

TREASURES
of the
NATIONAL
MUSEUM

JAKARTA



TREASURES *of the* NATIONAL MUSEUM —◆— JAKARTA



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*This book is dedicated
to*

H.E. PROF. DR.-ING. WARDIMAN DJOJONEGORO

Minister for Education & Culture
Republic of Indonesia

by

JOOP AVÉ

Minister for Tourism, Post & Telecommunications
Republic of Indonesia



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Photography by
TARA SOSROWARDOYO

Page 1: A shadow puppet (Wayang Kulit) from Cirebon, West Java.

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PRESIDEN
REPUBLIK INDONESIA

FOREWORD

As a nation and a state, the Indonesian nation and the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia are modern in that they came into being and developed in the twentieth century. Our national history has shown that our national awareness has grown slowly since 1908 and that the awareness became a force which gave rise to the birth of a unitary state, the Republic of Indonesia, in 1945. In the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia we have established and operated various modern national institutions in the political, economic, sociocultural as well as defence and security spheres.

As a cultured society, this highly diverse nation of ours has old cultural, historical and traditional roots, the existence of which can be traced back to the pre-historical time. Although the culture, history and tradition of our society are dynamic, continuing to develop in the course of time, their essence has settled down eternally within our souls. On the whole, it is these old cultural, historical and traditional roots of ours that constitute rich assets and a strong foundation of our spirit and national identity which we keep fostering these days.

The National Museum is an institution which we have established and continuously maintained and developed in order for us to be able to preserve our cultural, historical and traditional artifacts. I believe that by seriously pondering upon the vast, invaluable repertoire of the museum, we will be proud of the diversity of our nation's roots of very rich culture, history and tradition, all of which have become the ever-gushing source of our nation's dynamics for the present time as well as for the future.

May Almighty God bless all of us.

Jakarta, 24 December, 1997.

KATA SAMBUTAN

Sebagai bangsa dan negara, maka bangsa Indonesia dan negara kesatuan Republik Indonesia adalah bangsa dan negara modern, yang lahir dan berkembang dalam abad ke-20. Sejarah nasional kita membuktikan bahwa kesadaran kebangsaan kita tumbuh secara pelahan sejak tahun 1908 dan merupakan kekuatan yang melahirkan negara kesatuan Republik Indonesia dalam tahun 1945. Dalam negara kesatuan Republik Indonesia itu kita membangun dan mengoperasikan berbagai lembaga penyelenggara negara yang modern, baik dalam bidang politik, ekonomi, sosial budaya maupun pertahanan keamanan.

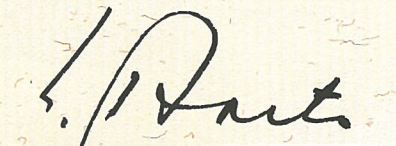
Namun, sebagai masyarakat yang berbudaya, bangsa kita yang amat majemuk ini mempunyai akar budaya, sejarah dan tradisi yang tua, yang keberadaannya dapat kita telusuri sejak zaman prasejarah. Walaupun budaya, sejarah dan tradisi masyarakat kita tersebut bersifat dinamis, yang selalu berkembang dari waktu ke waktu, namun intisarinya mengendap secara abadi dalam jiwa kita. Secara menyeluruh, akar budaya, sejarah dan tradisi kita yang tua itulah yang merupakan modal serta landasan yang kukuh bagi jiwa dan kepribadian bangsa yang sedang kita bangun dewasa ini.

Museum Nasional adalah lembaga yang kita dirikan, kita rawat dan kita kembangkan secara terus menerus untuk mengabadikan artifak budaya, sejarah serta tradisi kita itu. Saya percaya bahwa dengan menekuni sungguh-sungguh demikian banyak khazanah museum yang tidak ternilai harganya, kita akan bangga dengan kemajemukan akar budaya, sejarah dan tradisi bangsa kita yang amat kaya, yang merupakan sumber dinamika bangsa yang tidak akan kering-keringnya, baik untuk masa kini maupun untuk masa datang.

Semoga Tuhan yang Maha Esa memberkati kita semua.

Jakarta, 24 Desember 1997.

PRESIDEN REPUBLIK INDONESIA


SOEHARTO

In dedication to **IBU TIEN SOEHARTO**

As a tribute to her great dedication to the creation and support of museums throughout Indonesia, and the many initiatives she took on their behalf, the National Museum, Jakarta, wishes to honour Mdm Soeharto.

The Government has announced its intention to dedicate the new wing of the National Museum to Ibu Tien. A specially commissioned statue is to be set up in her memory.

Among the museums initiated or opened by Ibu Tien were:

- Museum Penerangan (1993)
- Museum Transportasi (1991)
- Museum Purna Bhakti Pertiwi (1993)
- Museum Istiqlal (1996)
- Museum Indonesia (1980)
- Museum Istana
- Museum Prangko (1983)
- Museum Olah Raga (1989)
- Museum Keprajuritān (1987)
- Museum Telekomunikasi (1990)
- Museum Asmat (1986)
- Museum Komodo (1978)
- Museum Minyak Bumi dan Gas (1989)
- Museum Serangga (1993)
- Museum Pusaka (1993)
- Museum Listrik & Energi Baru (1995)
- Museum Puri Bhakti Pertiwi I (Istana Negara) (1971)
- Museum Puri Bhakti Pertiwi II (Istana Negara) (1983)
- Museum Tekstil (1976)
- Museum Jamu Ny. Meneer (1984)
- Museum Purna Bhakti Pertiwi (1993)



The photographs on this page show the First Lady launching Pusaka, the first large-scale book about the collections of the National Museum, in December 1992. Also shown are Ibu Suwati Kartiwa, Director of the National Museum (upper and lower photographs), and Ibu Haryati Soebadio, the then Minister of Social Affairs.

Lebur Dalam Bakti atau 'Manusia Indah'

by
Sri Kusdyantinah



*Adakah manusia yang lebih indah dari dia yang menyinta,
Bermandi cahaya, leburkan diri dalam juang dan bhakti?
Pemimpin besar, rakyat kecil, pria dan wanita,
Si miskin, si kaya, berusia ranum, maupun remaja.*

*Juang dan bhakti membebaskan diri,
Dari ruang terbatas segala kemampuan,
Dari jurang pemisah segala perbedaan,
Kekerdilan kurungan dari keakuan.*

*Is there one more beautiful than one in love
Bathing in light, surrendering self to struggle and sacrifice?
Great leaders, common people, men and women,
The poor, the rich, the aged, the young.*

*Struggle and sacrifice frees the self
From the stocks of human capacity,
From the canyon of differences separating us,
From the narrow confines of egoism.*

*Love of nation, of fellow being, and sacrifice to God,
Weariness, tears, blood and life itself,
The will to sacrifice unites the soul,
With the most powerful source of Everlasting Love.*

*Raise up misery to become happiness,
Change confinement into expanse,
Bathe in the light glowing from each breast,
Give glory and honour to the values of human kind.*

*Cinta Tanah air, bhakti Tuhan, kasih umat sesama,
Perahan jerih, airmata, darah, maupun nyawa,
Daya berbhakti mengsenyawakan diri,
Dengan sumber kebebasan Kasih Semesta.*

*Mengangkat derita menjadi bahagia,
Merobah kesempitan menjadi jaya,
Menyumat nurcahya di setiap dada,
Mengagung-indahkan nilai manusia.*

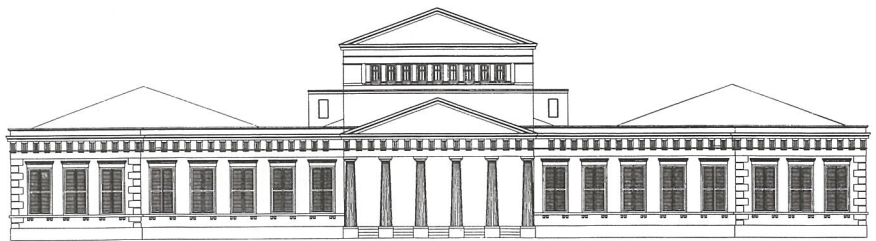
Sri Kusdyantinah is a poet, philosopher, historian, and psychologist. Sri Kusdyantinah's poetry has been translated into English, Dutch, French and Japanese.

A NATIONAL MUSEUM FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

The National Museum has long served as an institution whose job is to collect, preserve, and present, in permanent and temporary exhibits, objects that constitute the cultural legacy of our nation. Due to the lack of any significant efforts at improvement or expansion, however, the current building of the National Museum has come to be increasingly inadequate. Growing demands on the National Museum mean that there must be a plan for managing its development in a comprehensive manner, and this plan must encompass both organisational and physical development. Synergy between these two elements is crucial as improvements of a piecemeal nature will not ensure the National Museum's ability to fulfil its role.

The existing structure of the National Museum, measuring approximately 11,500 square meters, is of great historical value—the main building dates to 1862. The development and construction of the new building began in mid-1996 and is due to be completed early in the year 2000. The area of the museum site, originally measuring 13,840 square metres, has been enlarged by 11,360 square metres to the north and south of the existing plot, to give a total of almost 25,000 square metres. On this land two new structures will be built: Buildings B and C. Building B, to be located on the north side of the existing building, will contain two basement levels and seven floors, encompassing 30,000 square metres. Building C, which will be located in a section of Building B, will have two basement levels and 10 floors, and measure 40,000 square metres.

This physical expansion will enable the



Museum to accommodate its activities fully. Approximately 40 per cent of the area will be allocated for permanent and temporary exhibit space and storage. Another 30 per cent will be for public use, including a lobby and auditorium; and for public services, such as a cafeteria, souvenir shop, and bookstore. The remaining 30 per cent will house offices and support areas, such as laboratories and rooms for conservation, preparation, photography, and collection study.

With these improvements, the job entrusted to the Museum—that of representing the nation's culture—will be performed more effectively. There will be attractive and interesting exhibits that can be easily understood by both Indonesian and foreign visitors. Attractive layout and interior design, the clear direction of visitors as they circulate through the exhibit areas, and a hierarchical arrangement of the interior space—these are just a few of the factors that will make for a more successful National Museum.

The National Museum is one of the main tourist destinations in Jakarta, the nation's capital. As the only centre for the exhibition of Indonesian cultural artefacts, it is a unique destination. Its strategic location on Jakarta's north-south historical axis makes it a landmark



Top: the Neo-Classical facade of the National Museum.

Below: the elephant statue originally given to the City of Batavia by King Chulalongkorn of Thailand.

with great potential as a tourist destination. To meet the increase in both foreign and domestic tourist numbers, improvements in the physical quality of the National Museum to meet international standards are timely.

It goes without saying that physical expansion of the Museum is only part of the effort, and it must be accompanied by any necessary reorganization and the creation of activities that will motivate the general public to become devoted supporters of the Museum. Besides the scientific aspect appropriate to the National Museum's educative-cultural function, we must also consider its recreational aspect. Various recreational activities take place periodically: this part of the Museum's programme is carried out in conjunction with various organizations and community groups, and its aim is to attract visitors and increase community participation in the Museum's activities.

The Museum's collections reveal important information on the Indonesian people's cultural history—from the prehistoric period, through the classical period of the fourth to fifteenth centuries, to the rising influence of the Islamic religion in the sixteenth century, and the period of European influence beginning around the seventeenth century.

Cultures from the whole of Indonesia are represented: 525 different ethnic groups, inhabiting 17,000 islands large and small, from Sabang to Merauke. The diverse objects in the Museum's collections reveal the cultural values of the Indonesian people and the historical values of the nation. They reflect evidence of environmental wisdom from the prehistoric period, as well as sophisticated traditional technologies from the classical period, as seen in the temple structures at Borobudur, Prambanan, and Kalasan. Sculptures from the times of Hindu and Buddhist influence often reflect religious values in addition to aesthetic concerns.

An ethnic group's cultural values—the Indonesian people's regard for mutual aid and assistance is an example—are reflected in its daily life, in rituals connected with the harvest, and in the building of ceremonial structures,



places of worship, and community meeting places. Its ethical values are reflected in its communal and clan relationships. And its aesthetic values, which are inseparable from functional values, are contained in all of its works.

The 109,363 items collected by the National Museum from the 18th century up to the present day reflect these noble ideals and the richness of the Indonesian people's cultures. The collection is divided into several disciplines, including Prehistory, Archeology, History, Geography, Anthropology, Visual Arts, and Education.

The Museum should be able to satisfy the public's needs on both a national and a global scale. As part of its endeavour to advance into the arena of international museum activity, the National Museum must improve its facilities so that it becomes on a par with museums outside Indonesia. The developments now taking place anticipate future growth in regional and international relationships between museums.

As we approach the 21st century, it is hoped that the National Museum can improve both its image and its performance of the role with which it has been entrusted. The construction of new museum buildings should go a long way to achieving these twin aims.

New developments at the National Museum represented in the form of an architectural model.





THE HISTORY OF THE NATIONAL MUSEUM

The National Museum, as we currently understand it, comprises the building and its various collections, located on Jalan Merdeka Barat in Jakarta. The National Museum did not always belong to the Government of Indonesia. On the contrary, what is now the National Museum belonged for most of its history, to a private organisation, called the *Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen* or the Batavian Society of Arts and Sciences. This Society was established on April 24, 1778, during the Dutch colonial period, and continued to exist until the early sixties, albeit under a different name. The National Museum building, with its white Neo-classical façade and Doric columns, used to be called *Gedung Gadjah*, after the statue of the elephant located in the forecourt, given to the City of Batavia in 1871 by King Chulalongkorn of Thailand.

From the end of the war for Indonesia's Independence (about 1949), until the final departure of the Dutch (1963), the Society continued to operate as a private organisation. It was governed by a board consisting of respected academics (in the beginning board

entirely Indonesian), intent on preserving a historical legacy built up over a period of almost 200 years. During a meeting of all members, on January 26, 1950, it was decided to change the name of the Society to *Lembaga Kebudayaan Indonesia*, *Koninklijk Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen*, and in 1958 this was shortened to simply *Lembaga Kebudayaan Indonesia*. In 1963, due to increasing difficulties in managing its affairs, the Government was asked by the Society to take over the responsibility for the museum, and its collections and major libraries. Moh. Amir Sutaarga, then Secretary of the Society's Board of Directors, was instrumental in transferring all the Society's assets to the Ministry of Education and Culture. The transfer was further facilitated by the fact that the President of the Board, Prof. Dr. R. Prijono, was also the Minister for Education and Culture. The Society's museum, and its collections, have become the Indonesian

National Museum, while the Society's collection of books and rare manuscripts became part of Indonesia's National Library.

In view of the very close relationship between the Society and its museum, understanding the history of the National Museum is really synonymous with understanding the

history of the Society. Furthermore, to gain insight into questions such as the origin and nature of today's collections, it is necessary to consider the evolution of the Society over time. One must develop an understanding of the objectives and attitudes of the members of the Society, as well as the cultural context of Indonesia throughout the Society's existence.

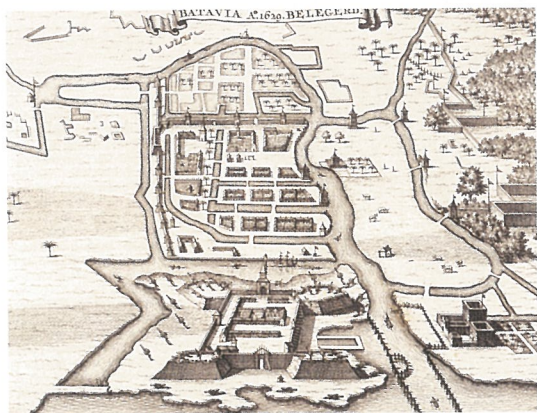
GENESIS

Various factors came together in the establishment of the Batavian Society of Arts and Sciences. Perhaps the most important

element was the influence of the intellectual revolution known as the Enlightenment. This 18th-century movement originated in Europe, particularly in England, Italy and Germany, but most of all in France. It was marked by a questioning of tradition and a growing trend towards individualism, empiricism, and attempts at scientific reasoning.

The Enlightenment built upon foundation stones laid a century before by thinkers such as René Descartes (1596-1650), John Locke (1632-1704), Isaac Newton (1643-1727), Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646-1716) and Baruch Spinoza (1632-77). However, it was during the 18th century that new ideas and attitudes began to pervade many areas of thought, ultimately leading to the French Revolution in 1789. For example, between 1751 and 1772, Diderot and d'Alembert published their *Encyclopédie*, which, among other publications, criticised existing institutions, and exalted the arts and crafts and a liberal bourgeois society. In many other areas, scientific reasoning came to the forefront. In economic thought, the basis of modern economics was established when Adam Smith published in 1776 his famous work, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, with its advocacy of free trade and *laissez-faire* policies. The latter ethos stood in sharp contrast to the mercantilistic approach towards trade practised by the Dutch in their colonies.

The changes in thought outlined above had a major influence in Holland, whose *Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie* or VOC, the United East Indies Company, controlled the East Indies archipelago, the modern-day Republic of Indonesia. In 1752 a society of sciences, the *Hollandsche Maatschappij der Wetenschappen*, was established in Haarlem, the Netherlands. The first major factor leading to the establishment of a society in Batavia came in the form of a competition organised in 1771 by the *Hollandsche Maatschappij der Wetenschappen*, calling for essays focused on Dutch trade, with particular emphasis on the East Indies, and on how the arts and sciences could play a role in promoting Christianity in the colonies.



Previous pages: An early photograph of the Society's collection of classical era statues from throughout Indonesia: in the foreground Ganesha, God of Wisdom and Learning, Son of Shiva and Parvati, from Candi Banon (Central Java).

Above: The Javanese laid unsuccessful siege to Batavia in 1629.



The second important factor which led to the establishment of a society can be found in the person of Jacob Cornelis Mattheus Radermacher, who by all accounts can be considered the founder of the Batavian Society. Radermacher, son of a prominent Dutch family, started working for the VOC in 1757, at the age of 16. In the years that followed he rose rapidly through the company's hierarchy. His marriage to the stepdaughter of a high company official, Reinier de Klerk, Director-General of the VOC, clearly helped. (De Klerk was the first occupant of a beautiful mansion in Batavia, today the National Archives on Jalan Gajah Mada.)

RADERMACHER

Radermacher's beliefs and attitudes, perhaps strongly influenced by developments in Europe of which he undoubtedly had read, were quite different from those of the majority of VOC officials. The second half of the 18th century saw the rapid decline of the once-powerful VOC in Asia. Governor-Generals in Batavia after 1760 were older men who had risen slowly within the

narrow hierarchy of company officials. Faced with the company's declining fortunes, they tended to make profit their sole goal, while covering their own shortsightedness and bigotry with elaborate rituals emphasising rank and status. Intellectual activity was rare among company officials and the subdued group of 'burghers' and military. Censorship of books and the absence of printed news contributed to a prevailing atmosphere of disinterest among the majority of people. Corruption among VOC officials was extensive in those times, as was documented by an ex-VOC secretary, P. van Dam. However, at the time these findings were kept secret, contributing to a general atmosphere of secrecy and distrust.

In spite of these conditions, Radermacher and a very small group of like-minded individuals believed in a better future. Characteristic was his membership of the Freemasons, an international society adhering to principles of brotherliness, charity and mutual aid. Freemasonry seemed to offer Radermacher an opportunity for some kind of

A View of Batavia, the Capital of the Dutch Settlements in India – an early view of Batavia from the sea.



The Batavia residence of the Dutch Governor-General in an engraving of 1882. This illustration is from volume two of a book depicting life in the Dutch East Indies by Van Rees.

social and intellectual activity in Batavia's bleak society. Radermacher was the key founder of the first Masonic lodge in Batavia in 1762. The building used to house the lodge still exists on Jalan Budi Utomo in Central Jakarta. In 1763 Radermacher departed for the Netherlands, where he remained for over three years. During this period he gained a doctorate in law and became exposed to, and involved in, the intellectual debates raging within the Netherlands. He undoubtedly learned about the *Hollandsche Maatschappij der Wetenschappen*, with its enlightened views.

Upon his return to Batavia in 1767, Radermacher's initial intention was to found a society similar to the *Hollandsche Maatschappij der Wetenschappen*. However, his proposal was considered 'unheard of' and 'impossible to achieve' by Batavian society, which for all practical purposes consisted only of VOC officials. Consequently, the idea was shelved until some ten years later. At that time, on the occasion of its 25th anniversary on May 21, 1777, the *Hollandsche Maatschappij der Wetenschappen* in Haarlem decided to establish a branch dealing with economic questions, which would also operate in the Dutch overseas territories. The Governor-General, the Director-General (not Reinier de Klerk at that time) and Radermacher were appointed Directors in the Indies. It is not particularly clear what actually transpired regarding this decision but the issue of the establishment of a learned society in Batavia resurfaced due to the attention drawn

by the *Hollandsche Maatschappij der Wetenschappen* ruling.

Radermacher's father-in-law became Governor-General of the VOC in October 1777 and Radermacher and a few others were now ready to proceed with the establishment of a society. However, an independent society was preferred over a branch of the *Hollandsche Maatschappij der Wetenschappen*. The great distance from Europe as well as the specific issues faced in the East Indies made the founding of the economic branch unfeasible, according to Radermacher. Instead, they preferred a separate society to investigate properly the economy of the Dutch Indies. This could also generate interest on the part of the Haarlem Society in focussing on the whole of the Dutch Indies, and not just on issues of an economic nature.

The founding of the Batavian Society of Arts and Sciences officially took place on April 24, 1778. De Klerk, then Governor-General of the VOC, and all the other high officials present in Batavia signed up as directors, while a large number of the most prominent citizens became members. The Society chose as its motto: *Ten Nutte van het Algemeen*, indicating that it would work for 'The Public Benefit'. It is interesting to note that the Society in Batavia was the first of its kind in all of Asia. In India, where the British East India Company was the equivalent of the VOC, the Asiatic Society of Bengal was established in Calcutta in 1784, six years after the Batavian Society.

THE HISTORY OF THE SOCIETY

Throughout its almost 200-year history, the overriding goal of the Society was to analyse, through scientific research and scholarship, every cultural aspect of the East Indies colony and its people. The results of the Society's work are encapsulated in the 79 volumes of the Society's *Transactions*, published between 1779 and 1950. They contain more than 31,000 pages of text, covering a very broad array of subjects, ranging from such practical areas as new irrigation methods, to the most detailed analyses of old Javanese texts. The *Transactions* constitute a veritable treasure

trove with respect to the archipelago's rich cultural history.

In addition, from 1853 through to 1952, the Society published the *Tijdschrift voor Indische taal- land- en volkenkunde*, or the *Journal of Languages and Ethnography of the Indies*, while from 1926 through to 1951 the Society published a *Jaarboek*, a compilation of mostly scholarly material, published on an annual basis. Critical to the scholarship conducted by the Society was its collection of artefacts, old manuscripts, archeological finds and other items found throughout the archipelago. The collection housed in the National Museum is the result of numerous initiatives taken by individual members of the Society.

Throughout its history the Batavian Society of Arts and Sciences had its ups and downs. The fluctuating state of the Society was not just a result of external circumstances, but also due to the fact that its member-scholars only remained for a limited time in the colony. Whenever a scholar with a particular interest left the Indies for home, it frequently created a hiatus, until someone else took up an interest in the same subject. Despite these interruptions it can be said that the Society became the focal point for serious cultural research on the archipelago; the Society was the place where new scientific initiatives were taken, and a place which functioned as an 'advisory board' over cultural issues. This was especially important in the early days when there were no government bureaus dealing with, for example, archeological issues, let alone universities. The Dutch Government only belatedly recognised the importance of the Society, when it bestowed the appellation *Koninklijk*, or Royal, on the Society in 1923.

MAIN PERIODS

In very broad terms one can identify three main periods in the Society's history. During these times significant momentum was built, which kept the Society functioning until its demise in 1962. It is interesting to note that each of these periods is associated with one particular person, who had the vision and energy to mobilise others for 'The Public

Benefit'. First, there was the period of the Society's founding during which Radermacher and his colleagues gave form to the Society's work. This period was relatively short, from 1778 until about 1794, when 'scientific production' came to a halt with Radermacher's untimely death. He was killed in a mutiny aboard ship when he returned to Holland in 1782, and this undoubtedly robbed the Society of much vitality.

The second period coincided with the British Interregnum during 1811-1816, when the troops of the British East India Company drove the Dutch out of the East Indies, and Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles not only became Lieutenant-Governor of Java, but also accepted the Presidency of the Society (in 1813).

The third period started during the 1830s and lasted until 1940. During this period the Batavian Society became a world-renowned scientific organisation, famous for its work in ethnography, anthropology and the languages of the Indonesian Archipelago. More than any one else, Dr. W. R. Baron van Hoëvell was the intellectual force behind the Society's renewal in the middle of the last century, leading up to the most productive period for the Society, which was during the first four decades of this century.

During each of the above-mentioned periods the specific activities of the Society's members and the scope of their work varied a great deal. However, it was during the first relatively short period that the inquisitive nature and scientific orientation of the Society was firmly established. Although the founders had to tread very carefully in order not to interfere overtly with the very secretive VOC, a charter was set up calling for an increase in the amount of knowledge about the colony. It was stated that the Society would stimulate all arts and sciences and would eagerly receive anything which dealt with the natural history, antiquities, customs and mores of the people in the colony. Hence, the first volumes of the *Transactions* dealt with such broad subjects as natural sciences, ethnography, history, literature, medicine, and agriculture. In addition, in true keeping with the spirit of the age, the charter



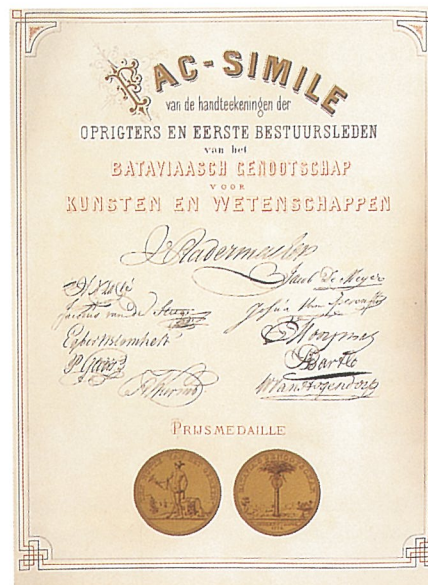
Europe recreated in the capital of the Netherlands' possessions in the East Indies. Neoclassical architecture and French garden design were faithfully transplanted to the tropical heat of Batavia.

stipulated that the Society would make the subjects of its investigations benefit agriculture, trade, and the welfare of the settlements. This very practical and pragmatic approach to the application of the arts and sciences was further highlighted by the practice of soliciting answers to specific questions in various areas. The resulting answers would be rewarded with a cash prize. In volume I of the *Transactions* (1779), 46 questions were listed: 23 dealing with agriculture, 2 with fishing, 8 with industry, 8 with mechanics, 3 with medicine, and 2 with literature. As it turned out this method of soliciting interest in the Society met with a limited response. Primarily the Society's members wrote essays for the *Transactions*, with Radermacher, as the presiding officer of a member-committee overseeing the day-to-day work, one of the key contributors.

This very broad, and what could be called liberal, approach towards the Society's work was also reflected in its initial membership. When the Society began its work there was a core of 103 members in Batavia, of which one-third were members of the Freemason movement. In addition, there were 77 members from outside the VOC's East Indies 'capital', including the company's possessions and stations in India, Ceylon (modern-day Sri Lanka), the Cape of Good Hope in Southern Africa, and Japan. Finally, there were a small number of corresponding members, residing mostly in the Netherlands.

It is interesting to note that although the Society was set up as a private organisation, outside the VOC, it was not far removed from the VOC's influence. In fact, in the beginning the Chief Director of the Society had to be the Governor-General, a VOC position, while only high government officials could serve as Directors.

On 24 April, 1778, Radermacher and 11 other VOC officials signed a document establishing the Batavian Society for Arts and Sciences, the first of its kind in Asia.



DEVELOPMENTS IN EUROPE

Decline of the Society's fortunes after the death of Radermacher coincided with violent events in Europe, specifically the Napoleonic Wars. Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821) invaded and occupied the Netherlands, driving out Prince William V. The Dutch East Indies became French property, and on December 31, 1799 it was decreed that the VOC be disbanded. Although there were sporadic meetings during these years, it can

be said that scientific zeal seemed to have left the Society. The only bright light was provided by Dr. Thomas Horsfield, an American botanist, who visited Java from 1799 to 1800, and returned in 1801 for an extended stay. The Society elected him as a member and facilitated his research on Java. However, they could not offer much more in the way of assistance, and none of Horsfield's contributions appeared in print, because of a lack of printing facilities at the time.

While France occupied Holland, and thus the Dutch East Indies, the British East India Company, headquartered in India, became very concerned about the French-Dutch colonialists in the East Indies, who by now were Britain's enemies. Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles, the company's representative in Penang, was in constant communication with Lord Minto, the Governor-General and highest-ranking company official outside London. Their concern was that no enemy should disturb trade through the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea to China. They both saw the monopolistic practices of the French-Dutch enemies in the East Indies as a serious threat to British trade. And so the plan was made to invade Java. According to Raffles it would be best if all the company's possessions in the Indies could be incorporated in a new unitary structure, centred in Batavia or

Semarang. On June 11, 1811, the largest ever British fleet set sail, ferrying 12,000 soldiers to Java, and by the end of August 1811, the battle was won. Subsequently, Raffles was appointed Lieutenant-Governor of Java.

The arrival of the British proved to be a blessing for the Batavian Society, in particular because of the great interest which Raffles showed in anything related to knowledge and history of the islands in the East Indies. For example, during a chance meeting in Solo, Raffles met the earlier mentioned botanist Dr. Horsfield, and thought so highly of his studies that he provided him with a company allowance to ensure that he could continue his work. Horsfield was a regular visitor to the Raffles' house near Bogor, where they spent hours together poring over maps, reports and specimens. Raffles had surrounded himself with similarly capable men. For example, his Chief Engineer, Colonel Colin Mackenzie, had an unquenchable interest in curiosities and antiquities. Raffles instructed Mackenzie and his Indian assistants to record everything of historical importance on Java.

For the Batavian Society Raffles became another Radermacher. The Society was given a new home for its meetings, free use of the Government printing press, and access to the Government library. Under Raffles' guidance, the Society rewrote its charter, modelling it closely on that of the Asiatic Society in Calcutta. In his address on April 24, 1813 accepting the Presidency of the Society, Raffles gave a learned survey of the Indonesian islands and highlighted the need to obtain more general knowledge of the Javanese language. The renewed activity of the Society was reflected in the issuance of new volumes of the *Transactions* in 1814 and 1816, containing, among others, numerous contributions from Dr. Horsfield, and several articles by eminent British scholars.

After Napoleon was defeated in the Battle of Waterloo, in 1815, the Dutch entered into the Anglo-Dutch treaty, which, among other provisions, once again gave the Dutch control over their East Indies possessions. On March 25, 1816, Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles and the

British East India Company left Batavia, marking the end of the British Interregnum. In his place came the Dutch Commissary-General, G.A. Baron van der Capellen, accompanied by 3,500 Dutch troops. The departure of the British led again to stagnation in the Society's work, causing it to lead an anaemic existence.

FLUCTUATING FORTUNES

Over the ensuing years, during the 1820s, the Society again had its ups and downs. One of the good things was that new people from Holland started to arrive more frequently, strengthening the membership. One of the notable arrivals was C.G.C. Reinhardt, Director of Agriculture, Arts and Sciences and founder of Bogor's world famous Botanical Garden. He served as President of the Society from 1818 to 1821. In addition, the personal interest of Commissary-General van der Capellen was beneficial to the Society. He issued a decree in June 1822 in which he appointed a commission to search for Java's antiquities, with the instruction to transfer these antiquities to the Society's museum. He also provided the Society with financial support, a special budget allocation of 6,000 guilders in 1823. However, after van der Capellen, the new Commissary, General Du Bus de Gisignies (1826-1830), introduced a period of great austerity, stripping the Society of needed resources, making scientific progress difficult to say the least.

It was throughout the period from the 1830s until 1940 that the Batavian Society started to take its final shape as a scientific organisation of international renown in the field of culture and related sciences. The focus of its scholarship became much sharper and the scope of its investigations much narrower, by turning away from the natural sciences and concentrating on languages and history. It was also during this time that the Society's collections started to take on the form of a museum of cultural history, in the sense in which we currently interpret 'museum'.

THE STRENGTHENING OF THE SOCIETY'S ROLE

During this period the relationship between the



'Bitara Gana', or Ganesha, from Raffles's *History of Java*.



Four European men, dressed in frock coats and top hats, direct restoration work on a Javanese temple in 1807. This image is a neat visual summary of the beginnings of archaeological research in Java as conducted by the colonizers.

colonial Government and the private Society became much better defined. Although many of the Society's directors were high-ranking Government officials, this was not a requirement, as in the early days. As directors of the Society they acted in their capacity as private citizens, enjoying a highly productive and synergistic relationship with the colonial Government. In short, the Society became a trusted advisor to the Government, repeatedly being consulted about a variety of matters such as the publication of particular Javanese and Malay school texts, or the advisability of granting particular requests made to the Government.

The Society functioned as a major force or 'watchdog', to protect and preserve Indonesia's cultural heritage, when action taken by the Government or others were either insufficient or even destructive. For example, after complaints by the Society's Board about the serious neglect of the Borobudur temple, a governmental commission was appointed in 1900. The commission was directed by the

Society's Hindu-Javanese specialist, Dr. Brandes. Establishing the commission led to subsequent restoration efforts. In another example, the Society successfully opposed transfer of ethnological objects from Batavia to the State Ethnographic Museum in Leiden, the Netherlands. It argued that anthropological research should be conducted in the field, and that an increasing number of scholars visited the Society's museum for this purpose. In Holland, on the other hand, scientific interest in the antiquities of the Indies was more limited.

There were various factors that gave rise to the strengthening of the Batavian Society after the 1830s, but two main factors stand out: increased economic and social development in the colony, and more focused leadership by successive Presidents of the Society, in particular by Dr. W.R. Baron van Hoëvell.

After the British left Java and the Java Wars (1825-1830) had ended, a period of calm and prosperity returned to Java. This period ushered in steady progress in the development of the colony; Bleeker in his report of 1853