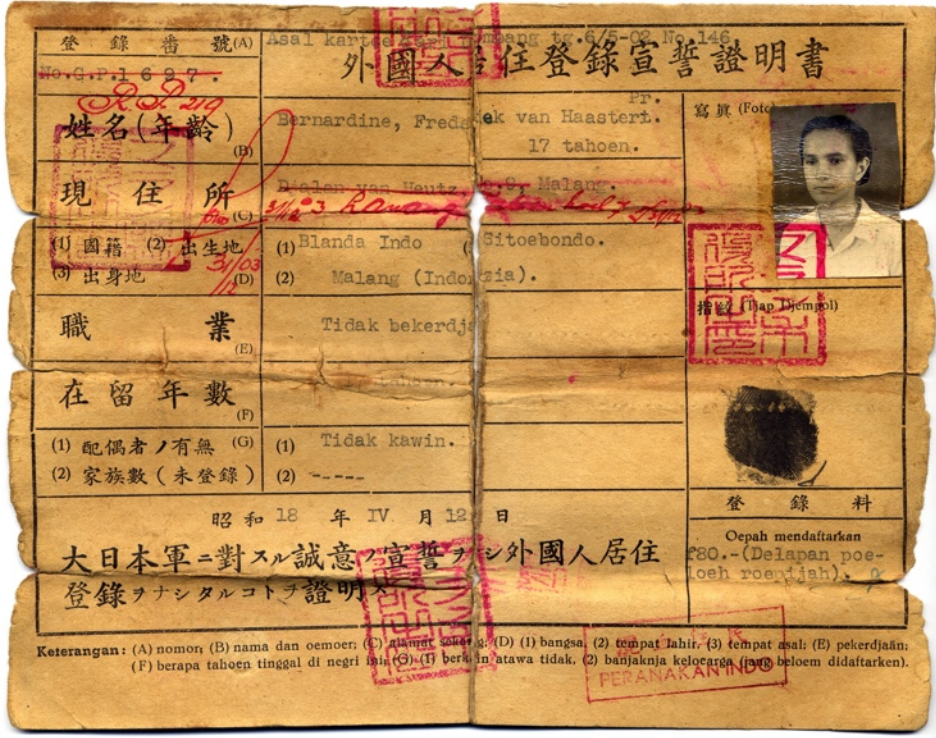


The Dutch Left Behind: Internment during the Japanese Occupation of the Netherlands East Indies (NEI) 1942-1945

Under the Japanese Occupation Forces, former Dutch military and bureaucratic personnel, including Ambonese and Mendonese, were interned at once as Prisoners-Of-War (POWs). In the following six months, throughout the region Dutch civilians, including women and children, were also herded into separate camps where they were starved and ill-treated. Some Dutch teenage females, were taken to separate houses to serve as comfort women for the Japanese military. Males from as young as 10 years of age were taken from their mothers and placed in boys camps and treated like men.



On Loan to N. Peters Collection.



Japanese enter Java, Odyssey Quilts, Frances Larder Collection.



At Wars End



Internees were allowed 35 minutes daily to march to the river, bath and do their washing. Severe penalties were inflicted on those who overstayed their time. This woman was two minutes late returning to the compound.

Mrs Lily van Bommel sketched this series of pictures recording aspects of her captivity. Courtesy Western Mail 24 January 1946p. 13.



No privacy was permitted. Even the daily shower was watched by the ever-present guard.

When the Japanese forces occupied the NEI, bowing to the Japanese became mandatory. Internees who did not bow low enough were severely beaten. Odyssey Quilt images Courtesy of Francis Larder.



Internment camp in Batavia, Java.

At Japanese Capitulation 15 August, 1945 the population of the Netherlands East Indies was near starvation, the supply of clothing almost non-existent and sanitation and agriculture had broken down. In the period 8 March 1942 to 15 August 1945 it is estimated that between 37,000 and 42,000 Netherlands East Indies Dutch adult males and 22,000 Australians became forced labour as prisoners of war (POWs). An estimated 100,000 Western civilians, including children (4,700 in Sumatra and 29,000 in Java) were incarcerated in around 300 Japanese civilian internment camps. Disease became endemic and up to 20% of internees and POWs died of ill-treatment, starvation, and diseases such as yellow fever, malaria and cholera.



Letter from Queen Wilhelmina to interned NEI Dutch women acknowledging their plight, their courage and bravery during this ordeal. Courtesy Henrietta Thomas nee Kuneman.

Kampong Makassar internment camp Batavia, Netherlands East Indies, 1945 at the close of war. A group of women representatives of the many who were unable to leave the appalling conditions as they had no alternative accommodation and had been separated from their families during the war (naval collection).

