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Autore	Bruijn Iris
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Nota di contenuto	Introduction: Coping with a black legend -- 1. The surgeon's tale: The development of surgery -- 2. The world of the East India Company surgeon -- 3. The medical service of the Dutch East India Company -- 4. The geographic origin of the Company's surgeons -- 5. The career of the Company surgeons -- 6. 'Great expectations!' -- Conclusion: The surgeon's legacy.
Sommario/riassunto	The ship's surgeons in the employ of the Dutch East India Company were responsible for the healthcare on board the ships and in the hospitals founded by the Company in a vast geographical area expanding from South Africa to Japan. They were not highly regarded by their contemporaries, who criticised them for being little more than barbers or loblolly boys. The author of this fascinating study paints the true picture of the profession, drawing on her analysis of data for some 3,000 ship's surgeons in the Company's service, and including the recruitment policy of the Company, the career of the surgeons, their geographical origins, their life expectancy, to mention but a few. The results of her analysis, based on many hitherto unpublished sources,

show this negative image to be a myth. The surgeons were, as a rule, fairly well educated according to the standards of their time. The tragic fact that they were confronted with diseases unknown in Europe and incurable at the time contributed to the sailors' and the society's dismissive attitude to their skills.

Scheepschirurgijns van de Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie waren verantwoordelijk voor de gezondheidszorg op de schepen en vestigingen van de VOC in Zuid-Afrika en Azië. Zij staan te boek als analfabeten en kwakzalvers of zelfs veredelde barbiers. Iris Bruijn bewijst met haar diepgaande onderzoek dat het negatieve beeld een mythe is en laat tegelijkertijd de tragiek van deze chirurgijns zien. Ze laat 3000 chirurgijns de revue passeren en belicht hun opleiding, hun geografische herkomst, de carrière van de chirurgijns, hun levensverwachting en het rekruteringsbeleid van de VOC. Hoewel de scheepschirurgijns goed opgeleid en bekwaam waren, kregen zij te maken met onbekende exotische ziekten die, zo weten wij nu, niet te genezen waren.

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