1-1-1998

The History of Anthropology in the Netherlands

Han F. Vermeulen
activities of particular individuals, institutions (including the WPA, the University of Texas department and museum of anthropology, and the Central Texas Archeological Society), as well as the TARL itself. Not included in this publication are inventories of 650 linear feet of records documenting the projects and sites in the 254 counties of Texas, which will be in part later this year through the Texas Historical Commission’s Texas Historical Sites Atlas Project.

RESEARCH IN PROGRESS:

Julia J. Smith (New School of Social Research) is doing research for a master’s thesis on the early years of anthropology at the New School, and would greatly appreciate hearing of relevant sources, or from people doing related research.

BIBLIOGRAPHICA ARCANA

I. The History of Anthropology in the Netherlands

Han F. Vermeulen
University of Leiden

The history of anthropology in the Netherlands and its former colonies in the East and West Indies has been studied by many scholars in the Netherlands and abroad. Because there are no research institutes and few postdoctoral grants available for the subdiscipline, conditions for research are not optimal. Even so, there is an abundance of material, and a dozen doctoral dissertations have been defended or are now in progress. A full bibliography would take up 60 pages of text, only a selection of which can be presented here. Before discussing some of this material, a brief outline of the history of anthropology in the Netherlands may help to set the stage.

Development of Dutch Anthropology:

Anthropology in the Netherlands developed in the wake of Oriental studies and in cooperation with geography and sociology. Relations with physical anthropology and prehistoric archeology have been weak and are even today virtually non-existent. Similarly, sociology has also been independent, particularly since the institution in 1963 of the Faculty of Social Sciences at Dutch universities. From the beginnings, anthropology has had a strong regional orientation towards the study of Indonesia. The first anthropological chair was established at the University of Leiden in 1877, in ‘geography and ethnography’ of the Netherlands East Indies (1877). The first four occupants were P.J. Veth, G.A. Wilken, J.J.M. de Groot, and A.W. Nieuwenhuis (Heslinga 1975, Locher 1978c, de Josselin de Jong & Vermeulen 1989, de Wolf & Jaarsma 1991).

The study of the ethnography of Indonesia was closely connected with a training course for colonial civil servants called Indologie, first given at an intermediate level at Delft (1843-1900) and Leiden (1864-1891), then at university level at the universities of Leiden (1902-1956) and Utrecht (1925-1955). In Batavia (now Jakarta), courses were also given in Indonesian languages, history, geography, Islam, colonial and customary law, although generally the training of colonial civil servants and lawyers took place in the motherland rather than in the colonies (Warmenhoven 1977, Feddema & van den Muyzenberg 1978, Fasseur 1993).

In 1907 a chair in general volkenkunde was established at the University of Amsterdam, to which S.R. Steinmetz, who had studied at Leiden, was appointed (Fahrenfort 1933, 1963; Köbben 1992, 1996). In contrast to Leiden and Utrecht, the students entering the curriculum at Amsterdam
were mainly students in geography, a situation that lasted until after World War II. After the independence of Indonesia (1949) general ethnology was renamed ‘cultural anthropology,’ and Indologie was transformed in 1952-53 into ‘non-western sociology’ or ‘sociology of non-western peoples’ (Schoorl 1967a, 1970; Kloos 1988, 1989). Earlier described as applied anthropology (Held 1953, Schoorl 1967b, 1996; Jongmans 1976), and now recast as development sociology, “non-western sociology” developed in close connection with cultural anthropology, as departments that combined both courses were established. This implied a fundamental change insofar as anthropology, formerly only one of the subjects in the Indology curriculum, was now on a par with non-western sociology, a transformed version of Indology.

In addition to those mentioned, chairs in ethnology were established at the Agricultural University of Wageningen (1946), the Catholic University of Nijmegen (1948), the University of Groningen (1951) and the Free University of Amsterdam (1956). Chairs in non-western sociology were established at the universities of Amsterdam (1947 and 1965), Utrecht (1955) and Leiden (1956), at Wageningen (1956), Nijmegen (1958), the Free University of Amsterdam (1962) and at the Economic University of Rotterdam (1964).

Prior to World War II, anthropology was pursued not only at the universities, but also in learned societies, specialized research institutes and ethnographical museums. Such museums were established at Batavia (1836), Leiden (1837, by P.F.B. von Siebold, a German physician who had worked for the Dutch in Japan), Delft (1864), Rotterdam (1885), Amsterdam (1926) and, more recently, at Groningen (1968) and Nijmegen (1969). The history of these museums has been scantily discussed, mostly in expensive volumes on ‘masterpieces’, but recently a trend to publish specialized volumes on collections and collectors has become manifest.

The Historiography of anthropology (part 1):

The study of the history of Dutch anthropology (including non-western sociology) has reflected these developments. During the nineteenth century ethnography was practised in relation to Oriental studies (Boele van Hensbroek 1875) and to geography (Tiele 1884). But when during the early twentieth century attempts were made to develop a general ethnology, founding fathers of modern Dutch anthropology such as S.R Steinmetz (Amsterdam), J.P.B. de Josselin de Jong (Leiden) and H.Th. Fischer (Utrecht) started to teach history of anthropology as part of their efforts to formulate new paradigms. Steinmetz published a ‘History of Ethnology’ in 1917, followed by a ‘History of Sociology’; van Eerde wrote a review of ethnological investigations in Indonesia (1923); de Josselin de Jong located his subject within a genealogy going back to Linnaeus in his (second) inaugural lecture on Indonesia as ‘a Field of Ethnological Study’ (1935) and distributed stencilled lecture notes on ‘The origins of scientific ethnology’ among his students around 1938; Fischer dealt with the history of ethnology in his inaugural lecture (1936) and in an encyclopaedia entry on ethnology (1938); Schrieke (1948) published a report on scientific work done in the colonies during the period 1918-43.

During the 1940s and 1950s the first studies on the history of Dutch anthropology were published, dealing mainly with the subdiscipline of applied anthropology as practised within the Indology curriculum. In 1944, the American Indonesiologist Raymond Kennedy stated that the Dutch East Indies civil service was ‘the only official body in the world that has made the study of ethnology, native language, and native law compulsory for all its staff,’ and in 1945 Kennedy published a substantial bibliography. That same year there was brief reference to Dutch contributions in Malinowski’s posthumous Dynamics of Culture Change. A fuller account was given by G.J. Held (1953) in a paper on ‘Applied Anthropology in Government’ presented at the Wenner-Gren conference in New York. Following a precedent set by Herskovits (1946) to associate...
Dutch research with that in Belgium, A.A. Gerbrands published a overview of the situation in ‘The Netherlands and Belgium’ in 1953, a linkage repeated two years later A.J. van Bork née Felkamp (1955). The latter presented anthropology in the broad sense, including ethnology and folklore studies, but concentrated on physical anthropology (a subject on which she had written a major monograph in 1938; see also Constandse-Westermann 1983). Gerbrands published a more detailed overview of cultural anthropology in Holland (1959), which, significantly, was written in French, reflecting Gerbrands’ participation in the ‘mouvement structuraliste’ between Leiden and Paris—although he mentioned all the other centers in the Netherlands as well.

The first serious review of the history of ‘Cultural Anthropology in The Netherlands’ was published by P.E. de Josselin de Jong (1960), a successor to his uncle at Leiden. He pointed out that the development of Dutch anthropology had been determined not only by a relationship with the colonial state, but also by an intimate relation with Oriental, mainly linguistic, studies—a field surveyed by G.W.J. Drewes on ‘Oriental Studies in the Netherlands’ (1957), which also carried a ‘Selected Bibliography of Oriental Studies’ by E.M. Uhlenbeck. In his later historiographical articles P.E. de Josselin de Jong discussed ‘the anthropological tradition in the Netherlands’ from a structuralist point of view, beginning with a paper for the 1968 Wenner-Gren Conference on national traditions in anthropology, which (at the editor’s suggestion) appeared under a quite different title in 1980. There he traced the origins of structural anthropology in Leiden to the work of van Hien, van Ossenbruggen, Rassers and J.P.B. de Josselin de Jong, at the same time underlining the fundamental importance of the work of Marcel Mauss and Emile Durkheim. Later publications included an important essay on ‘Marcel Mauss et les origines de l’anthropologie structurale Hollandeise’ (1972); and the introduction to de Jong’s collection of translated essays on ‘Structural Anthropology in the Netherlands’ (1977). These studies of Leiden structuralism were complemented by Locher (1978a-b, 1981, 1982, 1988), van Baal (1977, 1986-89) and Jaarsma (1984).

Meanwhile, Henri Claessen and Peter Kloos, both from Amsterdam but working in Leiden, had joined in an effort to make Dutch anthropology in general better known. With the financial support of the Ministry of Education and Science they edited two volumes entitled Current Anthropology in the Netherlands (1975) and Current Issues in Anthropology: The Netherlands (1981). Both were published by the Anthropological Branch of the Nederlandse Sociologische en Antropologische Vereniging and were distributed to participants at two international conferences held at Amsterdam. A third volume was published as Contemporary Anthropology in the Netherlands (1992). Each of the two volumes carried a number of thematic and regional reviews of Dutch research, and was introduced by an historiographical essay by Kloos, one on the origins and institutional structure of anthropology and non-western sociology in the Netherlands (1975); a second (1981) on ‘Themes of the ’Seventies,’ in which he analysed 96 recent doctoral dissertations. The 1992 volume was of a different nature, but had an interesting piece by Kloos on ‘Anthropology in the Netherlands: The 1980s and Beyond’.

In the mid-1970s, the close interrelations between ethnology and the administration of the colonies also caught the attention of several foreign scholars (Hirano 1975, Koentjaraningrat 1975, du Toit 1975, Ellen 1976), although a thorough critical study is not yet available. A serious study of the transformation of the Indology courses was published by Kloos in 1989, which, however, discusses only the outcome of the development and does not touch upon the intrinsic relations between ethnology and Indology. A book on the history of the Indology training courses, written by the historian Fasseur (1993), somewhat neglects the part played by anthropology in these courses. Aspects of this relationship are covered in de Josselin de Jong and Vermeulen (1989). Since the 1970s, the interrelation of anthropology and colonialism has been taken up in a number of studies, as we shall see in a later issue.
References Cited:


II. Recent Dissertations
(Ph.D. except where otherwise indicated)