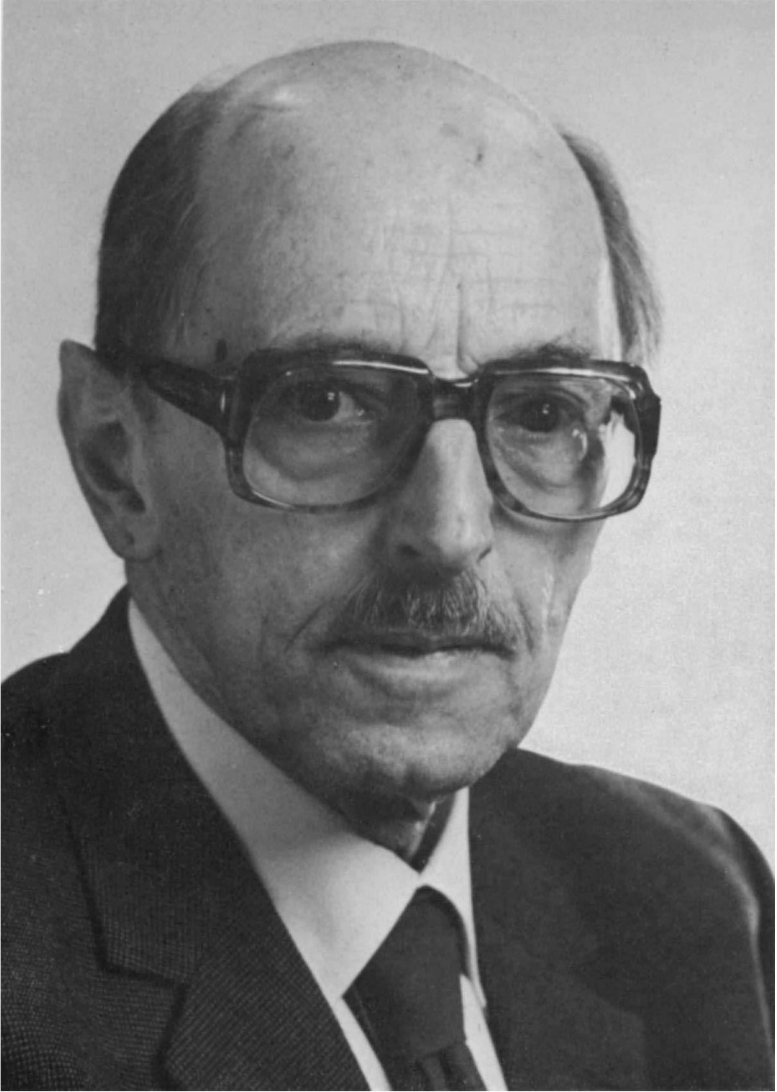


MAN, MEANING AND HISTORY



Prof. Dr. H. G. SCHULTE NORDHOLT

VERHANDELINGEN
VAN HET KONINKLIJK INSTITUUT
VOOR TAAL-, LAND- EN VOLKENKUNDE

89

MAN, MEANING AND HISTORY

ESSAYS IN HONOUR OF H. G. SCHULTE NORDHOLT

Edited by

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J.W. SCHOORL

FOREWORD

These essays have been written to commemorate the occasion of H.G. Schulte Nordholt, having reached the age of sixty-five, retiring as professor of cultural anthropology at the 'Vrije Universiteit'. This parting is not final yet, since he will continue his work parttime. But for his friends - his colleagues and ex-students - it was a good opportunity to present him with a Festschrift in his honour, a fitting tribute to the significance of his role in the field of cultural anthropology.

This volume was compiled with a view to certain specific themes and regions. There was the clear intention to put together a volume mainly dealing with subjects in the field of symbolic anthropology, and preferably within the anthropology of Indonesia. This intention excluded a number of friends who would have liked to make a contribution to this Festschrift. However, we hope and trust that the present composition of the volume will give it a clear position in its field, which would have been more difficult if it had consisted of contributions on a wide variety of subjects and regions. Schulte Nordholt is an anthropologist with a wide range of interests, but within that wide scope there are certain main points above and beyond the rest. These are what we hope to focus on in this book.

From 1930 to 1934, Schulte Nordholt studied Indology at 'Rijks-universiteit' in Utrecht, in order to prepare for a career as a government official in the former Dutch colony of Indonesia. Due to the Depression, he could not be sent abroad immediately upon completing his studies. He took advantage of this opportunity to go more deeply into philosophy, Islam and cultural anthropology of Indonesia. In October, 1936, he was sent to Indonesia. First he worked at Sumbawa Besar; in October, 1938, he was transferred to East Flores, and in November, 1939, to Timor. The Japanese invasion in May, 1942, put an end to this stay. In 'Besturen in een vacuüm' (in S.L. van der Wal, ed. *Besturen Overzee*), he gave an absorbing account of the situation just before and during the landing of the Japanese. After spending more than three years in a

Japanese prison camp, in September, 1945, he returned to Timor, where he worked as a government official in Kefamnanu until July, 1947. Due to his health, he was not stationed abroad again.

He went back to the University, where he studied Semitic languages, Arabic and Hebrew ('kandidaats'-degree, 1948) and History ('doctoraal'-degree, 1953). From July to the end of 1949, he interrupted his studies to devote himself to official activities in connection with the Round Table Conference about the recognition of the sovereignty of Indonesia. From 1950 to 1961, he was a high school History teacher. In 1960, he joined the cultural anthropology sub-department at 'Vrije Universiteit', where he was given a lectureship in the cultural anthropology of Africa in 1961. He got his Ph.D. at the end of 1966, with the thesis *Het Politieke Systeem van de Atoni van Timor* (in 1971 the English translation was published as no. 60 of the 'Verhandelingen van het Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde' under the title: *The Political System of the Atoni of Timor*). He had gathered the material for this thesis when he was in Timor as a government official. In 1967, he succeeded L. Onvlee as professor of cultural anthropology at 'Vrije Universiteit'.

This summary of Schulte Nordholt's activities illustrates the broadness of his scope of interest in man and his culture, as well as the main points within it. In the first place, history has always fascinated him. Not just history as a field of academic study, but mainly history as an essential dimension in human life. No matter how interested he might have been in structures, to him that never meant emphasis on the synchronic approach at the expense of the diachronic approach. No matter how greatly he was influenced by the 'Leiden School' and the work of Lévi-Strauss, the anthropologist never disavowed the historian. His inaugural speech, *Culturele Antropologie en Geschiedenis* (Cultural Anthropology and History), was a clear illustration of this.

In the process of the development of the cultural anthropology department at 'Vrije Universiteit', Schulte Nordholt initially devoted most of his attention to political anthropology. In his dissertation, there is a clear evidence of this interest on his part, as is the case in later publications as well, particularly in *Verantwoorde revolutie* (with J. Verkuyl, 1968). This interest also constituted the beginning of the political anthropology specialization which developed at 'Vrije Universiteit'.

However, in the past decade, his theoretical interest shifted in the

direction of the symbolic classifications and the thought structures which had also already played such an important role in his study of the Atoni. In this way, in addition to political anthropology, under his supervision symbolic anthropology was developed as the second teaching and research specialization. An increasing number of faculty members and students devoted their attention to the analysis of classification systems, rituals, myths and so forth. In the research that took place - and is still taking place - under his supervision, this interest in the symbolic dimension of human thinking and conduct is also evident.

His most important activities have been in the field of the cultural anthropology of Indonesia. That was the first and foremost object of his affection. As a government official in the former Dutch colony of Indonesia, he made a practical contribution to the development of the country. The fact that, in the course of doing so, he developed an interest in the culture of the local population was evident from his excellent study of the Atoni of Timor. This interest in Indonesia has never ceased to fascinate him, even when he was concentrating his attention on the cultural anthropology of Africa. His dissertation led him to return to the anthropology of Indonesia, and confirmed this move. This was also manifestly expressed by the fact that he was made a member of the executive committee - and vice-president - of the 'Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde' (twice) and a member of the guidance board of the Indonesian Studies Programme, a product of the co-operation between Indonesia and The Netherlands within the framework of the Cultural Agreement.

His enthusiasm for the study of Indonesia has accorded this particular study an important position within the department of cultural anthropology at 'Vrije Universiteit'. Almost a dozen graduate students have either already conducted research in Indonesia under his supervision, or are preparing to do so. This has granted symbolic anthropology, as well as the specializations referred to above, a place of their own within the anthropology of Indonesia. Thus, Schulte Nordholt has greatly helped to stimulate the revived interest in Indonesia within the field of cultural anthropology in The Netherlands.

In the production of this volume a number of people were involved. Also on behalf of Dr. Schefold and Professor Tennekes I would like to thank all those who were willing to contribute. In addition I would like to express our special gratitude to Mrs. M. Kreuze who, whilst doing her work at our secretariat, assisted and advised the editors and prepared

the manuscripts for publication. We are also grateful to Mr. G.H. Speelman for kindly providing the photograph of Professor Schulte Nordholt which appears at the beginning of this book and to Mr. J. Ter Haar for his drawings for the essays of N.G. Schulte Nordholt and J. Tennekes.

In view of the long history of the preparation of this volume as well as the circumstances of its production, it may display shortcomings here and there, the responsibility for which both the editors and the publisher were obliged to leave with the authors.

Amsterdam, Autumn 1979.