

MELCHIOR TREUB  
1851-1910

Treub was born on 26 December 1851 in Voorschoten near Leiden, the son of the local burgomaster. After attending the municipal HBS in Leiden, he started his studies in biology at the University of Leiden in 1869. His most important teachers were the botanist W.F.R. Suringar and the zoologist E. Selenka. Treub received his Ph.D. in 1873 on a dissertation on the true nature of lichens (*Onderzoeken over de natuur der lichenen* [Leiden: Van der Hoek, 1873]), an elaboration of an earlier gold-medal winning study. From 1874 to 1880, Treub was botanical assistant to Suringar. The high quality of his studies on plant cytology, histology, nucleus division, and embryology brought him membership of the Royal Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1879.

In 1880 Treub was appointed director of 's Lands Plantentuin (Botanical Garden) in Buitenzorg on Java in the Dutch East Indies (now Kebun Raya at Bogor, Indonesia). Within a year, he had reorganized the curriculum of the attached agricultural school. He went on to revitalize the gardens, herbaria, library, and scientific research. Treub insisted that applied agricultural research should always be based on pure scientific research. In 1883 he founded a new periodical, *Mededeelingen*, to publish the results of the researches carried on at the gardens. In order to accommodate the increasing numbers of foreign scientists visiting the gardens, Treub opened a new laboratory in 1885. Using various means of publication such as articles in a popular Dutch literary journal, and the newly founded journals *Bulletin du jardin botanique de Buitenzorg* and *Teysmannia* (both beginning in 1894), he tried to make the authorities and the general public aware of the rich economical potentials of the colony.

On medical leave in the Netherlands in 1887, Treub established the Buitenzorg Fund, which provided grants for botanists to work in Java. From that time onward, new laboratories were established and a programme was begun under Treub's guidance for the foundation of various agricultural research stations all over the colony. In 1890 he founded the Maatschappij ter Bevordering van het Natuurkundig Onderzoek der Nederlandsche Koloniën (Society for the promotion of natural scientific research in the Dutch colonies, commonly known as the 'Treub Maatschappij'). Treub acquired a forest preserve next to the mountain garden in Tjibodas (now Cibodas) where, in 1891, a new field laboratory was founded.

Treub's own research dealt with various plant diseases, rice crops, the embryology and biohistory of club ferns, the fertilization of *Casuarina*, the embryology of *Ficus* and *Elatostema*, the plant sociology of the rain forest, and floras of Buitenzorg and of the recolonized island Krakatoa. Treub's merits were recognized by the colonial authorities who, in 1898, gave him the honorary title of professor although there was as yet no university in the Dutch East Indies. In 1905 Treub married Antoinette Petronella Vogel. The marriage remained childless. In that same year a Department of Agriculture was founded in the Dutch East Indies, of which Treub became the first director.

In 1909 Treub retired for health reasons. He settled in southern France where he died of persistent malaria in St. Raphael on 3 October 1910.

#### *Primary works*

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[L.C.P.]