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BATAVIASCHE APOTHEEK, A MISSED OPPORTUNITY

Wicherink S.C.

Schiedamse Vest 134, 3011 BG Rotterdam, The Netherlands

In 1746 the Bataviasche Apotheek was published in Batavia, nowadays Jakarta in Indonesia. It was one of the first official Pharmacopoeias for a tropical country. And although the Dutch East India Company (VOC) had always insisted on investigating local medicines, the "Apotheek" seems not aware of that policy: the vast majority of the substances were the well known European ones.

The important works of one of the VOC's own doctors, Hermannus Grimm, published almost half a century earlier, in which he described and praised many local medicines, unknown to European doctors, seem to have been ignored by the compilers. His "Pharmacopoeia Indica" (1684) has never been made official in the Dutch East Indies, and, being published in Europe, probably never made it to Batavia.

This, and perhaps the fact that the "Apotheek" was published in Dutch only, may have contributed to the fact that the first edition was the last one as well, and that this book was forgotten for a very long time. And the abundance of (expensive) European medicines, only to be imported by the VOC, may not have helped either to give it a favorable reception among the pharmacists in de colony.

Comparison of this "Apotheek" with the Pharmacopoeias used in the Dutch Republic in that time reveal a marked influence of the VOC, the medicine-trunks aboard its ships and the Pharmacopoea Amstelredamensis of 1741.