

The Standing and the Collapse of the Dome Church in Batavia in the 18th Century and Early 19th Century

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ABSTRACT: *This paper discusses the establishment and the collapse of the church building that ever existed in Batavia, the Dome Church, the Protestants Church of the Dutch Indies Company in the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century. This church was established in 1732-1736 by the non-expert architect, Christoffel Moll. This enormous Dome Church had each four Dorian pillars at its four sides and had very large doors and windows (Gothic style). This church was then becoming an iconic symbol of Batavia. The sailors used it as a sign of their direction when they entered the Batavia harbor. Noculaus de Graaff, in his report of his journey to Batavia, told that Batavia was the most beautiful city in the world. Unfortunately, the Dome Church was damaged by the earthquake, while in the same time the VOC or the Dutch Indies Company was bankrupt. The following government did not pay any attention to this leaning church, and finally the Dutch government sold the land of this building to the warehouse company. Since 1975, the government of Jakarta Province has been using the building for the Puppet Museum or Museum Wayang that collects all kinds of puppets from many countries of the world.*

KEY WORDS: *Cross church, Dome church, church visitors, Heemraden, kerckfabriek, gravestone, baker, warehouse, and painters.*

INTRODUCTION

When we entered the park of the Inscription Museum on Jalan Tanah Abang adjacent to the mayor's office building in Central Jakarta, our view will be fixed on the carved stones are very beautiful as a picture attached to the wall starting from the right wing, on to the verandah on to the left wing. These gravestones were found by the *Bataviaasch Genootschap* or Foundation Art and Science of Batavia in the warehouse of Geo Wehry & Co. in the former *Nieuw en Hollandsche Kerk* or New Dutch Church or the Dome Church, which is now situated in Jalan Pintu Besar Utara No.27 Jakarta.

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VOC, CHRISTOFFEL MOLL, AND THE STORY OF THE DOME CHURCH

The foundation purchased the warehouse for later handed over to the *Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen* or Foundation, Scientific and Cultural Art of Batavia. That attract attention is a gravestone on the right wall when we are facing the museum building, that is the gravestone with a carving of three pigs of the heraldic symbols. That is the gravestone of Christoffel Moll. On his tombstone is written a brief biography of him, explaining that he was born in Meinertzhagen (Germany) on 20 March 1699 and died in Batavia on 19 January 1751 at the age of 51 years, 9 months, and 22 days. During his life, he served as *Ritmeester van de Burger Kavallery* or Native Cavalry Officers; *Collegie van de Heeren Heemraden* or Member of the Board of Trustees Distinguished Levee and Water Building in the region *Ommelanden*, the area outside the walls of the city of Batavia. This is a very prestigious position at the time. This position unless regulate irrigation as well as overseeing dykes and channels in Batavia.

The government of her native country of the Company since the Netherlands already accustomed to living with water problems. They therefore put great attention to the problem of control and irrigation and dam in Batavia, so that no flood occurred. The person assigned as *Heemraden*, viewed as very important people and gain prestige in society. Therefore, they had also very large salaries. We could recognize how rich they were from the gravestones of the *Heemraden* in Batavia, now stored in the Inscription Museum. Christoffel Moll gravestone is one example as follows:

HIER LEYD BEGRAVEN D[en]H[eer] CHRISTOFFEL MOLL OUD RITMEESTER VAN DE BURGER CAVALLERY EN LID IN [He]T EERW[aardige]. COLLEGIE VAN HEEREN HEEMRADEN DER BATAVIASE OMMELANDEN GEBOREN TOT MEINERTZHA GEN DEN 20 MAART 1699 OVERLEDEN TOT BATAVIA DEN 19 JANUARY 1751 OUD 51 JAAREN 9 MAANDEN EN 22 DAGEN.

Translation:

Here is buried Mr. Christoffel Moll, former Cavalry Officer and Members in Honorary Board of Supervisory Gentlemen Levee and Water Building around Batavia. Born in Meinertzhagen on March 20, 1699. Died in Batavia on January 19, 1751 at the age of 51 years, 9 months, and 22 days.

From a semiotic symbol of heraldic of Christoffel Moll can be described as follows: (1) Helmet with horns symbolizing that the dead from among the nobility and power; (2) Tendrils leaf emblem acanthus as filler on the left and right shield symbolizes eternal life in heaven; (3) Three pigs symbolize prosperity and fertility and the number three symbolizes the Christian

faith would be a trinity: God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; and (4) Loop of rope under the shield symbolizes the rope of his life was over, the rope was also a significant symbol of the family ties. Therefore, people are usually given in gift wrap ribbon-shaped.

It seems that the Christoffel Moll, in his life, was very rich. Not everyone at that time was able to have an expensive tombstone carved with beautiful views. This tombstone was ordered by his family from Sadras, South India, which at that time included the area of the *Vereenigde Oost Indische Compagnie* or VOC (Suratminto, 2006:325; and Suratminto, 2008a:14-15 and 225).

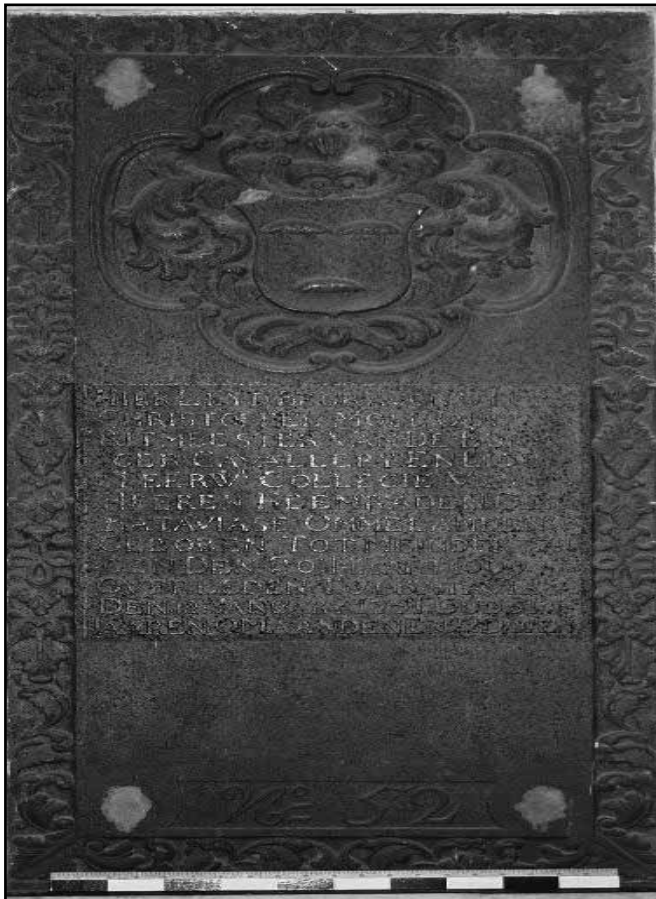


Figure 1:
The gravestone of Christoffel Moll in the Puppet Museum
(photo collection by Lilie Suratminto)

Christoffel Moll worked since the beginning at the VOC in Batavia as a trooper. When he retired as a cavalry lieutenant, he opened his business as a baker because he might see this business is not so much done by the Europeans in Batavia. Most business is run by the Chinese. His business was very successful and he managed to become big sellers and had a lot of connections with officials of the VOC. Therefore, he was subsequently appointed as an Honorary Board of Supervisory Gentlemen Levee and Water Building around Batavia superintendent in *Ommelanden*. Position as a baker of course not mentioned on his tombstone. At the time, there were plans to build a dome church *de Nieuwe Hollandsche Kerk* to replace the old church building or *Kruiskerk* or the *Oud Hollandsche Kerk* (the Cross Church), he won the tender as a contractor for the construction of church buildings.

The establishment of the VOC and development of *Kruiskerk* (the Cross Church) on Jalan Pintu Besar Utara is currently nothing to do with the history of the VOC in Batavia. VOC trading activity center is at the Castle of Batavia. The Castle of Batavia built with the entrance of the city in accordance with its function. Therefore, there was a large door and there was a small door (now Jalan Pintu Besar and Jalan Pintu Kecil). This castle, in the reign Daendels, was destroyed and the stones used to build a government building in *Waterloplein* (Banteng Square), which is now used for the office of the Department of Finance of the Republic of Indonesia (*Departemen Keuangan Republik Indonesia*).

In the year 1602, VOC – namely States Agency for Trade Business in Asia – approved by the *Staten Generaal* or Parliament of the Republic of the Dutch States hereinafter referred as the VOC with *octrooi* or special patent, namely the VOC can recruit soldiers, entered the war and peace treaties with local rulers from South Africa to Deshima island in Japan, print its own currency and established forts as centers of trade and the fight against Spain and Portuguese across the ocean. Initially, the Company does not have a permanent headquarters. Governor-General Pieter Both sat in the year 1605 in Victorian Castle in Ambon, and later in the year 1609 in Orange Castle of Ternate which was captured from the Portuguese as their commercial office centers. To facilitate the movement of their commercial fleet, in the year 1610 the Company rented a parcel of land from the Regent of Jayakarta, Prince Jayawikarta or Wijayakrama at the estuary of the Ciliwung river who situated across the British trade office that had previously rented space there. They built the Castle of Batavia inside the fort of Batavia with the big cannon at its four corners, one of which leads into the palace of Wijayakrama (de Graaff, 1949).

Wijayakrama's policy considered by the Sultan of Banten as the act of stepping over the authority of the Sultan, the Prince was therefore arrested and detained. Furthermore, Banten forces attempted to destroy the fortress of the Company which has been strengthened with the cannon. In that war, into the palace of Jayakarta successfully destroyed by the army of the Company and the Sultan and all his people fled to Banten. In place of the ruins left by the occupants, Company at the date of May 30, 1619 built a walled city which was then set its name into Batavia by *de Heeren Zeventien* or the Gentlemen of Seventeen Council of 17 in Amsterdam.

In the year 1625, VOC built a simple church in Batavia in a place that later was used as the place for the building of the Javasche Bank (now used as the Museum of Bank Indonesia, which was inaugurated by President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono on 26th July 2009). In 1628, the church was demolished because it is designated as a place of cannon for defense from attacks of the Mataram's troops. Since then, the church was moved to one room in the building of the *Stadhuis* (City Hall) for the Malay-speaking congregation, the Netherlands and France (Heuken, 2003:13).

After a time the winding Ciliwung straightened for the manufacture of the channel, in the year 1632 on the orders of the Governor-General Specx, VOC established the Cross Church or the *Kruiskerk* on the reclamation land, which is now on the Jalan Pintu Besar Utara. In 1640, the Governor-General van Diemen laid the first stone of the building construction of the Cross Church. The *Oude Hollandsche Kerk* called *Kruiskerk* or the Cross Church named according to the basis of the cross-shaped building. This church was built with stone and the floor of the tombstones. Captain Barrows, who visited Batavia, told in his journal as follows:

The Dutch have imprudent custom of burying their dead not only within the city walls, but also in the churches. It is not, therefore, in the least surprising that diseases of a fatal nature should prevail in such country. The most common of these are dysenteries and putrid and inflammatory fevers, which in the course of a very few days, and sometimes in a few hours, prove fatal (cited by de Haan, 1923).

On the roof of the Cross Church in 1641 decorated a small tower for the bell that was brought from Malacca when the city was captured by the Dutch from the Portuguese. In the year 1732, this new church obtained a new organ from the Netherland but it was too large for the size of the Cross Church. The Cross Church was later determined to be dismantled and built at the same place the *Nieuwe Hollandsche Kerk* (New Dutch Church) called the *Dome Church*. This church was completed in 1736.

The Cross Church (1632-1732) was the first Christian church in Batavia successfully painted by J. Nieuhoff. The front wall of this church is similar with the Puppet Museum (*Museum Wayang*) now. This seems a small church in the middle of a yard wide with a variety of lush trees visible from a distance of four coconut trees.



Figure 2:
Gereja Salib *Oude Hollandsche Kerk* (Heuken, 2003).

In front of the church visible church crowded of visitors who were waiting in a huddle. A Dutch adventurer named Nicolaus de Graaff, in his book *Oost-Indische Spiegel* (1701), highly praised the beauty of the city of Batavia at that time, including the Cross Church. Batavia is the most beautiful city in the world. Batavia was a city with beautiful buildings and channels in which the water was very clear, like Queen of the East. Except for praising the beauty of the church building and the city plan of Batavia at that time is also a good enough.

Nicolaus de Graaff also criticized the behavior of the women and the wives of the VOC officials who came to the church showing off wealth and prestige with the luxury apparel, wearing bracelets, necklaces and rings of gold and diamonds. They were accompanied by slaves carrying betel box, spittoon for spitting, and umbrella. In the worship, they sat in a special place of honor for the VOC-officials and their families. During the preach of the preacher, they were chatting and chewing as if not caring pastor who was preaching. The church (*kerckfabriek*) do not want to ban them. They avoided these ladies moving to another church. In addition, the church re-

ceived large donations from the wives of such officials. About this, Nicolaus de Graaff wrote as follows:

The great luxury was just shown in Batavia by the Dutch women, but also by women and Kastise Mistise and very surprising. This is very visible at the time, they come or go from worship on Sunday or on any other day, when held sermons. At that moment, the one decorated and dressed better than others. Silk, velvet, satin, linen, or a different *songket* of expensive fabrics such as *striated*, *cindai*, *tegarun*, and *lisban* special form of silk or gold and pearl necklace strap and the neck or worn on a hat. Beautiful earrings of pearl or diamond preferred plugged in the ear. Uncut diamonds and gold brooch with lots of diamonds that appear on their chests. Sometimes also tied at the back of the band or head coverings (de Graaff, 1703).

To show off their wealth on many occasions for example on their children at baptism, weddings and even at death, all the needs of these ladies will be dealt and regulated by the *kerckfabriek*. In the cemetery, for example, they did not hesitate to spend a big funeral ceremony procession. The family can order a very expensive and beautiful carved gravestone from Sadras, South India (Suratminto, 2006:138-139).



Figure 3:
The wife of the VOC Officials going to church (Heuken, 2003).

Meritorious painter who makes paintings *Oud Hollandsche Kerk* or the Church of the Cross was J. Neuhoff. His paintings now became the only style of painting depicting the building *Oud Hollandsche Kerk* as shown in the picture.

ON THE NIEUWE HOLLANDSCHE KERK OR THE DOME CHURCH

Mockups of the design of the Dome Church is now still stored at the Fatahillah Museum of Jakarta. Patterned octagonal ground-plan of the eighth corner mounted a strong pillar to support the dome. The Church was built with brick and stone stairs consist of granite and the floor of the tombstones of people buried in the church there.

The Church is equipped with sixteen high windows that allow light from outside entered freely into the living room from different corners coupled with a lantern on the dome light. Church roof covered with a layer of slate imported from Europe. The Dome Church towered over the houses in Batavia which is used by fishermen as a sign. Two England captains, Bougainville (1769) and James Cook (1770), call this the Dome Church` St. Paul's because it reminds them of a major church in London.



Figure 4:

Mockups of the Dome Church or *de Nieuwe Hollandsche Kerk* at the Jakarta Historical Museum (photo collection by Lilie Suratminto).

Dome Church was built with a very luxurious and is therefore estimated at 128.5 thousand Ringgit or by Barrows around 80,000 British Pound Sterling at that time. This church is built by building-contractor Christoffel Moll, already mentioned at the beginning of this paper. He was actually not an architect of buildings but a baker. So chances are the foundation of the church did not meet safety standards such as the building is spectacular. So no surprise when three years after the church was completed, when a great earthquake happened, the walls became heavily cracked. *Nieuw Hollandsche Kerk* was too big for the Dutch-speaking people who are lazy to follow worship (Heuken, 2003:24).

The *Oud Holandsche Kerk* had ever become an iconic of Batavia during the 18th century. Some painters have been perpetuating the existence of the church from various sides. Here will be given a few examples of how the painters who were perpetuating the Dome Church is now located at Jalan Pintu Besar Utara No.27 Jakarta, sequentially during the VOC in Batavia. The Dome Church by many famous painters can be seen as follows:

First, **the Dome Church by W. Schouten, 1658-1665**. Hence, W. Schouten is a painter who had previously worked as a doctor of the Company in Batavia, 1658-1665. He painted from the east side of Batavia. Dome Church appears on the left side of banana trees. The tower of the Casteel of Batavia was not portrayed realistically (Heuken, 2003:19).



Figure 5:
The Dome Church by W. Schouten, 1658-1665.

Second, the Dome Church by J.W. Heydt in 1740. J.W. Heydt in the year 1740 painted the Dome Church very detailed look ahead. The Church was at the entrance with its four pillars seems very stiff. The pillars in Dorian style built symmetrically. On the left and right wings of the church was equipped with the pillars as well. In addition, J.W. Heydt also painted the floor plan of the church place to hold worship services in church activities. J.W. Heydt said to be a plan *onder der neu Grundriß erbauten Holländischen Kirch* (Heuken, 2003:26). From the description of the ground floor can be seen the octagonal-shaped floor consisting of headstones from the Company officials who died in Batavia (Heuken, 2003:26).



Figure 6:
The Dome Church by J.W. Heydt before 1740.

Third, the Dome Church by F.X. Habermann. Who is F.X. Habermann? He is a German painter that painting the Dome Church from the direction of Batavia Hotel (now Café Batavia), circa 1650. On the right side appear high Rising Dome Church, the Church is surrounded by a trellis fence and

there was no door from the direction of the church to get to the field of City Hall building. Dome Church visible on the background of Salak mountain. In the churchyard, there is a path facilities to form straight lines which intersect each other. In the church yard, the visitors looked very relaxed. What is interesting that almost all men like to wear clothes similar with the robe at present. Batavia is a tropical region (Taylor, 2009) we would wonder if they do not swelter.



Figure 7:

The Dome Church by F.X. Habermann, 1640-1650, used as books cover of the Komunitas Bambu Publisher (photo collection by Lilie Suratminto)

Fourth, the Dome Church by J. Rach (1770). J. Rach is a famous Danish painting of City Hall on either side there is a shady tree. Dome Church is on the right. It appears that this painting was taken from the front of the Batavia Hotel (now Café Batavia). At the top of the church installed wind directions in the form of a rooster. In front of the church was given the right side of the fence extends up to City Hall.



Figure 8:

The atmosphere in the courtyard of *Stadhuis* with the Dome Church by J. Rach in 1770.

The fence in front of the church is not equipped with a door into the courtyard of City Hall. On the left is *Tijgersgracht* or the Tiger Channel, and now as *Jalan Pos* (Heuken, 2003:23).

Fifth, the Dome Church by G.M. Probst (Augsburg) in 1785. Painters G.M. Probst (Augsburg) painted the Dome Church from the side yard of City Hall *het Justitie Gebouw* or House of Justice. On the left is the City Hall building (*Stadhuis*), and straight in front of us is the Dome Church visible towering. The Dome Church is surrounded by a fence and trellis in front of the church it appears that the fence was a door to go into the church. In the churchyard, there is no protective trees. This is very different from the results of the painting 15 years earlier J. Rach to the right where there are no trees (Heuken, 2003:24). This church seems similar to the paintings by F.X. Habermann which was painted circa 1650. In this painting does not exist in the courtyard of City Hall there were no trees.



Figure 9:
The Dome Church and the Stadhuis by G.M. Probst 1785

Sixth, the Dome Church by W. Alexander, 1793-1794. Unlike earlier painters, painter W. Alexander's painting of the Dome of the Church of Kali Besar (Great River), in other words from the back of the Dome Church. Pictured here in community activities along the Kali Besar. Under the tree on the left appears a carriage officer of the Company. Along the road there is a row of shade trees (Heuken, 2003:25).



Figure 10:
The Dome Church visible from Kali Besar by W. Alexander 1793-1794

THE FRENCH REVOLUTION, THE COLLAPSE OF THE DOME CHURCH, AND THE BUILDING OF PUPPET MUSEUM

During the French Revolution, the Dutch Republic fell into the hands of the Patriots a very pro-France and the Netherlands changed to the Republic of Bataaf. Prince Willem V was forced to leave the country and he fled to England. Most of the Dutch East Indies regions outside Java fell into British hands. Java, then, ruled by the Governor-General Herman Willem Daendels. Java island was blockaded by the British under the Raffles, the trade route between the Dutch East Indies Company and the Netherland was cut by the British army. This was the beginning of the destruction of VOC and VOC really collapsed in the year 1799 (Mulder *et al.*, 1989:206-207).

During the Republic of Bataaf, the Dome Church started displaced and more so at that time the situation in Batavia was getting worse because of fears of a sudden invasion of the British army. In these precarious circumstances in 1808, Herman Willem Daendels ordered to dismantle and sell the land of the church to the Geo Wehry en Co. and the gravestones must be moved to Kerkhoflaan (now Jalan Tanah Abang). That was the end of the Dome Church in Batavia.

In 1937, the ruins of the Dome Church site was purchased by *Het Bataviaasch Genootschap* then submitted to *Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen* or Foundation, Scientific and Cultural Art of Batavia. On December 22, 1939, this Foundation had been renovating the former building of the Dome Church into a new building. The inauguration of the new building (1939) was attended by the last Governor-General of the Dutch-Indies government, Jonkheer Meester Aldius Warmoldus Lambertus Tjarda van Starckenborgh-Stachouwer.

In the Japanese era, the museum was abandoned. In the year of 1957, this building was submitted to the Indonesian Institute for Sciences or LIPI (*Lembaga Ilmu Pengetahuan Indonesia*). On 17 September 1962, the Indonesian Institute for Sciences gave this building to the Ministry of Education and Culture and designated as the Museum of Jakarta before being turned over to the administration. On June 23, 1968, the Government of Jakarta Capital Region or DKI JAYA (*Daerah Khusus Ibukota Jakarta Raya*) handed over the management of this building to the Department of Museums and History. In the empty condition, the building was restored and was officially inaugurated on August 13, 1970 as *Museum Wayang* or the Puppet Museum by Ali Sadikin, the Governor of Jakarta.

In this museum, we can see the collection of puppets from all over the archipelago, started from grass puppets, cardboard puppets, puppets made of zinc which is very simple, two-dimensional puppets made of wood called

klitik puppets, puppet show to a variety of puppets made from carved leather very beautiful and decorated with jewels made of diamond is very expensive. In addition, there is also a collection of leather puppets and puppet from various countries around the world.



Figure 11:
The Puppet Museum of Jakarta (photo collection by Lilie Suratminto)

In the space left, when we entered the building of Puppet Museum, we will encounter a collection of nine of the Company's tombstone mounted on the wall. There, we can read the names of several former Governor-General of the VOC in the 18th century, such as Willem van Outhoorn, Abraham Patras, and Gustaaf Willem Baron van Imhoff, and several other VOC officials. Opposite below the inscription, there are replicas of the tomb of the

Governor-General Jan Pieters Zoon Coen, and the row names of the Governor-General who once buried in the Dome Church. The inscription said as follows: “[...] 1808 EN OVERGEBRACHT NAAR TANAH ABANG”. It means that in the year of 1808, it was the gravestones moved to Tanah Abang. So according to these inscriptions, in the year of 1808 the tombstones of the Governor-General of the VOC, who died in Batavia, all totaling 23 people and their family, was moved to Tanah Abang (Suratminto, 2006:134). In the cemetery of Tanah Abang, which is now called the Inscription Museum, there were only two tombstones of former Governor-General of the VOC i.e. Governor-General of the tombstones of Van Riemsdijk (+1677) and Van Overstraten (+1801).

CONCLUDING REMARKS

From the above explanation, we can be taken several conclusions that the building of the Dome Church by his real name *Nieuwe Hollandsche Kerk* was standing at the place of the Puppet Museum building. Evidence that the Dome Church had ever existed can be seen in the daily reports or the *Daghregister* of the VOC which are now kept at the National Archives in the Hague, Netherlands, and in the National Archives of the Republic of Indonesia or ANRI (*Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia*), and at several other VOC cities in the world. In addition, from various sources we can be obtained recordings ever undertaken by painters, either by the Dutch painters and painters of other nationalities, for example J. Neuhoff, F.X. Habermann, J. Rach, J.W. Heydt, G.M. Probst, and W. Alexander. Perhaps there are many more other artists outside of this research.

The painter, as eye witness of the presence of the Dome Church, had painted it from various directions. Among these artists are F.X. Habermann, J. Rach, and G.M. Probst have in common is that they paint the Dome Church from the side of the Batavia Hotel, which now functioned as Café Batavia or from the left side of the building of the *Justitie gebouw* or Justice building (now the Museum of Paintings and Ceramics). Painter W. Alexander actually painted the Dome Church as the background of his paintings *grote rivier* or the great river.

The Dome Church collapse was triggered by many factors, namely: (1) Establishment of the land of the buildings was not strong enough, because it was obtained from the straightened of Ciliwung river; (2) The foundations of the building was less strong or less power because the contractor was not accountable, Christoffel Moll, was not an engineer but a baker; (3) Lack of development funds to the church because of the VOC as lenders already

bankrupt; (4) Because of the political and religious reasons: the Governor-General Daendels was Catholic and he was the patriot anti-Orange Faction and of course he was less concerned with the Protestant, the followers of the *Prinsgezinden* or Pro-Oranges group. The French Revolution influenced the colonial society directly the policy of the Dutch Indies government; (5) The state treasury was empty for the cost of the war against the British invasion; and (6) Because of natural phenomena. The earthquake in Batavia at that time resulted the Dome Church in a slight angle. Triggered by the need for funds, the land of the Dome Church was eventually sold by the Government to Geo Wehry en Co. that required the warehouse to store merchandise.

Finally, the symbol of the greatness of the Dome Church in Batavia was torn down and disappear like swallowed up by the earth, including its community. The ladies of the Company Officials used like showing off wealth and prestige in the church service were disappear too. We can find today at the place of the Dome Church only a mute witness the Puppet Museum looks ahead to resemble the face of the *Oud Hollandsche Kerk* (the Cross Church).

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LILIE SURATMINTO,
The Standing and the Collapse of the Dome Church in Batavia

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