

To the Memory of Comrades:

Personal Remembrance of Dutch War Dead in Southeast Asia, 1942-45

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July 2004, The Hague Netherlands: beside the pathway on a bench in one of the stands at the 'Pasar Malam Besar' (the big night market),¹ the largest Eurasian festival in the world, sits a 82-year-old white haired man holding a bamboo ladder his daughter just bought. He is obviously in a good mood and calls to the people passing by in Malay language: 'Selamat datang di rumah Indo' (welcome to the *Indisch Huis*), inviting people to enter the stand of the *Indisch Huis*, a sort of society for Eurasians located in The Hague.² This man, Gerrit van der Schuyt,³ spends much of his time at the twelve-day festival, presenting the *Indisch Huis*, walking around having a chat with friends and strangers or playing chess in the stand with his chess

buddy with whom he regularly plays in the *Indisch Huis* itself. Few visitors would expect that Gerrit, the warm and friendly man, has thrown stones at the Japanese Emperor's car and an egg at a Dutch Prime Minister.

As a former POW on the Burma railway, Gerrit is very sensitive about the way the war is commemorated. In his reactions to what he thinks is not correct he can be both very furious and rebellious.⁴ At the same time he holds to protocols. The combination of his rebellious reactions and esteem for protocol seems a contradiction. Although there is a tension between them in Gerrit's case, the rebellion is part of his fight to recognize the sufferings of the war victims from the Netherlands Indies and to commemorate the war dead in a ways he deems proper. In this article I will discuss how Gerrit van der Schuyt deals with his war dead and his war past. In one sense Gerrit is an exception because not many Eurasians in the Netherlands react as Gerrit does. In another way he is not because many of the Eurasians feel that Gerrit van der Schuyt put their thoughts into action. Gerrit's story can be seen as a representing the way individuals deal with their war dead and war past.

GERRIT VAN DER SCHUYT

Gerrit was born on 10 January 1922 in Batavia, present-day Jakarta. His father was Dutch and his mother Indonesian-Chinese. He was the second of three children. In 1940-1941 while in fifth grade of Grammar School he was called up to military service in the 8th Battalion in Kediri (Java). In 1942 he was taken prisoner, and via POW-camps at Sukabumi, Cimahi and Changi he was send to work on the Burma Railway. He worked at several camps, among them the woodcutter camp 'Linson'. In 1945 he was transported to Tamuan where he was liberated. After his liberation he entered the 2nd Battalion and was send back to the Netherlands Indies. In the Netherlands Indies Indonesian nationalists on Java had proclaimed an independent Indonesian Republic on 17 August 1945 whereupon the Dutch tried to regain power. The result was a violent conflict in which the Dutch government brought troops from the Netherlands to support the colonial army. The conflict lasted until 27 December 1949 when the Dutch gave up the colony and officially transferred sovereignty to Indonesia.⁵

When Gerrit ended up in a hospital he prepared for entrance examinations for the civil service, which he passed. He went to the

Netherlands to study in Leiden. After arriving in the Netherlands he supported the initiative to build a national memorial at the Dam Square in Amsterdam by symbolically 'buying' a stone of that square. After he found out there was no definite plan to include the memory of the war victims of the Netherlands Indies in the National Monument, he ripped the certificate of 'his stone' into pieces. Before finishing his study Gerrit encountered difficulties forcing him to seek employment as teacher. After going to university again Gerrit taught geography and cultural anthropology.

In 1971 his experiences at the Burma-railway started to disturb him. The trigger for this was the announcement of a state visit of Emperor Hirohito to the Netherlands. Gerrit wrote letters to the Prime Minister asking him not to welcome Hirohito. These letters were never answered so together with Wim Kan, a well known Dutch artist who also worked at the Burma-railway, he organized demonstrations against the visit of the Emperor. On 9 October Gerrit threw a brick at the Emperor's limousine. Gerrit and Wim Kan's protesting was part of a second wave of what Locher Scholten calls a *Indisch* commemoration cyclical movement. The first wave had been a mass production of publications on the war in the beginning of the fifties, after which interest in the war declined.⁶

Because his war past started to create physical and mental problems, Gerrit entered a program in a centre for war victims. After a short break due to clashes with therapists, he entered the program again in 1989. He also started to visit Thailand to see the old Burma Railway and visit the war cemeteries where his comrades are buried. By then he had been retired for two years.⁷

In July 1991 the visit of a Japanese delegation of Prime Minister Kaifu triggered Gerrits anger again. This delegation put a wreath at the *Indisch* monument, a memorial in the Hague where every year on 15 August the end of the Second World War in the Pacific is commemorated. This gesture was not appreciated by the *Indisch* community (Eurasians and Dutch who used to live in the Netherlands Indies) as they felt the Japanese government should first apologise and pay recompense for their sufferings. The wreath was taken away and thrown into the water near the monument. But on the instructions of Prime Minister Ruud Lubbers, the wreath was put back at the monument. Gerrit learned about this from the newspaper while having breakfast. He immediately went by car, still wearing his bathrobe, to The Hague and threw the wreath back into the water.

Gerrit and his comrades again wrote letters to the government to present their case. The Prime Minister did not answer them and even ordered the police to prevent the Japanese delegation from being confronted with the *Indisch* demonstrators. It was at this point that Gerrit decided to confront the Prime Minister. On 15 August 1991, the day of commemoration, Gerrit left his house carrying a plant with two small stones between the green leaves. One stone was to be thrown at the Prime Minister and the other at a Eurasian front man who Gerrit considered had 'sold out their cause'. The plant was a good camouflage because more people would bring plants and flowers to place at the monument. On his way to The Hague Gerrit visited his former commander with whom he survived the Burma Railway and showed him the stones. His commander distracted Gerrit and secretly asked his wife to get the stones away. The wife changed the stones for eggs because she was afraid he would take new stones if he did not see something white between the leaves. At the monument Gerrit found out he was carrying eggs and threw the first one at the Prime Minister whom he hit. Gerrit was instantly taken away, unable to throw the second egg.

After the incident Prime Minister Lubbers asked to meet his assailant because he wanted to know his motives. At this meeting Gerrit pointed out his dissatisfaction with the non-communication between the government and the *Indisch* community and his disappointment that there was no official sign at the war cemeteries in Thailand. In a way the action of Gerrit was successful. This time his protest coincided with a third wave in the *Indisch* cyclical commemoration movement. Due to several new *Indisch* organizations and new policies dealing with war victims, this third wave was much more politicized than the earlier ones.⁸ A result was that the Dutch government facilitated an umbrella group of *Indisch* organizations to act as liaison between the government and the *Indisch* community. This was already a long standing wish of the *Indisch* community, but it took the 'egg incident' to change the Dutch Government's position. Another result was that the Dutch government was open to unveiling a plaque near the entrance of the war cemetery of Kanchanaburi (Thailand) in 1993 by Prime Minister Lubbers. The plaque was an initiative of a Dutch person living in Thailand.⁹

MONUMENTS

In Gerrit van der Schuyt's story we see him giving meaning to two national monuments: the National Monument on Dam Square and the *Indisch* monument in The Hague. Together these monuments form the Dutch national anchors to commemorate the end of WW II respectively in Europe and Asia. Although they both can be considered national monuments there is a hierarchy. The monument commemorating the end of the war in Europe is 'the National Monument', while the monument commemorating the end of the war in the Pacific is the '*Indisch* Monument' suggesting that it is especially for the *Indisch* community and therefore less national.¹⁰

The impulse of Gerrit van der Schuyt to rip the certificate of the Dam Stone was a personal gesture that symbolized a broad discussion. When the National Monument was designed initially there was no plan to include the commemoration of the war in the Netherlands Indies. Eleven urns with earth from execution places from the eleven Dutch provinces, symbolizing national unity, were put in the monument. There was nothing commemorating the war in the Netherlands Indies.¹¹ At the time the monument was erected in 1947 the organizing committee realized this and started a discussion to incorporate the colonies. Finally just before the 'official decolonization' of Indonesia in 1949 an urn with earth from war cemeteries in Indonesia was brought to the Netherlands. In 1950 this urn was placed in the National Monument. The absence of the Netherlands Indies in the National Monument meant that Gerrit did not find himself represented by the monument.

In 1988 the *Indisch* monument was unveiled in The Hague, where three year later Gerrit was to throw the egg. This was the result of changing commemoration patterns in the Netherlands.¹² A first national commemoration of the war in Asia was held only in 1970 and was organized from inside the *Indisch* community and attended by members of the Royal family. The slogan at of the commemoration was 'Once, for the first time, for the last time'. Notwithstanding that slogan a second national commemoration was organized ten years later on 15 August ten years later. Because of its success the commemoration was then organized annually. The monument itself was an initiative of a member of the former Dutch resistance during World War Two. Besides the *Indisch* monument in The Hague small *Indisch* monuments were erected in many other cities.¹³ The *Indisch*

monument in The Hague, however, is considered to be national, as emphasized with the presence of the Prime Minister at the commemoration every year and a summarized broadcasting on Television. The monument in The Hague is an institutionalized marker of the *Indisch* community. Flowers always lie at the foot of the monument in honor of people who died recently and throughout the year one can find somebody spreading the ashes of their beloved ones close to the monument. The monument therefore serves as a more or less sacred place for those who survived the war and the deceased.¹⁴

The *Indisch* monument can also be seen as the central one within a series of smaller monuments erected by, among others, the Dutch government in war cemeteries all over South East Asia. A special monument outside the Netherlands can be found in Mizumaki at Fukuoka Island, Japan. At this monument the deceased Dutch POWs, who were forced to work in Japan, are commemorated. After Dolf Winkler, a former forced laborer, was taken to the spot by a Japanese journalist, he 'recovered' the location where the deceased Dutch in Mizumaki were buried. He established the monument in collaboration with the local council.¹⁵

Like all other war monuments, these monuments serve to honor and remember the dead. On the level of the nation they represent unity and the nation's history. In that way the *Indisch* Monument represents the unity and history of the *Indisch* community. It is a recognition of the sufferings experienced by that *Indisch* community even though the *Indisch* Monument was not initiated from inside the *Indisch* community, which the commemoration was.¹⁶ The people who experienced the war feel very close to the monument. Because it deals with a war far away from its location, it also symbolizes those places where people suffered and died. A request to spread ashes near the monument after death is like going home or to the place where one experienced life at its most intense. In a way such a request is an alternative to requests of former POWs that their ashes be spread along the Burma-railway.

LINSON AND KANCHANABURI¹⁷

Let us go back to Gerrit van der Schuyt once more to explore this special bond with the Burma-railway and his comrades who died there. In the 1990s Gerrit regularly visited Thailand and in the second half he began to plan to a book with the memories of his comrades

who survived the Burma-railway. He called this the 'Remembrance Project'. He also wanted to find Linson, the woodcutter's camp that was not always mentioned in the literature, and lists of the camps at the Burma-railway. Linson was a special camp for Gerrit because it was the last but one camp he stayed in. And it was machine gunned by the allied forces. Nobody seemed to know exactly where Linson was. In 1997 Gerrit succeeded in locating the camp with the help of two Thai guides. He recognized the location among others things because he found wood blocks, an empty space where the roll-call took place every morning and a small creek. The distance of the camp to the end of the Burma-Railway corresponds more or less with the notes from L. Cody who was a member of an Australian party that identified war graves along the Burma-railway immediately after the war in 1945. These notes were at the Australian War Memorial (AWM) in a description of a photograph of Linson, and Gerrit obtained a copy of them. Gerrit suggested to the Dutch embassy that it create some sort of memorial on the location of Linson.

In a reaction to a submission by the Dutch embassy Rod Beattie, Group Supervisor of the Commonwealth War Grave Commission working in Thailand, denied that the location Gerrit pointed out could have been Linson. According to Beattie, the camp was some eight kilometres further south. Gerrit did not agree because he did not recognize the surroundings, which were missing some small hills and because the walking distance to another camp did not fit with his experiences. He mobilized survivors of Linson in the Netherlands and America to support his position and his vision. An attempt was made to settle the dispute through the Dutch embassy in Thailand. A friend of Gerrit's did some fact finding in 2004 at the AWM through the internet and found out that the description of the photograph of Linson was changed and now corresponded with Beattie's point of view.¹⁸ Later Rod Beattie explained why Gerrit was looking in the wrong area. Gerrit went by car and after the estimated amount of kilometers he started looking for recognisable sites. Gerrit counted the kilometers by road and mistakenly did not take into account the bows and bends of the rail track. Beattie himself was working on a process of recovering detail of the railway. He had been excavating along the railway in order to find the exact places of the camps and places where special events had taken place.¹⁹

For Gerrit the denial of the location of Linson was frustrating because it denied his memory of his wartime period at that specific

location. It was the camp where one of his comrades committed suicide but was registered missing. He was determined that the remains of his comrade should be found and laid to rest at the war cemetery.²⁰

Gerrit went to Thailand again in 1999 and in 2000. One of the reasons was to check the medal he received from the Dutch government that he put at the grave of his friend Jan Delmaar who died in camp Tarsao. Gerrit always visited both war cemeteries in Thailand: Chungkai and Kanchanaburi, which are six kilometers from each other. In 2000 Gerrit went to the bridge over the river Kwai where he almost fell into the water in 1944.²¹ On 15 August Gerrit was to attend the ceremony at the Kanchanaburi cemetery where a Dutch flag was to be hoisted.

The situation he found at Kanchanaburi made Gerrit furious, as he writes in a letter. When he arrived at 8am he heard from a Thai assistant that Beattie 'instructed a subordinate to raise fully the Thai flag and a frayed Dutch flag. When I noticed this I intervened and with some ceremony from my side I raised the frayed Dutch tricolour half mast.' Gerrit then went to Beattie's office and saw two official wreaths of the Netherlands War Grave Foundation, one for Kanchanaburi and the other for Chungkai. He then met Beattie: 'He looked untidy, not shaven and shabbily clothed. Should this man lay the wreaths? Over my dead body, I thought. I then demanded from Mister Beattie that, because there was no Dutch delegate, I would lay down of the wreaths in Kanchanaburi and Chungkai with some homage from my side, to prevent Rod Beattie dumping the wreaths carelessly.'

Gerrits' anger was not sparked by Rod Beattie's appearance and behaviour per se: it was more directed towards the Dutch representatives. He ended his letter by saying that there were two journalists who interviewed him: 'This proves again that the Public Relations of the Dutch embassy in Thailand is in the wrong and that in the future, near and distant, a lot has to be improved and changed.'

Gerrit sent his letter to the embassy in Thailand, the Dutch Foreign Minister and some organisations dealing with *Indisch* history and the war dead. The embassy reacted as if it was the offended party. The temporary chargé d'affaires wrote: 'At first, undoubtedly needless to say, I want to remind you that the official commemoration is on 4 May.'²² Every year on that day the Dutch

ambassador lays down wreaths on the war cemeteries in Kanchanaburi and Chungkai.' He then listed some other work the embassy does for the war graves, survivors and relatives, and reminded Gerrit that the embassy had helped him during his private Remembrance Project. At the end of the letter the writer explained that, due to holidays and transfers, it was not possible to send a delegate on 15 August. This offensive and defensive reaction presented in a nutshell the problems the *Indisch* community faced for a long time when they wanted to honor their war dead or asked for recognition of their war experiences. They had to conform to the European timetable of the war memory, determining the end of the Second World War at 5 May, while at that moment the war in the Netherlands East Indies was still going on. The reaction of the Minister of Foreign Affairs was more diplomatic. He expressed his sorrow that Gerrit was confronted with the disappointing situation and promised to initiate action for more activities.

ANGER AND PROTOCOL

How do we understand the personal quest of Gerrit van der Schuyt in Thailand? One way of course is therapeutic. It can be a way of dealing with disturbing memories to confront yourself with the places that are part of your nightmare. There is also a psychological explanation because Gerrit felt that he survived thanks to his dead friends who are buried in Thailand, and being there is a way of coming home to them. Another more psychological explanation as far as his wish to find the remains of the 'missing' comrade and rebury him is that Gerrit knows how it feels to have missing relatives. His father died in the war but his body was never found. Gerrit feels it is very important to know where you can go to visit the grave of your loved ones.

In Thailand Gerrit is not looking for his fathers' body but taking care of his comrades. For the same reason that people want their ashes to be spread at the *Indisch* Monument or at the River Kwai, Gerrit goes there because the time he spend there left such an imprint on his life. Recognition of their history and its details is immensely important for the ones who survived the war. Recognition of their version of the story makes their experiences true and validated. In that sense it was important for Gerrit to find Linson, not only to complete the story of the Burma-railway, but also to possibly rebury the remains of deceased comrades. Whether or not they were already

reburied or not does not matter. What counts is the perception of the individual. Seen from a national point of view the exact geographical location of all POW camps might not be that interesting; on an individual level it is. It is odd to realize that although Rod Beattie and Gerrit van der Schuyt disagreed on the exact location of Linson, both men were motivated by the same reasons to find the actual location. One of Beattie's motives to excavate and do other research along the railway was to determine the few exact details that can be known, such as location, place of death and burial, all of which are of great importance to the families concerned.²³

The broader context of the attempts of both men to improve the historiography of the Burma railway is the phenomenon that history and historical events tend to be claimed by one party or that one party dominates the writing of history. For example in the case of the Burma railway the dominance of English written accounts overshadows the Dutch written experiences of Dutch POWs.²⁴ The fate of Asian forced laborers at the railway – the Romusha – are also very much neglected in Western histories of the railway.²⁵

What makes the story of Gerrit van der Schuyt significant is his continuous struggle for recognition for himself and his community. This started when he 'bought' the Dam stone in 1946. He did not want the stone anymore when it turned out that his dead were not included in the National Monument. It was important for him that his dead are recognised in an official way, through protocol and in official memorials. It was also important that political representatives take into account the sensitivities of members of their nation. Neglect by the Dutch government in not listening to the objections of the *Indisch* community against visits of Japanese state delegations raised much anger among this community. By throwing a brick at the emperor's limousine Gerrit expressed this people's outrage. The same can be said of the 1991 'egg incident'. It was the expression of the people's anger because they felt their memorial was tarnished by the Japanese presence and that the government again did not want to listen to them.

Gerrit's actions seem always to be an engagement with official ways of commemorating the war and the dead. In 2000 he did not allow the commemoration of his war dead to be sullied. He, as a POW and Dutch citizen, raised the Dutch tricolour half mast and takes care of the wreaths. Photographs of this ceremony show Gerrit

standing at attention in front of the flag. He was most angry because his representatives, the Dutch embassy, did not fulfil their duty to honour the war dead as they should. The reaction of the temporary chargé d'affaires was a repetition of earlier neglects: war dead, among them those who died in Asia, are officially commemorated on 4 May and not in August. By law and regulations this might be true. In practice, however, there is an extra commemoration of the war dead in Asia with official protocol in the Netherlands in August.²⁶

When we look at the official timetable of national history we do not always recognize our own history. This was the case with the *Indisch* community. But because some of them protested, sometimes in an unorthodox way, the commemoration of their dead was given an official dimension. That did not guarantee that all Dutch understood the sensitiveness of the difference between the National and *Indisch* commemoration, as we saw in the reaction of the Dutch embassy in Thailand. How about Gerrit? Is he still busy with this issue, for example, when he visits the 'Pasar Malam Besar' and feels as if he is coming home during those twelve days? Yes, it is still in his head. His life in the POW camps is always in the back of his mind. Not necessarily in a problematic way, remembering the sufferings. When he sees me he shouts that he remembers the song that Wim Kan used to sing in the POW camps. With a big smile Gerrit sings me the song and promises to write the words down. He is enthusiastic when he tells me about it. I am puzzled. Why is he so enthusiast? Maybe because it reminds him that he is a war survivor and not among the war dead? Maybe because he can share his memory with me? Maybe because it connects him in a way to his friends?

The real encounters with the war dead takes place elsewhere. They take place when survivors visit the former camps, they take place when survivors protest against wreaths that, according to them, do not belong at that monument, and they take place when somebody far away replaces the Dutch representative at a ceremony. But most of the times the encounters with the dead take place in the mind. As when Gerrit remembers Wim Kan's song and sings it for me.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ In 2009 the Pasar Malam Besar changed its name to Tong Tong Fair.
- ² In 2006 the *Indisch Huis* went bankrupt.
- ³ Gerrit van der Schuyt was interviewed by Freddy Begemann for the SMGI (Stichting Mondelinge Geschiedenis Indonesië, Foundation for Oral History on Indonesia. See F. Steijlen, *Memories of the East*, KITLV-Press, Leiden, 2002). These interviews on 19 November, 26 November and 14 December 1998 can be found in the Interview collection of the KITLV in Leiden (nr 1309.1, 1309.2 and 1309.3). In 2002 I had some lengthy talks with Gerrit while preparing a public interview with him on 15 August in the *Indisch Huis*. Since then he provided me with all his relevant correspondence. On 6 October 2006 Gerrit passed away. He has read an earlier version of this article and gave his permission to use his real name. I wish to thank Jan van Bremen and the other participants of the Kyoto workshop in 2005 (Historical Research Program Japan-Netherlands), as well as Adrian Vickers for their remarks on an earlier version of the article.
- ⁴ More than 42,000 Dutch military (soldiers, navy and auxiliary corps) were made POWs by the Japanese. Among them were many Indo-europeans and ethnic Moluccans and Menadonese. Some 18,000 Dutch POW's were employed at the Burma railway. See also: L. de Jong 'The collapse of a colonial society: the Dutch in Indonesia during the Second World War'. *Leiden*, KITLV 2002, chapter 4.
- ⁵ For more information on this complex period of the Indonesian revolution and decolonization see among others A. Vickers, *A history of modern Indonesia*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2005 chapter 3 and H. van den Doel, *Afscheid van Indië: deval van het Nederlandse imperium in Azië*, Prometheus, Amsterdam, 2000.
- ⁶ E. Locher-Scholten, 'In Nederland na 'de verre oorlog: Publieke herinneringen aan de Tweede Wereldoorlog in Azië', in R. Raben (ed), *Beelden van de Japanse bezetting van Indonesië* Zwolle, Waanders, 1999, p61.
- ⁷ In the 1960s the war cemeteries in Thailand and Burma had become part of the Dutch *Indisch* war commemoration landscape. This was initiated after Win Kan introduced the film 'Bridge over the River Kwai' and then queen Juliana visited Thailand in 1963. See R. Raben, 'Dutch memories of captivity', in K. Hack and K. Blackburn (eds), *Forgotten Captives in Japanese-Occupied Asia*, Routledge, London, 2008, p101.
- ⁸ Locher-Scholten, 'In Nederland', p65.
- ⁹ Personal information from Rod Beattie December 2005.
- ¹⁰ There is also a National Indië monument 1945-1962 in the city of Roermond. This monument was erected for the Dutch soldiers from the Netherlands who felt in Indonesia and Netherlands New Guinea between 1945-1962. More and more this monument remembers all soldiers that were killed on duty after the war. Interview KITLV/Indische Knooppunt 2052, dd 26-08-08 with H. Cremers, mw. B. de Klerk-Moors, L.M.P. Ubben.
- ¹¹ Nor from Surinam or the Carribean. See also E. Locher-Scholten, 'Van Indonesische urn tot *Indisch* monument: vijftig jaar Nederlandse herinnering aan de Tweede Wereldoorlog in Azië', *Bijdragen en Mededelingen betreffende de Geschiedenis der Nederlanden*, vol 114, no 2, 1999, pp192-222 and E. Locher-scholten, 'De strijd om de Indonesische urn. De Nederlandse herinnering aan de Tweede Wereldoorlog in Azië', in W. Willems and J. de Moor (eds), *Het einde van Indië. Indische Nederlanders*

tijdens de Japanse bezetting en de dekolonisatie, Sdu, The Hague, 1995, pp267-77. Nowadays the Netherlands has 12 provinces; in the 1950s there were 11.

¹² E. Locher-Scholten, 'Van Indonesische' and W. Willem, *De uittocht uit Indië, 1945-1995*, Uitgeverij Bert Bakker, Amsterdam, 2001.

¹³ Some of these monuments do not refer to the World War but to the Dutch military who were sent from the Netherlands to fight the Indonesian revolution. These are local monuments with the same intention as the national one in Roermond; see note 9.

¹⁴ An *Indisch* city counselor managed to fence off the bosage next to the monument in 2005 in order to prevent dogs entering the place where peoples ashes is spreaded. Interview KITLV/*Indisch Knooppunt* 2036, dd 15-02-09 with A.A. Lutter.

¹⁵ Every year Mizumaki hosts a delegation from the Netherlands that visits the city to attend a ceremony at the monument where a list of 871 Dutch dead is inscribed. Around this memorial an exchange program of Dutch and Japanese schoolchildren was established. The town of Mizumaki is very active in expressing the peace message of the memorial (see: <http://www.town.mizumaki.fukuoka.jp/eng/exchang/exc.htm>).

¹⁶ Locher-Scholten, 'Van Indonesische'.

¹⁷ For this paragraph I used the correspondence given to me by Gerrit van der Schuyt.

¹⁸ Where used to be written '202.5 km from Thanbyuzayat', was now written '203 kilometres north of Nong Pladuk... or 211 kilometres south of Thanbyuzayat'. According to research centre of the AWM they checked the location in two sources, but they did not explain why they changed the notes in the first place.

¹⁹ Personal information from Rod Beattie December 2005. I think Rod Beattie's version is the right one See also Rod Beattie *The Death Railway: A Brief History*, Image Makers Co, Bangkok, 2005 and Rod Beattie, *The Thai-Burma Railway: The true Story of the Bridge on the River Kwai*, Image Makers Co, Bangkok, 2005.

²⁰ According to the Dutch War Graves Service this comrade is buried at the war cemetery in Myanmar. Gerrit believes the name-plate of his comrade must have been taken by somebody else.

²¹ In 1944 the river was not called Kwai. This was done after the movie *Bridge over the River Kwai* had the bridge in Kanchanaburifamous. Because many people came to visit the 'bridge over the river Kwai' the Thai government decided to change the name of the river into Kwai. See for a discussion on the feature film K. Hack and K. Blackburn, 'The Bridge on the River Kwai and King Rat: Protest and ex-prisoner of war memory in Britain and Australia', in K. Hack and K. Blackburn (eds), *Forgotten Captives in Japanese-Occupied Asia*, Routledge, London, 2008, pp147-171.

²² The writer refers to 4 May because then the war dead are commemorated; 5 May is the national celebration of the end of the war.

²³ Personal information by Rod Beattie, December 2005.

²⁴ See A. Ooms, 'The Dutch community in Thailand, 1945-46', in Hack and Blackburn, *Forgotten Captives*, pp278-302.

²⁵ See Paul H. Kratoska (ed), *Asian labor in the wartime Japanese empire: unknown histories*, M.E. Sharpe, New York, 2005.

²⁶ On 14 August there is a closed gathering at a plaque in the House of Representatives and on the following day the official commemoration takes place.