

Presentatie van eerste exemplaren van 'Koloniale oorlogen in Nederland' door Piet Hagen op 25 april 2018 te Amsterdam

Jangan sekali-kali meninggalkan sejarah

*Do not ever, even for a moment,
turn your back on your history*

President Sukarno, 17 augustus 1966

Mr. Ambassador, ladies and gentlemen,

The history textbook of my secondary school was published simultaneously in Groningen and Batavia in the first year of the War of Independence, in 1946. Two pages of this book were dedicated to the Java War, which swept Central and Eastern Java from 1825 till 1830. It was the first time I heard of Dipanagara, who revolted against the Dutch. We were told that the pious prince hated the colonial government and tried to drive them out of his country. But the book didn't mention the number of 200,000 Javanese who were killed during this war.

Sixty years later, I read the excellent biography of prince Dipanagara, written by Peter Carey of Oxford University. It was this book that inspired me to investigate the history of colonial wars in Indonesia. I wanted to know how many wars had been fought by colonial powers since Portugal conquered Malaka in 1511. If more than 200,000 people lost their lives during the five years of the Java War, how many people would have died during five centuries of colonial rule?

The book which is published today contains a list of more than 500 military actions, expeditions and wars waged upon Indonesia by Portuguese, Spanish, French, British, Dutch and Japanese forces. The main reason for these wars was expressed by Jan Pieterszoon Coen

in his adage that there is no trade without war and no war without trade.

I'm afraid that very few people in Holland know that sultan Agung of Mataram tried to expell Coen from Java twice, both in 1628 and 1629, as you can see on this painting by Sujojono. In these two battles alone tens of thousands of Indonesians lost their lives. The total number of Indonesian casualties in all the colonial wars I have documented, must be counted in millions.

Whereas the Europeans wanted to secure free access to Indonesian waters, ports and markets, Indonesians defended their right to trade freely as they had done before. That's the reason I've chosen the subtitle: 'Five centuries of resistance against foreign rule'. It changes the focus from Europe to Indonesia.

In my book I try to explain how a very small number of Europeans - less than 1 per cent of the population - managed to control tens of millions of Indonesians for such a long time. They did so mainly by military force. During the five centuries of foreign rule, there were always colonial wars, often in two, three or more places at the same time. In addition there was a repressive system, based on the collaboration of Indonesian princes and regents.

I do not deny that Europeans have also brought benefits to Indonesia. But my book focuses on colonial wars because this subject has been neglected for so long by many historians.

Of course, there is a new interest in the Dutch role in the Indonesian War of Independence. But this is a quite recent phenomenon and the knowledge of other colonial wars is still haphazard if not totally non-existent. Over the last seven years, I've asked many people what they knew about the Java War, one of the biggest wars ever fought by Dutch forces. Even academics had to confess that they had never heard of it.

A good historian will try to explain the events he describes in the context of their time. But this does not mean that we have to conclude too easily that colonial oppression was 'normal' in the past. The fact that Indonesians fought so many wars against their oppressors is the best proof that not everyone in those days accepted foreign rule. Moreover, the behaviour of the colonial forces was also criticized by contemporaries in Europe. In the last chapter of my book I quote more than a hundred authors, who *in their* time criticized the abuses of colonial rule.

I do sincerely hope that my book will stimulate teachers at schools and universities to pay more attention to the colonial wars in Indonesia. One cannot evaluate the common past of Europe and Indonesia properly without knowing the dark side of colonialism. As Sukarno remarked in his last Independence Day-speech: Do not ever, even for a moment, turn your back on your history.

I Gusti Agung Wesaka Puja, I am very happy that you were willing to attend this meeting and it is a great honour for me to offer the first copy of my book to you as the ambassador of the Republic of Indonesia.

Het tweede 'eerste' exemplaar is voor Frank van Vree, als vertegenwoordiger van het Nederlandse instituut dat gespecialiseerd is in oorlogsstudies. Frank, je grote voorganger bij het NIOD, Loe de Jong, heeft 26 boekdelen nodig gehad om de Tweede Wereldoorlog in het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden te beschrijven. Ik bied je nu een overzichtsstudie aan van zo'n vijfhonderd militaire acties, expedities en oorlogen gedurende vijf eeuwen - in één band. Wie durft dan nog te zeggen dat dit boek te dik is?