblings is pivotal for understanding kinship in New Guinea. The research he conducted in those ten years in New Guinea was founding for the rest of his career. The expedition fits in really with his other work, a contrast perhaps to De Wilde. In Jan POUWER’s work there is a strong focus not only on New Guinea but also on social organization and anthropological theory. He is a good example of the shift from colonial anthropology to modern anthropology. He started his career in a colonial setting but moved into a respectable academic position in socio-cultural anthropology in the Netherlands.

Johannes ANCEAUX (1920 – 1988) studied Indonesian Languages at Leiden University. In the 1950s he had worked for the Population Office until the start of the expedition. During the expedition he worked on linguistics in the anthropology team. He had the least intrusive working method: He sat in the middle of a village and just listened to the people around him. Like the other anthropologists he depended on informants.

What became of his research and what this experience meant for the rest of his career is less clear. In 1971 Anceaux became a professor at Leiden University. In his linguistic work he concentrated mainly on New Guinea and the surrounding islands.³⁰⁵ In his publications he mapped the variety of language in this area and tried to look at their connections and similarities. According to Anceaux the linguistic situation on New Guinea provides the researcher with an inexhaustible variety and originality.³⁰⁶ He recognized that the study of

³⁰² Translation: “A government official, a Catholic missionary or Protestant missionary, who spent years in the same territory and is on very good terms with the population, sometimes does not observe even prominent phenomena like matrilineal kinship, or interprets these data ethnocentric.” From: POUWER, *Het Individu* 5-6.

³⁰³ J.POUWER, ‘A Social System in the Star Mountains: Toward a Reorientation of the Study of Social Systems’, in: J.B. WATSON (ed.), *New Guinea. The Central Highlands* (Stanford 1964) 133-161.

³⁰⁴ POUWER, ‘A Social System’ 158.

³⁰⁵ A selection of his publications: J.C. ANCEAUX, *The Nimboran Language. Phonology and Morphology* (The Hague 1965); J.C. ANCEAUX, *The Wolio Language. Outline of grammatical description and texts* (Dordrecht/Providence 1988); J.C. ANCEAUX, *The Linguistic Situation in the Islands of Yapen, Kurudu, Nau and Miosnum, New Guinea* (The Hague 1961)

³⁰⁶ J.C. ANCEAUX, *Indonesië en Oceanië. Een taalkundige terreinverkenning* (The Hague 1971) 18.

Papuan language was still at the beginning both at a descriptive and a comparative level.³⁰⁷ His work at the Sibil area fits in well with his research objectives and other experiences, however the results did not figure in one of his publications.

Lourens Nijenhuis worked at the blood transfusion department of the Dutch Red Cross before he was asked to join the expedition. During the expedition his main task was research into Papuan blood types. According to Nijenhuis this research method was very suitable for anthropological research because it could give a decisive indication which tribes were related:

“The genetics of blood groups, unlike those of the generally used anthropological characteristics, are precisely known. Anthropologists on the other hand carry out measurements of various parts of the body, and determine ratios between such measurements, but are unable to attach any genetical meaning to what they have observed, or to differences between populations, based on these observations.”³⁰⁸

This quotation from his 1961 dissertation is very telling for the period of transition anthropology was in. Anthropometry became more and more obsolete and made way for genetic research in physical anthropology. Blood group research on the other hand was still at its very beginning.

The results of the Star Mountains expedition were integrated in this elaborate study on blood group frequencies in the Netherlands and (former) Dutch colonies. Most of this book was based on his own collected material, although he used other material as well for comparative purposes. To get a good sample of blood group frequencies a group of people of the same age, who are not directly related, had to be picked out. In New Guinea the easiest way to get a blood sample was to use a finger prick, instead of venipuncture (extracting blood from the vein). This method was quick and scared the Papuans the least. He found a corresponding blood group pattern, with variation in very isolated tribes.³⁰⁹ He set out by stating environment cannot have influence on the genetic pattern. After researching New Guinea's diversity he came to the conclusion that a combination of natural selection and environmental factors help decide the genetic pattern over a long period of time.³¹⁰

The language of his dissertation is very formal, with word use that now seems a bit dated perhaps. The discourse of that time becomes far more evident in another popularized article he wrote for a larger audience. In this booklet Papuans were implicitly compared to monkeys and blood group research in the jungle associated with chasing crocodiles in the jungle.³¹¹ A very curious booklet, but perhaps very revealing about the time spirit. Nijenhuis did not have the chance to build his further career on the experiences he had in the Star Mountains. He died a few years after the expedition.

³⁰⁷ Anceaux, *Indonesië en Oceanië* 19.

³⁰⁸ L.E. Nijenhuis, *Blood Group Frequencies in the Netherlands, Curacao, Surinam and New Guinea. A study in Population Genetics* (Amsterdam 1961) 17.

³⁰⁹ Nijenhuis, *Blood Group Frequencies* 77.

³¹⁰ *Ibidem* 124.

³¹¹ L.E. Nijenhuis, *Bloedgroepgeografie* (Leiden 1961) 2.

Impact

The 1959 expedition had raised even higher expectations than the expedition twenty years earlier. The aura of failure stalks the image of this expedition even more. The journey to the Sterrengebergte is not entirely forgotten. Because of its scale and late situatedness in time it gets the occasional (media) attention). The image of 'failure' is not entirely correct. The anthropologists of the Star Mountains did have careers after 1959. However they have partly contributed to the image of the expedition as a 'failure'. The expedition's results did not figure prominently in their later publications. They did not publish an anthropological account of their experiences in the highlands. In De Wilde's case his research was soon dated, in Nijenhuis' case his type of research was still at the beginning. For Anceaux and Pouwer the stay at the Sibil area was perhaps too short to come to in-depth conclusions. The data and the collections however are stored in different museums and research institutes in the Netherlands and are available for research.

Conclusion

During the scientific expeditions to Dutch New Guinea there was no straightforward or visibly racist view of the Papuan. Rather it was 'race' as a worldview or methodology in anthropology that decided the construction of a certain image. In the 1930s the composition of the Papuan highland tribes were analysed in terms of racial science. Papuans were placed on the 'chain of being' in a lesser position versus the West. After the Second World War many of the questions that had intrigued anthropologists before continued: How were the different tribes related? Where did they come from? And what did the 'primitive' Papuans tell about the human past? In the 1950s race was still used as a methodological framework, however it becomes more of an academic thing, detached from language and culture. Anthropology had become more specialized in the 1950s and more connected to Dutch academia.

The image of the Papuan reverberated between that of the primitive, Stone Age, benevolent savage and a potential pliant citizen of the Dutch Empire or nation. There was a tension in the image of the 'other' that was upheld by Dutch scientists. A tension also manifesting itself in the construction of their selves. How close was the highland Papuan to themselves?

It is difficult to speak of change and continuity for the period 1935-1960 because anthropology was anticipating a transition. The change of language in anthropological works attests to this transition, the physical anthropological practices are proof of the persistence of some of the prewar standards. Still only in the 1960s and 1970s would the anthropological discipline reflect on some of its practices and its origins.³¹² Only then would 'race' as a research tool become problematic. The Dutch academic debate was not over after the Sterrengebergte expedition, but became low-pitched in Dutch academic circles after the 'loss' of New Guinea.

³¹² Asad (ed.), *Anthropology*.

Chapter Five

Careering New Guinea: Making the Anthropological 'Self'.

Introduction

“Everyone who writes about the Orient must locate himself vis-à-vis the Orient (...).”³¹³

According to Said empire is a discourse and inevitable in the process of knowledge production, whether cultural, popular or scientific. The Orient was constructed as the opposite of everything the West was.³¹⁴ Writing about the Orient, constructing knowledge about the ‘other’ requires the positioning of the writer. That makes the ‘self’ an inextricable part of this binary opposition together with the ‘other’. In the previous chapter we encountered the anthropologists of the expeditions and the images of the ‘other’ they constructed. In this chapter we will take a closer look at the persons that made new knowledge in Dutch New Guinea. What made their anthropological ‘selves’? Their professional lives were shaped by different factors: sex, class and race but also being Dutch, a colonial and a ‘jungle man’ or adventurer. The intersectionality between these elements made the anthropologist and in turn influenced how they processed the world. It is a pity colonial anthropologists in New Guinea rarely took the opportunity to study their own role or the colonial society they were moving in.³¹⁵ Whether they were aware of it or not, the environment they were operating in and their own personalities played an important role in constructing an image of the ‘other’.

Class: Who could career in Dutch New Guinea?

In recent years much attention has been paid to the concept of ‘imperial careering’. The collection ‘Imperial Lives’ by David Lambert and Alan Lester has taken a new and interesting approach to imperial biographies.³¹⁶ Instead of merely summing up a person’s life they set out to reconstruct the making of an imperial actor through tracing movements and career steps. The spaces of the book consist mainly of the British Empire. The book illustrates abstract notions like ‘empire’ or ‘imperial network’. This approach focuses less on a supposed colonial ‘mindset’, as Said very much did.

Men who wanted to make a career in the Dutch ‘Empire’ only travelled back and forth between the Netherlands and the Netherlands Indies. After the Second World War this space had even become more narrow. However Dutch New Guinea was just as much a place where a career could be made as the Netherlands Indies had been before the war. It was a place where different generations met. On the one hand there were the experienced BB

³¹³ Said, *Orientalism* 20.

³¹⁴ Ibidem 1-2.

³¹⁵ Jaarsma, *Waarneming en interpretatie* 129.

³¹⁶ D. Lambert and A. Lester (eds.), *Imperial Lives across the British Empire: Imperial Careering in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge 2006).

(‘Binnenlands Bestuur’) officials and jungle scientists. A good example is the governor Jan van Baal. He had made a career as a junior official before the war and assumed the most senior position in the 1950s. On the other hand there were the young AAA (‘Adjunct Administratief Ambtenaar’) and scientists just out of university. The AAA officials got a training of nine months in Hollandia, afterwards they had to serve on an outpost somewhere in the colony. After their time in New Guinea the government paid for their university education in the Netherlands. The young scientists who participated in the Sterrengebergte expedition had just gotten their PhD or completed their university education. For scientists there were also possibilities at the Population Office in Hollandia or they could combine their scientific interests with a career in colonial administration. After the war Dutch New Guinea had become more of a meritocracy and movement up the ranks was very well possible. Still it was a system in which women were not welcome and persons of Indonesian decent found themselves in a second-rate position.

Profession: Becoming a Colonial Scientist

Dutch anthropology had shifted its field of interest to New Guinea after the ‘loss’ of the Netherlands Indies. The last colony in the East was a particular research field, as Jaarsma demonstrated, because of the close interactions between missionaries, officials and scientists in the anthropological research space.³¹⁷ The colonial framework made being an anthropologist in New Guinea different. For the expedition members, being a scientist, being an academic in the midst of the jungle was perhaps the most important part of their identity. What was expected of a scholarly team in the tropical jungle? What would the job advertisement for the expeditions have looked like, if there had been one?

In chapter two we saw that the KNAG expeditions to New Guinea were complex undertakings. ‘Het witte hart’, written by Brongersma and Venema about the Sterrengebergte expedition, gives a good impression of the daily activities at the Sibil base camp and the different smaller exploratory tours that were undertaken.³¹⁸ Other books about scientific expeditions often give another impression. For example Bijlmer’s ‘Naar de achterhoek der aarde’ or Van Eechoud’s ‘Met kapmes en kompas’ put the image of the lonely white male explorer center stage. Expeditions were perhaps an isolated enterprise, but not a lonely one. The scientist had to be a team player and was largely dependent on the other participants. Expeditions were a peculiar amalgam of scientists, their Indonesian assistants, the indigenous *draggers*, the Papua police and colonial officials. A little world of its own where daily realities were decided by a racial line. The bivouacs were separated by a divide and tasks were equaled with one’s skin colour.

In order for this motley crew to function, scholars had to be leaders as well, Brongersma being a good example. Officially appointed to lead the scientific endeavors, in practice he dealt with all kinds of practical and communicative issues and kept the scientific team together. The other leader, Venema, is a far more elusive figure in this whole episode. Especially for the leaders jungle experience was a must. The organizing committee for the

³¹⁷ Jaarsma, *Waarneming en interpretatie* xvi.

³¹⁸ Brongersma and Venema, *Het witte hart*.

1959 expedition explicitly looked for a *rimboeman* (jungle man).³¹⁹ Jungle experience came in handy with all the non-academic work and the complex logistics that had to be taken care of. The Sterrengebergte expedition was significantly slowed down by logistic miscalculations, inciting the rumor that technical leader Venema himself or discord between the leaders was responsible for this. Moreover jungle experience was only useful up to a certain degree, on the spot the scholars were dependent on local guides and interpreters to get any work done. The short time span in which research had to be conducted, made it impossible to adequately learn the local language.

Affinity with the Netherlands Indies and New Guinea could work in your advantage as well. The scientists of the Wisselmeren expedition all had been in the tropics before. The botanist Eijma was already performing research in the highlands since January 1939, while the physical anthropologist Brouwer was working as an army doctor on Java. The leader Le Roux had been a participant in the Dutch-American Stirling expedition of 1926. A shift took place in comparison to the 1959 expedition. In this case the leaders were from a different generation than the young specialists. The latter often came straight from Dutch academia and stood at the beginning of their scholarly career. Six months in the New Guinea jungle provided them with a unique opportunity and could mean a jump start for their scientific careers. As said before, some of the Sterrengebergte scientists had worked in New Guinea before, however the colonial framework of the Netherlands Indies was lacking. They did not have experience with any of the prewar New Guinea or other colonial expeditions. Brongersma on the other hand was hired because of his experience in jungle expeditions.

To become part of the expedition depended more on your personal (academic) network than your ability to apply for a vacant job. The team for 1959 was recruited by the organizational committee. They looked in their personal network for adequate people. Suitable scientists were most often affiliated to a university or a state museum. The notes of the SENNG committee are witness to the many rejections the organizers had to send out.³²⁰ After having found a suitable candidate, scientists (and their employers) had to be willing to leave their normal work behind for several months.

Once in New Guinea scientists had to work on their own (of course accompanied by *draggers* and police) for several days, weeks or months in a row. For example the anthropology team went out to the villages on their own and quietly performed their research. The daily routine of an expedition left considerable space for individual exploits. During the 1959 expedition the team had very specialized individual instructions. A big contrast to twenty years before when for example Le Roux had taken on ethnographic work together with topography. Scientific work in the jungle was increasingly carried out by men with a specialized university education in contrast to a general *Indologen* education. Physical anthropologists like Brouwer and Bijlmer had a medical education and first worked for the colonial government before going on expedition.

³¹⁹ UA, KNAG 1873-1967, 74, inv.no.176, 'Notes first and second meeting'.

³²⁰ Ibidem, inv.no.178.

KNAG expedition members were all male from the *draggers* to the leaders. This is indeed a very traditional story of the white male Western ‘self’ speaking about and for the ‘other’. For most work in New Guinea only men were hired: colonial officials, missionaries, scientists. The only instance where women are encountered is as secretary for the SENNG. The candidacy of women for expedition member is not taken seriously.³²¹ Women were present in Dutch New Guinea, often as the wife of a protestant missionary or colonial official.

A possible exception in which we do encounter women doing anthropological work is as ‘wife of’. Both Doeke Brouwer (1930s, Alor islands) and Jan Pouwer (1950s, Mimika) mention that their wives were essential to the success of their anthropological work. Brouwer’s wife accompanied him on trips, helped him with his medical work and took notes of his anthropometric measurements. Not unimportant her presence could convince the female Papuans to participate in the anthropological research.³²² Pouwer mentions the fact that his married status enhanced his possibilities to get into contact with married Papuans.³²³ Not unimportant: Because his wife did the household tasks, Pouwer could devote himself to his anthropological mission. Anthropologists often made the remark that it was difficult to get into contact with Papuan women. Taking your wife on a field trip could make this easier but could never really solve the distance.

Still in the Netherlands and Dutch New Guinea anthropology was a very male world. Abroad this was different. In the Anglo-American academic world the interwar period saw the entry of women into the anthropological field. This happened at the same time that the societies in Oceania and New Guinea were systematically studied for the first time.³²⁴ Especially the circle of anthropologists around Franz Boas was open to women as well. He was convinced anthropology should be practiced from other viewpoints as well. Margaret Mead, his most famous disciple, even stated that women were more apt as fieldworkers. They found it easier to gain access to both male and female circles in the societies they were studying.³²⁵ A statement perhaps derived from her experience as a field worker in Australian New Guinea. Feminist anthropologists in the 1970s and 1980s even claimed women were better at fieldwork because of their empathic and social qualities.³²⁶ Dutch colonial science was definitely not emancipated and followed a different track than the Anglo-American scholarly field.

³²¹ Brongersma and Venema, *Het witte hart* 15.

³²² Brouwer, *Bijdrage tot de anthropologie* 9.

³²³ Pouwer, *Enkele aspecten* vi.

³²⁴ L. Schumaker, ‘Women in the Field in the Twentieth Century: Revolution, Involution, Devolution?’, in: Kuklick (ed.), *A New History* 279-280.

³²⁵ Schumaker, ‘Women in the Field’ 283.

³²⁶ *Ibidem* 285.

Adventurer: Playing Kipling

In the 1930s the interior of Dutch New Guinea was for a large part unknown territory. This made it both on a governmental and scientific level a frontier society.³²⁷ This sense of entering a new chapter in colonial history inspired all kind of emotions. The modern colony evoked images from other periods in the history of European colonialism:

“Inderdaad het is een gunst, een genade, ontdekker te mogen zijn, zijn blik te mogen laten weiden over gebieden, nog nimmer door een blanke aanschouwd, onbekend land te mogen vinden en het te brengen binnen het gezichtsveld van de beschaafde wereld.”³²⁸

Jan van Eechoud was one of those government officials of the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s who went out into the jungle ‘alone’ to map the unknown parts on the map. In fact he was accompanied by a team of helpers and about a hundred *draggers*. He strongly identified with the image of the white male explorer, even when his tasks were very unheroic. His jungle explorations of the 1930s were preparatory efforts for the Wisselmeren expedition. Gathering knowledge could become very unromantic when travelling through the jungle for several months in a row. Still the sublime, the joy of discovery fulfills Van Eechoud with a Kiplingean sense of adventure: “Hier lag dat maagdelijke land, dat nog op geen enkele kaart voorkwam. Ik moest verder gaan; het onbekende lokte. De lust om te weten, te onderzoeken, was onweerstaanbaar geworden.”³²⁹ The thirst for knowledge about the land and the people was the essential drive for further exploration. His groundbreaking exploratory work made him a colonial hero, although he is largely forgotten now.

The physical anthropologist Bijlmer invoked another Kipling reference to emphasize the difference separating the modern Dutchman and the ‘primitive’ people. When describing the culture of the people of the lake regions, especially the interaction between men and women, he sighs: “East is East and West is West (..)”³³⁰. Bijlmer cites this well-known poem to clearly delineate the ‘other’ and the ‘self’. However in many parts of his book he almost unconsciously crossed this line by recognizing the many similarities between primitive society and his own.³³¹ Just like in Kipling’s poem there is tension in the delineation of ‘other’ and ‘self’.

The references to Kipling were made into a colonial trope. It was a cultural reference the modern colonial in New Guinea could understand. The books were based on experiences in the 1930s, Van Eechoud’s jungle series published in the early 1950s and Bijlmer’s reissued

³²⁷ L. Visser (ed.), *Governing New Guinea* (Leiden 2012) 3.

³²⁸ Translation: “Indeed it is a privilege, a grace, to be discoverer, to be allowed to let your gaze rest on areas, never seen by a white man before, to find unknown land and bring it within the scope of the civilized world.” From: Van Eechoud, *Met kapmes en kompas* 6.

³²⁹ Translation: “There it was that virgin land, which occurred on no map yet. I had to go on; the unknown beckoned. The desire to know, to investigate, had become irresistible.” From: *Ibidem* 61.

³³⁰ Bijlmer, *Naar de achterhoek* 180. He refers to Kipling’s poem ‘The Ballad of East and West’ (1889).

³³¹ In fact Kipling’s poem continues as follows: “Oh, East is East and West is West, and never the twain shall meet,/Till Earth and Sky stand presently at God’s great Judgment Seat;/But there is neither East nor West, Border, nor Breed, nor Birth,/When two strong men stand face to face, though they come from the ends of the earth.

in 1950. Short statements or references can be very revealing. Said wrote about this in ‘Culture and Imperialism’.³³² In the sequel to ‘Orientalism’ Said took a closer look at what he called general European imperial patterns that defined the relationship between ‘self’ and ‘other’. Moreover he searches for the countervoices that were absent in his first important book.³³³ His main thesis is that culture was the constituent of imperialism around the world. There were a lot of commonalities to European imperialism, a common attitude. The novel was the carrier of this culture of imperialism, where the boundaries of the national and the division between ‘us’ and ‘them’, and between ‘self’ and ‘other’ evaporated.³³⁴ Said believed in the omnipresence of this culture of imperialism.³³⁵ Although he only looked at the cases of France, Britain and modern America; he leaves a door open to other imperial contexts. A literary figure like Kipling is no longer a national British icon, but becomes part of a global context of imperialism.

The culture of imperialism in Dutch New Guinea also drew from a Kipling-like idea of adventure. The lust for adventure permeated through the experiences of scientists and colonial officials alike. The ideal colonial administrator was a jungle man, a leader of outstanding moral quality. Dutch New Guinea created their own myths in the form of the *woudlopers* (jungle rangers), They were officials, among others Vic de Bruijn and Van Eechoud recognized to have all these outstanding qualities. This closely resembled the demands for the expedition leaders, who should be outstanding jungle men. Le Roux strongly identifies with his contemporary Van Eechoud in his diary:

“Wat hier door den commissaris der politie Van Eechoud, den bekenden explorateur, die den post opgericht heeft, gedaan is met uiterst geringe hulpmiddelen in zeer moeilijke omstandigheden, wekt mijn bewondering. Ik meen, als oud-rimboeman met een jarenlange ervaring zijn arbeid te kunnen beoordelen. Het is mooi pionierswerk.”³³⁶

For New Guinea a special kind of bureaucrat was required. Someone who could understand the Papuan and make contact with him. This attitude of the heroic and the adventure is reminiscent of the kind of personalities Priya Satia described for the intelligence service in Arabia.³³⁷ In the interwar period British imperial agents in the Middle East were convinced that the land and the people could only be understood by grasping the unknown, seeing what could not be seen and by making the place legible. ‘Arabia’ was understood as a place outside reality. The imperial ‘self’ became pivotal in understanding the ‘other’. The ideal anthropologist could make New Guinea legible to an audience at home.

³³² E.W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York 1993)

³³³ Said, *Culture and Imperialism* 1-2.

³³⁴ Ibidem 32.

³³⁵ Ibidem 35.

³³⁶ Translation: “What has been done here by the commander of the police Van Eechoud, the well-known explorer who founded the post, with minimal resources in difficult circumstances, earns my admiration. I think I am in a position to assess his work as a former jungle man with years of experience. It is beautiful pioneering work.” From: Le Roux, *De expeditie* 668.

³³⁷ P. Satia, *Spies in Arabia. The Great War and the Cultural Foundations of Britain’s Covert Empire in the Middle East* (New York/Oxford 2008).

*Colonial: 'Nederlands-Indietje spelen'*³³⁸

In the Netherlands in the 1950s there was the strong idea that Dutch colonialism in New Guinea was something modern and new. It was called development administration: colonialism executed along the lines of modern development policy for the Third World. It was a strong departure from pre-war 'imperial' colonialism:

“The art of governing is rational, on the condition that it observes the nature of what is governed (...). Particularly in a geographically, physically and socially little explored land like New-Guinea in the mid-twentieth century, this observation could have been the motto of the Dutch administrators who took upon themselves the daunting task of the rational or goal-oriented exploration, exploitation, and development of its natural resources and population.”³³⁹

The collection 'Besturen in Nederlands-Nieuw-Guinea' by Pim Schoorl is very insightful on how the colonial service looked like on the ground in New Guinea.³⁴⁰ The colonial service in Dutch New Guinea after the war had to cope with profoundly different realities and demands. The team consisted out of old BB but a new generation of colonial servants were recruited in the Netherlands.³⁴¹ These (often young) men had to cope with a long list of responsibilities in the jungle of New Guinea: ethnographic work was one of the most important.³⁴² Schoorl's edited volume provides the reader with personal accounts of colonial life in Dutch New Guinea.

A high sense of morality and responsibility permeated colonial thought about Dutch New Guinea. Colonialism in New Guinea in the last years was guided by ideals:

“Het wordt daarom en tegenover Nederland en tegenover de Papoea's steeds urgenter een duidelijk perspectief te bieden. Wat de laatste aangaat: hun geestelijke ontwikkeling schrijdt beangstigend snel vooruit en zij zullen ons straks voor moeilijke vragen stellen. En vzw Nederland betreft is het hoog nodig duidelijk te maken, dat wij hier niet een beetje Nederlands-Indietje zitten te spelen, maar andere oogmerken hebben, gericht op een aflopende taak en last.”³⁴³

The above citation by governor Van Baal is revealing on several aspects. First of all that developing the Papuans was an important priority. Second Dutch responsibilities in New

³³⁸ Nationaal Archief, Collectie 385 J. van Baal, entry 2.21.205.02, inv.no. 120 'Letter Van Baal to B. Krijger, 23 oktober 1956'.

³³⁹ Visser (ed.), *Governing New-Guinea* 2-3.

³⁴⁰ Schoorl (ed.), *Besturen*.

³⁴¹ Binnenlands Bestuur (BB) were academically trained (Indologie) senior colonial officials. Assistant Administratief Ambtenaar (AAA) were trained in Hollandia and after a three year career returned to the Netherlands to pursue academic studies.

³⁴² Schoorl (ed.), *Besturen* 12-13, 31-32.

³⁴³ Translation: “Therefore it is becoming more urgent to give a clear perspective to both the Netherlands and the Papuans. As the latter are concerned: their mental development is striding forward with a frightening pace and they will start asking us difficult questions soon. Concerning the Netherlands it is necessary to make clear that we are not just playing Netherlands Indies here, but have other objectives, geared towards a task and burden with and end date.” From: NI-NaHa, Collectie Van Baal, 2.21.205.02, inv.no. 120 'Letter Van Baal to B. Krijger, 23 oktober 1956'.

Guinea were aimed at eventual independence, and should not be a repetition of colonialism in the former Netherlands Indies. New Guinea after 1945 was a place to do something *new*. A place to redeem oneself, and according to Van den Doel a place to take up once again the ‘white man’s burden’ and finish what the Ethical Policy had started.³⁴⁴ In chapter two we saw that Van Baal was also the man who urged the expedition committee to make the expedition something *new*. He discouraged the intermingling of scientific and governmental interests.³⁴⁵ Certainly the New Guinea government could facilitate the expedition according to him, but should remain aloof from meddling with scientific interests.

The scientists of the Sterrenbergte expedition found themselves in a very contradictory space. On the one hand their goal was to gain scientific knowledge, on the other hand they profited from the fact that the Dutch were in fact still playing Netherlands Indies in New Guinea. In the 1930s a kind of New Guinea ‘cult’ or craze had taken root resulting in increasing attention and a flurry of publications.³⁴⁶ Before the area had been another unimportant Outer Territory. In the 1950s scientific and governmental exploration and expansion had taken on an air of urgency. Large parts of the island were still unknown and the colonial government might have suspected Dutch colonialism would not last forever. Nobody did exactly know how long it would still last, the new Republic of Indonesia posed a distant yet urgent threat.

The Dutch New Guinea craze would last up to the transfer and then came to a sudden stop in 1963. Regret and guilt would be the only things left of this vibe of newness. The Sterrenbergte expedition would be seen as a desperate anachronism, an attempt to revive the adventurous explorations of the Netherlands Indies. The *new* type of colonialism failed, the last revival of *new* colonial science went down with it.

Nationality: Being Dutch in New Guinea

Being ‘Dutch’ in the colonies was not a self-evident act.³⁴⁷ It was part of an identity that had to be constantly performed. Dutchness in the Netherlands Indies was something entirely different from Dutchness at home as Raben and Bosma demonstrated. Bloembergen investigated in ‘Colonial Spectacles’ to what extent the colonial exhibitions reflected back on the Dutch self-image.³⁴⁸ Frances Gouda looked at the performance of Dutch identity overseas and how difference was nurtured in the Indies.³⁴⁹ Colonies and motherland worked together to remake whatever Dutch identity was. Dutchness existed thanks to a delicate construct between ‘us’ and ‘them’. Dutchness was a tool to exclude the colonial subjects from the rulers, but also a tool to include. It is the part of the colonial’s identity most difficult to grasp.

³⁴⁴ Van den Doel, *Afscheid* 314-315.

³⁴⁵ UA, KNAG 1873-1967, 74, inv.no. 181, ‘Letter Van Baal to Eggink, 14-04-1954’.

³⁴⁶ Colijn, *Naar de eeuwige sneeuw* 11.

³⁴⁷ See Bosma and Raben, *Being Dutch in the Indies*.

³⁴⁸ Bloembergen, *Colonial Spectacles*.

³⁴⁹ F. Gouda, *Dutch culture overseas. Colonial Practice in the Netherlands Indies 1900-1942* (Amsterdam 1995) 119.

What kind of image of the Dutch/being Dutch/the Netherlands these colonials in New Guinea wanted to express? How did individual expedition participants experience their Dutchness?

Even in the thick jungle a degree of symbolism was held high by colonials. Raising the Dutch flag in a new territory is described by Cator as one of the highlights of his *tournee*.

“Een en ander was voor mij aanleiding om dit centrum van een Hollandsche vlag te voorzien, temeer, daar het hoofd Solekigi te Fak-Fak voor mijn huis de vlag als gezagssymbool had leeren kennen en zeer gesteld was op dit hooge waardigheidsteken.

Met groote plechtigheid werd de vlag in aanwezigheid van alle Zonggoenoes en vele Kapaoekoes, aan een vlaggestok gebonden en midden in het dorp geplant, waarna wij allen onder wild gezang een Papoeaschen rondedans om de vlaggestok maakten. (..)

Het is een waarlijk groots moment, een mijlpaal in de geschiedenis van Itodah, deze officiële inlijving van de Zonggoenoes als Nederlandsche onderdanen.”³⁵⁰

Cator gives us a very visual description: you can almost see him dancing around the flag pole surrounded by locals who probably did not fully grasp the fact that they would be Dutch subjects from now on. Cator invoked this episode as proof that the tribes were welcoming towards Dutch rule. Papuans in the interior were defined as subjects of The Netherlands, even though they had never even met someone out of a ten kilometer radius. The notion that Papuans should fully be Dutch subjects became more pronounced in the 1950s. Education and development were put central stage after the Second World War.

A Dutch identity was kept up by for example faithfully celebrating royal births and birthdays in the middle of the jungle.³⁵¹ New names for geographical landmarks were partly inspired on the royal family. For the Sterrengebergte expedition the SENNG committee even tried to find the queen willing to serve as a patron. Unfortunately this request coincided with a moment of increasing financial insecurity of the future expedition. The queen declined for the honor in December 1958.³⁵²

Other articulations of Dutchness came into expression through the daily realities of an expedition. A not so subtle division within the team was visible: the white male scholars vs. the convicts. The scholars vs. the police and marines. The expedition vs. the locals. Difference was made visible by making separate accommodation for each group, by giving each group different food rations.³⁵³

³⁵⁰ Translation: “All this led me to provide this centre with a Dutch flag, all the more, because in FakFak the head Solekigi had got to know the flag in front of my house as a symbol of authority and was very fond of this sign of high dignity./With much ceremony, and in the presence of all Zonggoenoes and many Kapaoekoes, this flag was attached to a flagpole and planted in the middle of the village, after which we, while hearing wild singing, made a Papuan dance around the flagpole.(...)/ It is truly a great moment, a milestone in the history of Itodah, this official annexation of the Zonggoenoes as Dutch subjects.” From: UA, KNAG 1873-1967, 74, inv.no. 149, ‘Verslag Cator’ 19.

³⁵¹ Van Echoud, *Met kapmes* 192; Le Roux, *De expeditie* 770-771, 784.

³⁵² UA, KNAG 1873-1967, 74, inv.no.178, ‘Notulen bestuursvergadering SENNG, 1956-1966, 24th meeting 08-09-1958 until 28th meeting 03-12-1958’.

³⁵³ “Per man en per dag kan een Europeaan aanspraak maken op 1,5 kg bruto aan levensmiddelen, een Inlandsch deelnemer op 1,25 kg.” Translation: “Per man per day, a European can claim 1,5 kilo in food, a native participant 1,25 kilo.” From: Le Roux, *De expeditie* 663.

There was also significant tension between the activities of a scientific expedition and expressions of Dutchness. The climbing of the Juliana peak in 1959 incited such tension. From the viewpoint of the expedition members the scientific usefulness of climbing the peak was evident. The colonial government of New Guinea saw other possibilities: governor Platteel used the image of the expedition men on the peak for his official New Year's card. Platteel valued the publicity that was generated with the alpinist enterprises of the scientific team.³⁵⁴ As we have seen in chapter two there were tensions as well between (scientific, imperial) ambitions and practical possibilities (financial, practical). The *doorsteek* at the end of the expedition was one of those ambitions for which no money was to be found for at first. The SENNG proposed to the government to pay for this cross-country endeavor as it would generate much publicity.³⁵⁵

Conclusion

The anthropological 'self' was a delicate construction. Only certain men were deemed suitable to read the Papuan. The ideal jungle scientist was a person who was well versed in the daily realities of the tropics. He circulated in a network of colonial scientists, a world which did become more meritocratic in the 1950s. Character was important too – the sense of discovery and adventure was bound up with being a scientist in the 'stone age'. In addition the jungle man had to have an aura of Dutchness and to have a good influence on the new people he met on his journey. In the contemporary debates about the European colonies, there was serious discussion about to what extent the tropics could change the 'self'.³⁵⁶ The encounter with the 'other' inevitably reflected back on who the colonial scientist himself was. Not only was there a clear idea about the ethnographic 'other', but the image of the colonial 'self' was just as important in Dutch New Guinea. Anthropological knowledge about 'race' was not only about the Papuan, but was just as much decided by the position in which scientists found themselves.

³⁵⁴ UA, KNAG 1873-1967, 74, inv.no. 194, 'Letter to SENNG from Brongersma, 11 and 13-06-1959' 6.

³⁵⁵ Ibidem, inv.no.178, 'Notulen bestuursvergadering SENNG, 1956-1966, 36th meeting 20-07-1959'.

³⁵⁶ Gouda, *Dutch Culture Overseas* 148.

Conclusion

The end came fast. Three years after the ambitious Sterrengebergte expedition, in October 1962, Dutch New Guinea was transferred to the interim UNTEA government of the United Nations. Six months later the area became a province of the post-colonial state Indonesia. Colonial science went down together with the last Dutch colony in the East. The expeditions to the interior of the island had been directed towards the future. Gathering more knowledge about the land and the people of New Guinea had not only been done to reach scientific goals. Exploring and developing the region was an important priority for the government as well in the last years. This was done with the expectancy that Dutch colonialism here would at least last for a few decades to come.

The simultaneous stop of both the phenomenon of large scale expeditions and Dutch colonialism is another indication of the tension that stood central in this story. The character of these two expeditions was scientific but they were situated in a colonial time and place. At the beginning of this story I asked the following question: To what extent were science and empire entangled in Dutch New Guinea during the expeditions of 1939 and 1959 and what kind of knowledge about 'race' was produced by these connections?

The two expeditions were situated in a time (1935-1960) in which not only the outlook of colonial science and anthropology went through a transformation but the political situation around New Guinea changed together with the world's view on colonialism. Naturally, the two developments were linked to each other. 'Race' as a methodological tool in science became less and less accepted after the Second World War because simultaneously it became less accepted as a worldview. Critical assessment (in the Netherlands) of the colonial past only started from the 1960s onwards. Therefore the expeditions are situated in a time of transition, not a moment of radical rupture.

The two case studies were put against the background of this important period of transition. In the first part of the story I looked at the definitions of science and empire and the possible connections between the colonial state and the expeditions. These enterprises did depend on the facilities of the colonial state, but they were also immersed in a national or imperial rhetoric. In the 1930s this revolved around the rhetoric of the Dutch Empire: The Outer Territories had to be effectively controlled for the international prestige of the Netherlands as a colonial power. In the 1950s the international reputation of the country was again at stake: Now the Netherlands had to show they were a modern colonial power. A modern ambitious expedition fitted this picture and could add to the prestige of the Dutch colony.

In the last three chapters we looked at the second part of the research question. The knowledge that was constructed about the Papuans and the explorers themselves by colonial anthropology was studied. In the 1930s race thinking was at its height, a development reflected in the writings leading up to the Wisselmeren expedition. A transformation was already visible in some of the writings directly connected to the expedition. Le Roux full heartedly recognized the humanity of the Papuans and denounced their inferiority. The image of the Papuan as primitive but good natured and willing to be colonized still prevailed though.

In 1959 'race' had become less relevant and took on the purely 'scientific' meaning it would have in the years to come - detached from language and culture as Boas advocated many years before that. A process of 'othering' also took place in the late 1950s - by silencing and placing the Papuans in another time the local population was made into willing research material. Understanding the land and the people also required a special attitude from anthropologists: they had to be jungle men with a special sensitivity towards the 'other'.

In my opinion the colonial framework influenced these expeditions more than the participants might have been aware of. Their goals were defined as purely scientific but they depended on the facilities of Dutch colonialism. Both expeditions were taken on as opportunities to further extend government authority in the highlands. More important the colonial framework determined how they looked at the world. Anthropologists moved in the hierarchy of the colonial world, a hierarchy represented in the composition of the expedition. By not asking certain questions, by not looking critical at their own roles in that colonial society and by not critically assessing their own presence in those highland communities (they did afterwards) made that the making of knowledge was inevitably influenced by these factors.

Abstract notions like the interaction between science and empire or the making of new knowledge were of course the results of many individual efforts put together. The boundaries between the past and the present blurred when I encountered some of the protagonists of the Sterrengebergte expedition. In the spring of 2012 I talked to five scientists and former colonial officials who had been involved with the preparation and execution of the expedition. It was manifest that they all had told the Sterrengebergte story before and some of them had even written their experiences down in books.

Three of my informants were scientists: Herman Verstappen, John Staats and Ben van Zanten. The other two had been colonial administrators with a keen interest in the land and people: Jan Sneep and Pim Schoorl. Each of them I met once and I decided to have an informal exchange with them rather than making it into a formal oral history project. The questions were about several aspects of their experiences during the expedition. First of all I was interested in their colonial careers: How did they end up in New Guinea and what did this work mean for the rest of their career? Questions about the day-to-day expedition experiences were mainly focused on the social interaction between the different groups and individuals at the Ok Sibil. Furthermore I was curious if there were ever tensions between their colonial work and their scientific goals. Some of the answers were leading in the writing of this thesis. For example they made it clear to me that the Sterrengebergte expedition did have an influence on the rest of their career. A failure is not the word the participants used to describe the events of 1959 and therefore I decided not to make it the starting point of my narrative. The men also had strong feelings about the purely scientific character of the enterprise. I hope to have problematized the last issue in my story. In the end this little project made forgotten science suddenly very alive and connected to the present.

Few people know about Dutch colonial expeditions nowadays and even with historians it is not a popular topic of research. The archive provides enough material for more research about many expeditions. I want to discuss another idea here as it comes out of some of the findings

of this research project. In the last chapter I talked briefly about the *new* colonialism that was propagated in the final years of Dutch New Guinea. This hints at a continuity between the outlook of the colonial period and discourses that emerged thereafter: development aid, international organizations and nature protection did not come out of nowhere. In the primary sources mentioned, there was already a growing consciousness about the need to protect the people of the highlands. In the 1930s explorers were aware of the negative effects of discovery. This awareness only grew in the 1940s and 1950s: The Dutch should do something for the Papuans, instead of solely developing the area for their own gain. Slow steps towards modern development aid and nature protection were taken. It would be interesting to investigate the continuities in thinking between the colonial period until 1960 with the period after. In this story I have treated the transfer of New Guinea as a break. However it would be interesting to look at how colonial science could be profoundly 'modern', while today's science and nature protection can have colonial basis.

The expedition to the Wisselmeren took place more than seventy years ago, the expedition to the Sterrengebergte is only fifty years behind us. Yet it is a world utterly strange to us. We think of colonial times in black and white. The colonial world, the divide that ran through society, was based on a division between black and white. The real world of Dutch New Guinea, was one of many colours as the photographs of the Star Mountains show. The image of the 'other' discussed here was a construction in the Western mind. In real life the boundaries were crossed constantly. Although Brongersma had stated that the expedition would definitely be no leisure trip and the setbacks of an expedition had been emphasized all too often, it was the beauty and the colours of Dutch New Guinea that stayed with the participants for the rest of their life.

Appendix

I Overview Expeditions to Dutch New Guinea in the Twentieth Century³⁵⁷

| Year | Name | Protagonists a.o. |
|-----------|--|--|
| 1903 | Wichmann Expedition, North New Guinea | |
| 1904-1905 | Sneeuwgebergte, Southwest New Guinea (New Guinea I) | KNAG, Posthumus-Meyjes , De Rochemont, Koch. |
| 1907 | Lorentz expedition to Central New Guinea | |
| 1909 | Nouhuys expedition to Central New Guinea | |
| 1912-1913 | Herderschee expedition to South New Guinea | |
| 1907-1915 | Military Expeditions | Colijn sr., Gooszen. |
| 1909-1911 | British Ornithology expedition | A.F.R.Wollaston |
| 1909-1910 | Second South New Guinea | |
| 1912-1913 | Third South New Guinea | |
| 1920-1922 | Central New Guinea | Van Overeem, Kremer . |
| 1926 | Stirling expedition to Mamberano | Le Roux. |
| 1935-1936 | Mimika expedition | Bijlmer. |
| 1936 | Colijn expedition to highlands New Guinea, Carstensz Peak | Colijn jr., Dozy, Wissel. |
| 1937-1938 | Wisselmeren explorations | Cator, Ravenswaay Claassen. |
| 1937-1939 | Military explorations by plane. | Vreede. |
| 1937-1938 | Gold exploration | Mijnbouw Maatschappij Nederlands Nieuw Guinea. |
| 1938 | Archbold expedition (Dutch-American) to the Baliem valley. | American museum of Natural History. |

³⁵⁷ Van den Brink, *Dienstbare kaarten* 90, 159-161, 211-212,233-235, 260-262; Van Duuren, *Physical Anthropology Reconsidered* 80.

| | | |
|------|----------------------------------|--|
| 1939 | Wisselmeren (New Guinea II) | KNAG, Le Roux, Brouwer. |
| 1955 | Exploration Sibilvalley | Schoorl. |
| 1959 | Sterrengebergte (New Guinea III) | Treub-Maatschappij (De Maatschappij tot bevordering van het Natuurkundig Onderzoek in Oost- en West Indië) KNAG, Van Baal , Brongersma, SENG (special commission of KNAG en Treub) |

II - Overview Participants

Expedition Wisselmeren 1939³⁵⁸:

Dr. C.C.F.M. Le Roux (ethnography, cartography leader)
Dr. R. IJzerman (geology)
Dr. D. Brouwer (doctor and physical anthropology)
J.P. Eijma (botany)
H. Boschma (zoology)
M. Saleh, H.J. Hoeka (cartography)
Sitanala (interpreter)
R.R. van Ravenswaay Claassen (police unit commander)
Father Tillemans (catholic mission)
J.V. (Vic) de Bruijn (local government official)

Expedition Sterrengebergte 1959³⁵⁹:

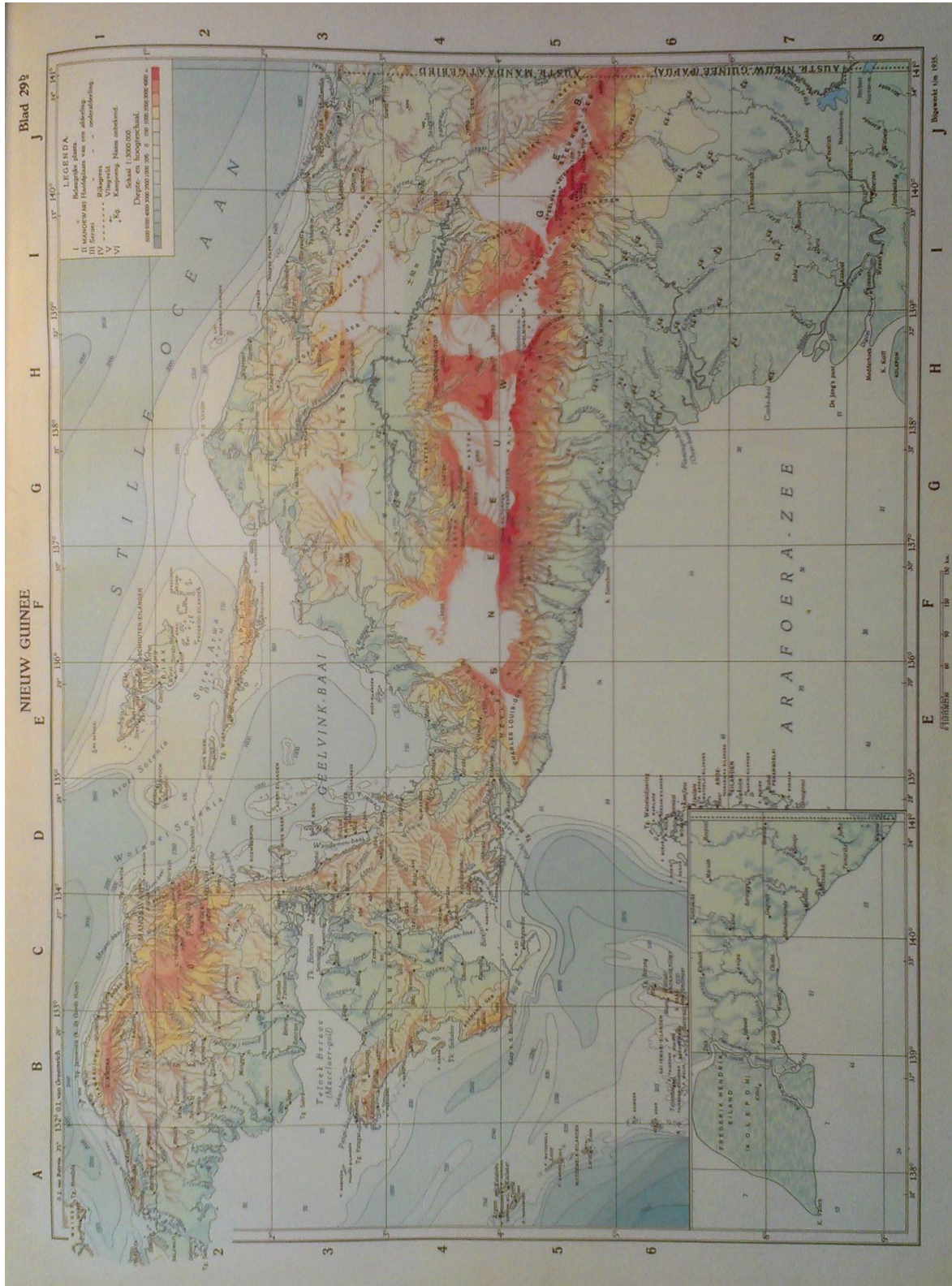
Dr. L. D. Brongersma (leader, zoology)
Kapt. Ltz. VI. G.F. Venema (leader, technical aspects)
Dr. J.C. Anceaux (linguistics)
Dr. J. Pouwer (Cultural Anthropology)
Dr. L.E. Nijenhuis (Blood type research)
Dr. A.G. de Wilde (Physical Anthropology)
C. van Heijningen, J.J. Staats, Dr. W. Vervoort (Zoology)
Dr. H. Th. Verstappen (Geomorphology)
Dr. Ch. B. Bär, Ir. H.J. Cortel, Ir. A. E. Escher (Geology)
Ir. J.J. Reijnders (Agricultural Geology)
C. Kalkman (Botany)
Dr. B.O. van Zanten (Bryology)
T. Romeijn (medical)
C.B. Nicolas (head of the marines)
R. Kroon (head of police unit)
J. Sneep (local government official)

³⁵⁸ Le Roux, *De expeditie* 662.

³⁵⁹ Brongersma and Venema, *Het witte hart* 279.

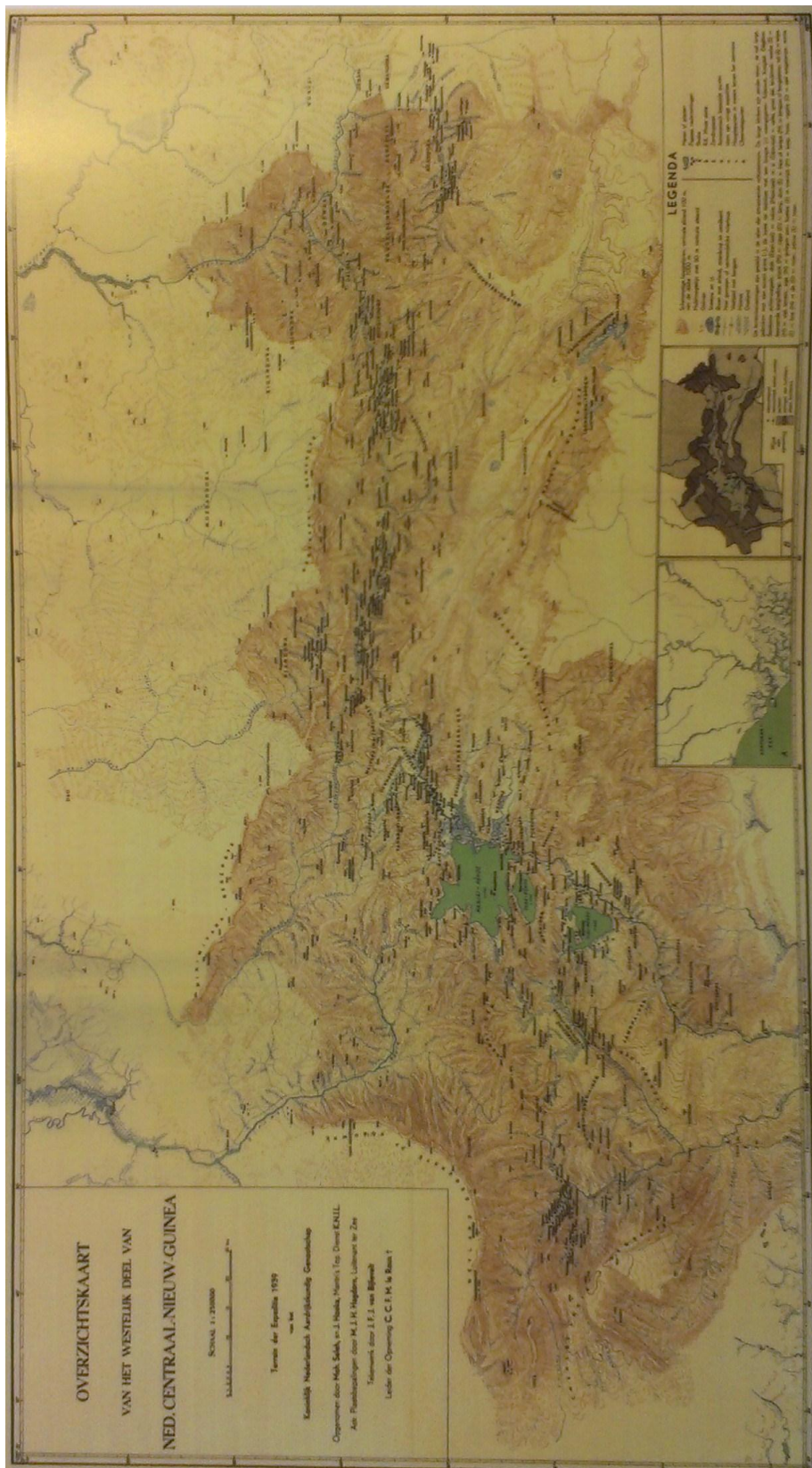
III - Maps

'Nieuw Guinee', in: Dutch New Guinea, in: Atlas van Tropisch Nederland uitgegeven door het Koninklijk Aardrijkskundig Genootschap in samenwerking met den Topografischen Dienst in Nederlandsch-Indië (1938).



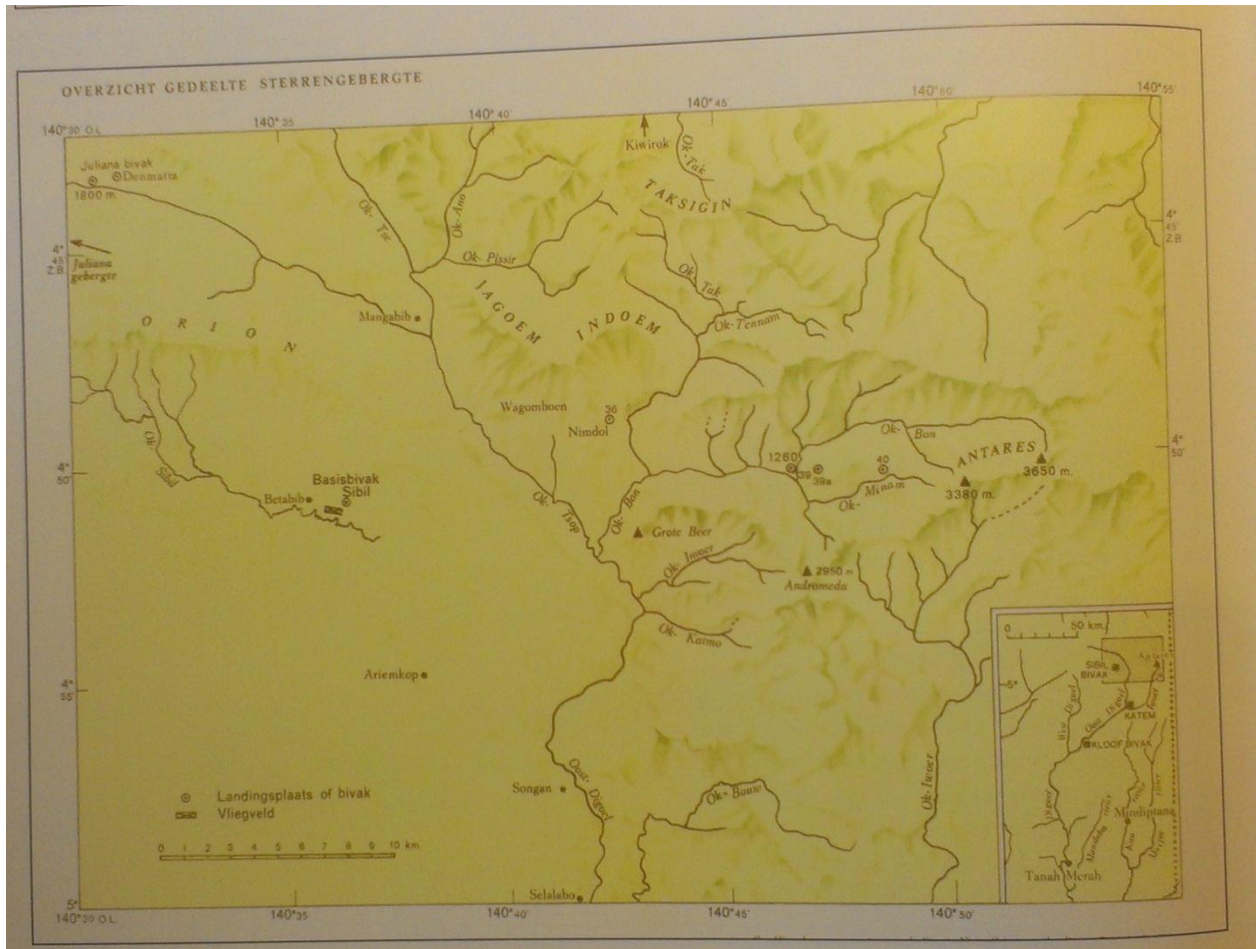
The Wisselmeren Expedition

M.Saleh and J. Hoeka, 'Overzichtskaart van het westelijk deel van Ned. Centraal-Nieuw-Guinea.1950', in: van den Brink, *Dienstbare kaarten* 238.



The Sterrengebergte Expedition

'Overzicht gedeelte Sterrengebergte', in: van den Brink, *Dienstbare kaarten* 260



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