LIFE AND WORK OF
THEO VAN ERP

March 26 1874 Ambon - May 7 1958 Laren (N-H)

By:
A.J.Th. (Guus) van Erp
a grandson of Dr Theo (Theodoor) van Erp

YOUTH (1874)

Theodoor (Theo) van Erp was born March 26, 1874 on the island Ambon as the fifth of six sons of Willem Vitus van Erp, at that time Captain, later Major of the Dutch Indies Army and Mrs Anna Susanna Elizabeth van Swieten.

When he was 4 years old he was sent to The Netherlands for his education. The journey by sailing ship took 144 days around the Cape as the ship was stuck for 6 weeks on a reef in Sunda Strait. Theo spent much of his youth far from his parents, in boarding schools and with host-families in the Province of North Brabant.

KMA/DUTCH INDIES (1892)

Theo entered the Royal Military Academy (KMA) at Breda in 1892. In 1896 he was sent as a young second lieutenant of the Engineering Corps of the Royal Dutch Indies Army (KNIL) to the Dutch Indies where he was deployed for some time in the unfortunate Aceh war. He was also involved in building of the fortress at Cilacap and designed the mosque in Medan.

As first lieutenant of the Engineering Corps, Theo van Erp was transferred to Magelang, an important military garrison city in Central Java.


PREPARATIONS FOR THE RESTORATION OF THE BOROBUDUR/BOROBUDUR COMMITTEE/EXECUTED PROVISIONS AND PUBLICATIONS (1899)

In 1899, Mr L. Serrurier produced a report
for the *Koninklijk Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen* (*Royal Batavian Society for Art and Science*) about the condition of some of the important monuments in Central-Java.

As a result of this report, Governor General W. Rooseboom - former General of the Dutch Army Engineering Corps of the military- and Lieutenant General H.P. Staal, commander of the Engineering Corps of the KNIL, visited the Borobudur.

This led to the installation in 1900 of the *Borobudur Commissie* (*Borobudur Committee*). Theo van Erp, 26 years of age, was nominated to this Committee of three. Its task was to consider “which measures should be taken to save and preserve the monument Borobudur.”

Modest as he was, Theo attributed his nomination to his personal connection in the military, especially the Engineering Corps; however, his growing interest and love for the Hindu and Buddhist monuments around Kamer, and his artistic, archaeological and engineering abilities, apparently had already been noticed.

It is known, for example, that in the period 1902-1903, Theo van Erp had already worked on the Siwa temple of the Prambanan complex and the main temple of the Sewu complex. At that time Van Erp's name is also mentioned in connection with the Ngawen, Selogriyo and Pringapus temples.

Van Erp drafted internal reports about these monuments. These reports were used later by such authors as Prof Dr N.J. Krom and Prof D.G. Stibbe, and by the *Commissie in Nederlands-Indië voor Oudheidkundig Onderzoek op Java en Madoera* (*Commission in the Netherlands Indies for Archaeological Research in Java and Madura*) established 1901; renamed in 1913 in *Oudheidkundige Dienst van Nederlands-Indië* (*Archaeological Service of Netherlands Indies*). These authors and institutions relied on Van Erp's early reports and pioneering work.

**BOROBUDUR COMMITTEE/COMMISSION FOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH (1900)**

The *Borobudur Committee* consisted of three members: Brandes, Van Erp and Van de Kamer. It was chaired by the linguist Dr J.L.A. Brandes who himself became a devoted archaeologist.

Brandes was also the first chairman of the aforementioned *Commission in the Netherlands Indies for Archaeological Research in Java and Madura*. Its main task was to suggest, but not execute measures to preserve ancient monuments in Java and Madura. Various
circumstances and regrettable occurrences, such as giving away, in 1896, fragments and sculptures of the Borobudur to the King of Siam, convinced a growing number of people that more effective measures should be taken to protect the Borobudur as well as the ancient Javanese monuments in general.

B.W. van de Kamer was a civil servant of the Department of Public Works (Waterstaat), who had already done some restoration work on ancient Javanese monuments. Mr. Van de Kamer had a different view on how to protect the Borobudur, which he had already promoted in Governmental circles before the installation of the Borobudur Committee and which consequently qualified him for membership. Mr. Van de Kamer's proposal was to protect the Borobudur from the tropical rains by covering the entire structure with an enormous pyramid-shaped roof of galvanised sheet-iron, supported by forty angle-iron styles.

In spite of the obvious weather related advantages, Van Erp and Brandes, and distinct voices in government, rejected the “monstrosity” on aesthetic grounds.

Van Erp said that Gunadharma, considered the “architect” of the ninth-century Borobudur, had he heard of the Van de Kamer plan, would have “turned himself upside down on the ridge of the Menorah Mountains” where his profile is supposed to be visible. Or, as Van Erp said also: “the stones (of the Borobudur) start now slowly to roll but first in the wrong direction.” The Committee's final advice contained in a Report of 1902 was not unanimous, as Mr. Van de Kamer disagreed and stayed in favour of his own plan. This plan would have cost Dfl 135.000 at that time. Brandes, however, supported the view and the vision of Van Erp, which were based on his thorough and conscientious investigations on the Borobudur itself.

The deliberations about the Borobudur report took quite some time within the Commissie van Bijstand in Nederland (Advisory
Committee in the Netherlands) under the chairmanship of Dr J.W. IJzerman. Mr IJzerman had discovered in 1885 the hidden base of the Borobudur which resulted among other things in the famous photographic recording by Mr. K. Cephas. Mr. IJzerman was at that time head railroad engineer on Java and also first chairman of the Archeologische Vereeniging van Yogyakarta (Archeological Association of Yogyakarta).

The Borobudur report was returned as late as 1905 with an approval of execution of the restoration and additional suggestions.

The start of the restoration work took time as well. One of the reasons was, no doubt, the death of Dr Brandes in June, 1905, aged 48. He was a pioneer in the Dutch Indies' archaeology, in conducting the first restorations and in writing colourful descriptions of the Indo-Javanese monuments he examined.

START OF THE FIRST PART OF THE RESTORATION OF THE BOROBUDUR (1907)

Theo van Erp started the restoration in August 1907 just a few months after the project had been assigned to him. A house was built for him at the foot of the monument and he moved in it with his wife Bets and his son John, born in Magelang in 1904.

Initially, Theo was allotted the mere sum of Dfl 48.800 for the restoration plus an additional Dfl 10.000 for a complete photographic recording of the Borobudur.

The Advisory Committee advised three types of measures:

1) Prevention of the further collapse of the monument: to re-erect the corners of the building, to remove stones that hampered and threatened other work, to adjust the first balustrade, to restore some of the gates, niches and stupas and the main stupa.

2) Ensuring long term improvement: to enclose the compound, do judicious
maintenance and especially improve the discharge of rain-water by repair of floors and gargoyles.

3) Improvement of the image of the building: to clear away and collect all loose stones, to lay bare the monument to its foundations, to remove disfiguring, wrongly added, buildings and to rebuild the pinnacle on the main stupa.

Theo also stopped a practice that had turned the Borobudur into a source of building material. Local government condoned or even encouraged the removal of temple stone for road pavement, compound partition, building material for sugar factories and other “useful” purposes. Such use of temple material has not been as bad for the Borobudur as it had been for the monuments in the open, more accessible Prambanan plain, because, for a long time, the Borobudur had been nearly completely covered with soil, ash and vegetation. For a long time, the Prambanan plains monuments had been open pits providing stones for new construction projects in the area, like railroads and sugar factories. Theo remarked sarcastically that the Borobudur by nature and circumstances contained fewer stones that could be “candied”.

Theo van Erp and his team started out by cleaning the plateau above the galleries and the courtyard surrounding the processional walk.

The courtyard had to be dug out to a depth of about 1.30m. The excavation of the surroundings was done in a very systematic way. The courtyard was divided into squares of 10 x 10 meters so that finds in each of these pits could be kept together.

In all, the excavations took seven months. The results were highly satisfactory and rewarding. Many important stones, sculptures and fragments were recovered, and partially replaced, including ornaments, monumental Kāla-heads (giant heads adorning gates to stairs) originated from some of the gateways, gargoyles, fragments from narrative panels, units from niches, several lions, 20 Buddha-
heads, antefixes and many more items. The Borobudur had the “advantage”, as said before, that, for a very long time, it was covered partly or completely with soil and vegetation. In Theo van Erp’s own words, “Many stones could be recovered from the bowels of the earth”.

The surroundings of the Borobudur were combed thoroughly. Three Buddha heads were found in a chicken coop of a military encampment; one as a tombstone on a grave. For small compensation, Javanese inhabitants of near-by desas could often be persuaded to give up stones that were used as building material. Sculpted stones were especially sought-after objects of recovery; bald stones and money were offered in exchange.

Among the sections of buildings which could be restored were the four tripartite flights of steps, one on each side, leading from the courtyard to the first gallery by the processional walk.

Out of 432 niches, 151 were completed with their Buddhas and the frames of 41 more were rebuilt. Only a few of the original 24 gateways could be restored but the greater part of the monumental decorative ornaments could be recovered. Several reliefs of the Borobudur could be restored in part or even in full.

The Javanese workmen proved to have a remarkably good eye and intuition for tracing the counterparts of cracks and joints cutting through stones and carvings, as had also been observed in the small scale pre-Borobudur work on some ancient Javanese monuments.

Some of the Javanese stone masons had such an extraordinary gift in this respect that Theo suggested they had inherited the genes of the artisans of the golden age of Java.

At the Borobudur, this method of assembling (carved) stones was first started by Theo van Erp’s assistant J.J. de Vink. In this way, many reliefs and decorations were restored by using the methods of two-and three dimensional
jig-saw puzzles which proved the basic of the later “anastylosis” procedure in the reconstruction of ancient Javanese monuments.

(Anastylosis is the archaeological term for a reconstruction technique whereby a ruined building or monument is restored using the original architectural elements to the greatest degree possible.)

START OF THE SECOND PART OF THE RESTORATION (1910-1911)

During the initial reconstruction Theo van Erp concluded that more restoration than the agreed-upon, restricted measures was not only feasible but also necessary. He sought permission to extend his work with a number of extra restorations in order to bring the Borobudur back to its original shape. Thus, Theo van Erp filed in 1908 these additional restoration proposals:

1) restoration of the balustrades with all present niches
2) restoration of the lowest terrace wall
3) restoration of drainage gutters along the hill slopes
4) restoration of lower stairs, gates, niches and all stupas of the terraces

By Governmental Decree of 18 January 1910 an additional amount of Dfl 34.060 was awarded.

This extension required first and foremost the dismantling and rebuilding of the circular terraces and the perforated stupas. One of them was left open to give a better impression of the Buddha inside. The fifth balustrade was broken down and then rebuilt over its full length.

Out of the total of 100 gargoyles no more than 48 were in situ at the beginning of the restoration; however, none of these gargoyles worked anymore as drains. Of those missing, 32 could be replaced, 27 were excavated; 4 were

Borobudur during restoration
brought back from the Regent House in Magelang; 20 are still missing. Two were in Bangkok, given to the King of Siam, H.M. Chulalongkorn, in 1896. Nine were replaced by straight, undecorated channels.

Perhaps the most important result of this part of the restoration, including the work on the niches and the most significant decorations, was the re-creation of the marvellous Borobudur silhouette which marks Borobudur's enduring image that has become over time the spiritual heirloom of artists and scientists all over the world.

DEVELOPMENT OF THEO VAN ERP'S VIEW ON RESTORATIONS

The question is: “why did Theo van Erp not replace old missing carvings by new, equally beautiful, stones which the able Javanese stone carver could produce very well?”

Theo van Erp's views on the restoration of monuments were rather progressive compared with those underlying contemporary Dutch buildings. During the period ending about 1915, characterised by the work of Pierre Cuypers, a well-known architect in the Netherlands (the famous Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam is among his accomplishments) and Victor de Stuers (high official in the Department of the Interior), the restoration of any monument was at that time regarded as an architectural achievement, a creative act in itself.

Missing elements were “restored without any problem”, that is to say “newly fabricated”, according to the architectural principles of the same period. In the Netherlands, for example, that would be in the neo-gothic style.

Shortly before 1915, just after Theo van Erp concluded his Borobudur restoration, there were voices in the Netherlands expressing criticism of this type of restorations. The argument was that it was doing harm to the authentic character of the building. Yet even after 1915, when the addition of the new element in would be-antique style was generally outmoded by the idea that a monument's value as an architectural document should prevail, restorers still continued replacing missing elements. Now, however, they did not use an old style but their own: the so called “Amsterdam School of Architecture”. This practice continued up until 1940 in the Netherlands.

There is, however, a great difference between old houses used for living for example and archaeological monuments like Candis and, consequently, different methods should be used for each.

Theo van Erp's attitude and principles regarding what should and what should not be
done for the conservation and restoration of ancient Javanese monument differed considerably from what had been done previously when less professional methods prevailed.

His views resulted first of all from a great respect for both the monument and its creators, inducing him to preserve the building's authentic character. In order to do most justice to the builders and their creations, the restoration of the Borobudur required first of all that the various elements which had fallen down or been removed had to be returned to their correct, original, places.

In certain cases, an essential functional element which had disappeared had to be replaced (even in the middle of a relief where their severely smooth surfaces and outline stood out too clearly in the opinion of the later restorers). Yet Theo van Erp restricted himself to those additional reconstructions needed for bringing out the most essential characteristic aspects of the Borobudur: the marked horizontal lines, the typical silhouette lines restored by reconstructing some of the niches and stūpa shaped ornaments, and the perforated stūpa tops on the circular terraces. Several elements could be safely reconstructed since there was no doubt whatever as to the original shape. Details which were not known with certainty were left out.

A striking example of Van Erp's extreme caution is the main stupa's pinnacle. The greater part of this essential element in a stūpa has been brought down by nature and carried away by humans. The general set-up of a spire could be reconstructed, in drawings at least, but the exact forms above the square-box base were questionable. Some photographs are available of the conjectural reconstructions of the entire pinnacle which Theo van Erp made with his crew in reality. Since there was no absolute certainty about its truth, he rejected this, broke it down and kept only the square base, though indicated through the very first layers of a spire that there should be more. In his technical drawings of the pinnacle it is shown in dotted lines.

**ADDITIONAL REMARKS ABOUT THE SECOND PART OF THE RESTORATION/ THE RESTORATION**

Theo van Erp successfully restored, by reconstruction, the circular terraces and the perforated stūpas. He had to leave alone the square terraces' main wall in the first and the second galleries, sagging though they might be. There were practical reasons as well as motives of principle for this decision. Once it had been established that maintaining the sagging
conditions and the leaning over of the first and second galleries' main wall did not endanger the future of the monument, Theo van Erp did not feel justified to make any changes not strictly necessary to preserve the character the Borobudur had acquired in the course of its history.

Important as Theo van Erp's restoration was to the Borobudur and the conservation of Southeast Asian monuments in general, his tools and finances were limited. The modern technical assistance of building cranes, elevators, forklift trucks, conveyor belts, etc., was not available to him. Everything had to be done by bamboo or jati-wood scaffolding, pulleys, ropes and human muscle. The only technically trained assistants at his disposal were the photographer J.J. de Vink, the able Javanese draftsman Mas Kartodisastro and general assistant Mas Karto. The entire work crew had to be selected and trained.

There were neither organisations nor institutions that could take over some of his tasks. Beginning 1900 expertise which nowadays forms the basis of archaeological work, such as studies of soil properties, erosion, microbiology etc was not, or hardly, available. The technology for reconstruction of ancient Javanese monuments was in its infancy and developed later by the Archaeological Service, after 1926, based mainly on important recommendations from Theo van Erp himself, commissioned from Holland to advise on the restoration crisis of the early twenties.

It is indeed questionable whether the tools and financial means available at that time would have sufficed for a complete dismantling and rebuilding- as has happened during the second restoration of 1973-, let alone to solve Borobudur's greatest problems, the drainage of rainwater and the intrusion of water, minerals and vegetation. Straightening and cementing the masonry, the only method employed at that time, would not have been enough. In some cases Theo van Erp renewed floors with newly made rectangular trachyte tile. This proved in the long run not to be the final solution. Even cementing the stones closely together would not be waterproof. The stones themselves would transmit water.

On the other hand, underlaying the galleries with a fully waterproof pavement would, during day time, have resulted in still higher temperatures in the already very hot galleries. Also, the balustrades and perforated stūpas should have gotten similar waterproof provisions. Later experts concluded that, because of the alkali-sensitivity of the Borobudur stones, any direct contact with cement should be avoided and impervious layers should be used
to keep them apart.

Parts of the first gallery's main walls were in some locations sinking; in others, leaning back or bulging, as photographs show at the end of the restoration. This was a problem Theo van Erp at that time could not solve.

Van Erp had to solve another very difficult problem: how to bring about an acceptable connection between the sinking main walls and the newly laid, carefully levelled, floors. He achieved this by partially hiding some of the plinth behind the floors.

At the same time, a much greater threat were the effects of natural corrosion and vegetation on the now exposed reliefs. Judging by the photographs taken during the restoration process and soon afterwards, Theo van Erp left the monument and its reliefs in a perfect condition. Some of the reliefs, however, were treated with a combination of yellow ochre, chalk-dust and smoke-black to get rid of disturbing white spots, caused by mosses. Whether this was the right treatment has been the subject of later discussions.

While Theo van Erp may have lacked the modern day scientific and technical restoration experience, he had something more important: a deep love and great respect for the Borobudur.

Mr. H.F.E. Visser, oriental art expert and author, great collector and Curator of the Asiatic Art Department of the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam put it succinctly in his obituary: “Theo van Erp was the right man at the right place”. In view of the decay of Borobudur prevented by Van Erp, Visser could not have said it better.

Professor Dr A.J. Bernet Kempers, archaeologist and former Director of Archaeology in the Dutch Indies and Indonesia (1936-1956) put it like this in his publications: “In the beginning of the 20th century, at a very critical moment in its existence, Borobudur was lucky enough to receive care from a man who

Combination of yellow ochre, chalk dust and smoke-black on the relief of Borobudur
developed himself into a great restorer, an artist and architect as well as a scientist. This good fortune helped Borobudur keep much of its riches and its exceptional character. Everything might have been very different had the work not been done so well or, of course, had the monument been discounted as hopeless and not worked on at all”.

According to Prof. Krom, Theo van Erp was, however, one of the first to admit that, because of the restoration, something special has been lost: the particular charm of a ruin in disorder.

The same Prof. Krom added that the doomed ruin had only two possibilities: to yield the sanctuary to further destruction or to save it for art and science at the expense of a certain charm.

The choice made in 1905 could in hindsight be justified. The “Grey Stupa,” as often mentioned by Van Erp, became ultimately the cultural heirloom of the scientists and artists of the world.

In 1908, whilst working on the Borobudur, Van Erp executed also repairs on the neighbouring Candi Mendut and finished the work that Dr Brandes could not finalize because of his death in 1904. For this restoration a budget of Dfl 6.800 was available.

By the end of 1911 the work on the Borobudur was finished.

1912-1918

When Theo van Erp started with his work on the Borobudur, he was 33 years old; when he finished in 1911, he was 37 years old and a Major of the Engineer Corps. He had worked for 16 years in the East Indies, without interruption, without leave. This entitled him to two years leave. He spent part of his leave in Switzerland because his long stay in the tropics had affected his health and obliged him to recuperate.

In August 1914, the First World War broke out and Theo was appointed as commander of
the fortified city of Hellevoetsluis in the Province of South-Holland of the Netherlands. Due to its neutrality, however, the country did not see war action.

**PRIVATE SCHOLAR (1918-1945)**

At the end of World War I, Theo van Erp opted for retirement. He had sufficient tropical service years to be eligible for it.

Theo was no longer the man to prefer a steady job over the freedom to act as a kind of Privatgelehrter. Financially, he was reasonably independent. Thus, he could devote, and balance, his time to his passion for research, writing, painting and sketching.

He could dedicate himself also to his grand plan to have the Architectural Description of the Borobudur published. Van Erp himself had in 1909 broached the subject in the *Koninklijk Bataviasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen (Royal Batavian Society for Art and Science)*. The Society, which promoted the study and scientific research of art and the buildup and saving of archeological and ethnographic collections in the Dutch Indies, was established in 1778.

In 1911, the *Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde (the Royal Institute of Linguistics, Geography and Ethnography)* in Amsterdam took up the matter and decided to publish an Archaeological volume. In 1916, the Royal Institute, on behalf of the *Departement van Koloniën (Colonial Department)*, split the task between Professor Krom and Theo van Erp. The remarkably fast worker Prof. Krom was ready in 1918 and his Archaeological Description of the Borobudur could be published as early as 1920.

The task of finishing the Architectural Description felt like a heavy burden to Theo van Erp. In this new phase of his life, he was no longer a man to work within a strict, tight schedule. Both the Royal Institute, the principal, and Van Erp, the author, had serious doubts that the agreed upon deadline for publication could be met.

There was another reason for the delay of the publication. Since 1921, the “restoration issue” had been discussed in archaeological circles in the Netherlands and the Dutch Indies. The main question then was how the restoration of the main temple of the Loro Jonggrang complex in the Prambanan plain should proceed. Theo van Erp was requested by Het *Bataviasch Genootschap (Batavian Society)* to undertake a journey to the Indies to advise a solution to the impasse. The journey far exceeded the planned 5 weeks and lasted 6 months because Theo was also asked for advice
on discoveries and restorations on the Isle of Bali. The result of the journey of Theo Van Erp resulted in several articles about archaeological artifacts.

Theo van Erp was delegate of the Dutch Government at the 19th International Orientalists Congress in Rome in 1935. In 1937 Theo was appointed *Ridder in de Orde van de Nederlandse Leeuw* (*Knight in the Order of the Dutch Lion*) and in 1938 he temporarily replaced Dr W.F. Stutterheim, who was on leave, as head of the *Oudheidkundige Dienst* (*Archaeological Service of Netherlands Indies*).

1945-1958

On March 3, 1945, at the end World War II, a heavy blow was inflicted on Theo van Erp. The British Royal Air Force mistakenly bombed the residential Bezuidenhout Quarter of The Hague, The Netherlands, where Van Erp lived. He lost his house and nearly all his possessions, including all his scholarly material on ancient Javanese art and the Borobudur such as books, manuscripts, photographs and objects. He and his wife barely escaped with their lives. “This was a ruin,” as Prof. Galestin put it in his speech on the occasion of Van Erp’s promotion to Doctor Honoris Causa, “Theo could not restore.”

After the disastrous loss of his house in The Hague, Theo settled down in the gardener’s lot of an estate of friends – Dennenoord - in Laren.
(N-H), an artist village situated in the centre of the Netherlands, in a region called "het Gooi". At that time, Dennenoord also contained the Dutch Students Sanatorium.

Studying and writing about ancient Javanese art and archaeology receded to the background, as Theo had lost nearly all his possessions and all study material. While his interest in the subject remained vivid, he began to devote much more time to his great hobbies: sketching and painting. A collection of about 400 sketches and paintings was the result. Theo van Erp's scientific career had more or less ended. He could no longer pursue, with the same vigor and interest as before, his study and interest in ancient Javanese art and the Borobudur.

Theo van Erp was an accomplished sketcher and painter who continued to work, even in his final years - he died in 1958 at the age of 84 in Laren (N-H). When he was in his 80s he could still paint standing up for hours. This is to be credited in large part to his military training - Theo was an excellent horseback rider and swordsman, which had given him a firm and correct posture and a well-cared-for appearance, lasting well into his later years.

One of Theo's great projects at that time was a large painting of the Borobudur on which he worked for years and into which he poured all his feeling, knowledge and admiration for the monument. This painting is now in the possession of another grandson of his, Peter van Erp, in the USA.

It was characteristic of Theo van Erp's humble and respectful attitude toward the Borobudur that he once signed a sketch made for the birthday of his admired friend, the great painter Willem van Konijnenburg, with the words: “11 Februari 1928. Theo van Erp. Van den schender”. (“11 February 1928. Theo van Erp. A gift from the violator”).

**PROMOTION TO DOCTOR HONORIS CAUSA (1951)**

On 17 September 1951, Theo van Erp received a Doctorate Honoris Causa from the Faculty of Arts and Philosophy of the University of Amsterdam. His promotor was Professor Dr Th.P. Galestin of the University of Leiden.

In his award speech, Prof. Galestin mentioned Theodoor van Erp's great merit for the ancient Javanese art and the first and unsurpassed restoration of the Borobudur by him, his magisterial monograph of 1931, the more than 75 articles and publications he produced about ancient Javanese art and its monuments and his many lectures about these subjects, delivered over the years with much...
humor.

Galestin mentioned also Theo's great significance for the Koninklijk Bataviaasch Genootschap (Royal Batavian Society), het Oosters Genootschap in Nederland (Oriental Society in the Netherlands) and the Vereniging van Vrienden der Aziatische Kunst (Association of Friends of Asiatic Arts) in The Netherlands. Theo was an honorary member of these institutions.

In his word of gratitude, Theo van Erp, now Dr Th. van Erp, replied that, during his life, he had already been greatly rewarded because he was granted the task of the first restoration of the Borobudur and spent many blessed years, “the best years of my life”, at the foot of the “grey stupa.”

He gave tribute in his speech to all those who contributed to the archaeological research and restorations of ancient Javanese monuments which had reached such a high level in the past decades. Such famous names as Brandes, the pioneer; Ijzerman, the discoverer of the hidden foot of the Borobudur and the force pushing Dutch Indies archaeology; G.P. Rouffaer, the pace-maker and author of the first monumental monographs; Prof. N.J. Krom, the first head of the Oudheidkundige Dienst (Archeological Service) and his successors Prof. F.D.K. Bosch and, later on, Dr W.F. Stutterheim and Prof. Dr. A.J. Bernet Kempers, as well as the distinguished pre-historians such as P.V. Stein Callenfels, A.N.J. Thomassen à Thuessink van der Hoop, H.R. van Heekeren and Willems.

Amplifying a wish conveyed by Professor Bosch in his speech accepting a professorship in history and archaeology at Leiden University, Theo van Erp expressed the hope and expectation that the cultural flame, lit by the Dutch, remain burning in Indonesia and in its newly created institutions such as Dinas Purbakala.

**THEO'S DEATH (1958)**

A journey to his eldest son John, who lived in the USA, in October 1957, had a very unhappy ending when Theo had to return to the Netherlands, his wife severely handicapped by a stroke. Theo van Erp died on May 7, 1958, and was buried on Westerveld Cemetery in the presence of a few family members -his two sons lived abroad- and a small group of his archaeological friends.
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Zevende volgreeks, Deel 5.


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A.J.Th. (Guus) van Erp, LL.M (1942) is a grandson of Theo van Erp (Dr Th. van Erp). His father was the youngest son of Theo van Erp, also Dr Th. van Erp, however MD. Guus lived until 1955 with his parents, mainly outside the Netherlands, including 7 years in Indonesia. From 1955 he also stayed for 4 years with a host family in Laren (N-H), The Netherlands. At that time he had, albeit for only a couple of years, more contact with his grandparents than in the years before. He had to rely for this article mainly on external sources because hardly any family possessions of Theo van Erp were available from before 1945.

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