Koninklijk Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen

Abstract

The Koninklijk Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen (Royal Batavian Society for Arts and Science) was founded in 1778. It set itself the task to promote (fine) art and science in the former Dutch East Indies. For long, the Bataviaasch Genootschap decided whether collected objects were kept in Indonesia or send to the Netherlands. In 1962, the collection of the Bataviaasch Genootschap subsumed in the National Museum of Indonesia.

History

Founded in 1778, the Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen endured through several subsequent colonial administrations in Indonesia: the VOC, the French period, the British interregnum and finally the Kingdom of the Netherlands. In 1950, after Indonesia's war for independence, the name of the Society was changed to *Lembaga Kebudajaan Indonesia*, the Indonesian Cultural Institute. This institute was dissolved in 1962 and its collection was incorporated into the National Museum of Indonesia, which still resides in the building that the Bataviaasch Genootschap moved into in 1867. Most of the society's members came from the upper echelons of the colonial administration in the former Dutch East Indies and so close connections were maintained with the colonial authorities. There was also frequent contact with similar societies in the Netherlands and with Dutch museums and scientists. In this way, the Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen developed into a pivotal player in the cultural and scientific field in the Dutch East Indies.

The aim of the Bataviaasch Genootschap was to promote the arts and sciences in the former Dutch East Indies, and in the early years of the Society the focus was mainly on publishing scientific treatises on the territories colonised by the Netherlands in the Indonesian archipelago. Collecting objects was not yet a priority at that time and apart from the collection of objects contributed by the first president of the Society, Jacobus Radermacher, very few objects were added to the 'cabinet', as the Society's museum was then called. Not until 1835 was the emphasis increasingly placed on collecting various objects. Initially, the focus was on natural objects but later more and more ethnological and archaeological objects were added to the collection. In 1843 it was decided to transfer the Society’s natural history collection to the Rijksmuseum van Natuurlijke Historie (the Museum of Natural History) in Leiden. Around the same time, a government decree stipulated that objects of archaeological value could no longer simply be shipped to the Netherlands. In 1858 that policy was tightened and the Bataviaasch Genootschap came to act as the custodian of collections obtained, either as spoils of war or otherwise, by the Dutch East Indies government. As a result, the collection of the Bataviaasch Genootschap increasingly took on the form of a museum.

From 1878 it was obligatory for all objects collected by Dutch officials to first be sent to the Bataviaasch Genootschap, where a selection was made, with some objects sent to the Netherlands and some remaining in Batavia. This is the reason, for instance, that part of the so-called 'Lombok treasure', captured by the Royal Dutch East Indies Army during the Lombok War at the end of the nineteenth century, was included in the collection of the

Bataviaasch Genootschap.

From 1779 the Bataviaasch Genootschap published scientific findings in *Verhandelingen van het Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen*, which was issued on a regular basis and, from 1838, was published by the Society itself. In 1853 the Society also founded the journal *Tijdschrift voor Indische taal- land- en volkenkunde*. The minutes of the Society were also published from that time, and often contain interesting information about the objects that were acquired.

[image] *The BGKW museum in 1948* (R.G. Jonkman / Nationaal Archief Den Haag)

Provenance research

After the Bataviaasch Genootschap was dissolved in 1962, the collection was incorporated into the collection of the National Museum of Indonesia, Museum Nasional Indonesia. The archive of the Society is accessible through the Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia, the National Archives of Indonesia. The inventory can be downloaded from the website and can be consulted by searching 'Bataviaasch Genootschap'; the inventory is in Bahasa Indonesia.

As described, the minutes of the Bataviaasch Genootschap contain much information about objects offered to and acquired by the Society. The minutes from 1864 to 1922 are available via the University Library of Leiden University. Hans Groot's book *Van Batavia naar Weltevreden* also contains some detailed descriptions of objects acquired by the Bataviaasch Genootschap.

Related Aids

- Civil servants in colonised territories
- Scientific research in colonised territories
- Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies (KITLV)
- Naturalis Biodiversity Center
- Artis Etnographic Museum
- Royal Cabinet of Curiosities
- Wereldmuseum Amsterdam
- Wereldmuseum Leiden
- Wereldmuseum Rotterdam
- Rijksmuseum Amsterdam
- Rijksmuseum van Oudheden
- C.G.C. Reinwardt

Primary sources

Publication:

> *Verhandelingen van het Bataviaasch Genootschap der Kunsten en Wetenschappen*
> *The journal published by the Bataviaasch Genootschap from 1779. Many editions can be found on the Biodiversity Heritage Library website.*
>
> https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/bibliography/7371

Minutes:

> *Notulen van de Algemeene en Directie-vergaderingen van het Bataviaasch*

Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen Minutes of meetings of the Bataviaasch Genootschap published from the 1850s onwards. Minutes from 1864 to 1922 are available through Leiden University Library.

http://hdl.handle.net/1887.1/item:1112865

Archive:

K 75. Inventaris Arsip Tekstual Koninklijk Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen (KBG) (1778-1962) The archive of the Bataviaasch Genootschap is located at the ANRI in Jakarta. The inventory of the archive can be downloaded from the ANRI's website (in Indonesian).

https://anri.go.id/

Journal:

Tijdschrift voor Indische taal- land- en volkenkunde Journal published by the Bataviaasch Genootschap. Several editions are available through the Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies (KITLV). Other sources related to the Bataviaasch Genootschap can also be found on this web page.

https://kitlv-docs.library.leiden.edu/open/Metamorfoze/TBG/tbg.html

Secondary sources

Book:

Groot, Hans. Van Batavia naar Weltevreden: Het Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen, 1778-1867. Amsterdam: Brill, 2009 Book by Hans Groot with a comprehensive description of the Bataviaasch Genootschap from its foundation to 1867. Also contains a large amount of information on collections acquired and specific members of the Society.

http://library.oapen.org/handle/20.500.12657/34657

Relevant Data

TO BE FILLED

first edited by Wiebe Reints as original_author on 2024-09-05
last edited by Abacus as translator on 2025-04-07 (applies to section: Main-text; Sources)