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Hans Pols. *Nurturing Indonesia: Medicine and Decolonisation in the Dutch East Indies.* (Global Health Histories.) xx + 285 pp., figs., bibl., index. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018. £75 (cloth). ISBN 9781108424578.

Hans Pols has been writing about medicine and psychiatry in the Netherlands Indies and Indonesia for decades, and this well-researched, highly readable book brings many of the strands of his research together. It follows several generations of colonial and postcolonial physicians and their political activism, from the colonial era until the present day. The emphasis is on the colonial period: seven chapters cover the first half of the twentieth century, and the remaining two and the conclusion deal with postcolonial developments.

What makes *Nurturing Indonesia* stand out is that this is not a history of medicine as a tool of empire, and European physicians play only a marginal role here. Instead, this is a book about indigenous medical students, doctors, lecturers, and researchers and about the roles they played in the development of nationalist thought and in the organization of resistance against the Dutch colonizers. For Indonesians, this link between the medical profession and nationalism will not come as a surprise. The 1908 founding of Budi Utomo (Noble Endeavour), a medical student organization that is considered Indonesia's first nationalist organization, is a well-known historical fact. The former Batavia Medical College, where the organization was founded, is now the Museum of National Awakening in Jakarta.

Pols has put forward the relationship between medicine and “national self-fashioning” in Southeast Asia in an earlier article with Warwick Anderson (2012) and hones the argument in this book. One important theme is the Indonesian physicians' desire for social advancement and their frustration when they realized that, even with the same education and the same level of European refinement, they would never achieve equal pay or be taken seriously by the Dutch. Another shared experience was their realization that colonial health provisions were often not beneficial to indigenous people.

A third theme, perhaps the most exciting for historians of science, is Pols's argument that medicine offered Indonesian physicians methods, styles of thinking, and biological and physiological metaphors for diagnosing colonial society and imagining a future Indonesia. However, the book does not go into detail about what these “styles of thinking” entailed and mentions only a few examples of patently medical metaphors. Tjipto Mangoenkoesoemo, for example, spoke in the Volksraad (the colonial proto-parliament) of the national body that was being “destroyed by a cancerous tumour” (p. 79). By and large, Indonesian physicians tended to use metaphors of progress versus primitivism, and these, I think, are not unique to the medical profession. Fortunately, one of the best chapters of the book (Ch. 5) details the protest mounted by indigenous physicians when two Dutch psychiatrists published their ideas about the backward mental state of Indonesians in the 1920s. The primitive Indonesian mind, according to the Dutch psychiatrists, required governance by law and order, guided by a strong paternal hand. This led to heated protests and refutations: the Dutch branch of the Association of Indies Physicians, for example, published a pamphlet deconstructing the psychiatrists' arguments. It is the best example of a case in which the combined forces of psychiatry and colonialism were resisted with scientific reasoning.

Each chapter in the book explores how Indonesian medical students and professionals juggled their newly learned ideals of science and progress and their nationalist ideas and ethnic traditions. Chapter 2, for example, a thoroughly absorbing chapter about student life, shows how medical schools offered students an encounter with life in the metropolis, a gateway to both science and the modern world, and in their dormitories students bonded in talking about everything from exam stress to nationalist ideologies. Several chapters focus on how physicians organized themselves. One way Indonesian physicians prepared themselves for independence, for example, was by publishing their own medical journal, “a deeply political act” (p. 135) of medical noncooperation and professional self-confidence, according to Pols.

The final chapters follow the political choices made by Indonesian physicians during the Japanese occupation and the Indonesian Revolution and detail the changes that occurred when nationalist physicians became national physicians. As physicians were some of the best educated and organized professionals,

they were very welcome as military officers, administrators, or ambassadors after independence, but such demands also meant that the medical profession suffered a brain drain. The medical profession never regained its political and ideological commitment, and this, Pols argues, has been a good thing because it has meant that doctors could stay out of the politics of an increasingly torn country. On the other hand, it has also been to the detriment of Indonesia, because postcolonial physicians have never been able to elicit support for better public health measures and have fled to urban private practices instead.

The strength of *Nurturing Indonesia* is its focus on the perspective of the indigenous medical professionals, the author's nuanced treatment of their political choices, and his innovative use of an admirable number of sources in Dutch and Indonesian. That the book is already available for Indonesian colleagues in Indonesian is also exemplary.

Fenneke Sysling

Fenneke Sysling is a postdoctoral researcher at Utrecht University, where she specializes in the history of race, colonialism, science, and the self. She is the author of Racial Science and Human Diversity (Singapore, 2016). Her current project looks at the history of self-tracking.

Megan Raby. *American Tropics: The Caribbean Roots of Biodiversity Science.* (Flows, Migrations, and Exchanges.) xiii + 319 pp., illus., maps, table, notes, bibl., index. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017. \$29.95 (paper). ISBN 9781469635606.

A blending of established academic traditions often enhances each core by shedding new light on old problems or invigorating tired ideas with a fresh infusion of life—like opening a window and feeling the wind. The disciplines of history and science can work this way. Science offers fascinating stories for historians, and historians in turn can show scientists where they fit into some identifiable big picture.

The problem arises when conventions in blended traditions clash. The habitat of historians, as described by Keith Benson (review of Michael J. Lannoo, *Leopold's Shack and Ricketts's Lab: The Emergence of Environmentalism*, *Journal of the History of Biology*, 2010, 43:805–807), is in the catacombs of blue-blooded institutions, where they exhume archival data and use it to create a construct, which they then describe and defend. Scientists also use data to create a construct, but with a twist. Rather than defend it, the best scientists look for hard evidence to destroy their creation. Only after failing, using objective tests of discredibility, do scientists start to become believers (recall Thomas Henry Huxley's quip—the “slaying of a beautiful hypothesis by an ugly fact”).

American Tropics is organized into five chapters—“An American Tropical Laboratory,” “Making Biology Tropical,” “Jungle Island,” “The Question of Diversity,” and “A Global Resource”—sandwiched between an introduction, “From Tropicality to Biodiversity,” and an epilogue, “Postcolonial Ecology.” Throughout these chapters Megan Raby seeks to reveal the origins of the concept of biodiversity in tropical fieldwork in the circum-Caribbean region.

Raby's subtitle, “The Caribbean Roots of Biodiversity Science,” stems from her core argument, which when assembled goes as follows. “The history of tropical research stations is fundamental to understanding the intellectual development of biodiversity and tropical thinking” (p. 13). “Tropical biology is a place-based science that has historically been practiced by people from outside that place” (p. 8). “U.S. scientists never simply went to ‘the tropics’; they worked at specific Caribbean localities that they framed as tropical” (p. 17). “The 1960s and 1970s saw a wave of highly influential publications on problems of the distribution and ecological controls on species diversity, which drew heavily on data from key tropical field sites. Yet, at the same moment . . . revolution swept Cuba and protests erupted in Panama against the U.S. occupation of the Canal Zone. U.S. tropical biologists confronted the loss of access to their most important tropical stations” (p. 19). And “The emergence of modern biodiversity discourse . . . is a direct product of the intellectual and political ferment of tropical biology during that revolutionary period.