



GERMAN PHYSICIANS AS MEMBERS OF THE NETHERLANDS COLONIAL HEALTH SERVICE IN EAST INDIA (1815–1884)

Philipp Teichfischer *

* M.A., Department of History, Theory and Ethics of Medicine
Medical Faculty, Otto-von-Guericke-University of Magdeburg
philipp.teichfischer@ovgu.med.de

Abstract

In the proposed paper a hitherto nearly unknown chapter of the Dutch-German medical history of the 19th Century is introduced. Since the development and expansion of the colonial health service in the Dutch colonies in today's Indonesia, above all German physicians were recruited to work in the far "East Indies" as military or civilian doctors. In the period from 1815 to 1884, approx. 250 German doctors have been found so far, who participated as military doctors in the Dutch colonial health service. This means that the German doctors represent a third of the total amount of the "health officers" active during this period in the East Indies; while within the first half of the period studied here (1815–1850) they represented often more than 50%. Some of them managed to get up to the top of the colonial health service. In addition, it is estimated that 50 German doctors worked as civilian doctors in the East Indies, so a total number of about 300 German colonial doctors is presumed, albeit before the beginning of the formal German colonial era in 1884.

After a short introduction into the topic, I will describe some specific aspects by using the complementary terms "cooperation" and "competition" which recently gained increasing historical attention. The aspects I intend to illustrate on the basis of these both terms are the *motivation* (of German physicians for entering Netherlands colonial health service), *recruiting practices* (recruiting German physicians for the colonial service), and *collection practices* (concerning the collecting of naturalia such as exotic plants and animals, as well as human skulls). Last but not least, I will raise the question, if there is any continuity between the Dutch colonial service in Indonesia and the German colonial service in Africa resulting from the engagement of Germans physicians in the Dutch colonies.