

Angelie Sens, *De kolonieman: Johannes van den Bosch (1780–1844), volksverheffer in naam van de koning*. Amsterdam: Balans, 2019, 477 + 16 pp. ISBN: 9789460038914, price: EUR 39.99 (hardback).

The historian Angelie Sens, affiliated with the Dutch Press Museum and afterwards with the International Institute of Social History, received a decisive incentive in 2013 to start working on a biography of Johannes van den Bosch. It took her seven years to conclude her study. *Only* seven years, one might add, in view of the important role of Van den Bosch in many state affairs during the first four decades of the eighteenth century and the mass of archival material that report about this. It is a pity that only a few sources about his eventful personal life have survived. Thus, his personality sometimes lacks contours, as Sens admitted and regretted, as well. What is clear is that he was impulsive and quick-tempered, and a man of unbridled energy, with indefatigable enthusiasm for his ideas and ideals, in a turbulent time of revolution and enlightenment. His family was from a provincial higher middle class background, and by choosing a military career he used an opportunity for upward social mobility. His education as a military engineer, as well as his volunteering for an Indies posting helped in this respect. He made his name by writing long memorandums on military matters and on appropriate policies to rule the Indies colony. A good marriage and the profitable exploitation of a plantation also helped. Van den Bosch resigned in 1808 out of discord with the new governor-general H.W. Daendels, who is very negatively portrayed by Sens. Back home again, he sided against France with the House of Orange King Willem I.

His ideas about alleviation of the masses of destitute inhabitants were realized by founding a Benevolent Society, which endeavored to give the lower classes a respectable life by turning wild lands into arable lands in the remote province of Drenthe. Thanks to Van den Bosch, these colonies could be realized. They reflected his ideas about human society, with his belief in the malleability of men, and their personal rights. In practice, this collided with the extent of force that was allowed in his paternalistic view. In the Culture System in the Indies as well as the slavery of the East and West Indies, he also endorsed the prolonged use of forced labor. The colonies in Drenthe opened in 1818, encountering many problems. There was opposition too, directed at the controversial Van den Bosch. He served a short term as highest official of the Dutch West Indies (1827–1828), pondering inconclusively about the future role of slavery. In 1828, he was made governor-general of the East Indies, with the assignment to save the Indies as a Dutch colony, and moreover to turn it into a source of income for the motherland. Van den Bosch reorganized agriculture, by retaining land rent, and private western enterprise, supplemented by the ever more

important Culture System (*Cultuurstelsel*), with its forced deliveries and forced labor. Equally important was the privileged position of the Netherlands Trading Society (*Nederlandsche Handel Maatschappij*). On a more abstract level, he pleaded for a balanced position of capital and labor—surprisingly modern, and thus not heeded. Upon his return in 1834, Van den Bosch was made Minister of Colonies. He resigned in 1839. Van den Bosch was a key figure in his active years. His unique colonies survived as a governmental penitentiary institution. Historians have thus far not agreed on his role, and especially in the debate on the Culture System he was strongly condemned as a conservative proponent. Sens makes a careful and convincing evaluation of Van den Bosch' controversial ideas and endeavors. She did so thoroughly, as the notes and bibliography (at 45 pages each) attest. The fictional elements she adds would have been best omitted.

Leo van Bergen, *Pro patria et patienti: De Nederlandse militaire geneeskunde 1795–1950*. Nijmegen: Vantilt, 2019, 371 pp. ISBN: 9789460044465, price: EUR 29.50 (paperback).

In 2015, the medical historian Leo van Bergen (1959) took the initiative to discuss a suitable commemoration in 2019 of 150 years of the Regiment Medical Troops and its predecessor, the Military Medical Service (*Militair Geneeskundige Dienst*, MGD), collaborating with the Netherlands Institute of Military History (*Nederlands Instituut voor Militaire Geschiedenis*, NIMH). His proposal to write a history of military medical service was favorably received. He was funded by NIMH and managed to produce a solid history in a praiseworthy short period of time. Such a general overview of this subject had been missing until now. Van Bergen was well-qualified for his task, having produced a number of medical history monographs, among which a critical study about the involvement of the Red Cross Organization in the decolonization war in Indonesia during the turbulent 1940s. The primary focus in this book is on developments in the Netherlands. He deliberately leaves out a discussion of the medical history of the KNIL army in the Netherlands Indies, including during the decolonization war of 1945–1950. However, he includes a medical history of the tens of thousands of Dutch volunteers and conscripts that were sent to Indonesia after 1945, to ensure the establishment of an independent Indonesia with a durable political and economic influence of the Dutch. This distinction between KNIL and the military from the Netherlands in terms of their medical experiences looks somewhat artificial for this period. A separate medical history of the KNIL has yet to be written.