

250

YEARS IN OLD

JAKARTA

Tales of the Bik family and the rich history of Tanah Abang



SVEN VERBEEK WOLTHUYS

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- The author at Taman Prasasti (Tanah Abang cemetery) Jakarta 2019 photo Leon Cramer

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*To my grandfather and my grandmother,
who conveyed their love for Tanah Abang to me*



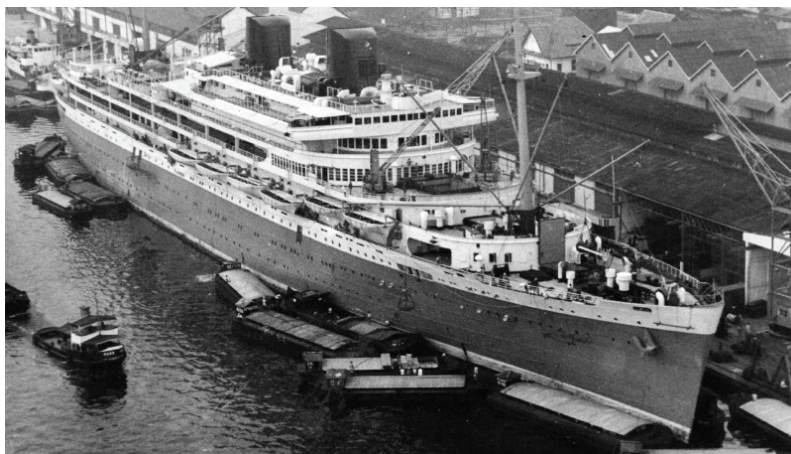
Tanah Abang Heuvel, Batavia/Jakarta 1926

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BIK FAMILY		
	TANAH ABANG	

Introduction

On 26 December 1952, just past eleven o'clock in the morning, the 192 metre-long passenger liner "Willem Ruys" of the Royal Rotterdamsche Lloyd left the Djakarta harbour of Tandjong Priok. Destination: Rotterdam, the Netherlands. On board was Hermanus (Her) Verbeek Wolthuys (1900-1974), grandfather of the author. He was leaving Indonesia once and for all. There was no one on the quay to wish and wave him farewell. Because he was the last to leave. Her left with mixed feelings. Deep in his heart he did not want to leave at all. But there were political developments between the new Republic of Indonesia and its former colonial master, and Djakarta was slowly becoming a less inviting place for foreigners to live. And thus Her left reluctantly, following the rest of his family, who had departed a few years earlier. Not only leaving behind his own footsteps but also more than two centuries of Bik family history in Indonesia. It was this family which Her himself had been part of since 1925 when he had arrived at this same port, full of hope, joy and excitement.



The passenger liner Willem Ruys in the harbour of Tandjong Priok in Djakarta, 1952. Photo by E. van Hage.

MUSEUM KONINKLIJKE ROTTERDAMSCH LLOYD



Announcement of the upcoming departure of Willem Ruys with Her Verbeek Wolthuys on board. Advertisement in the Java Bode of 23 December 1952.

DELPHER

In the book *Tempo Doeloe* (1961), author E. Breton de Nijs (Rob Nieuwenhuys) included two nineteenth century photos of the Bik family in front of their estates in Salemba and Tanah Abang (see also pages 276-277), in what was then called Batavia. He wrote:

"In 1816 a certain Jan Bik and numerous family members departed for the Indies. He became the patriarch of a large family, rooted in the Indies. The Biks formed a huge clan. Remarkably there were often marriages between family members. The consideration, to keep together the growing family fortune, was obviously not unrelated to this. From a social point of view, most descendants of Jan Bik remained in the upper class of society. The typical Indies' "sinking" occurred very rarely in this family".

This was a quite accurate description of a family that was influential in colonial Jakarta throughout the nineteenth century and first half of the twentieth century. But the Biks were not a typical Dutch family with a predictable colonial career of departing for the Indies for a limited amount of time

and earning enough money with the aim of returning to a comfortable retirement back in the home country. Most Biks were deeply rooted in the Indies culture, and in a number of cases even developed an outspoken aversion to what they called 'Baru Belanda', new Dutch arrivals, who in their eyes were not integrating into the society but arrogantly calling the shots without learning the culture, lifestyle and behaviours of those who were born, raised and educated in Batavia, the so-called 'stayers'. It led to clashes even within the Bik family itself, but was no longer sustainable from the early twentieth century when Bik children frequently pursued education in Europe and met their future spouses in the Netherlands, subsequently bringing them to the Indies.

When those newcomers arrived in the Bik family they were amazed by what they experienced. A massive elite clan of hundreds of family members, with their typical Indies lifestyle, virtues and hospitality, but also with their quirky habits, and all carrying the name Bik in different forms: De Nijs Bik, Butin Bik, van Berckel Bik, de Perez Bik, Arnold Bik and Vreede Bik. Within two generations after their arrival most Biks had worked themselves up to high ranking positions in the colonial society, and often pursued careers in plantation agriculture, making a fortune as landowners. This was accelerated when one of Jan Bik's sons, Jannus Theodorus (1796-1875), married the widow of the prominent and wealthy Van Riemsdijk family, and a grandson married the granddaughter of Leendert Miero (1755-1834). Miero had arrived in Batavia in 1776. He set foot in the Indies as a poor soldier, but was one of the wealthiest residents of Batavia when he died in 1834 at the age of 79. In 1863 Jannus Theodorus Bik became the owner of the country estate Tanah Abang, in Batavia's elite centre of Weltevreden (now Central Jakarta).

Tanah Abang, the jewel of the Bik family

Tanah Abang is a district with a rich trading history dating back to 1628. Its textile market was founded in 1735 and is now the largest in Southeast Asia. It was also a popular retreat area for the colonial elite. Governor-General Van Riebeeck

had already established a sizeable estate on Tanah Abang Heuvel (now known as Tanah Abang Bukit) in 1710, which in the 1740s was torn down by Governor-General Van Imhoff who built an even larger country house on the site. Those early landowners owned the entire Tanah Abang district which extended even further south and west than today's Tanah Abang. The remnants of Van Imhoff's estate became the jewel of the Bik family in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and this site eventually survived until the mid 1980s after it had functioned as the headquarters of Indonesia's powerful Air Force (AURI) after independence. Tanah Abang also became synonymous with burials. And if the graves and tombstones at the Kebon Jahe cemetery (now Taman Prasasti) had remained untouched (which sadly did not happen), it would have been the oldest original modern cemetery in the world and heritage listed by UNESCO. One of the largest and most notorious Japanese internment camps in Indonesia during World War II, Tjideng (Cideng), was in the area too and marked one of the darkest chapters in Tanah Abang's history.

Despite so many relevant historic events and sites, and being one of Jakarta's oldest districts, Tanah Abang is very much underrepresented in most history books about Jakarta. It is often almost entirely ignored. When it does get a mention it is mostly limited to the cemetery, a description of the market and some pictures of nineteenth century street views. Tanah Abang's rich history and that of its multi-ethnic population has never been researched and described in detail before.

Tanah Abang's historic remnants are rapidly disappearing. Since the 1970s, the appearance of Tanah Abang has undergone an unrecognisable metamorphosis following the demolition of colonial era homes along the main streets and Chinese style shophouses around Pasar Tanah Abang. It has sadly led to a severe loss of character too. Since the early 2010s there has been a new wave of construction where often two or three storey dwellings from the 1970s-1990s have been replaced by high rise office and apartment buildings. Even kampungs were not spared and two of the oldest kampungs of Jakarta, Tanah Rendah and Jatibaru, are about to disappear



Tanah Abang Heuvel in 1927. Photo by Her Verbeek Wolthuys.
COLLECTION: SVEN VERBEEK WOLTHUYS

in the coming years. Today there is very little left of what was once a green and lush residential suburb with tree-lined streets and a market full of character with a variety of multi-ethnic architecture. Consequently modern day residents and visitors have no idea how beautiful Tanah Abang once was, nor are they inspired or motivated to explore its history. Of all the structures that stood in Tanah Abang in 1945 more than 98% have been bulldozed. Unfortunately it is very typical of how the Jakarta authorities in recent decades have treated the cultural heritage of the city. Even in nearby Menteng, where in contrast to Tanah Abang a lot of colonial era homes had a protection heritage status, the rules were often circumvented and protected architecture was pulled down overnight under suspicious circumstances to make way for characterless concrete dwellings. Or as the late doyen of Jakarta's history, Father Adolf Heuken SJ (1929-2019), put it very strikingly in his masterpiece *Historical Sites Of Jakarta* (1982): *"What makes Jakarta special should be saved and looked after. Its few old and existing buildings full of charm and colour should not fall victim to 'developers' who only care about a quick profit. Let's not sacrifice what for the coming generations is a valuable asset!"*

250 YEARS IN OLD JAKARTA is for those who love Jakarta's history and are searching for a glimpse of its lost past. This book describes the exciting history of a Dutch family in colonial Jakarta from 1776 onwards, with all its ups-and-downs, with a large emphasis on the family's prominent and influential presence in Tanah Abang. But there are two centuries of Tanah Abang before the Bik family arrived, and Tanah Abang changed after the Biks departed. This book will hopefully also contribute to an improved consciousness for the readers, as well as for the previous and current residents of Jakarta, that we need to preserve what is left of Jakarta's history for future generations. Even in the case of Tanah Abang where there is less than 2% of its historical heritage remaining, let us make an effort to preserve these last fragments.

By providing a full historical description of such a unique Jakarta district, elaborating on its multi-ethnic population over the past centuries, and at the same time showing how a wealthy family lived in Tanah Abang during the last century of colonial Jakarta, this book is not a traditional history book as such, but gives the history a personal perspective. This obviously comes with the caveat that it is impossible for the book to provide a balanced overview of all of Tanah Abang's history, current situation and population.

250 YEARS IN OLD JAKARTA is enhanced by a large number of never-published drawings, maps and pictures which show the development of Tanah Abang over four centuries in all its facets. These are interspersed with a large collection of precious Bik family photographs, a significant number of which have only been rediscovered in recent years. Despite all the rapid changes in Jakarta, and in Tanah Abang in particular, remarkably a handful of Bik tombstones have still survived and are to be found in today's Taman Prasasti. A few dozen other family tombstones still exist on former Bik properties in Cisarua, in the mountains south of Jakarta. Her Verbeek Wolthuys' departure in 1952 might have marked the end of the physical presence of the Bik family in Jakarta, but those few family remains have so far survived all of Jakarta's changes for almost two and a half centuries since the first ancestor arrived in Jakarta in 1776.

1 The Bik family: from draughtsmen to landowners

When Jan Bik (1757-1827) sailed from Amsterdam and arrived in Batavia (now Jakarta) in 1816, he probably did not realise he would later be regarded as the founding father of a clan that not only became quite influential but also blended relatively quickly and smoothly into the colonial society of the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia) at the time. It was a bold decision for him to emigrate at the age of 59, together with his wife and nine children. However Jan's father had just passed away, and initially one of his sons was appointed as draughtsman on Professor Caspar Reinwardt's expedition to the East. The latter had been charged by King Willem I of the Netherlands to undertake a scientific expedition in the archipelago. Jan Bik, who had constantly struggled financially to keep his head above water in Amsterdam, decided the family should be kept together. With the help of the Amsterdam City Council, this was the opportunity for a drastic change and improvement in his life.

The troubled years before the move

Jan Bik was a grain merchant in the Dutch town of Haastrecht in 1787 before his life changed dramatically. In 1778 he married Anna van der Lecq, and they had a daughter Nivina (1779-1832). Jan lived during the precarious years of the French revolution, and had chosen the side of the patriots, i.e. those who opposed the exiled Dutch royal family of the House of Orange. In September 1787, when the Prussian army helped to successfully reinstate Dutch Prince Willem V to power, Jan Bik had no other choice than to flee. In his diary he described the events as follows:

"...The flood of troops concerned many good residents who had to leave their home and all their belongings behind to save their lives. This also happened to me. To avoid ending up in the hands of the furious, murderous and marauding troops,

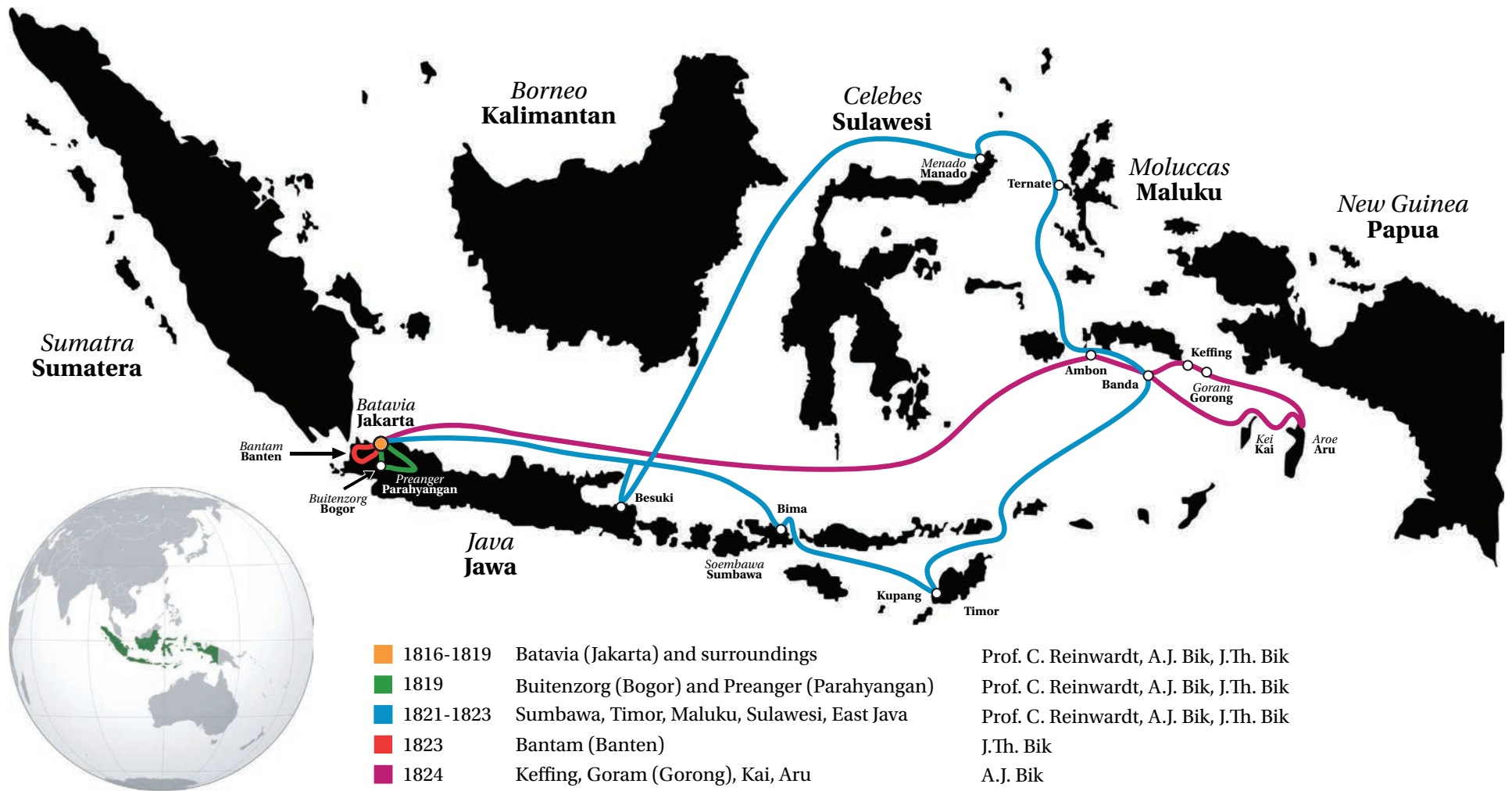


29 October 1815 - 26 April 1816 Evertsen vessel Adrianus Johannes Bik (eldest son of Jan Bik)
31 March 1816 - 3 September 1816 Nassau vessel Jan Bik, his wife and 8 other children

The journeys of the Bik family to the Dutch East Indies. Adrianus Johannes Bik left earlier, in the company of professor Reinwardt. His father, mother and siblings followed nearly half a year later.

GRAPHICS: SVEN VERBEEK WOLTHUYS

I saved myself by fleeing to France, leaving behind my vast affairs, residences and warehouses, filled with grains, under the protection of my good wife and elderly mother. Unfortunately neither young nor old were spared. My warehouses and house were plundered, my brave wife horribly abused, as she wanted to resist these inhuman soldiers, supported by a lot of common savages amongst our own people. The ill-treatment of beatings accelerated the virtuous woman's death; she passed away in my absence on 23 July 1788. My wife's elderly mother, after being mistreated as well, was able to eventually and fortunately escape with our eight-year-old daughter (Nivina Bik). So my happiest days were all of a sudden gone, my dear wife forever gone through a hasty death, my house plundered, my grain



Journeys of the Bik brothers in the Indonesian archipelago between 1816 and 1824. These trips were adventurous at the time and involved many months of travelling. The distance between Batavia and the Aru Islands is more than 3,500 km.

GRAPHICS: SVEN VERBEEK WOLTHUYS

2 Tanah Abang: from camp ground to elite residential quarter 1628-1900

In 1863 Jannus Theodorus Bik (1796-1875) purchased the most prominent piece of land in Tanah Abang in Batavia. It included the country house on what later would be called Tanah Abang Heuvel (Tanah Abang Hill or Tanah Abang Bukit) and most of the land and properties at the nearby market of Pasar Tanah Abang. However Tanah Abang's history dates back to the early seventeenth century.



Siege of Batavia in 1628, by an anonymous engraver.
COLLECTION: ROYAL LIBRARY THE NETHERLANDS

The name 'Tanah Abang' first appeared in 1628 when the troops of Sultan Agung of the Mataram Kingdom in Central Java were stationed in the area to take part in a futile attack on

the new town of Batavia, established by the Dutch under Jan Pieterszoon Coen (1587-1629) nine years earlier. The army of Sultan Agung noticed the red earth and called it Tanah Abang, *abang* meaning 'red' in Javanese, *tanah* meaning 'earth'. The "Beknopte Encyclopaedia van Nederlandsch Indië" (Concise Encyclopedia of the Netherlands Indies) of 1921 describes the soil's characteristics in more detail: "*The name (Tanah Abang), meaning 'red earth', points to the contrast between the grey colour of the sea clay, that here, where the soil starts to increasingly rise, it gets replaced by the reddish weathering crust*". This might explain why the earth around the hill of Tanah Abang has a more distinct red colour than in the lower sections of Tanah Abang further north.

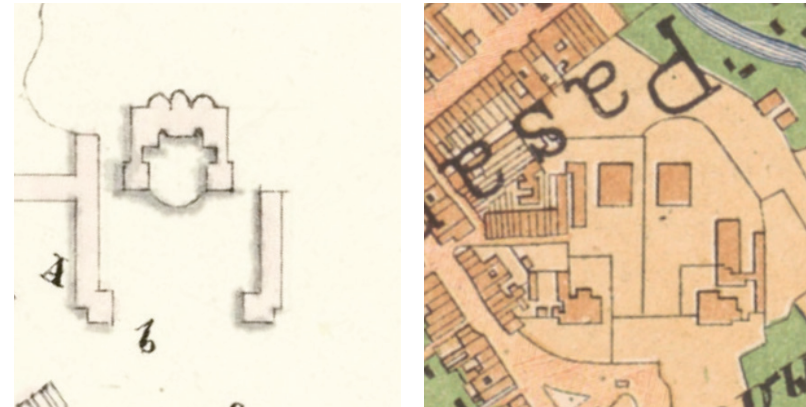
Phoa Bingam

The first known settlement in Tanah Abang dates back to around 1650 when the Chinese captain Phoa Bingam built a sugar cane estate and a cane mill on what became known as Bingamshoogte (Bingam's Height), but in later years as Tanah Abang Heuvel. Bingam had been a resident of Batavia since 1623 and was the owner of a piece of land that reached from the river Tjiliwoeng (Ciliwung) to Angkee (Angke), roughly four kilometres wide. He purchased it from Governor-General Cornelis van der Lijn (1608-1679). On the land he built a large residence and sugar mill house of bamboo, which after his death were sold for 440 Rijksdaalders (Ringgit). Bingam was the first to initiate trading in Tanah Abang, more than 80 years before Justinus Vinck obtained market rights and set up Pasar Tanah Abang in 1735.

The area around Tanah Abang was known to grow an abundance of crops like peanuts, ginger, jasmine and betel,

3 The Tanah Abang land during the time of the Bik and De Nijs Bik family 1863-1930

Although Jannus Theodorus ‘Dorus’ Bik (1796-1875) owned the country house and land in Tanah Abang, he preferred to live on his two other estates in Tjiloeear and Tjileboet just north of Buitenzorg on the slopes of Mount Salak. What he probably did not realise at the time was that Tanah Abang in later years would become one of the most prominent possessions of the Bik family. When Bik inherited it in 1863, Tanah Abang was the southwesternmost part of Batavia, but in the first half of the twentieth century it would be much more in the centre of the city and as a result sharply increased in value. In 1905 the land, which also still included the majority of the area of Pasar Tanah Abang, became an official company with shareholders and existed in this set-up until 1939. The Batavia City Council made various attempts to expropriate the land as part of a wider program to reduce the amount of private land in and around the city, eventually succeeding in 1918.



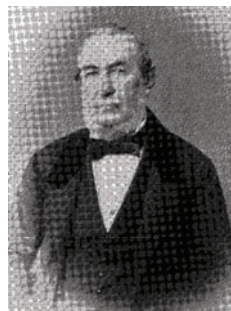
The original country house (left on an 1826 map) with two wings and two guard houses, split into four houses (right on an 1874 map). The large main building had been demolished.

COLLECTION: LEIDEN UNIVERSITY | NATIONAAL ARCHIEF



Announcement of the public rental auction of the Tanah Abang estate and the market in the Java Bode of 14 December 1864. Dorus Bik inherited the estate a year earlier.

COLLECTION: DELPHER



Jannus Theodorus (Dorus) Bik, early 1870s.

FROM: INDISCHE NAVORSCHER

Before Bik inherited the country estate, the original house of Van Imhoff, dating back to the 1740s, had already been split into four houses. The middle section was demolished and the former west and east wings became two new two-storey houses. This most likely occurred during the 1830s.

We assume that Dorus rented out the four houses on Tanah Abang Heuvel during all of the 12 years between purchase and his death. He must have also received considerable rental income from land and buildings at the market and along streets in the vicinity of the estate. A newspaper advertisement in 1864 (see this page) announced a public auction to rent out the Tanah Abang estate including Pasar Tanah Abang. It is not known whether the tenant was allowed to sublet the dozens of properties on this sizeable piece of land.



Tanah Abang Heuvel (Jalan Fachrudin/Jalan Mas Mansyur)

A lively street scene just around the corner from the Tanah Abang Heuvel country estate, most likely in 1899 or 1900. This is the road that runs parallel to it towards Pasar Tanah Abang which is beyond the electric tram on the right. The tram turns into the road Kampoeng Lima (later Oude Tamarindelaan and Jalan Wahid Hasyim). Left and right we see street sellers with their characteristic *pikulan*. Just beyond the street lamp is a group of children wearing *sarung* and *kebaya*.
COLLECTION: LEIDEN UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES | KITLV 5255

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5 The development of Tanah Abang 1900-1945

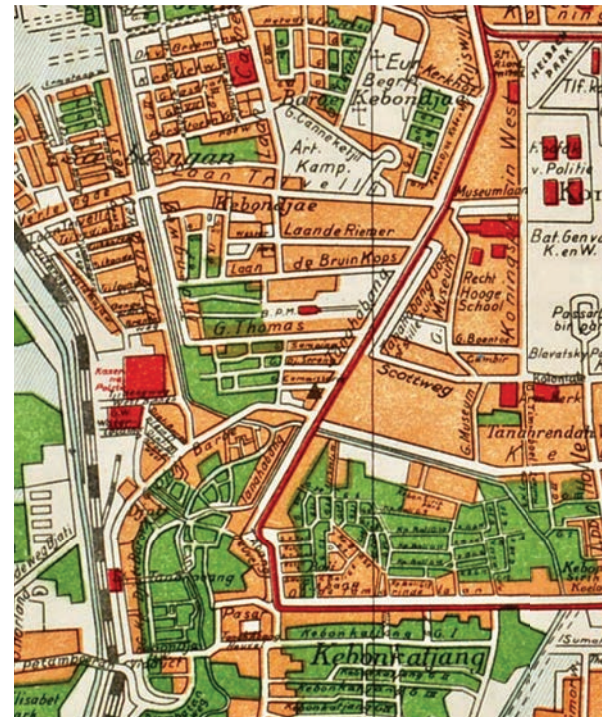
The twentieth century saw a rapid change in the appearance of Tanah Abang. Not so much during the first two decades, but especially when housing development began in the districts of Tjideng (Cideng) and further north in Petodjo around 1930, Tanah Abang became much more densely populated, and the last areas with rice fields and coconut palm gardens disappeared. Also existing streets like Tanah Abang West and the various side streets became built up and many grand mansions of the nineteenth century were replaced by modern housing. Interestingly, as a result of the diverse population of Tanah Abang, some streets like Tanah Abang Heuvel had an architectural mix varying from nineteenth century Indies houses, to Chinese mansions,

to art deco-style bungalows. After the destructive *banjir* (flood) of 1918 the council accelerated hygiene and drainage improvements in kampungs (small indigenous villages) in Tanah Abang, as well as upgrades to the walls of the Krukut River. By 1923 all major roads in Tanah Abang were sealed too, and an upgrade to Pasar Tanah Abang in 1926 and 1927 changed the appearance of the textile market area. During the Japanese occupation of Batavia, Tanah Abang was the scene of one of the most notorious internment camps in the Dutch East Indies: Camp Tjideng, where death and diseases were rife amongst the 10,000 women and children who were interned there. After independence Tanah Abang slowly changed from a residential to a more business-dominated district.



The Tanah Abang district on an 1897 map. The train line and Tanah Abang railway station are already included, but not yet the tram line. The western side of Tanah Abang mostly still comprises of rice fields.

COLLECTION:
LEIDEN
UNIVERSITY



A much more densely populated Tanah Abang in 1945. The entire area between the *banjir* canal in the west and Koningsplein in the east has been built up.

COLLECTION:
LEIDEN
UNIVERSITY

Batik industry in Tanah Abang

Pasar Tanah Abang was and is the largest textile market in Southeast Asia, however the district of Tanah Abang was also the centre of batik making in Batavia during the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth century.

Batik is a technique of wax-resist dyeing applied to the cloth. It is made either by drawing dots and lines of the resist with a spouted tool called a *tjanting* or *canting*, (a kind of a pencil with a reservoir in which the liquid is warmed wax), *batik tulis* (handmade batik), or by printing the resist with a handmade copper stamp called *batik tjap* or *batik cap*, or stamped batik. There is also a *batik kombinasi*, which combines *tulis* with *tjap*. The applied wax resists dyes and therefore allows the artisan to colour selectively by soaking the cloth in one colour, removing the wax with boiling water, and repeating if multiple colours are desired. Batik making in Java dates back to the sixth or seventh century.



A postcard with batik workers from Tanah Abang, most likely from the 1920s. The women here are using the so-called *tjanting* method of creating batik.

COLLECTION: SCOTT MERRILLEES

Batikhandel, Lim Giam, Paal Merah	Plm 51
BATIKKERIJEN.	
Batikhandel, Tan Eng Lie, Karet Tanah Abang 142	WI 1179
Hong Seng, merk, eigenaar Lie Tjian Ie, Karet Tanah Abang	WI 1117
Jap Giok Hie merk Tat Gee, Gang Baroe Paal Merah	Plm 37
Lay Sie Ho, Paal Merah ..	Plm 36
Oey Tian Tien, medegebr., Karet Sawah	WI 1776
Sin Ka Seng, Pasar Baroe Tanah Abang 1103	WI 1530
Ljia Tjit, Merk Hok Goan Seng, Paal Merah	Plm 7
Fa. Hok Tjwan, Karet Sawah	WI 1776
Tjiang Tjoan Hoat, merk, Pasar Paal Merah 37	Plm 33

The Batavia telephone directory from 1928 shows a list of those batik manufacturers in the city with telephone connections. All of them are in Tanah Abang and adjacent Paal Merah (Palmerah).

FROM:
TELEFOONGIDS
BATAVIA 1928

The batik produced in Tanah Abang was mainly red, named *bang bangan*, or 'red on red'. This is *Mengkudu* red, made with natural colouring of the *Morinda Citrifolia* root. Most *tjanting* batik was made by *Pembatik*, Indo-Chinese women, artisans, while the *tjap*-made batik was traditionally created by men.

Using the more work-intensive *tjanting* method, one piece of cloth took nine months to create at the time.

Tanah Abang was not the only place where batik was manufactured. The entire north coast of Java had Sino-Indonesian (Chinese Indonesian) batik workshops from around the beginning of the nineteenth century. Towns like Cirebon, Lasem, Pekalongan, Rembang and Juana are all well known for this type of batik.



A piece of batik, made in a Sino-Indonesian/*Peranakan* Tanah Abang workshop in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The design of this batik is Indo-European influenced. This batik from Tanah Abang is called *Batik Bang Bangan* or batik red on red. That Tanah Abang means 'red earth' is most likely no coincidence.

COLLECTION: KEES DE RUITER | THE VERONICA WARNARS COLLECTION
 PHOTO: CAROL WINKEL FOTOGRAFIE AMSTERDAM



A full batik cloth with different Chinese Phoenix bird and flower pot designs (above), and a close up (left). This *Peranakan* batik is a *sarung* or tubular skirt with the *kepala* (head) in the middle. These were sold unstitched after which the owner stitched it or had it done by a *djahit* (sewing maid) by hand or with a Singer sewing machine. This batik *sarung* dates from around 1880. It is a beautiful example of *Mengkudu* red, created by a batik workshop in Tanah Abang by using the natural dye *Morinda Citrifolia*.

COLLECTION: KEES DE RUITER | THE VERONICA WARNARS COLLECTION
 PHOTO: CAROL WINKEL FOTOGRAFIE AMSTERDAM

6 Tanah Abang street views 1937-1945

The well-known Dutch pioneering aviator A.N.J. (Jan) Thomassen à Thuessink Van der Hoop (1893-1969), who was the first to fly a plane from the Netherlands to the Dutch East Indies in 1924, commenced an ambitious project in December 1937. He aimed to photograph the entire city of Batavia in street views. This was the direct result of the establishment of the Stichting Oud-Batavia (Foundation Old Batavia), which also opened a museum along the Stadhuisplein (Taman Fatahillah). Oud-Batavia was a collaboration between the community, West Java province, the city of Batavia and a number of well-known companies like BPM, Javasche Bank, NILMIJ and KPM.



A.N.J. (Jan) Thomassen à Thuessink Van der Hoop in 1925 (left) and on a Dutch airmail stamp issued in 1928.

COLLECTION: INSTITUTE FOR SOUND AND VISION | ALLNUMIS

Thomassen à Thuessink Van der Hoop, or in short Van der Hoop, was also curator of the ethnographic, prehistoric and historical collection of the Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen (Batavia Society for Arts and Sciences). He acknowledged that it would be of added value to create a photographic collection of the city of Batavia too.

With a 6 x 9 cm camera he started to take the first photos in December 1937, however due to other priorities the next series date from April 1939. The number of photos he could take in 1940 was limited too, hence he started to delegate the task to the bookkeeper of the Bataviaasch Genootschap, Mohamed Ali, of whom no information is available. Ali himself took more than 1,000 photos, mainly in 1941. He often left the office in the morning, rode his bike to a certain street and started taking photographs of the houses and street scenes. The start of World War II put a stop to this activity and thus parts of the city were never photographed. Nevertheless the collection is extremely valuable and provides a fascinating view of the city in the final years of the colonial era.

Although the district of Tanah Abang comprises approximately 110 photos, even here the project was not finalised. Parts of Tanah Abang West and the side streets were not photographed, nor the new Westerpark or Tjideng. On the other hand, the interesting Pasar Tanah Abang with all its side roads, shops and Chinese signage, was captured in all possible detail. Kampung areas were mostly ignored, but often the entrances to these native residential areas were photographed. The street views on the next pages are referenced against the equally fascinating aerial photo report of May 1945, during World War II, when the British RAF conducted reconnaissance flights from Australia to Batavia, still occupied by the Japanese. In an era when there was no Google Earth available, we are able to provide an almost similar experience. The Van der Hoop and Ali collection has been miraculously saved during the turbulent years of war and independence despite the Museum Oud-Batavia having been entirely looted during the war. The collection of photos has transferred ownership a few times and unfortunately some pictures have vanished over time. Currently Pusat Dokumentasi Arsitektur (PDA) in Jakarta has the precious collection in its possession, although it is not available online.



Intersection Kebon Sirih / Djati Baroe (Jalan Kebon Sirih / Jalan Jatibaru)

One of the busiest crossings in Tanah Abang today, however we only see commuters on bicycles, and the odd cart in the distance in this 1941 photo. We are looking in a southerly direction from the end of Tanah Abang West. The bridge on the left is the start of Kebon Sirih, to the right Djati Baroe, and the straight road continues as Tanah Abang Heuvel towards Pasar Tanah Abang. Prominent in this picture a new 'booglamp' (arc lamp) which had replaced the nineteenth century gas lamps. These lamps were placed at a distance of 40 metres from each other and the light intensity dimmed by 50% each night from 11pm onwards.

COLLECTION: PDA, INV.NO. 04-018 | PHOTO:M. ALI, 28 MARCH 1941

C1

7 Turbulent Bik years in Jakarta 1930-1952

With the arrival in Batavia of Leendert Miero in 1776 and the family of Jan Bik in 1816 (see Chapter 1) the Bik clan grew exponentially, and the majority of Bik heirs henceforth always resided in the capital, or in the vicinity. This was first and foremost the result of the fact that Jannus Theodorus Bik (1796-1875) was a landowner. All of his lands were in and around Batavia, Buitenzorg and Tjisaroea and most of his descendants who inherited his possessions obviously stayed in the region too. A few family members had taken over Dorus' tea and coffee estates in the mountains (see Appendix 2 pages 316-317), and the De Nijs Bik descendants were in control of his only estate in Batavia: Tanah Abang (see Chapter 3). When landowner Pieter Albert de Nijs Bik passed away in 1920, his daughter Caroline and her husband Wim van Garderen, the great-grandparents of the author, remained in their house in Tanah Abang until 1930. However during a stay in the Netherlands in the same year Caroline became ill and sadly passed away a few months later, at the young age of 45. Wim van Garderen was director of the insurance and annuity company NILLMIJ and had preferred to stay in the Netherlands after his wife passed away, but an agreement with the board of directors forced him to alternate his directorship between the Den Haag and Batavia offices. Hence after two years in Europe he returned to Batavia in 1932, and lived in the first house with air conditioning in the city (see pages 214-218). Only three days after Caroline had passed away in the Netherlands, her youngest brother Willem Albert de Nijs Bik tragically died following a tiger attack on a rubber plantation near Serang, west of Batavia. He was only 35 years old (see pages 208-213).

At the end of 1934 Wim van Garderen returned to the Dutch office of the NILLMIJ in Den Haag but this time would not return to the Indies again. Most other children of landowner Pieter Albert de Nijs Bik continued to reside in Batavia until 1942: Aletta de Nijs Bik (1888-1976) was married to Dick

Dull, a well-known real estate agent in Batavia. Her older sister Eulalie (1887-1969) was married to Victor Dersjant (see Appendix 1 pages 284-285). Victor, a retired colonel of the Topographische Dienst (Topographic Service) died in the Japanese internment camp Tjimahi (Cimahi) in 1945. Pieter Albert's only other son Pierre Jean Baptiste de Perez Bik (1890-1954) was married to Reina Reints Bok (1895-1995) and lived in Menteng. Although they themselves succeeded to stay out of the World War II internment camps (Pierre managed to prove he was a descendant of slave Saartje!), the couple would sadly lose their son Edu de Perez Bik (1917-1943) who died in captivity in Thailand during World War II.

The only other De Nijs Bik living in Batavia in the 1930s was Wijnand de Nijs Bik (1901-1964). He was a son of Pieter Albert's younger brother Henri de Nijs Bik (1864-1922) and his wife and second cousin Dorine Butin Bik (1876-1954). Wijnand was head of the Pandhuisdienst (Pawnshop Service) in the city.

Although the family name Bik slowly disappeared from Batavia, the telephone directory of 1935 for example included only a handful, the name Bik was still present on the shopfront of one of Batavia's most renowned florists, Bloemenmagazijn Butin Bik (see pages 206-207).

Most Bik members had repatriated to the Netherlands after the war, however the grandparents of the author returned to Jakarta, and would stay until 1952. Some Bik and Keuchenius descendants, who owned the coffee and tea plantations in Tjisaroea, became Indonesian citizens so that they could stay, even after 1957 when all Dutch residents were expelled from Indonesia. Today you will still find the Bik family name in Indonesia, although only at a few cemeteries. Six tombstones have survived in Taman Prasasti in Jakarta, and a few dozen others in two small cemeteries at the site of the former Bik plantations in Cisarua.

De Nijs Bik killed by a tiger (1931)

A double tragedy hit the De Nijs Bik family within four days. On 31 December 1930 Caroline van Garderen-de Nijs Bik passed away in Den Haag (the Netherlands) at the age of 45. Four days later on 3 January 1931 her youngest brother Willem Albert (Wim) de Nijs Bik was attacked by a tiger in a *sawah* (rice field) near Serang in West Java. Willem was administrator of the rubber plantation Tjikandi Ilir.



Caroline (Lien) De Nijs Bik (1885-1930) and her husband Bruinis Dirk Willem Jan (Wim) van Garderen (1881-1943). Photo by Charls & Van Es, around 1925.

COLLECTION: SVEN VERBEEK WOLTHUYS

He was rushed to Tjikini hospital in Batavia but died the same day, only 35 years old. News of the dramatic tiger attack was even featured in various newspapers in the Netherlands.

Caroline (Lien) was the eldest daughter of Tanah Abang landowner Pieter Albert de Nijs Bik (1858-1920) and Jeannette

Rosalie de Nijs Bik-Butin Bik (1865-1912). She and her husband Wim had lived on Tanah Abang Heuvel 146 from 1906 to 1930 (see Chapter 3 pages 88-101). Their initial plan was to sell the house at Tanah Abang Heuvel in 1929 and then retire to the Netherlands. The global financial crisis of 1929 however put paid to this plan. Instead their Tanah Abang house was rented out in 1930 and they would repatriate to the Netherlands for an unknown period, with Wim working at the NILLMIJ office in Den Haag. Shortly after arrival in the Netherlands Caroline became ill. A six month period of suffering followed until her passing on New Years Eve 1930.

Pierre Jean Baptiste de Perez Bik (1890-1954), the only surviving brother of Caroline, wrote a heartbreaking letter to Caroline's widower Wim van Garderen on 8 January 1931, following the family tragedies. It describes the tiger attack in every possible detail.



Grave of Caroline (Lien) De Nijs Bik on the Oud Eik en Duinen cemetery in Den Haag (the Netherlands), 3 January 1931. The funeral was held on the day that her younger brother Willem Albert de Nijs Bik was attacked by a tiger and died.

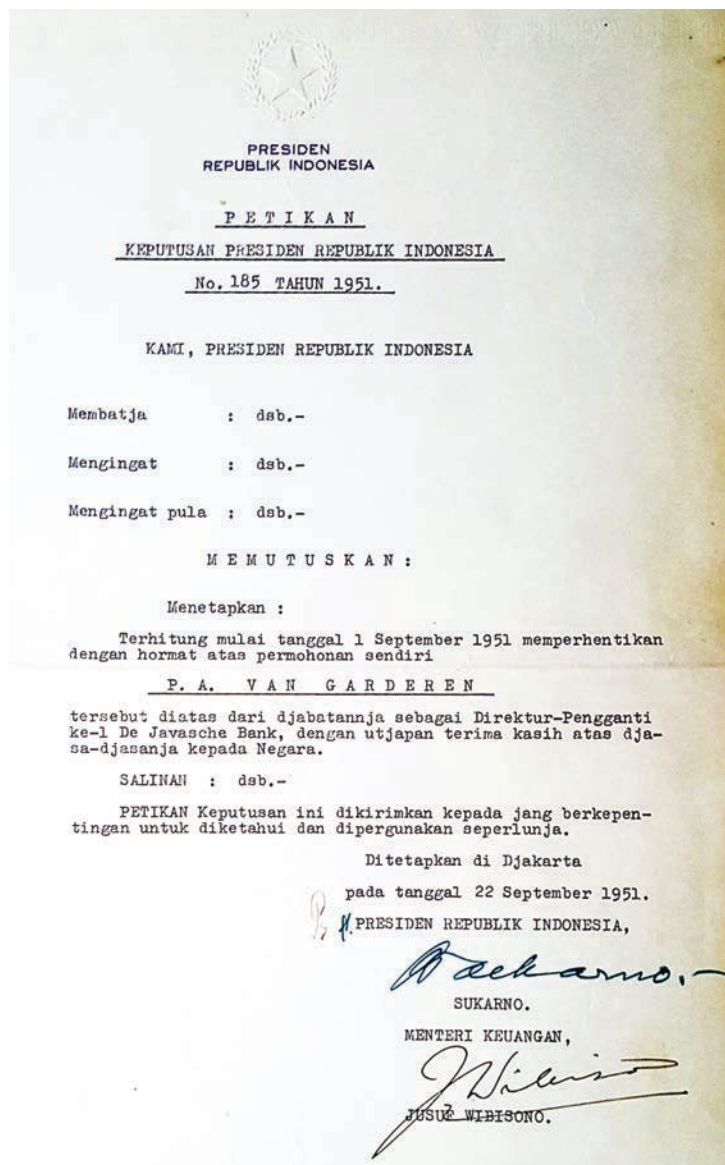
COLLECTION: SVEN VERBEEK WOLTHUYS

A letter from Soekarno

Pieter Albert van Garderen (1906-1973), son of NILLMIJ director Wim van Garderen, pursued a corporate career in the finance sector too. After his study in the Netherlands he returned to Java where he was employed at De Javasche Bank (now Bank Indonesia) in Semarang. After World War II he continued his career at the bank and eventually became deputy director at the headquarters in Batavia/Djakarta in August 1950. His official appointment was approved by President Soekarno (1901-1970).

A year later, in September 1951, Van Garderen decided to move to the Netherlands to become director of the Amsterdam branch of the bank which officially became Bank Indonesia on 1 July 1953. President Soekarno also replied to his resignation letter (see right) in which he thanked Van Garderen for his services to the country. The letter was co-signed by Minister of Finance Jusuf Wibisono (1909-1982).

After his career at Bank Indonesia, Van Garderen became director of the bank H. Albert de Bary (which operated as the Dutch branch of Deutsche Bank), a position he held from 1958 until his retirement in 1972. Pieter Albert van Garderen passed away shortly afterwards on 10 January 1973.



Top right: President Soekarno early 1950s in a photo by an unknown photographer;

Bottom right: Pieter Albert van Garderen in his office;

Above: letter from the President of the Republik Indonesia, signed by Soekarno and the Finance Minister.

COLLECTION: VAN GARDEREN FAMILY

Sinterklaas in Tanah Abang

Sinterklaas or Sint-Nicolaas is a legendary figure based on Saint Nicholas, patron saint of children. The feast of Sinterklaas celebrates the name day of Saint Nicholas on 6 December. It is celebrated annually with the giving of gifts on Saint Nicholas' Eve (5 December) in the Netherlands and on the morning of 6 December, Saint Nicholas Day, in Belgium, Luxembourg and northern France (French Flanders, Lorraine and Artois). The tradition has also been celebrated in overseas territories of the Netherlands, like Curaçao and Suriname, and also in the Dutch East Indies.

A few interesting pictures of Sinterklaas in Tanah Abang have been kept, including a visit to the NIWA Hotel in December 1947.

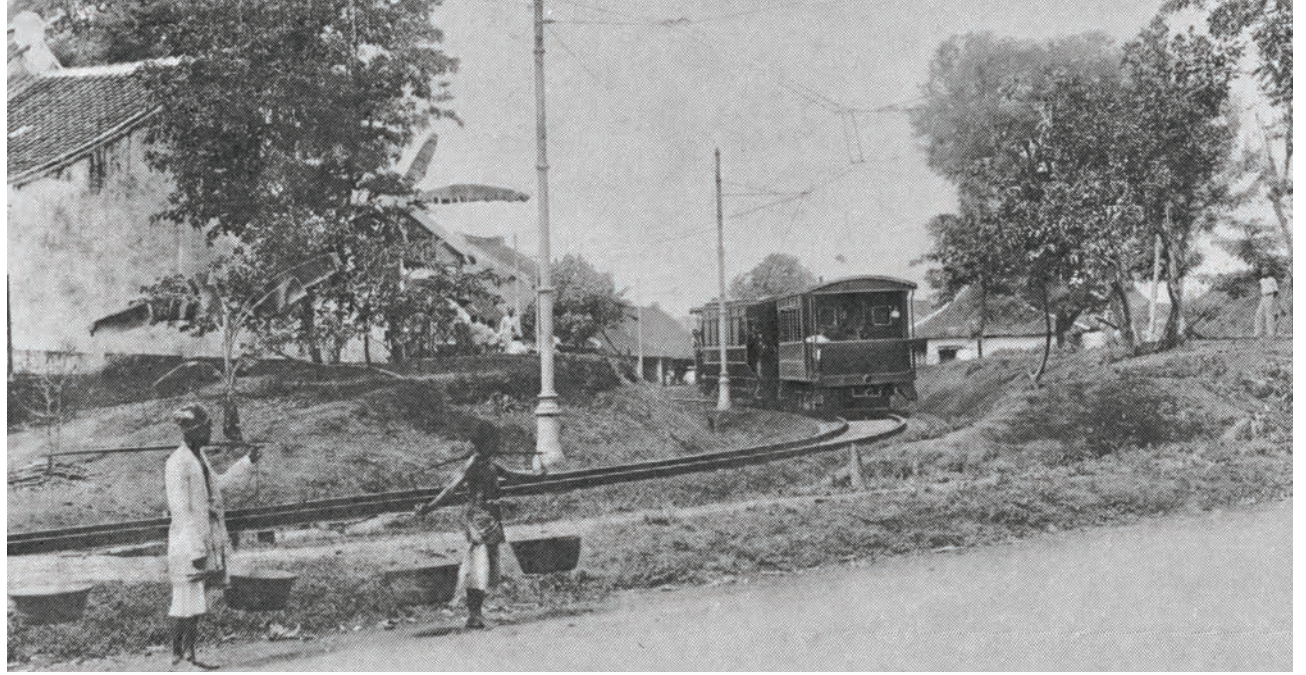


Top right: Sinterklaas in a convertible car followed by a column of cars with Zwarte Pieten (Black Petes), attracting attention from children. We are looking north along Tanah Abang Heuvel on 4 December 1947. At the left behind the electrical substation the headquarters of NIWA (see also photo on page 237).

Far left: a soldier and two Sinterklaas on the driveway of the NIWA Hotel;

Left: a hilarious photo of a squad of different Sinterklaas, all sitting in betjaks (becaks) pedalled by Zwarte Pieten in front of the NIWA Hotel. The pictures have been taken by an anonymous photographer.

COLLECTION: NATIONAAL
ARCHIEF | SINTERKLAAS
OVERZEE



The bend in the road on the hill of Tanah Abang. The historical picture dates back to around 1900 when the electric tram was just introduced. Beyond the tram we see the Chinese style shophouses along both sides of the road leading towards Pasar Tanah Abang. A curious man, probably a resident of the Tanah Abang Heuvel estate, stands on the hill on the right to watch the scene. In the modern picture we only recognise the bend in the road. The tram had already disappeared in 1960, and the road now merges with Jalan Mas Mansyur (left-right) which runs into a tunnel where the old shops used to stand. The Chinese shops were replaced by high rise buildings in the 1980s and 1990s. Following the dramatic increase in traffic, a pedestrian bridge was constructed in the early 2000s. Interestingly, part of the building on the corner of the 1900 picture still stands today, although hidden behind the pedestrian bridge.

FROM: TRAMS EN TRAMLIJNEN, H.J.A. DUPARC |
COLLECTION: SVEN VERBEEK WOLTHUYS





Left: From the same photo session as the photo on the opposite page. In this picture from 1901 Pieter Albert de Nijs Bik with three of his four daughters. The eldest daughter Caroline was studying in the Netherlands and Switzerland at the time. Here we see Eulalie (Lieke) de Nijs Bik (1887-1969) standing on the right. Standing on the left is Aletta de Nijs Bik (1888-1976), and sitting on the chair is Wilhelmina (Willy) de Nijs Bik (1893-1981).

Above: Very special to see these three daughters together again in a photo 62 years later, taken in the Netherlands. The 70-year old Willy (middle) had already moved to New York (USA) well before World War II and was on her last visit to Europe in 1963. On the left Aletta (75) and right Lieke (76). In 1963 these three were the only surviving children of Pieter Albert and Jeannette Rosalie. Caroline had already passed away in 1930 (aged 45), three days before her younger brother Wim (aged 35) and in 1954 brother Pierre died at the age of 63. The "Three Musketeers" in this photo would eventually all reach their 80s: Lieke 81, Aletta 87 and Willy also 87.

COLLECTION: SVEN VERBEEK WOLTHUYS



Above: Her Verbeek Wolthuys sitting on the grass at the entrance of the Tanah Abang Heuvel estate in March 1927. This photo was taken by Welly van Garderen, grandmother of the author. In the distance is the side pavilion of Pieter Albert de Nijs Bik's former home, which was the Swedish consulate at the time of this photo. On the right the author is sitting at the exact same location in April 2015. This 'then and now' comparison shows an entire metamorphosis of the site. Grass has been replaced by asphalt and the former entrance to the estate is now the front gate of Pasar Tanah Abang Blok E Ex AURI. The 2015 photo was taken by Ika Krismantari of The Jakarta Post newspaper during a Plesiran Tempo Doeloe tour through Tanah Abang, organised by Sahabat Museum.

Left: Her Verbeek Wolthuys (1900-1974), newly arrived in Batavia in 1925, bought a motorbike so he could ride to his work at the Gemeente Batavia (City Council). The roaring sound of his new toy was magical to Tanah Abang Heuvel veteran Ibu Soentje and she was visibly thrilled to be invited to join Her for a ride. Soentje had worked for the Van Garderen and the De Nijs Bik family since the turn of the century, and when Van Garderen and his wife moved to the Netherlands in 1930, they arranged for a monthly pension for Soentje and her family.

COLLECTION: SVEN VERBEEK WOLTHUYS



Clockwise from the top left:
 - Rob Verbeek Wolthuys (1928-2018) on the back of a tricycle with a friend and two Indonesian ladies in 1929;
 - Rob and his sister Nelly Johanna (Nel) Verbeek Wolthuys (1929-2020) in late 1930 with Sidin, who had worked on the Tanah Abang Heuvel estate since the late nineteenth century;
 - Rob Verbeek Wolthuys in 1928 on the *bungur* table (see also Chapter 3 page 101) in the back garden of his grandparents' home at Tanah Abang Heuvel 146. The table was basically a disc of three fused *bungur* trees, which previously grew in the garden but were cut down. The disc was used as a garden table.
 All photos were taken by Her Verbeek Wolthuys.
 COLLECTION: SVEN VERBEEK WOLTHUYS

250 YEARS IN OLD JAKARTA

More than 200 years ago the Bik family left the Netherlands and crossed oceans to seek a new life in the Dutch East Indies, now Indonesia. They were draughtsmen, artists, and government officials, and eventually wealthy landowners. Tanah Abang, the area of Batavia (now Jakarta) where they settled, is an intrinsic part of their story.

250 YEARS IN OLD JAKARTA is for those who love Jakarta's history and are searching for its lost past. It describes the adventures and tragedies of a Dutch family in colonial Jakarta, with emphasis on the family's prominent and influential presence in Tanah Abang. While 98% of historic buildings in Tanah Abang sadly no longer exist today, the many unique and never before published pictures in this book not only provide a glimpse into a bygone era, but also gives the history of Tanah Abang and Jakarta a deeply personal perspective.

Sven Verbeek Wolthuys (1968), a direct descendant of the Bik family, has been researching Jakarta's history for over 30 years. In this book he has brought together a vibrant mix of his family's stories and pictures, from the arrival of his very first ancestor in Batavia in 1776 to the current remnants of his family, the few dozen Bik tombstones still found in and around Jakarta today.



Sven Verbeek Wolthuys

