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## **School atlases for a colonial society: The Van Gelder/Lekkerkerker school atlases for the Netherlands East Indies 1880-1952**

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### ***Abstract***

In the Netherlands a new secondary school type (HBS, Hogere Burger School) had been initiated in the 1860s, aimed at preparing its pupils for trade and commerce, as opposed to the more university-oriented gymnasium, and this new school type was introduced into Indonesia from 1880 onwards as well. This school type was only meant for European pupils or for children from families officially recognised as "gelijkgesteld", that is regarded as having an European lifestyle. Although the curriculum taught equalled that of the motherland, the teaching material was adapted to the current environment, as shown in the biology and geography manuals used and in the atlases. The first special school atlas adapted to the Netherlands East Indies was published in 1880, and was basically an atlas of the Netherlands with maps for the various parts of Indonesia attached. This gradually evolved into an atlas more centred on Indonesia, but representation of the Netherlands would always retain a sizeable part of the atlas.

This paper will follow the various editions of the school atlases produced since 1880 by Messrs Van Gelder and Lekkerkerker respectively (both geography teachers in Indonesia), and the amalgamation of their atlases into one single edition. It will also try to refer to the additional parts of the geography teaching system, consisting of wall plates, wall charts, exercise manuals and blind maps. That material has hardly survived the hardships of the climate, the ants and the occupation during the war, however, and is only scantily available consequently.

The publisher, J.B. Wolters, controlled 80% of the educational market in Indonesia in 1942. In the aftermath of Indonesia's independence, it played an important role in getting the Dutch public used to the new Indonesian spelling and decolonised toponyms, as it tried to retain this market and therefore was a prime mover in changing over to the new spelling and new names. This was to no avail, however, as the Indonesian possessions of Wolters were disappropriated in 1957. Apart from Van Gelder-Lekkerkerker atlas Wolters also published atlases for native schools in local languages such as Malay and Javanese, but these are not part of this study.

### ***Introduction***

In 1881 the *Atlas van Nederlandsch Oost-Indië* was printed and published by the Batavia publishing house and bookstore Kolff & Co, produced by W. van Gelder, inspector of native education in the Dutch East Indies. The lithographic process had been executed in Amsterdam by Amand Lith. There is no introduction or foreword to this 8 maps atlas which starts with the legend and the list of contents. So these aims have to be deduced from the actual maps. According to a review in the journal of the Netherlands Geographical Society (TAG vol II, pp 672-674) the atlas lacks precision and perfection, but gives more and better information than the current elementary school atlases. So at least there must have been predecessors.

The contents of the atlas is as follows:

Map sheet 1: overview map of the Netherlands East Indies 1:8Million  
Map sheet 2: Java – population density, 1: 2Mill  
Map sheet 3: Java, mountains and rivers 1:2 Mill  
Map sheet 4: West Java 1:1 Mill  
Map sheet 5: Central Java 1:1 Mill  
Map sheet 6: East Java, Madura and Bali 1:1 Mill  
Map sheet 7: Sumatra 1:4 Mill  
Map sheet 8: important areas beyond Java and Sumatra 1:180 000-1:2 250 000

*Box 1: Contents of Van Gelder's atlas 1<sup>st</sup> edition*

Java had always been the centre of the country, and the outer islands had only recently become areas of official interest, mainly because of the increased pressure of other colonizing powers. Sumatra's agricultural cash crop apogee had not started as yet, nor its exploitation of oil and coal; interest was focused on traditional contact areas like Padang, and Palembang, apart from Aceh where war was waged. The other areas beyond Java and Sumatra that were highlighted in maps were the southeastern part of Borneo around Bandjermassin, the Minahassa and Makassar areas of Celebes, Amboina and the Banda isles, traditional spice areas, and Bangka and Biliton, where tin mining had started. With more than 65% of the maps dealing with Java, the emphasis is clear.

According to the preface of the second edition, there was a simultaneous edition of the first one in Malay, destined for "Inlandsche lagere scholen", that is indigenous primary schools. What was rendered on the maps in these atlases?

### *Contents*

The atlas shows the whole area as Dutch, including Aceh and Bali and Lombok; although Bali would only be incorporated into the realm in 1906, and Aceh was not really pacified until 1910. In the third edition there is a proviso, in that there is a special legend box indicating independent areas; this applies to the non-coastal part of Aceh; by that time, during a lull in the war, we apparently recognised its partial independence. The next edition reverted to the image of the whole area being under Dutch control.

The legends has symbols on provincial boundaries, stations of the administrative staff, anchorages and roadsteads, lighthouses and their visibility range, the great trunk road and other surfaced roads as well as tracks for horses, railways, tramways and proposed railways, marshes and live volcanoes. Even some fortifications and fortress towns (such as Willem I near Semarang) are rendered, especially on the later to be incorporated town plans. This is very much an image of the colonial infrastructure (see figure 1). Along the roads the distances (or travel time) have been indicated (these must have been taken from military sources; they were not continued on later editions), as is the case for the sea connections with KPM with their distances in English miles, although these have not been incorporated in the

legend. The important temples are rendered as well: Boroboedoe, Mendoet, Prambanan, Kalasan, but that is the only item, apart from the settlement names, that reflects on the indigenous population.

The Padangsche Bovenlanden, with their military establishments Fort de Kock and Fort van de Capellen (the present Bukittinggi and Batoesangkar) command an inset map, as does Aceh or Acheh (Atjeh in Dutch) where at that moment heavy fighting occurred. Timor is still poorly demarcated, the final fixing of the boundary with Portugal will not occur before early next century.



Figure 1 - Part of the map of Central Java from the first edition of the Schoolatlas (1881), showing the contents and style of the maps.

The relief representation in the first edition is not very spectacular, it is a rather primitive attempt at hill-shading. In the second and following editions, for which the relief representation was done in the Netherlands, there are hachures, that render the relief and its morphology very well. A good example is, again, sheet Central Java where one can clearly see the differences between the relief in the cretaceous areas of the Gunung Sewu east of Jogjakarta and neighbouring volcanic areas. The mountains and rivers map of Java has a cross section of the volcanoes as well, and apart from hachures indicating these volcanoes shows also the land over 300m.



Nine years later, a second edition appeared, now with Wolters publishing house as publisher, and with the title changed to *Schoolatlas van Nederlandsch Oost-Indië*. The atlas was printed now in the Netherlands, by Trap in Leiden. All the maps were redrawn, usually at slightly smaller scales, modelled on the *Atlas der Nederlandsche bezittingen in Oost-Indië* by J.W. Stemfoort and J.J. ten Siethoff, produced from 1883-1885 by staff of the topographical survey in Batavia and reproduced by the Topographische Inrichting in the Hague under supervision of its famous Director, C.A. Eckstein. The school atlas now contains separate maps of Borneo and Celebes at 1: 6 Mill., although the number of map sheets has remained the same. Because of the reduction in size, the atlas could now be sold for almost half the price of its predecessor. The foreword mentions explicitly that Java, as the main island, has the most extensive coverage, that the atlas maps have not been overloaded with geographical names and that generally the objective, to provide an atlas for primary education (lagere school and MULO) has been kept in mind.

From the 12<sup>th</sup> edition (1914) onwards, telegraph lines have been added to the portrayal of the Colonial infrastructure. Apart from showing the rank of the resident Dutch colonial administrators, with underlining now the population numbers of towns are indicated as well. This is the reverse of normal cartographic procedures, where settlement symbols denote the sizes of their population, while the underlining of the names indicate their administrative hierarchy.

From the 3<sup>d</sup> (1893) edition onwards, a new edition is produced about every 2 years; its foreword has been signed at Tondano in Celebes; the 4<sup>th</sup> edition of 1895 mentions that Van Gelder is inspector of native education; during that time at least until the production of the 5<sup>th</sup> edition in 1896 he was stationed at Probolinggo on East Java. The seventh edition (1902) mentions his retirement, but before that event he must have left for the Netherlands, as from the sixth edition (1899) onwards these have been signed at The Hague. He will continue to direct new editions from the Netherlands, from the 16<sup>th</sup> edition (1921) onwards with the help of another former inspector of native education, C. Lekkerkerker, then also domiciled at The Hague.

### ***Town plans***

The Dutch colonial infrastructure is also very well rendered in the town plans: the following items occur most on the town plans ultimately incorporated (Batavia, Semarang, Soerabaja, Padang, Palembang, Medan and its port Belawan, Bandjermassin and Makassar (Strangely Bandoeng, envisaged as Indonesia's white capital, like Simla in British India, was not included in the town plans, although it was the country's third city in population size.).

Table 1 shows a clear preponderance of European-built objects and institutions. In all, one sultan's palace, two regency abodes and one mosque do not count for much. One wonders a bit what could have been the relevance of all this for the majority of the users of this atlas, those of the editions in the native languages.

There is a distinction, as can be seen in figure 2, between brick/stone houses and kampongs, that is wooden or bamboo-built houses. This can be regarded as well as a distinction in-between European and indigenous residential areas; Europeans would not gladly suffer to live in the Kampong if they could help it! Of course the

government buildings, military buildings would be constructed in brick or stone as well.

railway station	19
port	8
canal	8
colonial administrators	6
central square	6
fort	6
lighthouse	5
government buildings	4
sultans palace/regent	3
artillery-range	3
European cemetery	2
racing track	1
mosque	1
prison	1
military hospital	1

*Table 1: frequency of designations on town plans in the atlas*

### ***Development of the atlas***

When one compares the consecutive editions of the school atlas, one perceives the gradual extension of the infrastructure and the gradual incorporation of the outer islands in the colony's economy. This reflects technical developments, as in the 12<sup>th</sup> edition (1914) where in the legend a new symbol has been added: station for wireless telegraphy. Telegraph lines had been added before, they were suppressed again in the 21<sup>st</sup> edition (1937) as they were no longer deemed relevant. The main contribution of the 12<sup>th</sup> edition is a new thematic map of export products, and it is here that the cash crop production area of Deli on Sumatra is particularly conspicuous, even if the data have not been quantified. A register has been added, with 3000 names.

The general trend in the atlas was, that it was continuously extended, areas were presented on increasingly larger scales, more town plans were added and more thematic maps. There were added for instance two separate map of the agricultural production of Java, two of its traffic infrastructure, one on irrigation and land use, apart from those coloured ones on production (see figure 3), languages, geomorphology and population density, that were incorporated from the start. As the number of coloured map plates only was extended from 8 to 11, part of the increase was made possible by including black and white maps on the reverse side of the coloured maps. A striking aspect was that the thematic maps were continuously updated, rather uncommon for school atlases at that time. From the 14<sup>th</sup> edition onwards a special statistical section was added to offset the fact that production maps were qualitative.



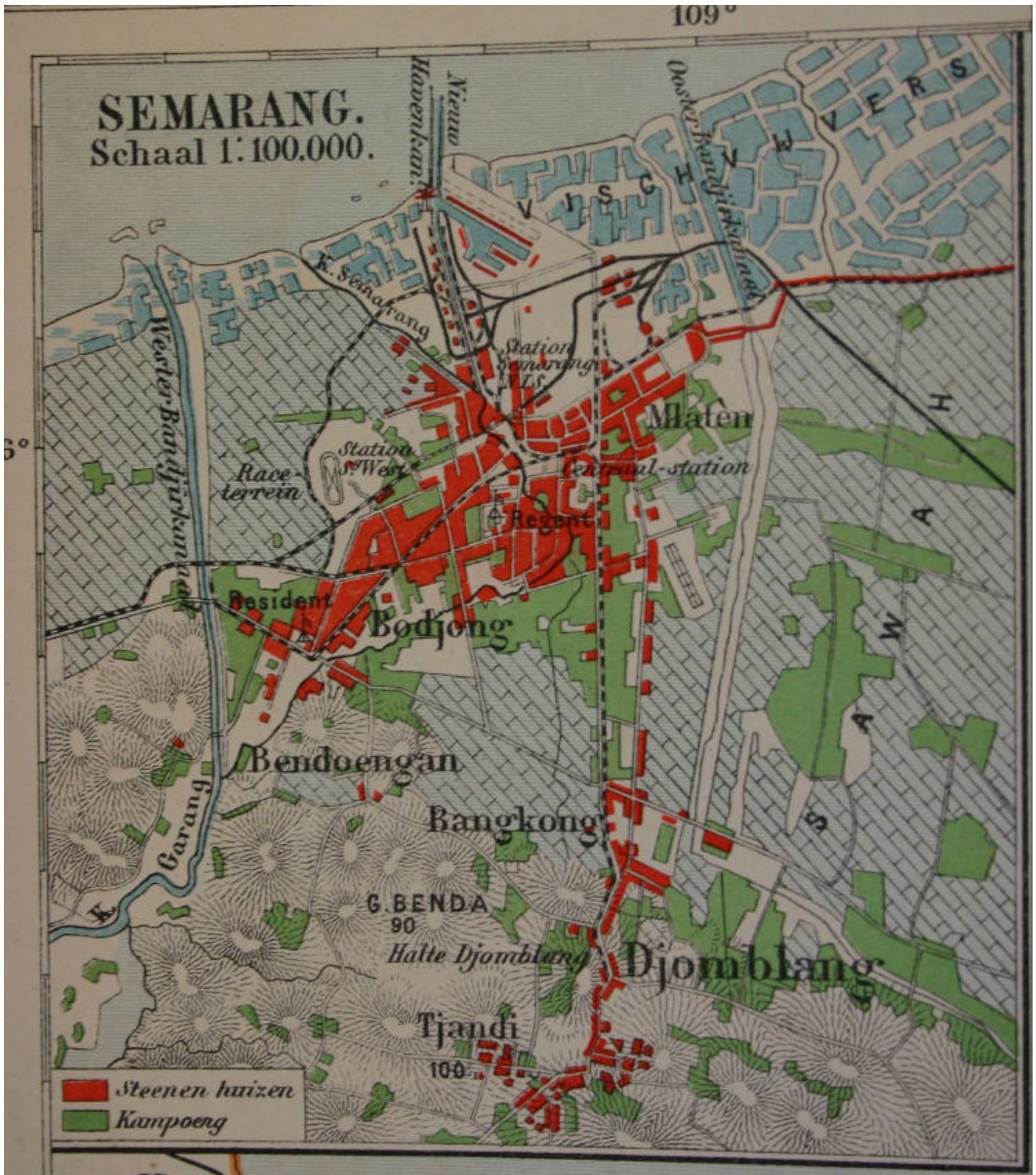


Figure 2: Town of Semarang, differentiating between brick/stone and wooden houses.



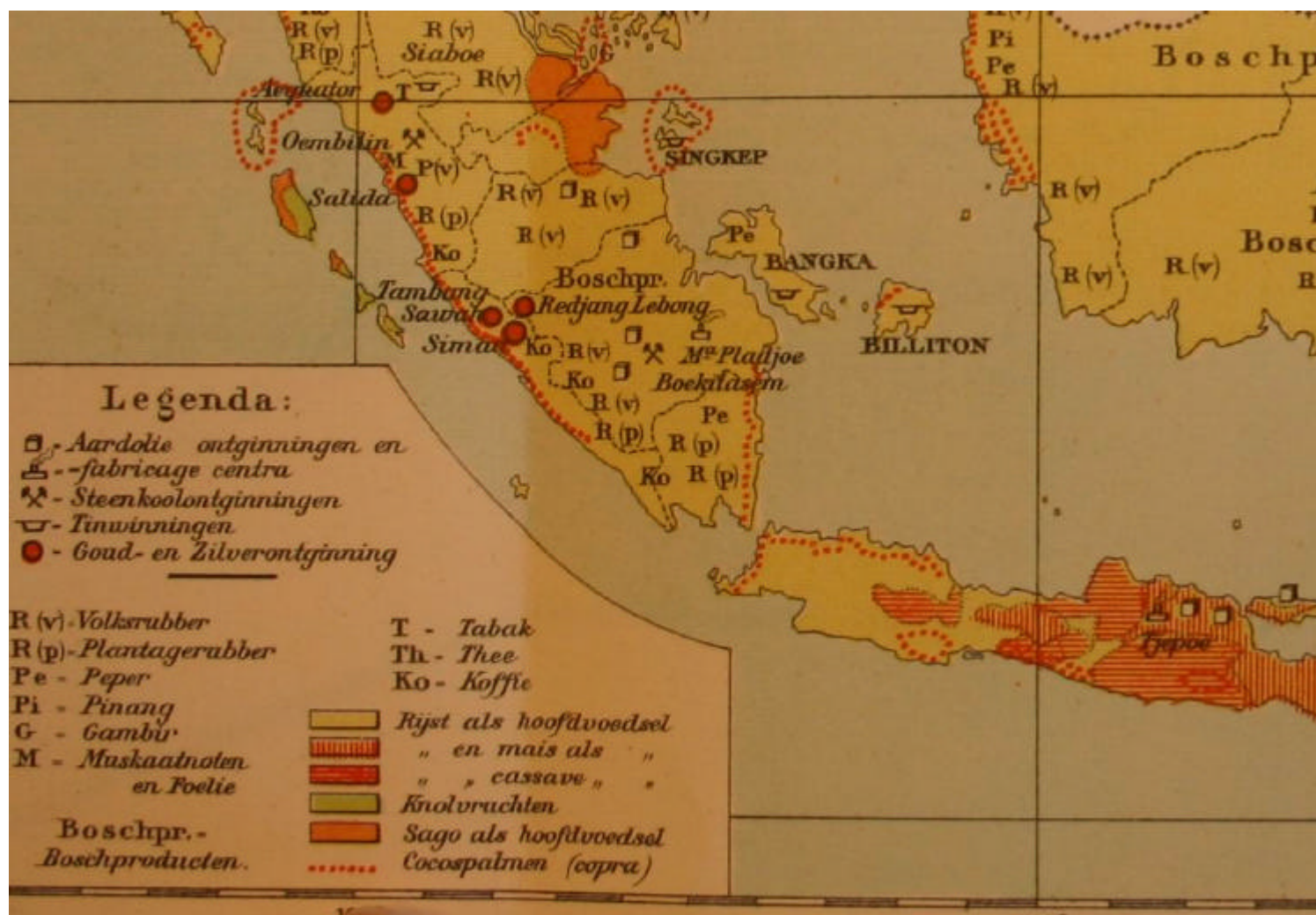


Figure 3: Detail of the Production map of the country, with mineral production rendered by figurative symbols, agricultural products rendered by letter symbols and areal symbols designating the main subsistence crops.

The atlas also reflects the gradual extension of the knowledge of the Dutch of the archipelago. During its production Sumatra, Borneo and Celebes were mapped at scales 1:200 000 and larger, sketch maps were produced of the other, more easterly areas and New Guinea was explored. The exploration of the latter island boosted the number of Dutch names in the atlas, as especially the members of the Dutch royal family were commemorated in the naming of the highest tops in New Guinea's central mountain ranges, climbed for the first time by the Dutch. These have since been renamed for Indonesian army generals that led the attempts to wrestle the island from Dutch control during Sukarno's confrontation policy actions.

Although it continued to be published separately, at least until 1938, from 1933 it was also sold bound jointly with the *Kleine schoolatlas der geheele aarde*, a product derived from the main Dutch school atlas, by Bos and Niermeyer (edited by C.L. van Balen), developed for extended primary education (MULO). Thus, the 11 maps of the Van Gelder/Lekkerkerker and the 52 maps of the Bos/Niermeyer/Van Balen atlas together formed a complete school atlas of the world, the home region and the mother country.

At the same time, a smaller sized edition of the Van Gelder/Lekkerkerker had been developed, the *Kleine Schoolatlas voor Nederlandsch-Indië voor de indische lagere school*, sized 26x20, while the main atlas was sized 28x43cm. This *Kleine schoolatlas* contained more map pages than its larger brother: 26 map pages. This atlas, for smaller budgets, also appeared in a number of native language editions.

### ***Spelling of placenames and other language versions***

In the foreword of the second edition, the difficulty is mentioned to have two language editions side by side: the hachures have been interrupted for the text in Dutch, and as the Malay names don't always have the same number of letters, this has sometimes been solved by keeping the Dutch names and providing their translation in the map margin.

In the same foreword Mas Abdoellah, a Javanese teacher at a Djokjakarta primary school, is thanked for his contributions, presumably for checking the correct spelling of texts and place names in Malay. In the rendering of geographical names, as much as possible letter symbols have been used that are part of Malay names: Sel (selat) for sea strait, P (pulau) for island, G (gunung) for mountain, T (tanjung) for cape, O (oejoeng) likewise for cape, S (sungai) for river and B (batang) likewise for river.

The atlas also reflects the development of educational terminology to suit geography teaching, as concepts like the Greater and Lesser Sunda Isles, Sunda and Sahul continental shelves, Northern and Southern Cretaceous Ranges were introduced.

### ***General representation***

The atlas showed the country as seen through Dutch eyes, and this is still one of our legacies: that this conglomerate of indigenous realms is seen as one centralised state, that all school atlases begin with their provincial representations with Atjeh and end in New Guinea, in a fixed sequence of maps. The atlas followed the official standardised name spelling of 1922 and that is another legacy, even if the spelling has changed (in an attempt to have one and the same orthography as Malaysia the Indonesians, who had changed the rendering of the -u- sound from -oe- into -u- in 1948, in the 1950s changed j to y, dj to j and tj to c. This did not help in the end, as the Malaysians did not effectuate the changes they had promised), this change was made on the basis of the standardised list.

The map in figure 4 shows Indonesia as a Dutch-imposed unity, and it also showed it under the control of the motherland, with the shipping and airline links clearly standing out. It is the image of a centrally-governed unit, and this image was also conveyed to the inhabitants of the country, not so much through the Dutch editions, but through the editions in the indigenous languages, that had much larger print runs.





Figure 4: Indonesia linked to the mother country, by sea, air and inset map

## Decolonisation

After World War II the publisher was hindered first because of the uncertain political conditions. Although most of the country was under Dutch control again from 1947 onwards, negotiations only led to a transfer of sovereignty and independence of Indonesia in 1949. The issue for Wolters, the publisher, who still had control of 80% of the educational book market in the country, was how to remain in the good books of the new government. This focused, as far as the atlas was concerned, on the rendering of Western New Guinea, which had been kept out of the transfer of sovereignty, and on the newly proposed orthography. The boundaries with New Guinea were not rendered too clearly, and the publisher became an ardent advocate, also in the Netherlands, of the new spelling, and the new names, such as Djakarta for Batavia and Bogor for Buitenzorg.

The town plans were also affected. It finally seemed no longer politically correct to differentiate between stone and wooden houses, as this was experienced as derogatory. Consequently the whole built-up area was rendered in the same colour, which did not much help in explaining the urban differentiation and morphology.

All this did not help, however. In 1958 the company was expropriated, as were all other Dutch businesses and companies, within the framework of Sukarno's confrontation policy.

***Competitors of the atlas by Van Gelder:***

- \* Dr I. Dornseiffen – *Atlas van Nederlandsch Oost- en West-Indië*, Seyffardt's boekhandel, Amsterdam 1884
- \* W.J. Havenga – *Atlas van Nederlandsch Oost-Indië*, Batavia, Kolff&Co, 1885
- \* P.H. Witkamp – *Atlas van Nederlandsch Oost- en West-Indië*. Arnhem, J. Voltelen 1897
- \* *Atlas voor de volksschool in Nederlandsch Oost-Indië* = 28<sup>e</sup> editie Bos v Balen voor Indonesie bedoeld. 9<sup>e</sup> en volgende edities daarvan heten *Kleine schoolatlas der gehele aarde*. Wolters, Groningen 1919.
- \* W.J. Gerards – *Kleine Schoolatlas van Nederlandsch Oost-Indië*, Heerenveense Boekhandel, Heerenveen 1927
- \* *Kaart en Tekst Eerste Atlas van Nederlandsch-Indië voor de Indische lagere school*. Door K.G. Knol, A.J.P. Moereels en C. Lekkerkerker. Wolters, Groningen-Den Haag-Weltevreden 1931
- \* J.M. Snijders – *Kaart en tekst I – Eenpoudige atlas van de omgeving van Nederlandsch Indië en de reis naar Nederland voor de Indische lagere school*. Wolters 1932
- \* J.M. Snijders – *Kaart en tekst II Eerste atlas van de omgeving van Nederlandsch-Indië, Nederland en de Werelddelen voor de Indische lagere school*. Wolters 1932
- \* C. Lekkerkerker – *Atlas Indonesia oentoe sekolah rendah*. Wolters, Groningen-Batavia ca 1935
- \* *Voorlooper van Kaart en Tekst Eerste Atlas van Nederlandsch-Indië voor de Indische lagere school* door K.G. Knol, A.J.P. Moereels en C. Lekkerkerker m.m.v. K.J. Danckaerts. J.B. Wolters Groningen-Batavia 1938

*Box 2: Although the Atlas by Van Gelder was considered the most important one, both qualitatively and quantitatively, it did have competitors over time. These are listed here.*

**Literature:**

C. Koeman and H.J.A.Homan - *Atlantes Neerlandici Vol 6*. Canaletto, Alphen aan den Rijn 1985.