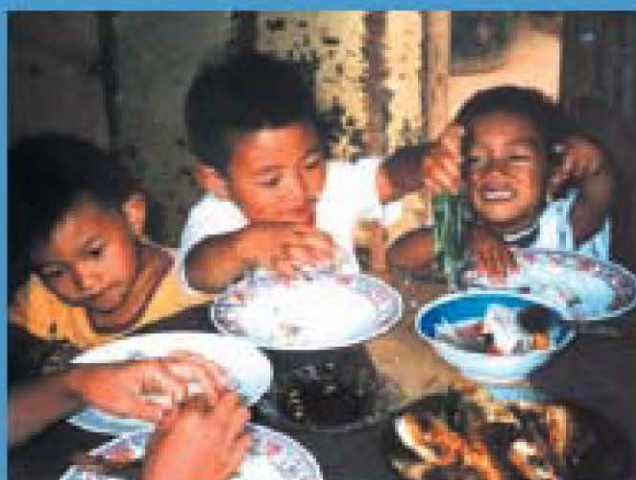


Dr. Karel Neys 1920-1992 and The Neys-van Hoogstraten Foundation



De zon van Azië doet mij goed;

J. K. Neys

Neys-van Hoogstraten Foundation

The Hague

The Netherlands



Dr. Adel P. den Hartog

Dr. Karel Neys 1920-1992
and The Neys-van Hoogstraten Foundation

Neys-van Hoogstraten Foundation

The Hague

The Netherlands

Part I Life and work of Dr. Karel Neys

1. Introduction

In 1989 Dr. Karel Neys founded the *Stichting Neys-van Hoogstraten Fonds*, known in English as the Neys-van Hoogstraten Foundation, named in honour of his parents. When Karel Neys passed away on March 3rd 1992, he bequeathed his fortune to the Foundation. As a man of education and study, with a sincere and deep affection for Indonesia and South-east Asia in general, he stipulated that his foundation should be directed to research and related training in the region. The main objective of the Neys-van Hoogstraten foundation is to support and stimulate socio-economic research in the field of household budgets and family nutrition in Indonesia and other (South-east) Asian countries. By providing financial and technical support, the Neys-van Hoogstraten Foundation aims at enhancing the quality and quantity of research in this field. Research results should be published.

Little is known of the life and work of the founder of the Neys-van Hoogstraten Foundation however. When Karel Neys passed away, all his personal documents and belongings were lost, due to the careless behaviour of his executor. No information was left behind about the person Karel Neys, a fact much regretted by the Foundation board. Now that the foundation has been operational for more than ten years, the time has come to study the scanty available data and discover; who was Karel Neys? As far as the spelling of his name is concerned,



*Coat of arms of the Neijs family
(Source, *Nederlands Patriaats*, 1939)*

he used both the Neijs and Neys spelling versions. From here on, we will use the Neys version, as is also reflected in the name of the foundation¹. Archival and library research has revealed several aspects of his work and life, though many uncertainties unfortunately remain.

The purpose of this publication is to give as concise a biography as possible of the life and work of Dr. Karel Neys, and to honour him for his generous initiative to create a foundation devoted to socio-economic research in the field of food and nutrition in South-east Asia. Furthermore, this publication will provide information on the objectives and activities of the Neys-van Hoogstraten Foundation since 1992.

¹ The spelling of the family name is Neijs, unless otherwise written in a document.

Acknowledgements

Several persons and institutions have been very helpful in our search for information on Karel Neys. Many thanks are due to Mrs. Carla Grader in Amsterdam, Mrs. Joy Neys in the Hague, Mr. Hans van der Kamp, antiquarian in the Hague, and Ir. P.H. Middelburg, Wageningen. The library of Leiden University and the *Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal Land en Volkenkunde* (KITLV) in Leiden have been very cooperative in providing relevant material. We thank as well the *Stichting Indisch Familie Archief* in the Hague.

2. The Neijs family

Karel Neys was born as an only child and son on 17th February 1920 in Klaten in Indonesia. His father was Adolf Henri Neijs (1879-1963) and his mother Adriana Laura van Hoogstraten (1883-1955), who were married in 1918 in Semarang, Java. Both parents came from what was then known as an old established *Indische familie* [Netherlands Indonesian Family]².

The Neijs family originated from Leuven [Louvain], situated in the southern part of the Low Countries, nowadays part of Belgium. In 1715, Joseph Neys departed for the Chamber of Zeeland of the United East India Company on board the *Nieuwliet* ship



The parents of Dr. Karel Neys, Mrs. A.L. Neijs-van Hoogstraten and Mr. A.H. Neijs, 1922 (Source, KITLV Leiden).

to the Indonesian archipelago³. He remained in Java, enjoying a successful career, married and became the founding father of a well known Dutch Indian family of civil servants⁴. Karel's father, Adolf Henri Neijs, began his career as a civil servant in the Dutch administration in 1917, at the age of 34⁵. There is no information to be found on what he did previously to this. He most likely was trained as a civil servant in Jakarta, then known as Batavia⁶. In 1919, he was promoted to the rank of *assistent-resident* in Klaten, Central Java⁷.

In those days, Klaten, the place of birth of Karel Neys, was part of the Regency of Surakarta, now known as Solo. It is situated on the rich soil at the foot of the Merapi volcano. Klaten was and indeed still is an

² *Stichting Indisch Familie Archief, den Haag* and the reference book *Nederlands Patriaat*.

³ *The Vereigde Oost Indische Compagnie or VOC* recruited much of its common personnel such as sailors and soldiers from neighbouring countries. Seamen from the Southern Netherlands were mainly recruited by the Chamber (or office) of the VOC in Middelburg, Zeeland. Gastra, F.S., *De geschiedenis van de VOC* [The history of the VOC], Zutphen, Walburg Pers, 2002, 88-94.

⁴ In the 1920s and 1930s several members of the Neijs family served in the administration such as: Ch Neijs, F.A. Neijs and T.H. H. Neijs. Source: *Regerings Almanak voor Nederlandsch Indië 1920-1940*.

⁵ *Regerings Almanak voor Nederlandsch Indië, Tweede Gedeelte: Kalender en Personalie*, 1923, p. 266.

⁶ Trainees for the study of civil servant were subject to a strict selection process. They could attend a study at the Universities of Leiden and Utrecht in the Netherlands, or in Indonesia at the *Bestuurschool* (School of Administration) in Batavia. The training in Indonesia was shorter, two years and more practically oriented. Zijlmans, G.C., *Eindstrijd en overgang van de Indische bestuursdienst. Het corps binnenlands bestuur op Java, 1945-1950*. [The administration on Java, 1945-1950], Amsterdam, de Bataafische Leeuw, 1985, 154-155.

⁷ *Regerings Almanak*, 1921, 223.



Impressions of Klaten in the 1920s (Source, KITLV Leiden).

important centre for production of sugar and tobacco. In the period of the Neijs family, it was one of the major areas in Java with large plantations. There were two agricultural research stations, one for sugar and one for tobacco. At an altitude of 180 m above sea level, the climate⁸ was very pleasant. Karel Neijs spent only a few years of his early childhood in Klaten, however.

At the age of three, Karels' father was transferred to a similar position in Salatiga, a small town in Central Java, with a cool climate, 580 m above sea level. The area was well known for the cultivation of European vegetables⁹. In 1925, Adolf H. Neijs was promoted to *resident* of Besuki, based in the

town of Bondowoso, near the Ijen Plateau in the Province of East Java. In those days, Bondowoso was a quiet place when compared with Klaten¹⁰. In July 1930, Adolf H. Neijs reached the peak of his career when he was appointed first governor of the Province of Central Java, in Semarang. During an administrative reorganisation of Java, the government established the Province of Central Java¹¹ in 1929. The city of Semarang was and still is an important commercial and industrial centre with a major port, situated on the north coast of the island. Around 1930, the city counted about 218,000 inhabitants, which was a sizeable number in those days.

The world economic depression of 1930 hit

⁸ *Encyclopaedie van Nederlandsch Indië*, 's Gravenhage/Leiden, Martinus Nijhof/E.J. Brill, 1918, Tweede Deel, 327. Gonggrijp, G.F.E. *Geïllustreerde Encyclopedie van Nederlandsch-Indië*, Wijk en Aalburg, Pictures Publishers, 1991. Reprint of 1934, 1320-1324.

⁹ *Regeerings Almanak*, 1923, 266. *Encyclopaedie van Nederlandsch Indië*, 1919, Derde Deel, 675-676.

¹⁰ *Regeerings Almanak*, 1926, 238. *Encyclopaedie van Nederlandsch Indië*, 1917, Eerste Deel, 346. Gonggrijp, 159. *Indonesië toen en nu [Indonesia past and present]*, Amsterdam, Intermediar Bibliotheek, 1980, 224-225.

¹¹ *Geïllustreerde Encyclopedie van Nederlandsch-Indië*, 521-522.

the Indonesian population hard. Purchasing power decreased sharply, many plantation workers became unemployed and households went into debt. People managed to survive by falling back on the self-sufficient economy of the *desa*¹².

In 1934, at the age of 54, Karel Neys's father retired. It was not an unusual age for retirement in the colonial service. His duties were much appreciated by the government, who decorated him twice¹³.

Karel Neys was 14 years old when his father retired. He most likely attended the secondary school in Semarang. For a family such as Neijs, having lived in the Indonesian archipelago for generations, the idea of returning to the Netherlands after retirement was not an option. Karel Neys was brought up in a family of colonial administrators, in a period in which the Dutch believed colonial rule to be infinite. Very few people interpreted the signs of coming changes which would result in the independence of Indonesia, though interestingly enough, the young Karel Neys¹⁴ was one of these enlightened few.

In 1938, at the age of 19, he set off for the Netherlands to study at Leiden University.

3. The person of Karel Neys

The question of who was Karel Neys, is not easily answered because of the lack of data. An advertisement placed in the *Moesson* journal, requesting information on the person of Karel Neys provided some valuable

reactions, nevertheless. The list of publications by Karel Neys (chapter 6) shows clearly that he devoted most of his working life to the education of adults, with emphasis on literacy campaigns. In his opinion, literacy was a major key to development. He must have been a restless person, when considering the many parts of the world in which he worked; Indonesia, the South Pacific and in Latin America. He was a great collector of books. According to the antiquarian Mr. Hans van der Kamp in the Hague, he had collected a vast and varied library of nearly ten thousand volumes, all personally signed. Most of the books concerned the Indonesian archipelago, but other regions were also included. His collection covered a very broad field of interest and was rather encyclopaedic in nature, including books from local and less known publishers. In the 1994-1995 period, his library was put up for sale on the antiquarian market in the Hague. The executors of his last will and testament simply dumped a beautiful private library on the market, including all his personal belongings¹⁵.

Karel Neys' library confirms what the philosopher Thomas à Kempis (1380-1471) once said; "I have searched everywhere for rest, and I found it in a small corner with a book".

He went very much his own way and can be considered a solitary person or even a loner, and for some people he would have seemed an unusual person indeed. Nevertheless, he stayed in touch with some friends he knew

¹² Kamerling, R.N.J. *Geen schade aan de export landbouw* [No damage to the export agriculture]. In: Kamerling, R.N.J. (ed.), *Indonesië toen en nu* [Indonesia past and present], Amsterdam, Intermediar Bibliotheek, 1980, 224-225.

¹³ De Jong, J.J.P., *De waaier van fortuin. De Nederlanden in Azië en de Indonesische archipel 1595-1950* [The range of fortune. The Dutch in Asia and the Indonesian archipelago], den Haag, Sdu Uitgevers, 1998, 485-486.

¹⁵ Information received by E-mail from Mr. Hans van der Kamp, a well known antiquarian in the Hague specialised in the Indonesian archipelago. The E-mail was a response to the advertisement placed in the *Moesson* Journal.

from his study in Leiden and from the South Pacific Commission. He had a house in the south of England, in St Duncan's near Canterbury, Kent¹⁶. While there, he would visit some of his friends in the Netherlands such as Mr. Ch. J. Grader, a former civil servant in Indonesia and Ms. Grader, who was also university educated. As a solitary person, the chances are that he felt most at ease in educated company¹⁷.

He was loyal to those people who served him well, which can be concluded from his last will. He bequeathed a sum of money to his former landladies in England, Voorburg, the Hague, and his Venezuelan properties to his landlady in Venezuela. A typical aspect of a person like Karel Neys was his wish mentioned in his last will; that there should be no public notification of his death, the exception being to the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund in New York for administrative reasons.

4. Education at the universities of Leiden and Utrecht

In 1938, Karel Neys was enrolled at Leiden University to study what was known as *Indologie*, literally meaning indology or the study of the Indonesian archipelago. It was however a professional rather than an academic training in colonial administration¹⁸,

much in line with the traditions of his family. It is interesting to note that he chose Leiden rather than the University of Utrecht, where the study was rather conservative in its perception of Indonesia and the world. The study in Leiden was in the tradition of the so-called Ethical Policy, reflecting a more enlightened approach to colonial administration. The study in Utrecht was of a very different nature, based very much on the interest of the Dutch business world in the Indonesian archipelago. When compared with Leiden, the academic level was not up to the required standard. The study in Utrecht was supported by industry and therefore nicknamed the *Petroleum Faculteit* [Oil faculty]¹⁹. Karel Neys had therefore chosen a course of study in the training of *candidaat indisch ambtenaar* or candidate Indonesian civil servant at a university which was progressive for that period. In this inspiring environment, he probably felt that Indonesia would take its destiny into own hands in the distant future. While at university, he developed a great interest in education as a tool for development.

Following brief but fierce resistance, Nazi Germany occupied the Netherlands in May 1940. Life at the University continued as usual, but a major event was to occur in September 1941. As part of the Nazi ideology,

¹⁶ Letter to NHF from Ms. Carla Grader, 21-10-2003

¹⁷ Information received from Ms. Carla Grader, Amsterdam, daughter of Mr. Ch. Grader, letter dated 12-8-2003. From the Ch.J.Grader Archive in the Leiden University Library it became clear that Mr. Grader served in the Dutch administration of New Guinea after 1945, in the field of rural development. As a non-self governing territory, the island was part of the South Pacific Commission. When Karel Neys joined the Commission, he must have been in contact with Mr. Grader.

¹⁸ At the end of the 19th century, modern-minded Dutch politicians and civil servants observed that the Dutch administration had not led to an improvement of the welfare of the Indonesian population. In 1901 the so-called *ethische koers* or ethical policy started formally. The policy did not challenge the colonial administration as such, but tried to correct harmful side effects and stimulate welfare, without losing sight of the interests of the mother country. See also, van Goor, J. *De Nederlandse koloniën* [The Dutch colonies], SDU, 's Gravenhage, 1994, 269-276., de Jong, 419-446.

¹⁹ Fasseur, C. *De indologen. Ambtenaren voor de Oost, 1825-1955* [The indologists. Civil Servants for the East, 1825-1950], Amsterdam, Bert Bakker, 1994, 2nd print, 420-431.



The Medical Faculty of Jakarta in the 1930s. The Faculty, created in 1927 was one of the preceding institutions of higher education of the University of Indonesia in 1950.

(Source, Natuurwetenschappelijk Tijdschrift voor N.I., Volume 102, 1945, Special Supplement).

all the academic staff of Jewish origin were dismissed on the spot. Students went on strike in protest against this unlawful measure and the occupying forces responded by closing down Leiden University. A number of students, including Karel Neys, went to Utrecht, where the university authorities accepted the discriminatory measures without any protest.

Karel Neys continued his studies in Utrecht, and in the absence of any prospect of a job, he decided to use his time as effectively as possible. He started his PhD research on the role of western acculturation and public education, a comparative study of the Philippines and Java. In the anticipation of gaining employment with the administrative authorities in Indonesia, which could take several

years, it was not uncommon for graduates to undertake their PhD. Neys' study was done under the guidance of professor H.Th. Fisher (1901-1976), an anthropologist with a solid scientific background²⁰. A mimeographed version of his PhD was ready by 1943, but could not be used for defence of a thesis. In that year too, academic life came to a virtual standstill in Utrecht, when students refused to sign a declaration of loyalty to the occupying forces and went into hiding instead, as did Neys' *promoter*, Professor Fisher²¹. Following the liberation of the Netherlands on the 5th of May 1945, academic life gradually returned to normal. In August 1945, Karel Neys defended his thesis at the University of Utrecht. It was an austere event, so soon after the war, with his PhD promotor Professor Fisher still suffering from

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 422.

²¹ Fasseur, 455.

²² De Pater, B. (ed.) *Een tempel der kaarten* [A temple of maps], Utrecht, Faculteit Ruimtelijke Wetenschappen, 1999, 90.

hunger oedema²². Karel Neys must have had a sense of anticipation, as he defended his thesis on the 17th of August, the very date on which the establishment of the Republic of Indonesia was proclaimed. It was undoubtedly a coincidence, unlike his view given in the introduction to his thesis: "The colonial phenomenon is about to disappear and in many cases has already disappeared". Such a statement proved Karel Neys to be a man with a modern vision, way ahead of most of his contemporaries. In his introduction, he expressed his gratitude for the scientific training received in Leiden from professor J.P.B. Josselin de Jong (1886-1964)²³. The anthropologist Josselin de Jong was an internationally known scholar, who founded the Leiden school of structuralism²⁴.

5. An international career, starting in Indonesia

When considering all the uncertainties of the 1938-45 period, Karel Neys received a solid academic training. He developed a modern view of the changing world in Asia. He was very attached to the country of his birth and wanted to return to Indonesia to work in the field of education as soon as possible. In Jakarta in 1946, at the age of 26, he gained a position as acting Secretary of the *Universiteit van Indonesië*, the University of Indonesia²⁵.

The period at the University of Indonesia

can be considered as the starting point for his international career in education. It was not an easy start, as the academic life of the Indonesian institutions of higher education ground to a halt during the latter end of the Japanese occupation and many buildings were devastated. The Republic of Indonesia was declared independent in 1945, but the Dutch tried in vain to turn the clock back to the old situation. In 1946, the so-called *Noord Universiteit* or Emergency University was established, by placing the already existing institutions of higher education under one umbrella. The first mission was to re-establish the system of higher education. The central administration of the University was based on the Anglo-Saxon model, with a President at the top, assisted by a Secretary. In 1948, the name was changed into the University of Indonesia²⁶, and it became part of the *Universitas Indonesia*²⁷ in 1950.

In his capacity as acting Secretary of the University, Karel Neys must have learned a lot about setting up institutions of higher education. At the University of Indonesia, he became familiar with the concept of education as a tool for development.

6. International assignments

When Indonesia became independent, Karel Neys decided to apply his talents elsewhere. In 1952, he was appointed adviser on literacy for the South Pacific Commission in

²² Neys, 1945, I-V. For the full bibliographical references of Karel Neys, please refer to paragraph 6, Publications of Dr. Karel Neys.

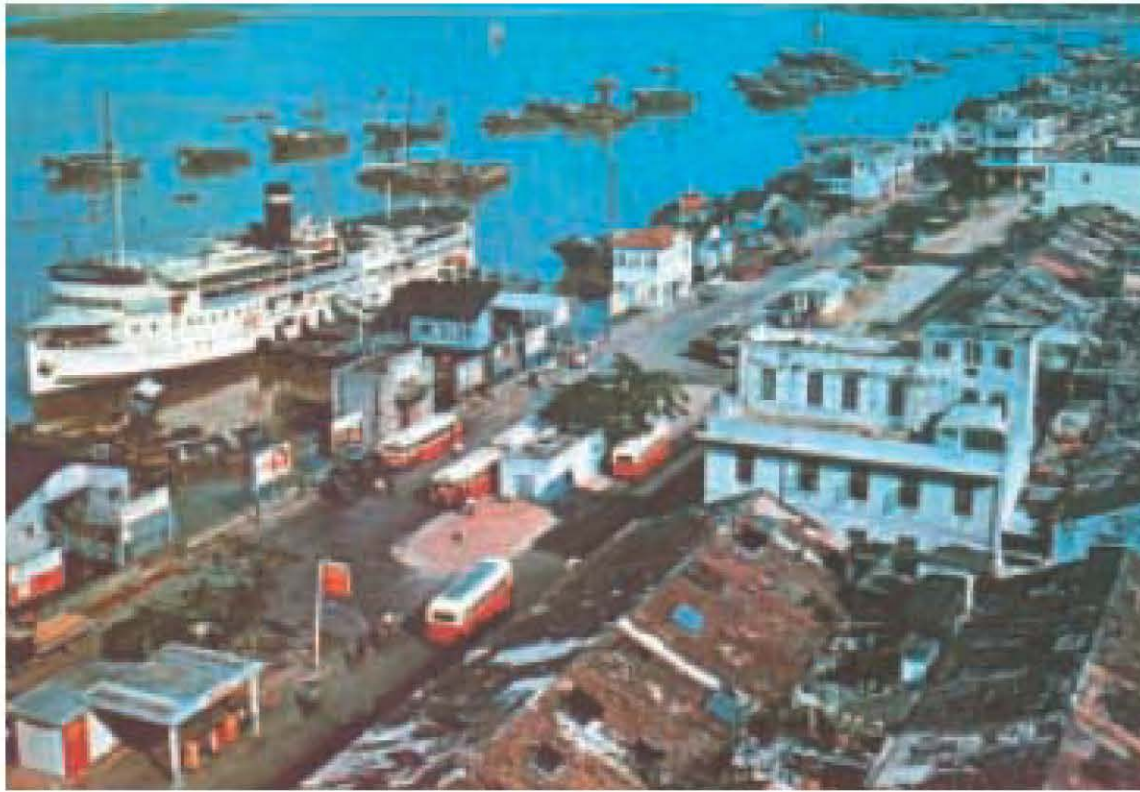
²³ Faseur, 431.

²⁴ *Universiteit van Indonesië. Gids voor het Academisch Jaar 1948-1949* [University of Indonesia, Academic Year 1949-1950], Batavia, Landsdrukkerij, 1948. 10.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 1949-1950, 12.

²⁶ Harja W. Bachtjar, *Universitas Indonesia, 1950-1975: kenang-kenangan hari jadi ke-XXVI/dissusi*, Jakarta, 1975.

²⁷ The South Pacific Commission was set up as an advisory and consultative body in 1947 by six governments responsible for the non-self governing island territories of the South Pacific region. When Irian or Papua, as it is now known, was handed over to Indonesia in 1962, the Dutch government took leave of the Commission. Elands, M., Starman, A. (eds.). *Afscheid van Nieuw-Guinea, 1950-1962* [Farwell of New-Guinea, 1950-1962]. Bussum, THOTH, 2003.



The old inner harbour of Macao postcard. In 1987, Karel Neys wrote from Hong Kong and Macao to his friends Mr and Mrs. Grader "The Asian sun is doing me good".

Noumea, New Caledonia²⁸. The appointment was probably for a period of three years, and Karel Neys received several assignments for the Commission. In 1952, in consultation with the Director of Education in Fiji, he conducted a survey on literacy teaching methods, with special attention for adult literacy. The outcome was published as a handbook in 1954²⁹. He also went on a mission to the Solomon Islands³⁰, and was responsible for an experimental course in adult literacy in Papua New Guinea³¹ in 1955.

Karel Neys left the Commission in order to take up a post with one of the United Nations' specialised agencies in education, UNESCO, for whom he prepared a manual

on adult education. The manual was published in 1961 and reprinted in 1965³². The information available does not give a clear picture of the countries in which Karel Neys worked for UNESCO. One thing is certain, however, his work always concerned activities in the field of adult education and literacy programmes. He went on a mission to Cuba, which must have been an interesting assignment, as the Cuban government was successful in its efforts to eradicate illiteracy³³. In 1965, he published a report on methods and means deployed by the government in Cuba to eliminate illiteracy. In 1969, he was invited to present a paper on functional literacy projects in Latin America, on behalf of UNESCO in London. From the paper, we

²⁸ Neys, 1954.

²⁹ Neys, 1954.

³⁰ Neys, 1958.

³¹ Neys, 1965.

³² Neys, 1965.

³³ Neys, 1965.

³⁴ Neys, 1969, 1973.



can conclude that he had worked and lived in Ecuador and Venezuela²⁸, after which Karel Neys went to tropical Africa. We cannot be sure whether this was before or after his retirement. He was living very quietly in M'babane, Swaziland when he drew up his last will and testament in 1989, but resided in the Hague by the time of his demise in 1992.

Following his assignments in Indonesia and the South Pacific, Karel Neys obtained knowledge, insight and experiences of the Latin American world and even Tropical Africa, regions previously unknown to him. Nevertheless, Indonesia remained very dear to him, and the idea of creating a foundation with the aim of supporting projects²⁹ in Asia must have been on his mind for quite some time. Once, when visiting the Netherlands, he remarked to his friends Mr. and

Ms. Grader that he wanted to do "something" with projects. When based in London, he undertook a private tour to Hong Kong and Macao in October 1987. In a postcard sent to Mr and Mrs. Grader, he wrote: "The Asian sun is doing me good"³⁰. In 1989, at the age of 69, he took the decision to set up a foundation devoted to the stimulation of research and related training for the benefit of researchers in Indonesia and South-east Asia. He probably felt that his long working life devoted to education was soon to come to an end. The foundation reflects not only his affection for Indonesia and Asia, but also his wish to honour his father and mother, hence the name Neys-van Hoogstraten Foundation. Dr Karel Neys passed away in the Netherlands on the 3rd of March 1992, at the age of 72 years, and bequeathed his fortune to the Foundation.

²⁸ Mentioned in a letter to NHF by the daughter Mrs. Carla Grader, 21-10-2003.

²⁹ Document received from Mrs. Carla Grader.

7. Publications by Dr. Karel Neys

[The family name is spelled in accordance with its printing on the publication]

Neijs, K. *Westerse accultumatie en oosters volksontdovings* [Western acculturation and Oriental public education], Academischproefschrift ter verkrijging van de graad van doctor in de letteren en wijsbegeerte aan de Rijksuniversiteit te Utrecht [PhD Thesis Utrecht]. Leiden, Drukkerij Luctor et Emergo, 1945. 336 p.

Neijs, K. *De tegenstelling stad –platteland: Indonesië-cultureel aspect* [The contrast between town and countryside: Indonesia-cultural aspects], Amsterdam, KIT, 1952, 16p.

Neijs, K. *The construction of literacy primers for adults. A handbook*, Noumea, New Caledonia, South Pacific Commission, 1954. 72 p.

Neijs, K. *An investigation of literacy in the British Solomon Islands Protection*, Noumea, New Caledonia, South Pacific Commission, 1954.

Neijs, K. *Literacy in the South Western Pacific: a general survey and report*, Noumea, New Caledonia, 1956.

Neijs, K. *Literacy in the South Western Pacific: a general survey*, Noumea, New Caledonia, South Pacific Commission, 1957.

Neijs, K. *An experimental course in adult literacy*, South Pacific Commission Technical Papers no. 114. Noumea, New Caledonia, South Pacific Commission, 1958. 64 p.

Neijs, K. Some considerations on the making of adult literacy primers, *Fundamental and Adult Education*, (1960) 12, no. 1, 41-58.

Neijs, K. *Literacy primers, construction evaluation and use*, Manuals on adult education and youth education, no. 2. Paris, UNESCO, 1961, 2nd print 1965. 113 p.

Lorenzetto, A., Neys, K. *Methods and means utilized in Cuba to eliminate illiteracy; a UNESCO report*, Paris, UNESCO, 1965. 82 p.

Neys, K. Experiences and problems in evaluation, a sociologist's point of view. In: F.Wood, *Report, The evaluation of functional literacy projects, UNESCO Workshop London, 3-22 August 1969*, London, University of London, Institute of Education, 1969, 49-53.

Neijs, K. *Proyecto piloto experimental de la alfabetización y educación de los adultos: Venezuela (misión) 1 de Enero de 1969-1 de Febrero de 1973*. Paris, Unesco, 1973. 49 p.