

Arts and Archaeology
of the Islamic World
Volume 22



Legacies of Colonialism in Museum Collections

The (Un)Making of Indonesian Islam in the Netherlands

Mirjam Shatanawi

BRILL

Legacies of Colonialism in Museum Collections

Arts and Archaeology of the Islamic World

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VOLUME 22

The titles published in this series are listed at brill.com/aiw

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Cover illustration: Wooden doll dressed as a hajji, one of 350 dolls that were presented in 1893 to Queen Wilhelmina as a present for her thirteenth birthday. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. RV-1108-1. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/683870>.

Text editing: Steve Russell

Photography National Museum of World Cultures: Irene de Groot

Photography Museum Bronbeek: John Klein Nagelvoort

The Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data is available online at <https://catalog.loc.gov>
LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2024054851>

Typeface for the Latin, Greek, and Cyrillic scripts: "Brill". See and download: brill.com/brill-typeface.

ISSN 2213-3844

ISBN 978-90-04-68841-4 (hardback)

ISBN 978-90-04-68842-1 (e-book)

DOI 10.1163/9789004688421

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Prologue

‘Can I have Pakistan back?’ It was my first week working as a curator of the Middle East and North Africa at the Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam, and my colleague, the curator of South Asia, had asked me a revealing question.¹ Until then, Pakistan had been assigned to my predecessor, who oversaw the museum’s collections of the Islamic Culture Area (*islamitisch cultuurgebied*). And now it was being asked that the country be ‘returned’. ‘Will you also take Afghanistan?’, I replied, feeling somewhat uncomfortable by this request, and hoping to hit a light tone. ‘No, my cultural zone is British India, so Afghanistan belongs to you’, was the answer.

That the legacies of colonialism permeated the Tropenmuseum at all levels was not news to me. My first big job at the museum had been to curate an exhibition about the relationship between the Netherlands and Islam (see Shatanawi 2012a; 2012b). I soon learned that in my position as the curator for the Middle Eastern and North African collections, Islam was at the centre of attention. The requests directed to me, both internal and external, often concerned Islam in many of its aspects. Besides, many of the objects collected by my predecessors had a direct connection to the Islamic faith (see Shatanawi 2014). At the same time, and much to my surprise, I discovered that Islam did not feature prominently in relation to the Indonesian collections, which at the Tropenmuseum made up the largest share of the

collections. There were several curators for the Indonesian collections at the time, and none had much knowledge of nor interest in Islam.² It did not take long before questions about Southeast Asian objects relating to Islam and Muslims were directed to me.

The overall lack of interest in Indonesian Islam at all levels of museum practice (collections, exhibitions, research) left me puzzled, since Indonesia had been the prime colony of the Netherlands. The National Museum of World Cultures (NMVW), of which the Tropenmuseum today forms part, has one of the largest and most prominent collections of art and material culture from Indonesia, most of which was collected during the colonial period.³ Yet despite this long history, few objects in the collection have been identified as ‘Islamic’ and there is no terminology to denote ‘Indonesian-Islamic’ artistic styles. Equally important, Indonesia was widely known as the country with the largest number of Muslim inhabitants in the world. Moreover, my curatorial career started in February 2001, just seven months before Islam would be propelled to the forefront of public debate, as well as in

1 I started at the Tropenmuseum in 2001, when I was appointed associate curator for the exhibition *Urban Islam*. In 2004, I was appointed curator of the Middle Eastern and North African collections. I negotiated a change of job title; previously the position was named curator of the Islamic Culture Area, but I found the rubric of Islam too narrow to describe the Middle East and North Africa, the region that was the focus of the position, and too broad because it suggested a larger focus area, including other Muslim-majority regions in Africa and Asia.

2 This changed in 2005 when Willem (Pim) Westerkamp was appointed curator of the History and Cultures of Southeast Asia. Between 1991 and 2005, Westerkamp worked as a curator at Museum Nusantara in Delft.

3 The National Museum of World Cultures was founded in 2014 as an umbrella organisation that serves the collaboration of four ethnographic museums: the Museum of Ethnology in Leiden, the Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam, the Africa Museum in Berg and Dal and (since 2017) the Wereldmuseum in Rotterdam. In 2023, all locations changed their names to Wereldmuseum and, hence, the Tropenmuseum was renamed Wereldmuseum Amsterdam. National Museum of World Cultures (Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen, abbreviated NMVW) remains the official name for the organisation.

museum practice.⁴ For a curator for the Middle Eastern and North African collections, Islam was the number one topic requested, followed by queries relating to Turkish and Moroccan culture, the countries of origin of the largest Muslim communities in the Netherlands. Yet the events of that time did not seem to have a similar impact on curatorial practice related to Indonesia. Museums in the Netherlands continued to present Indonesia as a country largely devoid of Islam and Muslims. In the Tropenmuseum gallery of Southeast Asian cultures, Islam was relegated to one small display case. The Rijksmuseum, the Netherlands' premier national museum, did not even bother to include a single Islamic object from Indonesia in its dedicated Asian Pavilion (Westermann 2015; Bloembergen and Eickhoff 2014).⁵ Situations like these kept me wondering: is this simply a matter of colonial amnesia, the act of forgetting colonial histories, or are we witnessing colonial aphasia, an occlusion of knowledge, 'a difficulty generating a vocabulary that associates appropriate words and concepts with appropriate things' (Stoler 2011, 125)?

My increasing anxiety about this matter was made productive in a curatorial practice that combined work on the ground with the investigation of the historical practices of collecting and presenting Islam at the Tropenmuseum, resulting in several books and articles (Shatanawi 2014; 2012a;

2009c; Vos 2008). These publications laid the foundation for this book. I also reflected on my own practice in the context of the epistemological legacies of the Tropenmuseum (Shatanawi 2012a; 2012b; 2009a; 2007). I wrote about othering as the museum's core business, because 'it only represents half the globe', enforcing a distinction between 'the West and the rest'. The museum's anthropological outlook, and the emphasis on cultural traits as markers of difference, meant that essentialism was woven into the organisational structure, with a 'compartmentalized world of cultures', each with its own curator and collection. As long as the ethnographic museum functions as a distinct entity, I concluded, I cannot counter curate my way out (Shatanawi 2007). Yet somehow, despite my attempts to write 'against culture' (Abu-Lughod 1991), I did not manage to get a grip. I felt a deeper investigation was needed to be able to understand the entanglements with the past, and ultimately to undo some of its effects in the present.

This book is the result of years of research on these matters. The overarching question is directed to why and how 'Islam' was collected, categorised and exhibited in Dutch museums, tracing the colonial legacies in today's practice. It follows the traces of tens of thousands of objects that are now present in museum collections in the Netherlands, such as the hajji doll that is featured on the cover.⁶ It was one of 350 dolls that were presented in 1893 to the Dutch Queen Wilhelmina as a present for her thirteenth birthday by 'the ladies of the Dutch East Indies', who intended to entertain and educate the young queen (see also p. 110). The ladies had the dolls carved by local craftsmen, but then complained that making realistic representations was 'virtually unknown to them' and, hence, that the 'natives' needed 'European guidance' to make progress in this area (Bakhuizen van den Brink-Raedt van Oldenbarnevelt 1894,

4 Publications about museums and Islam commonly start with the observation that after the events of 9/11 and the rise of Islamophobia, museums have shown increased interest in presenting Islamic art and material culture. Across the globe, museums have invested in new galleries, or their existing collection displays have undergone a major overhaul (for a partial list see Shaw 2019a).

5 Another example of the marginal position of Indonesian Islam in Dutch public culture is the publication by Poorthuis and Salemink (2011), *Van harem tot fitna: beeldvorming van de islam in Nederland 1848–2010* ("From Harem to Fitna: Images of Islam in the Netherlands 1848–2010"), a voluminous book of more than 700 pages, promising to be a comprehensive overview of the modern history of the connections between Islam and the Netherlands. In this study, Dutch imperialism and its relationship to Indonesian Islam are reduced to mere footnotes.

6 Wooden doll dressed as a hajji. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. RV-1108-1. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/683870>.

3–4). More important than the doll itself were the clothes it was donned. Each doll came with a detailed description of the local names of the garments, as well as their meanings and symbolism. This allowed the queen to learn about the different population groups in the colony. Today the dolls are on display at the Wereldmuseum Leiden, one of the instances where the colonial memory

of Islam is reactivated, as discussed in this book. Intriguingly, the hajji doll's face bears an expression of earnestness and slight distress, crafted by the woodworker from Cianjur, whose name the 'ladies' did not find worth mentioning. Could there be a message he intended to convey through this expression, and how does it hold relevance in today's context?

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The Making and Unmaking of Islam in Museums

An Introduction

1 Colonial Collections

The past years have been a particularly exciting time to write a book on the presence of colonial collections in European museums. The issue of the restitution and repatriation of objects that were amassed during the age of European imperialism has gained significant momentum and has become a subject of intense debate and activism. In several European countries – Belgium, France, Germany and the Netherlands in the lead – governments are developing active restitution policies, in close cooperation with a number of museums (Van Beurden 2022). The policies are a response to increased public debate, which high profile media reports attest to, and which is, in turn, driven by renewed and persistent demands from countries of origin. It has resulted in a change of public attitudes to museums, as visitors are increasingly questioning the origins of the collections and the moral rights of the museum to hold – and hold on to – such objects (Frost 2019).

At the same time, the broader movement of decolonising museums is challenging the Eurocentric narratives, power structures, and colonial legacies that permeate museums. Throughout Europe, activists, artists as well as museum staff seek to acknowledge and address the historical injustices and marginalization of non-Western perspectives within museum collections, exhibitions, and practices (Knudsen et al. 2021; Sieg 2021; Hicks 2020). The developments around colonial collections are closely followed in academia, resulting in a steady stream of publications, from multiple perspectives, including international law, cultural studies and critical race theory. The decolonial turn in museology has shifted the attention from the United Kingdom, Canada and the United States, to countries with lesser known colonial

legacies, such as Germany (Von Oswald 2022) and Sweden (Snickare 2022).

This book stands in this strand of scholarship and takes as its overarching question why and how ‘Islam’ was collected, categorised and exhibited in museums in the Netherlands, tracing the colonial legacies in today’s practice. The focus in this book is on objects from Indonesia, the Netherlands’ premier colony. Already in colonial times, Muslims made up the majority of the population, especially in densely populated Java and in Sumatra, but also in southern Sulawesi and certain parts of Kalimantan and the Maluku Islands. Yet when Indonesia is presented in museums, the predominant focus is on Hindu-Buddhist art or the heritage of the country’s non-Muslim cultural groups. Even in the repatriation of Indonesia’s art, Hindu-Buddhist heritage is prioritised (Tythacott and Ardiyansyah 2021). A comparable situation exists in relation to Islamic art. Museum collections and exhibitions, with few exceptions, take as their point of departure the so-called central lands of Islam and seldom pay attention to Indonesia.

The particular contribution of this book is to be found in detailed histories of Indonesian objects that are currently present in Dutch museums, following them during instances of collecting, classification, interpretation and public display. Like others, I notice that the public conversation is largely based on a simplified understanding of colonial collecting and the popular conviction that everything is looted. Yet colonial oppression took place in numerous subtle ways, and hence there is a need for deeper insights into the intricate aspects and complexities related to collecting and museum practices that reflect the history of empire. I argue that the silences surrounding Indonesian Islam in museums can be traced to a multitude of factors relating to Dutch colonial rule

barang hoe langer hoe meer een gunsteling van Allah ziet en hem heimelijk helpt en kwartier geeft. Talrijk waren de sprookjes over hem in omloop, ons verteld tijdens ons verblijf te Boni van 1911 tot 1913. Voedsel hertoe gaven ook wel de talrijke, mislukte tochten van uit de verschillende posten, waarbij men hem dikwijls zeer dicht op de hielen was — ik denk hierbij aan den toemaligen gezaghebber van Soppeng, die eens de met goud bewerkte songko (hoofddekse) van Daeng Pabarang, meebracht van zijn vervolging. — Toen zag hij er dus deftiger uit op bijgaande kicken. — En ik herinner aan sprong in den afgrond, toen hij dood he maar kort daarop weer opdook; aan de opva van zijn dubbelganger, die eenige vrouwen Daeng Pabarang geleidde. Vrouwen had de ruchteling bij de vleet; — de ouders brac hun jonge dochterjes aan den zwerver, als aan den grooten man. Arme slachtoffers! Bij de omsingeling van een huis, waar D Pabarang móest zijn, werd hij toch niet gevor

't Soppengsche, even na de laatste expeditie, met haar man — toenmaals kapitein en tevens civiel-gezaghebber — een jaar lang vertoefde, werd geïnspireerd door de romantische geschiedenis van Daeng Pabarang, en zóó ontstond het bovengenoemde verhaal.

Over de opvatting van Daeng Pabarang en den indruk, dien deze op de verschillende menschen in Boni teweeg bracht, hoop ik spoedig verder te verhalen.



De Songko van Daeng Pabarang.
(In bezit van oud-Lt.-Kolonel H. A. Kooy, te Haarlem)

„In rook veranderd”, vertelde men, was het huis ontlucht.

In de laatste jaren vóór zijn opvatting in 1913 scheen zijn macht wel wat te tanen. C nog de hand heeft gehad in een op het touw gezetten, maar spoedig gefnuikten, opstand in het Bonische in Mei 1913, is niet bewezen. Wel werden er telkens geruchten verspreid, dat Daeng Pabarang zich zou willen overgeven, brieven van dezen of van één zijner aanhangers bereikten wel eens het civiel gezag, maar men geloofde er niet in ernst aan en 't bleef voor mij als een sprookje, dat ginds in die donkere bergen van Lamoeroe de avonturier rondzwierf... tot op eens in 't laatst van Mei, ik het eerst nog wel... te Boni's hoofdplaats „Watampone” de telefonische tijding vernam van zijn opvatting. Verraden was hij door een, die zich uitgaf voor zijn beschermer, een landgenoot. Was het dwaas, dat ik een zekere spijt hierover gevoelde en heimelijk hoopte, dat 't blijken zou, dat men zich weer vergist had? Ja, wél dwaas. Maar toch ook begrijpelijk, voor wie „de Gouden Kris” van M. C. Kooy—Van Zeggelen gelezen heeft. Deze schrijfter, die in

Als Bram gaat jagen, sleept hij altijd de halve inventaris van onze woning mede, in den regel daarbij vergetende, wat hij het meest noodig heeft, hetzij zijn patronen of veldflesch of patroontrekker.

Tegen zes uur begon Jacob het huis leeg te halen en meende ik een oogenblik, dat hij een idée fixe gekregen had, dat wij gingen verhuizen, maar hij bepaalde zich gelukkig tot voorwerpen als jachtgeweren, een hartsvanger, veldflesschen, patroongordels, een veldkijker (wat je met zoo'n ding midden in een stikdonkeren nacht moet doen, is mij nooit recht duidelijk geweest; zeker een geheim van het vak), regenjassen, flesschen met benzine voor den motor, een voorraad, groot genoeg om met het ongelukkige motorbootje, waarmede wij naar A. -Estate zouden gaan, een reis naar de Stille Zuidzee te maken, een twaalf tasschen en een groote lans, met welke laatste hij heel handig door een mijner lievelingsplaten,



FIGURE 1 Daeng Pabarang's *songko*, collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. RV-3600-6087, and reporting in *Indië: geïllustreerd weekblad voor Nederland en koloniën* (vol. 1, 1917)

in Indonesia and a number of interlinked colonial-period conceptions that made Indonesian Islamic art as a museological notion inviable.

1.1 *Decolonising Museums*

At the peak of European imperialism, the British, Dutch, French and Russian Empires each governed more Muslims than any Muslim-ruled state, including the Ottoman Empire (Motadel 2014). One of the consequences was the large-scale movement of works of art, objects, and even entire architectural structures from the colonised Muslim lands to the European metropolises. The Islamic art collections in France, Britain and Russia were largely formed in colonial contexts, as were the Dutch collections from Muslim Indonesia (Giese, Volait, and Varela Braga 2019; Shatanawi 2014; Vernoit 2000a). Museums in countries without colonies in Muslim regions, such as Germany, also benefited from the steady stream of objects coming out of the colonies (Gierlichs and Hagedorn 2004).

Although, in recent years, the restitution and repatriation of colonial collections have become an area of increasing debate, Islamic art and heritage has thus far remained relatively in the shadows (Shatanawi, Macdonald, and Puzon 2021).¹ Regarding Indonesian heritage in Dutch museums, several steps have been undertaken towards repatriation, notably the publication of *Advies Koloniale Collecties en Erkennung van Onrecht* (Advice on colonial collections and the recognition of injustice, Raad voor Cultuur 2020) and the installation of a restitution committee. In 2022, Indonesia has requested the return of several items, including some from Muslim-majority regions, such as the regalia from the South Sulawesi sultanate of Luwu and objects related

to important historical figures, including Pangeran Diponegoro, hero of the Java War, and Acehese resistance leader Teuku Umar.² Between 1977 and 2020, several objects from the former possession of Diponegoro were repatriated from private and museum collections in the Netherlands (Ardiyansyah 2023; Van Beurden 2022). Since independence, recurrent requests were made for the repatriation of Acehese manuscripts, in particular the looted manuscripts that were in the possession of Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje and currently are part of the library collections of Leiden University.³ In chapter 4, I discuss the looting of manuscripts during the Aceh War (see also Witkam 2019).

Decolonisation of museums in the Netherlands goes in many directions, including the repatriation of collections, resisting and rewriting colonial vocabularies, sharing authority with so-called source communities, and reflecting the cultural diversity of Dutch society in the museums where the collections are currently housed (Ariese, Pozzi, and Wawrzyniak 2021; Balkenhol and Modest 2019; Van Huis 2019). However, there are certain structural aspects of colonial legacies that have received limited attention thus far. One notable example is the disciplinary organisation of collections, which continues to reflect colonial paradigms in Dutch and European museums. As chapter 6 of this book explains, the nineteenth-century arrangement of collections broke up Middle Eastern history and

1 For example, the report on the restitution of African objects by Sarr and Savoy (2018b) did not involve North Africa, allegedly because of the region's different histories of collecting and appreciation, which are, in fact, closely tied up with European imperialism.

2 At the time of writing, the returns have not yet materialised but are expected by 2024, except for the Luwu regalia of which the whereabouts are unknown. Following a request from Indonesia in 1975, museum curators tried to locate the regalia. I conducted a new search in 2022, but I was unable to trace them in Dutch collections. Minutes of the Council of Ministers, 20 August 1976. NL-HaNA Raad van Ministers [Ministerraad], 1823–1995, 2.02.05.02 no. 1930. See also: Brief report on the mission of specialists to Indonesia, 10–22 November 1975. Archive Pieter Pott, jaarverslagen. NL-LdnRMV, no inventory number.

3 Various memorandums on the return of cultural objects to Indonesia. NL-HaNA Ministerie van Cultuur, Recreatie en Maatschappelijk Werk, 1965–1982, 2.27.19 no. 4193.

heritage into three time periods (pre-Islamic, Islamic, and modern). Each of these time periods was studied in a different disciplinary tradition (archaeology, art history, and ethnology respectively) and the corresponding collections became part of dedicated museums. The taxonomies and conceptions of these collections, including definitions of the 'Islamic', have remained largely unchallenged since the early twentieth century (Graves 2012; Flood 2007). Likewise, artefacts from the ancient Near East remain not only geographically but also epistemically dislocated and detached from the region where they were once excavated (Brusius 2021). Moreover, the different time periods were, and still are, appreciated and appropriated differently; generally, Near Eastern archaeology and Islamic art were valued more, and seen as closer to Europe, than the art and material culture of modern and contemporary Muslims. In addition, the nineteenth-century developments did not result in the appreciation of Islamic art everywhere in Europe, as exemplified by the Netherlands, where colonial perceptions of art destabilised the recognition of Islam as a source of artistic creation in Indonesia.

This situation is mirrored in the former prime colony of the Netherlands, Indonesia, where museum displays, like in the Netherlands, often continue to reflect colonial ideas and uncritically present colonial sources (Arainikasih and Hafnidar 2018). In addition, museums sometimes present anticolonial positions, without offering alternative conceptions of Indonesian art and culture. As Ajeng Arainikasih and Hafnidar (2018, 106) put it, 'decolonising in the Indonesian context therefore means that museums may present narratives from the local perspective, challenging colonial legacies such as social segregation and deconstructing writing on Indonesian postcolonial official nationalist history, which remains embedded in Indonesian society.'

In Southeast Asia more broadly, several museums have extended the field of Islamic art to include Southeast Asian art. The Islamic Arts Museum

Malaysia (Muzium Kesenian Islam Malaysia) in Kuala Lumpur opened in 1998 and is privately owned. The Asian Civilisations Museum in Singapore has collected Islamic art from West and Central Asia since the 1990s. In 2015, it transformed its West Asia gallery into a gallery dedicated to Islamic art, now including Southeast Asian objects.⁴ Both museums start from the stylistic features found in Islamic art from the so-called central lands, such as calligraphy and natural motifs, and prioritise finding similar forms in Southeast Asian arts, rather than emphasising their unique features. A similar connection to global Muslim heritage, at the same time implying a non-controversial definition of the 'Islamic', is made at the Bayt al-Quran and Istiqlal museum in Jakarta (Zilberg 2011).

In anthropology, attempts to theorize and conceptualize Islam following postcolonial critique date back to the 1970s, resulting in influential concepts such as Talal Asad's Islam-as-a-discursive-tradition (Asad 1986).⁵ As Shahab Ahmed (2016, 114) points out, anthropology seemed to be more engaged with the question of definition than other scholarly fields, such as Islamic studies based on historical and textual sources. In the field of Islamic art history, engagement with this overwhelming body of work only seemed to arrive after Ahmed published his critique (2016) on the basic premises of the notion of Islamic art. The rudimentary conceptualisation of Islam in art history, which was rooted in early twentieth-century Western notions of religion, was long taken for granted. In the past few years, however, work has appeared that applies postcolonial approaches to Islam to art history (e.g. Shaw 2019b; 2012).

4 Noorashikin Zulkifli, Re-presenting Southeast Asian Art as 'Islamic Art'; presentation at the conference *Kampong Kaji to the Holy City: scholarship and stories of the haji*, Malay Heritage Center (Singapore), 2 March 2019.

5 For an overview of the history of the debate, see Lukens-Bull (1999) and for a critical review see Schielke (2010) and Ahmad (2016).

A similar gap exists regarding the study of the representation of Indonesian material culture in museums. Although the colonial context in which the established narrative of Indonesian art and culture emerged has been well-researched, its impact on the collecting and exhibiting of Islamic-period material culture, thus far, has been overlooked. Critical engagement with colonial practices of collecting and display has been the subject of scholarly work since the 1990s (e.g. Drieënhuizen 2012; Ter Keurs 2007a; Bloembergen 2006; Hardiati and Ter Keurs 2005; Schefold and Vermeulen 2002b; Legêne 1998a). In these publications Muslim Indonesia has been largely overlooked, as it is in studies of the histories of collecting Islamic art and material culture in Europe (Dolezalek and Guidetti 2022; Giese, Volait, and Varela Braga 2019; Gierlichs and Hagedorn 2004; Vernoit 2000a). With the exception of Aceh (Witkam 2019; Arainikasih and Hafnidar 2018; A. Bosma 2018; Broos 2010; Stevens 2007; 2005), work on collecting and exhibitionary practices regarding colonial Indonesia tend to focus on the non-Muslim and pre-Islamic heritage of Indonesia. Thus, even when the individual studies are decidedly critical in outlook, the combined narrative of this total body of work unintentionally replicates the colonial trope of disregarding Islamic heritage, especially outside Aceh. There is, for example, hardly any research done on the collecting of Islamic-period material from Java, and, as far as I know, none that includes an approach from the perspective of Islamic heritage.

1.2 *Islamic Collections*

'Islam' is a contested term. In the field of museums and heritage, such contestations principally take place around the question of whether a separation can be made between culture and religion, and whether Islam is characterised by singularity and uniformity or by difference and diversity (Shatanawi, Macdonald, and Puzon 2021; Jouili 2019; Ahmed 2016; Grabar 1978). For the purposes of this book, I have chosen not to opt for a

particular definition of 'Islam', but rather investigate the divergent meanings given to Islam in settings of museum collecting, classification and display. This means that I explore the notion of the 'Islamic' from a wide angle, including all kinds of objects made or used by Muslims in these various regions and time periods, as well as objects produced under Muslim rule. Such a broad perspective makes it possible to investigate in detail how objects generate multiple meanings as they move through different regimes of value (Appadurai 1986), and if and how these meanings relate to the origin and nature of the object. Looking at objects through the lens of Islam inevitably means invoking a particular frame, yet the objects of this book are not confined to any one frame, be it 'Islamic' or 'colonial', as I will emphasise throughout.

The starting point of this book is objects from the majority Muslim regions of colonial Indonesia, especially Java, Sumatra and South Sulawesi, that were removed from Indonesia between 1800 and 1949 and are now part of museum collections in the Netherlands. However, to be able to investigate the divergent framings of Islam, I also look at the principles that organised Islamic collections from other regions, notably West and Central Asia, North Africa and South Asia. In this respect, the notion of 'Islamic art', which governs representations of Islam in many European museums, draws attention. As an art historical and museological category the term was created by European art historians around the turn of the twentieth century, grouping together objects from Central and West Asia and North Africa on the basis of stylistic similarities. Islamic art is often defined as 'the visual culture of any society where Muslims were or are dominant' (Watenpaugh 2017, 1228), and the category also includes the art made by or for Muslim groups in societies where they constituted minorities, and made by or for religious minorities in Muslim-majority societies (Watenpaugh 2017; Blair and Bloom 2003). Despite the emphasis on encompassing 'any society where Muslims were or are dominant', the field of Islamic art history

initially focused on the so-called central lands of Islam (and early and medieval Islamic history), expanding over the course of the twentieth century both geographically and temporally.⁶ However, with a few exceptions, Indonesia remains outside the category of Islamic art.

In most European countries, Islam is chiefly presented in museums through this notion of Islamic art. Major Islamic art collections can be found in museums across the continent (for an overview see Ådahl and Ahlund 2000). In the Netherlands, the category has been deployed by several museums, including the Rijksmuseum, Kunstmuseum Den Haag and Wereldmuseum Rotterdam. Until today, virtually all European presentations of Islamic art exclude Southeast Asia.⁷ Just like 'Islam' is neglected as a category for Indonesian objects in museums in the Netherlands, Indonesia is ignored in most survey books, exhibitions and museum collections of Islamic art and architecture (Bloembergen 2021; Formichi 2016). Both ethnology and Islamic art emerged as fields of enquiry in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when European scholars and museums started to study the artefacts that were extracted from Muslim regions. One of the questions guiding the material in this book is to what extent, and in which ways, the exclusion of Indonesia from the field of Islamic art and material culture can be traced to this period of formation.

This book, thus, fits within a wider trend of critical engagement with the notion of Islamic art. In recent years, a number of publications have been dedicated to rethink the concept of Islamic

art (Shaw 2019b; 2012; Ahmed 2016; Necipoğlu 2012; Junod et al. 2012). Subsequently, a number of museums have renamed their Islamic galleries (e.g. Metropolitan Museum of Art in the US, Victoria & Albert Museum and the British Museum in the UK). Yet despite the renewed interest in exhibitions, research on how Islam is transmitted, displayed and framed through museum representations remains relatively scarce (e.g. M. Berg and Grinell 2021; Guidi 2021). This is noteworthy, given the emphasis of critical museology on matters of social justice and the role of museums as platforms to challenge prejudice and confront racial discrimination.

I use the notion of 'framing' to examine the historical conditions in which Islam was shaped in museums (see section 4). In studying the framings of Islam, and following Clifford (1997), this book takes the museum, first of all, as a contact zone, a staging area for negotiation, in this case between colonial perceptions and Indonesian cultural expressions. This contact zone extends to the sites from which museum objects were extracted. Through close reading of the objects themselves as well as the study of their biographies using archival sources, I investigate the various meanings attached to the objects by their Indonesian makers and users and their re-appropriation in the hands of collectors and museum staff. The central question is how ideas of the 'Islamic' are expressed in and mediated through the object, and then framed in practices of museum collecting and interpretation. Given the involvement of the large community of mixed Indo-European descent in these practices, such interactions were often cross-cultural in more than one way. Drawing on the work of Talal Asad (2003; 1993; 1986), I set out to explore the meanings that can be derived from the objects when they are understood as zones of connection between different cultural, historical and political forces. Asad, borrowing from Foucault, sees Islam as a discursive tradition, a set of discourses embodied in Muslim practices that address themselves to conceptions of an Islamic past and future (1986, 14). Central to Asad's notion of Islam as a discursive tradition is the question of

6 These expansions of Islamic art history grouped regions outside the central lands and later periods under the heading of Islamic art; for example, parts of India under Deccani and Mughal rule (1526–1857), and Qajar Iran (1799–1925).

7 An exception is the *Albukhary Foundation Gallery of the Islamic World*, which opened in 2018 at the British Museum (see Porter and Greenwood 2020). Not coincidentally, this gallery was sponsored by the Malaysia-based Albukhary Foundation that founded the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia.

power, particularly with regard to the production of knowledge. Looking at Islamic artefacts as sources of knowledge, which are produced within certain power relationships, as Asad's approach implies, fits in with Clifford's focus on the museum collection as a site for 'a power-charged set of exchanges' (1997, 192) of ideas between individuals and groups of people. A 'radical inequality' (Pratt 1992, 8) is implied because of the ambiguous relationships between colonial discourse and Muslim knowledge.

The second angle that will be explored is the museum as a contact zone for two academic narratives about the role of Islam in the Muslim world's arts and material culture. In order to do so, I will go back to the original use of the term 'contact zone' by Mary Louise Pratt as 'the space of imperial encounters ... where subjects previously separated by geography and history are co-present, the point at which their trajectories now intersect' (1992, 8). The formulation of a Western canon of Indonesian art and the emergence of the field of Islamic art simultaneously took place in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Although the two academic fields were geographically separated – Indonesian art history being dominated by Dutch scholarship, while Islamic art primarily was studied and collected in other European countries and the United States – they had a number of theories and conceptions in common, which framed their outlook on Islam. An example of such a shared concept is the diffusionist notion of cultural zones (*Kulturkreise*), which influenced museum framings of Islamic material culture in the domain of ethnology as well as art history.

The objects featuring in this book fit a variety of current and historical definitions of the 'Islamic', including those deployed in the domains of anthropology and art history. The objects are, for instance, associated with the Muslim faith or they fit the aesthetic and historical criteria of Islamic art.⁸ The broadest definition of the Islamic defines Islam as a cultural and civilizational zone.

⁸ In the field of Islamic art history, the boundaries between arts and crafts are subject to debate, on the basis that the

Islam is then explained in the sense of 'Islamicate cultures', a term coined by the American historian Marshall Hodgson (1974). Hodgson's (often-criticized) model differentiates between Islam, defined as the religion proper, and Islamicate, by which he meant the cultural layers of the regions ruled by Muslims, which are influenced by Islam but not necessarily religious in themselves.⁹ In the context of the museum, this translates into all objects that were produced or used by Muslims, in a Muslim-majority area, or under Muslim rule. The total number of objects from Islamicate cultures in museums in the Netherlands ranges between 130,000 and 150,000 objects, the vast majority of which are located in the NMVW collections.¹⁰ Studying this large body of objects allows me to discover the instances in which museums invoked the frame of the Islamic, when they did not, and when they did, which framings they deployed, and why. Thus, in this way it will be possible to uncover where and when absences and presences of Islam are located.

In this book, I argue that the occlusion, the state of being hidden, of histories of Dutch imperialism with Islam is possible due to the continued presence of colonial ideas about Islam, with a focus on

distinction is grounded in Eurocentric norms (Milwright 2017, 8–9).

⁹ For a contestation of Hodgson's model, see Ahmed (2016).

¹⁰ The exact number is impossible to determine, given the lack of data about the geographical origins of objects in many museums. My calculation takes the collections of the National Museum of World Cultures (including the Rotterdam collection) as a starting point: it includes approximately 70,000 objects from Muslim Indonesia and 24,000 from West and Central Asia and North Africa. Add to this around 20,000 objects (rough estimate) from other Muslim majority regions, for instance in East and West Africa and South Asia. Museon has approximately 9,000 objects from Islamicate cultures and Museum Bronbeek has 14,000 objects from Indonesia that cannot be accessed by geographical region, but predominantly originate from Java and Sumatra. Numbers in other museums are considerably smaller, and in most cases, the exact number is unknown.

Indonesian Islam. My premise is that such occlusions occur in fields and subjects in which Islam was occluded during the colonial period, such as art history, ethnology and material culture, and, in fact, that we are dealing with durabilities of imperial epistemologies. Building on the work of Ann Laura Stoler (2016), I use the term durability to describe how colonial thought can become stabilized in the practices of museum collecting, classification and display. Stoler explores the notions of durability and duress to examine the capacity of colonial or imperial ideas to endure and take on new forms in the present. Three principal features of colonial histories of the present, she writes, are ‘the hardened, tenacious qualities of colonial effects; their extended protracted temporalities; and, not least, their durable, if sometimes intangible constraints and confinements’ (2016, 7). She analyses the ensuing duress as a condition, ‘a relationship of actualized and anticipated violence’ that does not end with the formal closure of imperial rule (2016, 8).

Stoler’s arguments seek to address the ‘colonial presence’, the ramifications of colonialism that continue to shape the present conditions of people’s lives (2016, 25; 33). In line with this, the aim of this book is to look at the discursive mechanisms, produced under Dutch colonialism in Indonesia, that induce particular perceptions of Islam in museums today. Which lexicons and categorisations did colonialism employ? Under which circumstances was Islam seen and acknowledged and by whom? And, under which circumstances was Islam obscured or ignored, and why? What is the ‘colonial presence’ of museum representations of Islam in the Netherlands? This book examines these questions through a detailed examination of colonial practices of collecting, classifying and representation, with the eventual goal of uncovering how imperial ideologies became materially durable in museums, and continue to affect Muslim communities today. By studying the effects of these practices on museum memory, I explore why and how gaps and emphases are made and in

what ways they, in turn, have clouded the memory of Islam in museums.

The study of Islam has a long history at Dutch universities, dating back to the seventeenth century. Yet, whereas in neighbouring Germany philological and archaeological interest developed into the study of Islamic art (Marchand 2009), this largely failed to materialise in the Netherlands. This deviatory trajectory is partly related to the situatedness of colonial rule in Indonesia, so I argue in this book. Contrary to most European countries, in the Netherlands, Islam is mostly represented in ethnographic museums, and like elsewhere in Europe, Indonesian Islam is absent from Asian art galleries (Bloembergen 2021). Islamic art as a category of scholarly and curatorial inquiry has hardly gained any ground (Shatanawi 2014; De Hond 2011). In the Netherlands, the overwhelming majority of objects relating to Islam are found in the museums operating under the umbrella of the National Museum of World Cultures, and which carry the brand name Wereldmuseum. This type of representation currently can be found in five ethnographic museums, where objects are usually presented under geographical headings like the ‘Middle East’ or ‘North Africa’.¹¹ Hence, the principal mode of museum presentation focuses on Islam’s sociocultural aspects rather than artistic expressions.

2 Islamic Objects and Dutch Imperialism

The Dutch colonial expansion in Southeast Asia began in the late sixteenth century with maritime expeditions to get access to spices. From 1602, the Dutch East India Company (*Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie*, or VOC) began intruding parts of Southeast Asia. The archipelago we now know as Indonesia consisted of islands and estates

¹¹ Besides the museums operating under the National Museum of World Cultures, this includes the Museum (a popular science museum) in The Hague.

ruled by various kingdoms and sultanates, without the political unity that Indonesia has today. After the abolition of the VOC trading company in 1799, the Dutch government gained control over the archipelago, which was then referred to as the Dutch East Indies. During this period, the Dutch implemented various colonial policies to maintain control over the territory and exploit its resources. In the nineteenth century, the primary focus was economic exploitation and the establishment of a profitable trade network. The *cultuurstelsel* (Cultivation System), which was in force between 1830 and 1870, required indigenous farmers to dedicate a portion of their land and labor to cultivating cash crops, particularly sugar, coffee, indigo, and tea, against minimal compensation. Furthermore, the Dutch East Indies saw the establishment of a racially hierarchical society. The colonizers held significant power and privileges, which in varying degrees were transferred to communities such as the Chinese, Arab and Indo-European citizens, while the indigenous population faced outright discrimination and limited access to education and political representation. The *ethische politiek* (Ethical Policy) was initiated in 1901 and aimed to improve the welfare of the indigenous population in the Dutch East Indies. It was a response to growing criticism of the economic exploitation and limited social rights of the local inhabitants. Efforts were made to improve healthcare services, access to education and infrastructure. However, even during the Ethical Policy period relentless military crackdowns to quell any opposition were the norm. It was only in the aftermath of World War II and the subsequent struggle for independence that the Dutch colonial rule came to an end, leading to the establishment of the Republic of Indonesia in 1945 and the formal transfer of power in 1949.

2.1 *Colonial Governance of Islam*

In governing the Muslims of the colony, the policy line of the Dutch authorities aimed at maintaining peace and order. The government advised to

meet acts of worship with interest and respect, but, apart from that, not to interfere (Buskens and Kammers 2002). The growing concern about political Islam in the late nineteenth century prompted the colonial government to seek expert advice, in the form of the Office for Native Affairs (*Bureau voor Inlandse Zaken*, later: Native and Arab Affairs or *Inlandse en Arabische zaken*). It was colloquially known as *Kantor Agama* or office for religion. The office played a crucial role in shaping the context in which the collecting of objects occurred. The advisors were tasked with research and advice on specific aspects of Muslim life, varying from the migration of Arabs to the pilgrimage, Islamic dress and the use of talismans (Suminto 2011; Trouwborst 2002). In practice, the job focused strongly on the alleged threat of Islam. Most of the advisors were trained as orientalist at Leiden University, and some were known for their specialist knowledge in the field of arts and culture, such as B.J.O. (Bep) Schrieke (1890–1945), who would become director of the Colonial Institute (the current Wereldmuseum Amsterdam), the well-known philologist Hoesein Djajadiningrat (1886–1960), the first Indonesian to obtain a PhD from a Dutch university in 1913, and, of course, their teacher Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje (1857–1936). The office also employed several Indonesian advisors, such as the aforementioned Djajadiningrat and Sayyid ‘Uthman ibn Yahya (1822–1913), the mufti of Batavia, who was of Arab descent. Before the establishment of the Archaeological Service (*Oudheidkundige Dienst in Nederlands-Indië*) in 1913, Islamic monuments and sites had to be reported to the Office for Native Affairs to evaluate their significance and issue recommendations for restoration. Ultimately, the goal of the office was to maintain colonial authority, but it could only carry out its duties in collaboration with Indonesian Muslim communities, on whom the advisors relied for information (Suminto 2011). As experts of Islam, they felt often placed between a rock and a hard place; faced with what they saw as ignorance and anxiety emanating from the

colonial administration, they were increasingly put in a position of having to defend Islam (Laffan 2011, 223). Various cases in this book show the different reactions of advisors, such as Karel Holle and Godard Hazeu, to this tension.

The most famous and influential of all advisors of the Office for Native Affairs was the Leiden scholar of Islam Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje, who was appointed as personal advisor to the Governor General of the Dutch East Indies in 1889 (Buskens, Witkam, and Van Sandwijk 2022; Van den Doel 2021).¹² His contribution to the colonial system went further than any other Advisor for Native Affairs: he authored the *korte verklaring* (Brief Declaration), the new contract of subjugation local rulers throughout Indonesia had to sign (Locher-Scholten 2004, 201),¹³ sketched maps for the military forces (*Koloniaal verslag van 1902: Nederlandsch (Oost-)Indië* 1902, 12), accompanied KNIL troops during military campaigns,¹⁴ and identified the dead bodies of Acehese opponents after they were liquidated by the *marechaussee* (the KNIL's special forces), all of which were quite unusual tasks for an academic advisor. In 1891, the colonial government sent him to Aceh to work out a strategy to bring the region under full Dutch control. Snouck Hurgronje became the main architect of the government's Islam policy. Based on his experiences in Aceh, Snouck Hurgronje advocated a policy based on the distinction between two kinds of Islam: a 'good' Islam of worship and a 'bad' Islam of politics (Gedacht 2015; Bowen 2003, 48). The first type of Islam was to be left untouched as

a genuine source of piety, but political Islam had to be strongly discouraged and neutralised. This dual approach to Islam became the backbone of the policies and practice of the colonial administration. One of the consequences, however, was a strong focus of the administration on Islam as politics while Islam as a cultural force was downplayed or ignored.

Compared with his views on political Islam, Snouck Hurgronje's ideas on the interplay between Islam and culture were less influenced by the needs of the colonial government, and concerning this subject matter he was far ahead of his time. In contrast to most of his contemporaries, Snouck Hurgronje did not look at Islam as a fixed set of dogmas, but rather as a flexible and dynamic system. In several publications he outlined his line of reasoning (Snouck Hurgronje 1883; 1906a; 1907; 1911; 1923). Everywhere Islam went, Snouck argued, it absorbed pre-Islamic practices as well as foreign influences. If we accept this for the Arabian Peninsula, why not for Indonesia? Islam was always subordinate to local traditions, an idea Snouck expressed in his famous statement that *adat* (local customs) are the mistress and Islamic law her obedient slave (Snouck Hurgronje 1906a, 1:153). So, he wrote, 'let us not make greater demands to them who began to convert to Islam five centuries ago than to those who converted more than twelve centuries ago' (Snouck Hurgronje 1883, 20).

Without a doubt, Snouck Hurgronje was the most influential figure in the Netherlands when it came to object collecting in Muslim regions and throughout this book his name will appear. He singlehandedly made sure that large numbers of objects from the regions he studied – Western Arabia and Aceh – made their way to the collections of Dutch libraries and ethnographic museums in order to facilitate the study of Muslim cultures. He urged the military and civil authorities to preserve and study ancient Islamic sites, encouraged army officers to assemble collections of objects, to hand over spoils of war to museums and libraries, and take photographs during

12 Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje's record in the Register of the Civil Service. NL-HaNA Stamboeken Burgerlijke Ambtenaren, 1836–1936, 2.10.36.22 no. 922.

13 Brief Declaration (*korte verklaring*), left blank. Aceh, 1898–1936. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. TM-1016-8b. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/43641>.

14 Photographer unknown, Snouck Hurgronje with Colonel J.B. van Heutsz and military staff of the Pedir expedition in bivouac Koeta Meuntroë, 1898. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. TM-10001948. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/16155>.

military expeditions; all with an eye on the benefits for philological and ethnographic research. As the chair of the Batavian Society of Arts and Sciences (*Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen*), he allocated objects to the various museums. He himself put his ideas into practice by gathering objects, and making sound recordings and photographs (Mols and Vrolijk 2016). Curators of the various ethnology museums made ample use of his publications to write object descriptions. While museum inventory cards would often copy the ethnographic details, Snouck's broader-reaching and much more political conclusions were ignored. Thus, as we will see in the final chapters of this book, the presence of these collections hardly led to the intensification of the study of Indonesian Islam in museums.¹⁵ Nor did his novel ideas about acculturation find their way into the interpretation of these objects.

2.2 *Colonial Framings of Islam*

Three frames of Islam emerge as dominant during the colonial era; they are connected to expressions of the Islamic as religious, political and artistic. A common theme running through all these frames is the idea of the Arabian Peninsula, and more broadly West Asia, as the heartland of Islam. This view is partly founded on Islamic theology, in which the beginnings of Islam on the Arabian Peninsula represent the ideal for later generations. European scholars, who developed this perspective in the nineteenth century, saw Arab cultural and religious traditions as the model for Islam's outlying provinces. The model they developed was grounded, in a fashion typical of nineteenth-century scholarship, in the search for a pure origin of culture (*Urkultur*). In the field of Islamic studies, the German philological tradition and its

emphasis on the origins of Islam, located theologically in its founding texts (the Qur'an and *hadith*) and geographically in the Arabian Peninsula, set the tone, influencing Dutch scholarship as well (Vrolijk and Leeuwen 2014; Schulze 2010). The heartland/periphery model defines two broad and distinct areas. At the centre lies the Arabian Peninsula, where Islam originated, and the regions that were part of the Islamic Empire in the initial period of Islamic conquest: the rest of the Middle East and North Africa. The Islam of this region was seen as a religion that was internalised and which displaced previous cultures. Further afield lies the periphery: the areas in Africa and Asia which adopted Islam in later centuries, and under the influence of traders, Sufi preachers, and migrants. The heartland/periphery model pervaded all other frames; it assigned a 'pure' and 'unblended' Islam to the centre and a 'less-than-pure' and 'syncretist' Islam to the peripheral areas (Ahmed 2016, 451). This model was implemented in museological interpretations of Islamic art, religion and politics, and, as we will see, its effects on the reception of Indonesian Islam were immense.

3 *Approaching Objects*

In the period of colonial rule, the museums in the Netherlands were part of an imperial space, which they shared with museums in Indonesia, such as that of the Batavian Society of Arts and Sciences. Frequent exchanges of knowledge and objects between museums in the various locations of the imperial space occurred. Following the trajectories that objects and collections travelled in colonial times and beyond, the main subject of this book is the National Museum of World Cultures (NMVW), which comprises the archives of several museums and collections. Besides the NMVW, research involved other museums that have (or had) Islamic objects: the Rijksmuseum, Museum Bronbeek, Museon and the National Museum of Antiquities (Rijksmuseum van Oudheden). Exploring a broad range of museums allowed

¹⁵ This was different at Leiden University, where Snouck Hurgronje's collection of manuscripts, which contained many that were taken as loot during the Aceh War, was studied by his students and was the basis of several PhD theses.

me to follow epistemological formations as they developed across different institutions.

I take a biographical approach to objects, drawing on work on the social life of things, a concept made popular through the work of anthropologist Arjun Appadurai. A biographical approach means to ‘follow the things themselves, for their meanings are inscribed in their forms, their uses, their trajectories’ (1986, 5). Appadurai (1986, 5) argues that ‘it is only through the analysis of these trajectories that we can interpret the human transactions and calculations that enliven things ... Even though from a *theoretical* point of view human actors encode things with significance, from a *methodological* point of view it is the things-in-motion that illuminate their human and social context’. Looking at objects as having life histories that can be recorded as biographies, just like those of human beings, as Igor Kopytoff (1986) has suggested, is a particularly fruitful method in the museum context (Alberti 2005). One reason is the central place provenance occupies in museum work, another is the informative nature ‘of what we can learn from the lives of the most common of specimens’ (Alberti 2005, 560). Thus, objects appearing to be trivial or mundane and having little scientific or aesthetic value, may reveal a wealth of information when approached from a biographical angle. Even though a biographical angle to the study of Islamic art and architecture has become more common recently (Volait 2021; Macaraig 2019; Lambourn 2018), it has hardly been applied yet as a method to tease out histories of image-making related to Islam or Muslims. I am above all interested in the relationship between objects and public and scientific knowledge about Islam and Muslims. Objects from Muslim regions became part of different museum collections covering different fields of scholarship, such as archaeology, natural history, ethnology and art history.

Only in rare instances will I follow the objects that are the protagonists in this book through their entire life cycle. In a few chapters the focus is on

the moments when objects are taken out of their context of original use and ownership shifts from Indonesian to Dutch hands. In other chapters the main emphasis is on the afterlives, when the objects are musealised and subject to processes of meaning-making in diverging contexts. The heart of the book will be the moments when ‘things are in motion’, as they transfer from the maker or user into the collection or when objects move from one collection to the other, in line with Appadurai’s argument (1986, 4) that things move through different ‘regimes of value in space and time’.

The research for this book was inspired by the principles of archival ethnography, which approaches the archive as a site of fieldwork (Decker and McKinlay 2020; Stoler 2009). Just as an ethnographer spends lengthy periods of time at the field, I spent several hours a day, during years of research, immersed at my site of fieldwork: the collection system of the National Museum of World Cultures. I approached the object records as ‘interlocutors’, which by their historical nature are no longer accessible to direct observation, but would give me access to elements of the worldview of the people who created, collected and interpreted the objects. Inspired by the work of Ann Stoler, I set out to read the museum archive ‘along the grain’. I went through countless records ‘to explore the grain with care and read along it first’ (2009, 50) and to see where the flow of the archive would bring me. Accordingly, I focused on the small archival events that reveal ‘moments that disrupt (if only provisionally) a field of force, that challenge (if only slightly) what can be said and done, that question (if only quietly) “epistemic warrant”, that realign the certainties of the probable more than they mark wholesale reversals of direction’ (2009, 51). Searching for patterns allowed me to tease out particular narratives of colonialism from the archive, such as the changes in collecting over the course of the Aceh War. Through the interrogation of the archive, I was able to trace some of the large events of colonialism in the collection but also to find out what

was not being said, thus, to locate the silences and absences.

To some extent, my way of working can be considered as action research since I enhanced the catalogue while examining it. For example, I researched the provenance of large scores of objects, including exhibition histories and collector biographies, and entered the results. By doing so, I ensured that the data from my research are publicly accessible and retrievable. I also insisted on this working method for another reason; having been a museum curator for eighteen years, I noticed that information resulting from academic research is often not processed in the organisation. For my findings to make some impact on decolonisation processes, my research data needed to enter the core of the museum: the collection system. At the same time, I am aware that I was not only studying the archive, but also *creating* and *co-constructing* the archive. At times, this meant that personal implication, in the sense of simultaneously being the researcher and object of research, was unavoidable.

3.1 *Contextualising Objects*

Obviously, taking the museum archive as a point of departure means engaging with perspectives that are largely European-made. As we will see, the majority (but not all) of those collecting and curating for the museums had European ancestry. The collections were shaped within the political, societal and legal framework of Dutch colonialism. Previous research has argued that through the presence of the objects in museums in the Netherlands the populations of colonial Indonesia are also present, but ‘only as silent witnesses’ (e.g. Drieënhuizen 2012b, 7). It is certainly true that in the accounts of those collecting in colonial Indonesia the makers of the objects are only present in the background. Their names have rarely been documented. The same is valid for the thousands of Indonesians who contributed to the collections as informants, or by searching for objects ‘in the field’. Through the act of collecting,

objects as well as their makers were appropriated and given new meanings in the form of adding scientific or other descriptions (or, by omitting any description at all). Approaching the archive from this angle runs the risk, as Ann Stoler points out, of only looking for structure with the colonizers, and locating human agency with the colonized in ‘small gestures of refusal and silence’ (2009, 47). Indeed, I have encountered such gestures of resistance, both small and large, throughout my investigation of the archive. Yet, I argue for a broader approach by not only locating agency in people, but also in the objects themselves.¹⁶

In the acts of collecting and interpreting, people ‘make’ objects by creating meaning. Conversely, objects have the power to shape individuals just as much as individuals shape the objects themselves (Geismar 2018, 19). According to Janet Hoskins (2006), objects are made to act upon the world and on other persons; that is the main reason why they are created. Therefore, objects do indeed ‘possess an innate agency given to them by humans that allows them to affect change’ (Hoskins 2006, 75). Drawing on these ideas, throughout this book I not only examine how the actions of makers, collectors and museum curators shaped the Islamic in objects, but also, the other way around, how the Islamic in objects shaped the people dealing with them. In doing so, I show how, at times, the agency of objects has challenged and disturbed the colonial order of things. Islamic objects, because of their in-between nature, continually undermined attempts of the museum to order, classify and draw disciplinary boundaries, and they continue to do so.

To discuss this elastic condition, I use the term ‘in-betweenness’, a concept developed by anthropologist Tim Ingold (2015), to describe the position of Islamic objects in the museum. In-betweenness, so Ingold postulates, has no fixed location; it is

16 Regarding colonial Indonesia, such an approach is also taken to objects (Drieënhuizen 2018b) and heritage sites (Bloembergen and Eickhoff 2020).

midstream, ‘an interstitial differentiation’ (2015, 147), or as Paul Basu (2017, 8) suggests, ‘a middle space, a contact zone, a borderland.’ Museum objects are in-between in the sense that they are all ‘entanglements of ongoing social, spatial, temporal and material trajectories and relationships, dislocations and relocations’ (Basu 2017, 2). To look at things as ‘in-between’ is to understand them as being transitive and in motion.

In addition to looking through the lens of in-betweenness, theories of transculturality and transculturation can also be applied to these objects. The concept of transculturation, the convergence of cultures, was originally defined by the Cuban scholar Fernando Ortiz in the 1940s and elaborated in the 1990s within postcolonial theory by scholars like Mary Louise Pratt. She recounts how ethnographers have developed the notion of transculturation to describe ‘processes whereby members of subordinated or marginal groups select and invent from materials transmitted by a dominant metropolitan culture’ (Pratt 1991, 36). While acknowledging that the notion in this meaning has sometimes been criticized for putting an emphasis on the dominant cultural group, that is Europe, and marginalizing indigenous perspectives (Knickerbocker and Truong 2017), I am using the term in another definition, developed by the German philosopher Wolfgang Welsch, who puts less emphasis on (un)equal power relations and stresses the internal complexities and constant variations in cultural expressions. Welsch (1999) recognises that cultures are inseparably linked with one another, to a degree that one can no longer speak about separate cultures:

“It’s just that now the differences no longer come about through a juxtaposition of clearly delineated cultures (like in a mosaic), but result between transcultural networks, which have some things in common while differing in others, showing overlaps and distinctions at the same time. The mechanics of differentiation has become more complex, but it has also become genuinely cultural for the very first time, no longer complying with

geographical or national stipulations, but following pure cultural interchange processes.” (Welsch 1999, 203)

Looking at the world through the lens of transculturality means leaving the notion of cultures as homogeneous, self-contained entities, emphasising instead how culture transgresses borders, overlaps, and intermingles (Jurić Pahor 2017).

4 Frames and Framings

In examining the acts of collecting, interpreting, categorising and presenting Islam at the museum, I deploy the notion of ‘framing’. The concepts of frames and framing are most widely recognized for their application to media and communication studies, where they generally refer to ‘the structures of expectations that enable individuals to construct meanings and viewpoints about their environments, along with the related process of foregrounding particular structures over others’ (McNamee 2017, 1). This understanding of frames, following Goffman (1974), often envisions framing as a process of co-creation in which frames shift and are continually shaped in social interaction. In other words, frames are not just located in the media that communicate, but also within ‘receivers, and cultures and therefore are subject to different interpretations’ (McNamee 2017, 2). Judith Butler (2016) points out that framing relates to what is silenced, restricted, or available for apprehension, not only to modes of interpretation.

4.1 *Collecting and the Creation of Value*

The act of collecting, as described by museologist Susan Pearce (1995), represents a method used by humans to comprehend the world surrounding them, enabling them to express their worldviews as well as to serve their individual needs. At the heart lies selection, making the motives behind collecting more important than its content (Pearce 1995, 27). She points out that meaning-making through museum collecting is a mutual process

involving the collector(s) as much as the objects concerned: 'if the sacred-making process of selection expresses the subjective or psychological needs of the collector, we have to ask how it is that certain objects attract the selection process and others do not, and this brings us to questions of perceived value and how value is created' (Pearce 1995, 25). Similarly, Kopytoff (1986, 64) argues that 'the production of commodities is a cultural and cognitive process: commodities must be not only materials produced as things, but also culturally marked as being a certain kind of thing'.

I make a distinction between collecting as 'a practice in which the intention is to create a collection', defined as 'a set of objects that forms some kind of meaningful though not necessarily (yet) complete "whole"' (Macdonald 2006, 82), and donating or selling objects to the museum. In the latter case it often concerns objects that were originally acquired for other purposes, like home-making, or as souvenir, and it is the museum that creates the collection, thus the 'meaningful whole', by arranging the objects. In colonial Indonesia collecting was also frequently done directly from the maker or original user, that is 'in the field', with the intention of adding objects to a private or public collection. I make this distinction because it informs the museum collections from Muslim Indonesia, which were to a large extent formed by acquisitions of small numbers of objects from individuals. While collecting in the first instance might not always be the result of a conscious decision, and sometimes only be noticeable as such in hindsight (Pearce 1995, 21), bringing objects to a museum certainly requires a deliberate choice. It is the act of inserting an object into the museum which imbues the object with certain meanings and intentions of the collector, in other words, which makes it 'a certain kind of thing'. It is the act of bringing objects to the museum that makes the object become part of a group conceived to be meaningful by the owner. Once part of the museum collection, the museum recontextualises the object through regrouping it with other objects with which it is considered to be related

(Macdonald 2006, 82). As Sharon Macdonald describes:

"Museum and individual collecting have been argued to be mutually entangled, not only literally, with individual collections sometimes entering or even forming the basis of museums, but also in more subtle and ramifying ways. Museums have promoted and legitimized individual collecting practices and have provided exemplars for them. Moreover, they have helped to define the potential value of objects and their salience for identity work, and have established a cultural model in which collected material performs individual distinctiveness." (Macdonald 2006, 95)

So, what motivated individuals to collect or set aside objects in the colonial context of Indonesia? Which values did they attribute to these objects? How did they create value by donation or sale to the museum? And how did the decisions they made to collect or rather not to collect, or to bring the objects in their possession to museums or not, influence the meanings given to Islam and Muslims? In what ways did colonial framings of Islam and the varying settings in which collecting happened influence what was being collected?

4.2 *Frames and Framing*

Frames and framing are frequently deployed in research on museums, when museums are seen as producers of public knowledge and sites of informal consumption of knowledge. It is not surprising, considering the high prominence of Islam in media discourses, that there is also a considerable body of recent work referring to the concept of framing to discuss contemporary presentations of Islam in museums, especially in relation to exhibitions and other types of display (for a partial list of these publications, see Macdonald et al. 2021, 202). Although they often lack a theoretical elaboration of framing, these publications use the notion of frames 'to draw attention to the contexts or narratives within which Islam is presented' and 'to refer to many ways in which knowledge or expectations

are structured' (Macdonald et al. 2021, 202). Valerie Gonzalez (2018, 5), for instance, speaks of the discursive framing of Islam as aesthetic-phenomenological, whereas Klas Grinell, Magnus Berg and Göran Larsson (2019) argue that including the word Islam in exhibition titles means invoking different frames with different publics.

In this book I draw on the work of Judith Butler (2016) to look at the framing of Islam in museums in the Netherlands. Butler's conceptualisation of framing draws attention to the societal implications, and has a wider applicability than the media with which it is primarily concerned. According to Butler, framing is a performative act:

"The frame does not simply exhibit reality, but actively participates in a strategy of containment, selectively producing and enforcing what will count as reality [...] Although framing cannot always contain what it seeks to make visible or readable, it remains structured by the aim of instrumentalizing certain versions of reality. This means that the frame is always throwing something away, always keeping something out, always de-realising and de-legitimising alternative versions of reality, discarding negatives of the official version." (Butler 2016, 14)

The framing of Islam in museums need not necessarily be instrumental or instrumentalized (Macdonald et al. 2021). Indeed, framings can also be inadvertent and collateral rather than intentional (2021, 203). This aligns with Butler's argument that 'the frame does not quite contain what it conveys' because it 'depends upon the conditions of reproducibility to succeed' (2016, 34).

Colonialism inevitably involved a process of crafting images, and of 'selectively producing and enforcing what will count as reality' (Butler 2016, 14). The subjects of Dutch colonialism, in this case Indonesian Muslims, were framed and presented in particular ways. Museums circulated (and continue to circulate) such framings in their capacities as institutions communicating colonial knowledge, next to their functioning as producers

of colonial knowledge. In the museal chain of knowledge production, frames were produced and enforced, enacting and legitimising certain versions of reality, while keeping other versions away. Thus, by studying frames as they 'organise visual experience' and 'generate specific ontologies of the subject' (Butler 2016, 29), we can find out what is emphasised and de-emphasised, and what is remembered and what is silenced. Evidently, colonial frames were not set in stone. Like any frame they were prone to change, as they were shaped by different actors, who in the process fortified or changed existing frames or invoked new ones. Moreover, multiple frames can exist simultaneously, and they might overlap and reinforce each other or operate in tension: frames can collide, or they may contradict other frames. Indeed, as we will see throughout this book, in the museums of the Netherlands there were multiple framings of Islam, deployed by different agents, and they shifted over time.

4.3 *Making and Unmaking Heritage*

Framing and the selective production of what counts as reality, entails the making of memory. The notions of memory and heritage are interwoven. If memory consists of 'acts of recounting or remembering experienced events', then heritage cannot exist without memory and memory work (Sather-Wagstaff 2015, 191). Museum anthropologist Sharon Macdonald (2013, 6) uses the term 'memory complex' to designate the 'assemblage of practices, affects and physical things' involved in making memory. To think of artefacts held in museums as part of a memory complex allows us to get a fuller picture of the emergence of frames and framings. The memory complex of Dutch imperialism in Indonesia, in the period of colonial rule, that is, consisted not only of museal collections and displays, but also of the popular press, works of art and literature, mass-circulating photographs and films, antique shops and auction houses, private collections, academic publications, and official state-sanctioned commemorations. Moreover, this memory complex

was situated in a wider 'imperial space'. The act of making memory through museum objects formed networks between people and institutions in different locations; between the Netherlands and colonial Indonesia and between the people of different positions in these places (Drieënhuizen 2012b; Legêne 1998a). The networked notion of empire emphasises the movement of people, ideas and objects between the metropole and the colonies and beyond to other places (Lambert and Lester 2006). Thus, memory work not only took place in this imperial space, it also created and shaped this space. While the motivations of individuals to contribute objects to museums may have been personal, on many occasions museum directors and curators did position the objects coming from the colonies in the context of the colonial project, for instance when they described collections as important for the mapping of populations.¹⁷ In this way, the networks surrounding heritage shaped Dutch imperialism, the colony itself and the Dutch nation as an imperial power (Bloembergen and Eickhoff 2020; Drieënhuizen 2012b; Bloembergen 2006; Legêne 1998a).

Today's memory work is equally engaged with current societal needs. Critical heritage studies considers heritage, including museum collections, to be intrinsically linked to the present. Heritage is 'a set of attitudes to, and relationships with, the past' (Harrison 2013, 14), and 'a cultural process that engages with acts of remembering that work to create ways to understand and engage with the present' (Smith 2006, 44). The definition of heritage as present past-making ties in with Talal Asad's notion of Islam as a discursive tradition (1986) and Shahab Ahmed's conceptualisation of Islam as a process of meaning-making (2016). 'An Islamic discursive tradition', Asad (1986, 14) writes, 'is simply a tradition of Muslim discourse that addresses itself to conceptions of the Islamic past

and future, with reference to a particular Islamic practice in the present.' Similarly, according to Ahmed, Islam takes shape through the present engagement with meanings that have been historically generated. In these approaches, heritage is a quality that is continually negotiated, rather than intrinsic to things. As such, it has only temporary status and objects of heritage require constant re-evaluation and testing by social practices, needs and desires, in order to remain to be seen as heritage (Harrison 2010, 26). Both heritage and the Islamic are therefore qualities that arrive through active processes of meaning-making rather than being based on intrinsic values; this implies that both can be made and unmade.

In my research I have encountered the making and unmaking of heritage – by museums and in museums – on multiple occasions. The making of heritage is closely related to moments of collecting; when objects are collected, 'in the field' or otherwise, and become part of private or public collections, they are turned into heritage. As the museological literature discusses in detail, acts of selection are central to processes of meaning-making in museums (e.g. Pearce 1994). Evidently, objects could have meaning as heritage beyond musealisation. This is, for example, the case with the Southeast Asian category of *pusaka* objects, heirlooms that owe their special status to the connection to ancestors, and frequently form part of family collections (Kreps 2006; Trigangga, Sukati, and Ismail 2006; Soebadio 1992). Another moment of heritage-making is when objects enter museum collections, and thus become part of the heritage of, for instance, national or regional importance. Yet when heritage is defined as an active process of meaning-making *in the present*, if it is 'past-presencing' (Macdonald 2013), this implies that objects do not necessarily remain heritage once they are situated in the museum. The object is heritage at moments of motion, for example when it enters the collection, and when it is exhibited, studied or published. Yet it can also be deheritagised when it is no longer used, when it is 'buried' in storage, and has lost its meaning for the present (Brusius

17 See, for instance, the remark of the committee advising on the future of the Leiden Museum of Ethnology (Boeser et al. 1903, 57; 63). For other examples, see Bosma (2018).

and Singh 2018). Indeed, many of the objects I studied sank into oblivion after their entrance into museum collections, and were, perhaps, only reheritagised through this research project.

Take the example of the *songko* (headgear) of Sulawesi resistance leader Daeng Pabarang (also known as Petta Barang), which is briefly discussed in chapter 4 (Fig. 1).¹⁸ The headgear was made into military heritage in 1907, when officer of the Netherlands East Indies Army (KNIL) Herman Kooij (1868–1950) captured it as a trophy and added it to his personal collection, and again, in 1938, when Kooij donated the *songko* to the Royal Military Academy (KMA) in Breda. Like so many objects, it was quite famous in its afterlife as a trophy object. The *songko* even became the subject of an article in the popular press (Van der Lijke-Prins 1917), as well as featuring in the youth novel *De gouden kris* (The golden keris, 1908) by Kooij's wife Marie van Zeggelen, but was forgotten in its postcolonial musealised life. In museum representation the link to Daeng Pabarang was lost, thereby severing the connection with colonial violence and the resistance to it. Likewise, the 'Islamic' of the *songko* was made and unmade during its life-cycle. Daeng Pabarang, so the article mockingly states, 'pretended to be a messenger of God' (Van der Lijke-Prins 1917, 297). Yet the message, subtly braided into the *songko* by its maker and invoking God eighteen times with the words *ya Allah*, was overlooked by Kooij as well as the curators of the successive museums that held the headgear. Moreover, the Dutch authorities attempted to defuse the Daeng's appeal by dismissing his religiosity. In 1908, Daeng Pabarang was still on the loose, and the governor of Sulawesi, H.N.A. (Henri) Swart (1863–1946), signalled to a local news agency:

"Daeng Pabarang and his followers are not Mohamedans; they confess to a teaching that is, for a minor part, of Hindu origin, but which is mostly the product of their own fantasy. They completely reject the tenets and pillars of Islam. It is precisely the small religious foundation and the pure egoistic materialism of their teachings that brings them much support." (*Algemeen Handelsblad* 1908)

The *songko* followed a pattern that I have encountered in many variations: the transformation from spiritual heritage into trophy object into ethnographic sample; the erasure of colonial violence and resistance from memory, and the making and unmaking of the Islamic in this process – often through contestations of its authenticity. As the examples in this book show, in some instances, the unmaking of the Islamic in museums was intentional and meant to disable the powers ascribed to the object. In other instances, it was inadvertent, and the result of framings of which Islam was not, or barely, the focal point, such as the conceptions of religion and art in Dutch museums, which are the subject of chapters 7 and 8.

Another aspect of heritage-making I consider is heritage as an act of crafting and articulating identities in museums, which is intrinsically tied up with processes of inclusion and exclusion. In the period of colonial rule, museums in the Netherlands 'summarized and reinforced Europeans' sense of having a hierarchically more advanced culture, even in the guise of celebrating the cultures of other peoples whose objects were assembled' (P.M. Taylor 1995, 106). The hierarchisation of cultures gave rise to several binary frames, including European/non-European and ethnology/art, as well as the ranking of Indonesian ethnic and cultural groups on the sliding scale of primitiveness. However, despite these binary frames and hierarchical layers, objects regularly challenged the colonial structures.

In Europe today, positionings of Islam in heritage occur in different ways; for example, as a historical force in shaping Europe's culture, a foreign presence in the present, or the denial of Islam ever

18 Headgear (*songko*), Boni, early 20th century. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. RV-3600-6087. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/776594> The famous golden keris was also looted and given on loan to the Batavian Society in 1916 (Bataviaasch Genootschap 1916, LIV 1916:116; 166).

being part of Europe's history. Heritage is not only a mode of inclusion and exclusion; it is also a driving force behind feeling included:

“As heritage is an especially powerful mode of inclusion – a format with widely acknowledged legitimacy and value – this allows for Islam to be historically situated within Europe rather than simply accepted as being present in the here and now. As heritage, in other words, Islam becomes a valued cultural form, and as part of European heritage, it gains the potential to become *of* rather than just *in* Europe. It becomes part of ‘where we have come from’ and not simply ‘what we are now’. Therein, however, lies heritage’s ‘rub’. That very past-orientation of heritage also allows for making a distinction between the past and today in which ‘where we have come from’ might also potentially be ‘what we no longer are’ or even ‘what we have left behind’. Thus, considered as part of heritage, Islam may be seen as having contributed to shaping Europe but that does not necessarily mean that Muslims living in European countries today will feel included.” (Shatanawi, Macdonald, and Puzon 2021, 7–8)

Therefore, how Islam is framed in museums matters. Even though it is impossible to undo the colonial formations of heritage and Islam, museums are in a position to redirect the ‘colonial presence’, and to address the injustices derived from them in the present day.

4.4 *Silence and Memory*

Like any act of selection, heritage-making in museums creates memory as well as silence. Here I draw on the work of anthropologist and historian Michel-Rolph Trouillot. In *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (1995), Trouillot looks at colonial histories to explain how the combined acts of remembering and forgetting produce silences. Trouillot’s notion of silence does not equal the absence of speech. Rather, in the examples in his book silence is the result of an active and transitive process of selection. Taking

the Haitian Revolution as his main case, Trouillot shows how different processes of narrating the events created different silences. He emphasises that these silences occurred as part of the act of narration. ‘Any historical narrative is a particular bundle of silences’, he concludes, and thus, ‘the result of a unique process, and the operation required to deconstruct these silences will vary accordingly’ (Trouillot 1995, 27). This links to Ann Stoler’s notion of colonial aphasia as a discursive silence rather than the absence of speech; ‘in aphasia, an occlusion of knowledge is the issue. It is not a matter of ignorance or absence’ (2011, 125). In other words, colonial silences around Islam did not only occur when Islam was ignored, but also when Islam was discussed but privileging certain aspects of it while others were pushed to the background. In this book I look at these moments as well as the moments when Islam was brought to the fore, in line with Trouillot’s argument (1995, 48) that mentions and silences, or presences and absences, are both part of the same active process of history making.

Trouillot distinguishes four constitutive moments in the production of silences in the writing of history:

“Silences enter the process of historical production at four crucial moments: the moment of fact creation (the making of *sources*); the moment of fact assembly (the making of *archives*); the moment of fact retrieval (the making of *narratives*); and the moment of retrospective significance (the making of *history* in the final instance).” (Trouillot 1995, 26)

Translated to the context of the museum, these moments render to the individual objects and the act of collecting (*sources*) and the creation of collections (*archives*), exhibitions and publications (*narratives*) and the making of history in museums today (*history*). The boundaries between these domains are fluent; for instance, the re-arrangement of objects to create collections, not only produces archives but also entails

the making of narratives. Trouillot's framework has been adapted in relationship to museums and archives, and employed in several case studies (for examples see Mason and Sayner 2018). A useful addition is suggested by Rhiannon Mason and Joanne Sayner (2018), who conceptualise silence in museums as 'in motion', pointing to selection as a key mechanism in the making of collections as well as museum presentations, such as exhibitions and catalogues. This makes the creation of silences an inescapable reality of museum work. Yet, what or whom is being silenced changes over time, as displays and exhibitions are replaced and collections continually change through new acquisitions, loans, transfers, de-accessioning as well as new classifications (Mason and Sayner 2018, 7). Therefore, the question is not only what and whom are being silenced at a particular instance, and by whom, but if and how this relates to the silences present more widely in society.

5 Outline of the Book

In this book, I proceed from the constitutive moments of history making identified by Trouillot to uncover the memories and silences in museological framings of Indonesian Islam in the Netherlands. These moments largely align with the stages in the lifecycle of objects (Appadurai 1986). The rhythm of this book follows from the biographical approach. Part 1 (chapters 2 to 5) looks at the collecting of objects from Muslim Indonesia, or following Trouillot, the moments of fact creation and assembly. Starting with a mapping of the objects that were classified as Islamic, in the past or present, chapter 2 analyses patterns in the histories of collecting. I also look at common typologies of collecting in Indonesia, and to what extent they apply to Muslim-majority regions. In chapter 3, I then follow a number of these patterns to understand the historical conditions leading to the divergent valuations of Islam. I examine why percentage-wise Sumatra occupies a larger share

than other regions in what counts as Islamic, and why certain types of objects, such as those related to the hajj or magical practices, are more present than others. Furthermore, I delve deeper into the motivations of collectors to collect or not to collect Islamic material. Focusing on different types of collectors, such as army officer G.C.E. (Frits) van Daalen (1863–1930) and civil administrator F.W. (Willem) Stammeshaus (1881–1957), I explain the emphasis on certain regions and object types when Islamic material did make its way into museum collections, as well as to account for its absence in other domains. This investigation is followed up in chapters 4 and 5 which examine in detail the collecting histories of several types of objects that were collected under the heading of Islam: manuscripts, amulets and talismans, objects related to the hajj, and gravestones. Illustrated by a number of cases, I discuss how the collecting of these types of objects happened in the context of colonial policies of conquest, control, surveillance and benevolence.

Part 2 (chapters 6 and 7) considers the making of archives through practices of classification and categorisation. Classification is the ultimate 'moment of fact retrieval', when narratives are made (Trouillot 1995, 26). Chapter 6 examines the taxonomies of Islamic and Middle Eastern collections that developed in the nineteenth century and continue to inform museum praxis today. During the afterlives of the objects as museum holdings, a process unfolded dividing them between different museum disciplines: archaeology, art history and ethnology. I investigate the drawing of boundaries between three museums: the Museum of Ethnology, the Museum of Antiquities, both in Leiden, and the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam. Chapter 7 looks more closely at the information infrastructure that was – and is – employed in the ethnographic museums of the Netherlands and its systems of classification. I examine the position of Indonesian Islam as religion and art within this structure, in order to understand how knowledge of Islam was organised in the museum.

Part 3 (chapters 8 and 9) investigates framings of Islam through exhibitionary practices. Two framings in particular are considered: Islam-as-religion and Islam-as-art. The findings deal with one of the overarching questions of this book: the exclusion of Indonesia from the field of Islamic art. Although in the Netherlands Islamic art never received as much attention as in neighbouring countries, its narrative had a continued presence in museums, with Indonesia playing a minor role. The end of colonial rule in Indonesia was reflected in dwindling interest in representing Indonesian Islam in museums in the Netherlands. Islam as religion and art briefly found a place in museum representations of Indonesia, notably in the 1930s to 1950s, but from the 1960s onward it was relegated to the backseat. Following geopolitical events and migration from Muslim-majority countries, Islam became increasingly equated with the Middle East and North Africa.

The intentions of this research project are not merely descriptive. Following Susan Legêne and Henk Schulte Nordholt (2015), my point of departure is the premise that the colonial entanglements involved in collecting and interpretation do not signify an end point for understanding the significance of the objects concerned, and that reframing constitutes an essential part of decolonisation processes. As Judith Butler (2016) maintains, to evaluate and understand the historical conditions that enable framings is to begin to oppose their ramifications in the present. In the Netherlands, the debate on the decolonisation

of museums emphasises issues of repatriation. Yet, it is to be expected that the majority of the colonial collections will stay. If so, what will be the role of Islamic objects in a future decolonial Europe? The concluding chapter of this book deals with 'colonial presence', that is, the durabilities of the colonial epistemologies discussed in the preceding chapters. To inform debates about decolonising museums, I argue that the narratives of Islamic collections in museums in the Netherlands constitute a structural injustice which requires reparation beyond repatriation and re-interpretation of individual objects. To this end, I draw on the work of philosopher Catherine Lu, especially her application of the concept of structural injustice to colonialism. My conclusions suggest that the effort to rethink collections should be coupled with the decolonisation of museum disciplines. These epistemic reparations, I suggest, should include re-framings of Indonesian Islamic material culture. Shahab Ahmed's influential book *What is Islam? The Importance of Being Islamic* (2016) provides a useful framework for such disciplinary (re)interpretations of Islamic artefacts. To provide an example of decolonising practices, chapter 8 makes some suggestions towards application of his framework to Indonesian artefacts. Finally, I argue that undoing the dichotomous exhibitionary frameworks that underpin the presentation of these collections, or to 'undiscipline' them (Förster and Von Bose 2018), is an essential step to make museums more fit for justice.

PART 1

Sources and Foundations



Analysing Museum Holdings from Indonesia

1 Collecting Islam in Colonial Indonesia

Collecting, in the sense of ‘the gathering together and setting aside of selected objects’ (Pearce 1995, 3), is one of the ways in which human beings have tried to make sense of the world around them. What do collecting practices tell us about the ways in which Dutch actors perceived Islam? How did the institutionalisation of collecting, and the emergence of museums, shape these perceptions? In this chapter I look closer at the collecting practices in the Muslim regions of Indonesia in the period of Dutch imperialism (1600–1945) and the subsequent collection formations in the Netherlands. The next chapters will look more closely at collecting practices in the various regions of Indonesia, in particular Aceh and Java, and at different types of objects that were seen as Islamic: manuscripts and amulets, hajj-related objects, and gravestones. These types of objects exemplify the frames through which Islam was approached: an ideology of resistance, a source of sacred and political power, and a historical presence. In this chapter and the following, we will visit several locations that are typical of collecting in colonial Indonesia: the battlefield, the native court (*landraad*), the (Indo)European household and the royal court (*kraton* or *dalam*).

The focus of this chapter are the collections of the Wereldmuseum Leiden (formerly Museum Volkenkunde) and the Wereldmuseum Amsterdam (formerly Tropenmuseum), which constitute the core collection of the National Museum of World Cultures (abbreviated NMVW), the umbrella organisation referred to in chapter 1 which serves the collaboration of three ethnographic museums located in Leiden, Amsterdam and Berg and Dal. Since 2017 there is a close collaboration with the Wereldmuseum in Rotterdam, resulting in the integration of its collection in the database. For

this reason, I also include the Rotterdam collection when I discuss the NMVW collections. In the course of their history, the four museums have absorbed several smaller institutional collections (see below). At present, the combined Indonesia collections of the National Museum of World Cultures comprise 179,601 objects.¹ The majority of Indonesian objects in the collections were collected between 1850 and 1950, in the period of intense Dutch colonial rule. To put the history of collecting Islam in Indonesia in a broader perspective, I also looked at several smaller institutional collections, such as the Rijksmuseum (750 objects from Indonesia)² and Museum Bronbeek (14,000 objects).³

The integration of so many colonial-period collections into one large collection makes it possible to see certain patterns in the multitudes of histories of collecting. My analysis follows some of these patterns to understand the historical conditions leading to the divergent valuations of Islam in colonial collecting. As can be seen from the analysis, there were regional differences, as well as

1 The division of the Indonesia collection by institution is as follows: National Museum of World Cultures (acquired after the merger) 3,938 objects, Leiden 72,784, Amsterdam 71,773, Rotterdam 31,106. These numbers exclude the photographic and archival collections. Information TMS database National Museum of World Cultures. Accessed 24 November 2021.

2 A search for Indonesia or Indonesian archipelago gave 8,381 hits in the Rijksmuseum's collection database. This includes such items as photographs and paintings depicting places in Indonesia. Information gathered from the Rijksmuseum's Adlib database. Accessed 28 October 2016. The number of Indonesian objects, here defined as made by Indonesians, is around 750; this concerns objects collected in a colonial context and includes the permanent loan by VVAK. Jan de Hond, curator Rijksmuseum, email to author, 1 November 2019.

3 Personal communication John Klein Nagelvoort, curator Museum Bronbeek, 30 January 2024.

differences relating to collecting contexts in terms of the collectors' vocational backgrounds and academic disciplines. In other words, for Islam to be seen or obscured it mattered who was present, when collecting happened, where it happened, and how it happened. As my analysis shows, there were certain moments in colonial history in which the context of collecting and the type of object were inextricably linked. For instance, the collecting of Islamic manuscripts was closely connected to war and military intelligence, as the analysis in chapter 3 shows.

The emerging patterns also reveal information on who collected in the Muslim majority regions of Indonesia and the possible motivations for collecting. The immersive research I did into the database of the NMVW collections leads me to the assumption that a large section of the individuals implicated in the colonial apparatus (e.g. the military, administration, enterprises and cultural institutions) were involved in the building up of museum collections. My conclusion is based on the sheer number of individuals involved as well as checks of their professional backgrounds. The current state of registration, which is still incomplete, records around 500 individuals and institutions who collected in Aceh, around 1,800 in Sumatra and around 4,000 in Java.⁴ It appears that almost anyone holding any kind of significant position in colonial Indonesia left traces in the museum. Most of these individuals brought small numbers of objects (less than twenty) to the museum. Clearly, they ascribed a certain value to these objects, which led them to the choice of lifting them away from the world of things like all other, and to bring them to a public life in an institution. Hence, how did the transformation from 'just a thing' to 'a certain kind of thing' take place? In my analysis I focus on what constituted these meanings and how they are related to and contributed to meaning making about Islam.

The large-scale involvement of colonial society in museum collections is connected to a collective mood of mapping the new territories for the nation. A hallmark of the modern museum as it emerged in the nineteenth century was that 'museums encouraged members of the public to conceive of themselves as autodidactic collectors of knowledge, and the museum made visible suitable classifications and taxonomies into which that knowledge could be organized' (Macdonald 2006, 86). Museum directors like Frederik van Eeden (1829–1901) of the Colonial Museum and Lindor Serrurier (1846–1901) of the Museum of Ethnology called on those living in or travelling to the colonies to send items to their museums, and by doing so, making them available for research on the cultures of the colonies and their natural resources (e.g. Serrurier 1882). Their calls were not only met through the bringing of objects, people also sent photographs and maps of their surroundings, drawings they had made of the local population, and illustrated explanations or models of objects and buildings, which the museums also eagerly accepted. Together these thousands and thousands of individuals build a vast repertoire of data about the colonies that scientists and museum staff could use to generate knowledge about the colonised people and to popularize displays of imperial power.

At the individual level, motivations for contributing to museum collections differed. Some individuals appeared to be motivated by the status and prestige that was to be gained from the public act of collecting for museums (Drieënhuizen 2012b; Pearce 1995). Others wanted to support the scientific endeavour taking place in museums or were fascinated by the 'exotic' world they met (Schefold and Vermeulen 2002a). Caroline Drieënhuizen has argued that through collecting and donating to museums, inhabitants of the colony negotiated their social status and forged a connection to the European colonial elite:

"In Indonesia's colonial hierarchy, where social difference was never stable and always contested,

4 Numbers provided by Richard van Alphen, coordinator collection digitisation NMVW, 3 June 2021.

this meant that social positions had to be negotiated and defined. Therefore, we have to understand the practice of collecting, donating and displaying objects as political acts. These practices were a way to establish social interactions between collector, donator, receiver and visitor with an ulterior goal, namely the fashioning of certain identities in order to reinforce or undermine certain societal categories.” (Drieënhuizen 2019, 24–25)

An analysis of those who collected in Muslim Indonesia reveals that some of the benefactors to the museums seemed to consciously build a donating career by presenting objects to various museums, especially those who belonged to the ‘top of the colonial elite’ (Drieënhuizen 2012b, 7).

The general pattern of where to donate in the late nineteenth century, when evolutionary ethnology reached its peak, was the Museum of Ethnology in Leiden; this was a preferred destination for donors. After 1910, the Colonial Institute (the current Wereldmuseum Amsterdam) became the preferred place to donate, especially after the 1926 opening of the prestigious building in the east of the city.⁵ This shows that prestige mattered in donating (and one could earn a reward for large and important donations).

Another pattern is that individuals often brought objects to several museums. Take, for example, the donating career of Lieutenant General G.C.E. (Frits) van Daalen (1863–1930) who donated sets of objects to respectively the Batavian Society of Arts and Sciences (for which he was made an honorary member), the Colonial Museum in Haarlem,

the Museum for Geography and Ethnography in Rotterdam and the Museum of Ethnology in Leiden, as well as botanical specimens to the Rijksherbarium and to ‘s Lands Plantentuin in Buitenzorg (the present-day Bogor Botanical Gardens). In addition, he bequeathed his uniforms, honorary sabre and other paraphernalia to the Army Museum in Aceh.⁶ His heirs made donations at his bequest to the Royal Military Academy in Breda (his alma mater) and the International Institute of Social History (Shatanawi 2022c).⁷ Van Daalen was of Indo-European descent, which put him in a position in which he needed to prove his loyalty to the nation, despite his high-ranking position (Naarding 1938, 59). He collected ‘in the field’ (in his case, the battlefields of Aceh) with the purpose of directly transferring the collections to an institutional context. He was encouraged by Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje, the influential scholar of Islam, who mediated for Van Daalen on the occasion of his donations to the Batavian Society of Arts and Sciences (*Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen*, 1778–1962) and the Colonial Museum. The reciprocal relation between scholarship and military exploitation can be seen from Snouck Hurgronje’s publication *Het Gajoland en zijne bewoners* (1903), for which he made use of the collections compiled by Van Daalen (Stevens 2007, 116). From the letters Van Daalen sent to Snouck Hurgronje, it can be deduced that his first interest was to contribute to scientific knowledge about the colony and gain the personal prestige attached to this. For instance, before sending a number of valuables

5 Pieter ter Keurs (2009, 158) misinterprets this development when he concludes that the ‘dramatic drop’ in acquisitions in the 1910s at the Museum of Ethnology, and, he argues, even Europe-wide, was influenced by the Ethical Policy. By contrast, the Colonial Institute witnessed a surge of acquisitions in the 1920s and 1930s. Van Wengen’s analysis (2002c, 72) is more accurate: besides the Colonial Institute he mentions the decline of scientific expeditions and military conquests. This, however, did not diminish the growth of the collections, but rather resulted in different types of collections entering the museums.

6 Information TMS database National Museum of World Cultures. Accessed 22 July 2019. See also Stevens (2007) and Atjehsch Leger Museum (1939). Through exchange with the Leiden Museum of Ethnology, part of the Van Daalen collection is now also located at the Rautenstrauch-Joest Museum in Cologne. The Army Museum was ransacked during WWII, and the entire collection disappeared (Broos 2010). Information about the donation to ‘s Lands Plantentuin from Jan Wieringa, email to author, 21 October 2019, see also Kempees (1905, 223).

7 NL-AsdIISG, G.C.E. van Daalen, ARCH00439.

to the Batavian Society, Van Daalen let Snouck Hurgronje know that ‘it is a pity that so many lovers [of Acehnese things] have bought such things from the people here, because they are useless to them [the buyers], contrary to science to which they will be of great importance’, thus indirectly congratulating himself for his dutifulness.⁸

Snouck Hurgronje himself was an avid collector, who assembled his first collections when he went to Jeddah and Mecca in 1884, on invitation from the consul Johan Kruyt, who wanted him to monitor the Indonesian pilgrims and residents there (Snouck Hurgronje 1888).⁹ During his stay in Arabia he collected artefacts, made audio recordings and took photographs to augment his first-hand observations (Freitag 2022; Mols and Vrolijk 2016). For Snouck Hurgronje, material culture was an important medium to study Muslim societies (Buskens and Kommers 2022, 182), and besides encouraging civil servants and military officers to collect, he urged them to provide as much scientific information as possible with their finds. Yet when Lindor Serrurier pressed him to donate his own Meccan collection to the Museum of Ethnology, Snouck’s answer was that he assembled the objects as a private collection and as a personal souvenir of his journey, and that he preferred the collection to stay as long as possible at the home of his aged mother, so she would be surrounded by the memories of the last period of her son’s presence.¹⁰

8 Letter G.C.E. van Daalen to C. Snouck Hurgronje, 10 October 1906. Leiden University Library inv. no. Or. 8952 A: 240.

9 Snouck Hurgronje’s research trip to the Arabian Peninsula was financed by the *Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* (abbreviated: KITLV), the *Provinciaal Utrechts Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen* and the Ministry of Colonies (Van den Doel 2021, 51–52).

10 Letter C. Snouck Hurgronje to L. Serrurier, 11 June 1890. NL-LdnRMV A1-15-374/375. In 1919, Snouck Hurgronje eventually donated the largest part of his collection to the Museum of Ethnology. 235 objects, Jeddah and Mecca, c.1885. Collection National Museum of World Cultures, inv. nos. RV-628-1/7; RV-1973-1/153 and RV-2107-1. The photographic collection and the audio

From the examples of Van Daalen and Snouck Hurgronje it emerges that collecting can be seen as an act of self-fashioning. Susan Pearce (1995, 25) uses the metaphor of a tomb, erected to establish one’s own life, even after death. The idea that collecting can be seen as an expression of individual identity is one of the most widespread in museological literature (Macdonald 2006, 89). In the process of collecting and contributing to museum collections, colonial actors brought different worlds together, their private lives and their professional aspirations. In this manner, they gave voice to their actions and legitimised them. Through the objects they collected, the individuals collecting in colonial Indonesia created stories in which they narrated their own histories as well as more general narratives of Indonesian culture and history (Drieënhuizen 2012b, 17).

Scientific collecting is often held to be synonymous with systematic collecting. The systematic mode of collecting chooses objects that illustrate a certain theme or series, in the case of ethnographic collecting to give an overview of the ways of life of the studied people. This intention differs from the personal mode of collecting where the objects are, in the first place, an extension of the collector’s personality (Hill 2016, 70). Susan Pearce defines systematic collecting as follows:

“Systematic collection depends upon principles of organisation which are perceived to have external reality beyond the specific material under consideration, and which are held to derive from general principles deduced from the broad mass of kindred material through the operation of observation and reason; these general principles form part of our ideas about the nature of the physical world and the nature of ourselves.” (Pearce 1994, 201)

The emphasis of systematic collecting is upon classification, in which objects are extracted from their context and put into relationships created by seriality (Pearce 1994, 202). Museum historian

recordings are part of the special collections of Leiden University Library (see Mols and Vrolijk 2016).

Kate Hill connects this type of systematic ethnographic collection to colonial domination and the formation of knowledge:

“Donors gave objects which conformed to a scientifically ratified type of collection, objects which illustrated apparently naturally occurring divisions and hierarchies, particularly in the natural world, and in non-European cultures and societies. Such donations not only demonstrated the inevitability of hierarchies of power, they demonstrated the actual fact of this power; were in fact an important part of the exercise of power, in that they demonstrated the Europeans’ ability to appropriate, to interpret and to know the culture or nature they controlled. That knowledge was the end product of this appropriation was its most important justification.” (Hill 2016, 82)

1.1 *Collecting in the Period of the Dutch East India Company (1602–1799)*

The encounter between the Dutch East India Company and Islam in Southeast Asia took place in different domains, for instance in the struggle for power with Muslim rulers, resulting in countless military encounters and ultimately, in thousands of treaties, in maritime waters with regard to the hajj, and from the eighteenth century onwards, when the Dutch took control of increasing areas of Muslim territory, with regard to dealing with Muslims in day-to-day affairs (Steenbrink 2018; 2006; Tagliacozzo 2014). Yet in the museum collections in the Netherlands these encounters, whether friendly or violent, left few traces. One reason is the lack of precision of VOC-period sources, which makes it difficult to identify objects still existing today (North 2014, 114; Wagenaar 1992). Wagenaar (1992) also points to the fragility of objects; many have been lost due to decay.

As the VOC itself did not build object collections, collecting was a private enterprise for mainly VOC employees and followed their particular tastes and interests. These interests concerned, in the first place, curiosities and specimens from the natural world; objects of culture and art only became an interest later in time (C. van Dijk

2002). For instance, the oldest Qur’an known from Islamic Southeast Asia is in the heritage collections of the Rotterdam Library (Riddell 2002).¹¹ It is a gift that VOC admiral Cornelis Matelieff de Jonge (1570–1632) received in 1606 ‘*op syn ernstich anhauden*’, i.e. after a lot of urging, at the court of the Sultan of Johor in present-day Malaysia. At the time, the sultanate was an ally of the VOC, which contributed to an Islamic scholar (Matelieff incorrectly speaks of a ‘bishop’) handing over the Qur’an. Several items that were brought by VOC employees are now in Middelburg, one of the port cities that had a VOC chamber.¹² Besides gifts, objects were obtained through looting. The best-known incident in Dutch imperial history concerns a ‘collection’ of flags, weapons, precious objects as well as enslaved people conquered by VOC commander Jacob Pieter van Braam (1737–1803) in Melaka, Selangor and Riau around 1784 (Drieënhuizen 2022).¹³ In 1791, he presented thirty Islamic manuscripts to the Gelderse Academie, which he had seized during the 1784 conquest of Selangor in Malaysia. These were the contents of the library of Sayyid Jafar, the *panglima besar* or chief military commander of Selangor, described in Dutch sources as a ‘Mohamedan Chief Priest’ (*Mahommedaanschen hoofdpriester*) and ‘found’ by Van Braam in his house (Gallop 2024).¹⁴

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, collections were commonly part of cabinets of curiosities or *Wunderkammern*, often maintained by royalty, members of the aristocracy and wealthy citizens like merchants. Also the Netherlands was home to many of these private collections

11 Qur’anic manuscript, Johor, 16th century. Collection Rotterdam City Library inv. no. 96 D 16.

12 These are now part of the collections of the *Koninklijk Zeeuwsch Genootschap der Wetenschappen* (Royal Zeeland Scientific Society).

13 The flags conquered by Van Braam are now in the Nationaal Militair Museum (National Military Museum) in Soesterberg (Drieënhuizen 2022; Pool 2001).

14 Thirty manuscripts in Arabic, Malay, Bugis, Makassar and Javanese, various origins, 17th to early 18th century. Collection Athenaeumbibliotheek Deventer inv. nos. 10 M 1/18 KL; 10 N 1/2 KL; 10 O 1/8 KL; 10 P 1/2 KL.

(Meerkerk 2010; Effert 2008; Van de Roemer 2004; Bergvelt et al. 1992). As part of my research into the Dutch collections I have come across few Islamic (or, as matter of fact, Indonesian) items originating from these cabinets, which to some extent may be explained by the lack of provenance details of many objects in the museums I studied. One example is a set of two Deccani paintings, which could only be identified in 2005 thanks to the depicted historical event on one of them; identification would have been impossible if they depicted more generic Mughal subjects. The best-known of the two paintings shows Johannes Bacherus, an emissary of the VOC, in a large encampment in the Deccan region of India (Haidar and Sardar 2015, 324; Lunsingh Scheurleer and Kruijtzter 2005).¹⁵ Bacherus likely commissioned the painting to record his mission to the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb in the late 1680s. A letter from the VOC headquarters in Batavia, after his death in 1693, mentions two 'Moorish' paintings from his estate to be sent from Machilipatnam to Amsterdam (Lunsingh Scheurleer and Kruijtzter 2005, 52).¹⁶ From there the trail is interrupted, until the paintings re-appeared in the late nineteenth century as part of the collection of the *Nederlandsche Koloniale Vereeniging* (Netherlands Colonial Association, or NKV), to be bequeathed to Artis Zoo after the dissolution of the NKV in 1905, and ending up at the Colonial Museum in 1921.

Islamic objects entered the Royal Cabinet of Curiosities (1816–1883) through the transfer of property of the royal family. From archival sources we can get an idea of the many gifts sent by Indonesian sultans to successive members of the House of Orange-Nassau, but only few of them have survived (J.G. Taylor 2016, 123).

15 The Embassy of Johannes Bacherus en route to the Court of Emperor Aurangzeb, Golconda, c.1689. Painting of a horseman with bow and arrows, possibly Sultan Abu'l-Hasan, Golconda, c.1689. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. nos. TM-A-9584/9585. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/198499>.

16 The letter is in the National Archives/Archives of the Dutch East India Company inv. no. 1.04.02/1540/354.



FIGURE 2 Ceremonial keris, Gowa, 17th century. Gold, gemstones. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. RV-360-6021

The oldest known Indonesian object belonging to the Orange-Nassau family is in fact of Muslim pedigree. It is a ceremonial *keris* (Fig. 2), decorated with gold and precious stones, from the Sultanate of Gowa in South Sulawesi, and adorned with Hindu-Javanese decorations, like the figure on the handle, the wayang figure Bima, and the standing figure of Garuda on the cross piece (Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde 2013, 52).¹⁷ The *keris* was possibly owned by Stadholder Willem IV (1711–51) in his capacity of Director-in-chief of the Dutch East India Company. Willem IV was an

17 Ceremonial keris, Gowa, 17th century. Gold, gemstones. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. RV-360-6021. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/649123>.

enthusiastic scholar, with a particular interest in Indonesia. He built up a Cabinet of Rare Naturalia and Artificialia, which was later incorporated into the Royal Cabinet of Curiosities (Meerkerk 2010; Effert 2008). During the VOC period, the company's troops eagerly seized royal weapons as spoils of war, but weapons also frequently changed hands since they were presented as cultural gifts. How this particular *keris* came into the possession of the royal house of Orange-Nassau is unknown. It may have been given to them, but it is likely that the precious object belonged to the VOC before then and was either a gift or taken by force (Quist 2022). As most of the objects of its kind, since its entrance into the Museum of Ethnology collections in 1883, the *keris* has never been described as an Islamic object. In fact, between 2002 and 2012 the text label in the Indonesia gallery of the Museum of Ethnology stated that the *keris* had prime significance as an example of pre-Islamic workmanship.¹⁸ Indeed, the Hindu-Javanese iconography puts many pertinent questions on the table about the relationship between Islam and pre-Islamic sources of inspiration, as discussed in chapter 8. After the death of Willem IV, the *keris* allegedly became the property of his son Willem V, although the descriptions in the royal archives are vague and undetailed (Quist 2022). When Willem V's collection was opened to the public a few days a week in 1766 (Gommans 2018, 131), the *keris*, along with the jewellery of Stein van Gollenesse (see chapter 6) may have been among the first Islamic objects to be on display in a public museum in the Netherlands.

1.2 *The Typology of Collecting in Muslim Indonesia in the Colonial Era (1800–1945)*

Although relatively few Indonesian objects came to the Netherlands in the period of the Dutch East India Company or VOC, this changed during the period of formal colonial rule. In the nineteenth century, the early colonial period, the ethnographic

museums of the Netherlands were dependent on third parties for the acquisition of collections. Museum curators and directors did not travel, but 'collected from a distance', waiting for those who lived in the colonies or travelled to come to the Netherlands to deposit their finds at the museum (Van Wengen 2002b, 967). That changed in the first decades of the twentieth century, when the museum staff were largely composed of men who had made a career in the Dutch East Indies and had directly experienced the cultures they studied. Only after Indonesian independence, starting in the 1950s (Tropenmuseum) and 1960s (Museum of Ethnology), did curators go to Indonesia and other countries to collect in the field (Van Wengen 2002c, 142; Van Duuren 1991, 37).

Thus, who were the individuals and organisations collecting for the museums? Collecting emerged from different professional fields and in various segments of imperial society. Several authors have developed a typology of acquisition in the context of colonial Indonesia (Van Beurden 2017, 40–47; Ter Keurs 2007b, 2; Trigangga, Sukati, and Ismail 2006; Van Wengen 2002a, 96–100). As previous research was merely concerned with non-Muslim and pre-Islamic heritage, the question is to what extent these typologies apply to the Muslim regions of Indonesia. From these varied approaches I have made a comprehensive list distinguishing the following types of collecting contexts, in order to determine to what extent these contexts are relevant for collecting in Muslim regions:

1. Scientific expeditions
2. Archaeological sites
3. Missionary collecting
4. Military expeditions
5. Individual collectors
6. Gifts to colonial administrators and institutions

The first category, scientific expeditions, limited in the previous typologies to ethnological expeditions, is hardly relevant for objects from the Muslim regions of colonial Indonesia, because this kind of expedition typically targeted 'unknown'

18 Information TMS database National Museum of World Cultures (inv. no. RV-360-6021). Accessed 29 August 2019.

and ‘uncivilised’ cultures. Ethnological research preferred cultures without script, as ethnology was searching for the origin of humanity and its road to development. Still, two collections resulting from scientific expeditions, are from the Central Sumatra expedition (1877–1879) of the Royal Dutch Geographical Society (*Koninklijk Nederlands Aardrijkskundig Genootschap*, or KNAG), which targeted both the non-Muslim (Batak) population and the Muslim Minangkabau, and from the travels of the German ethnologist Alfred Maass (1863–1946) to West and Central Sumatra between 1900 and 1907.¹⁹ On his last trip, Maass was accompanied by the physical anthropologist Johannes Kleiweg de Zwaan (1875–1971), who took measurements and made a series of 57 plaster casts of the faces of Minangkabau men (Sysling 2016, 124–28). Kleiweg de Zwaan donated copies of the casts to the anatomical collections of Museum Vrolik in Amsterdam and the Museum of Ethnology in Leiden.²⁰ The Minangkabau people were the target of scientific expeditions, because their matrilineal kinship system caught the interest

of ethnologists. They were seen as only nominal Muslims, and although they were supposed to have a higher degree of civilisation, they were deemed to have enough ‘animist’ characteristics to be of interest. Moreover, Dutch anthropology took an interest in the Minangkabau Malay because of racial questions, for instance, if there was a pre-Malay racial element to be detected (Sysling 2016, 126). Apart from the KNAG and Maass collections, I haven’t come across colonial-period ethnographic collections resulting from scientific expeditions to Muslim regions. The same can be said for archaeological sites; apart from interest in gravestones, in particular those located in Gresik (Java), Pasai and other places in Aceh, museum collections do not reflect the attention paid by archaeologists to the Islamic heritage of Indonesia (Bloembergen and Eickhoff 2020). In chapter 4 I discuss in more detail the exploits of the Archaeological Service of the Netherlands East Indies and its attitude towards Islamic heritage.

As far as I know, the only collecting trip of a museum employee during the period of colonial rule was the trip of Johannes (Jan) Kreemer (1875–1966) to Aceh. For most of 1916 and 1917, Kreemer travelled through Aceh to make inquiries and to assemble an ethnographic collection for the Aceh Institute, an off shoot of the Colonial Institute.²¹ His research trip was of an entirely different nature to that of the Central Sumatra expeditions undertaken by the Royal Dutch Geographical Society (1877–1879) and Alfred Maass (1900–1907). The main purpose was to support colonial administration and enterprise, with an eye on the Colonial Institute’s mission of promoting trade and business. The influence of Snouck Hurgronje’s working methods was noticeable, as Kreemer’s main method consisted of visiting administrative offices and meeting with both Dutch and Acehnese

19 573 objects collected during the Central Sumatra expedition, Sumatra, mid-19th century. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. nos. RV-268-0/RV-268-527. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/598720>.

206 objects from the Minangkabau collected by the ethnologist Alfred Maass, West Sumatra, early 20th century. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. nos. RV-1623-* and RV-1700-*. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/713117>.

20 The Museum Vrolik at the University of Amsterdam has 49 of the 57 Minangkabau masks and the Museum of Ethnology owns 55 of the 57 Minangkabau masks (Sysling 2015). The masks are copies, made in Berlin from the original plaster moulds that Kleiweg de Zwaan casted from the men’s faces. The moulds are still kept by the Gipsformerei der Staatlichen Museen in Berlin. Johannes Kleiweg de Zwaan, 55 plaster masks depicting faces of Minangkabau men, West Sumatra, 1907. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. nos. RV-5733-3/57. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/838328> Johannes Kleiweg de Zwaan, 49 plaster masks depicting faces of Minangkabau men, West Sumatra, 1907. Collection Museum Vrolik inv. nos. 8750/8798.

21 638 objects, Aceh, c.1916–1917. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. nos. TM-45-1/486. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/143185>.

officials.²² In the foreword of the accompanying publication, Kreemer (1923, 2:vi) thanks his many Acehnese informants, especially Teungku Ceh Ibrahim, the imam of the Great Mosque of Koeta Radja (now Banda Aceh) and a former informant of Snouck Hurgronje, who visited him daily to assist with the compilation of information.

Missionary collections are discussed in more detail in chapter 7. There were missionaries active in Muslim regions, mainly in Java (Kruithof 2014), from where they also sent objects to the Netherlands to train future colleagues and inform the general public. Generally, in museum scholarship missionary collecting is considered a separate category because of the influence it had on traditional religious practice, due to missionaries confiscating or destroying religious objects with the aim of eradicating older practices and replacing them with Christianity (Van Beurden 2017, 45–46), although recent research has nuanced this image (Jacobs, Karen and Wingfield 2015; Corbey and Weener 2015). In the case of the Indonesian archipelago, the suppression of local practices seems however to be limited to the religions of the so-called ‘natural peoples’; in my research I have not come across the deliberate destruction or confiscation of Islamic objects by missionaries. Moreover, the ways in which missionaries obtained objects in Muslim regions (purchase, gifts, commissioning) and the kind of objects they acquired (daily life objects and utensils) did not differ much from other individual collectors. In fact, the missionary collections show great similarity to what civil administrators collected in Java, with an emphasis on the illustration of everyday life.²³ And, like the civil administration, the missionaries collected with the assistance of

the local population or by purchase at local markets (Neurdenburg 1874, 4). Objects connected to religious rituals or deemed ‘superstition’ (such as amulets) do not make up a large share of what missionaries collected in Muslim Java, contrary to other regions of Indonesia, thus making it less relevant to treat the missionary collections as a separate category. Missionary collecting did, however, influence the interpretation and classification of religious objects from the Indonesian archipelago as outlined in chapter 7.

The other categories (military collecting, individual collectors and gift-giving) are all highly important for collecting in Muslim regions. The vast majority of the objects from these regions in Dutch museums arrived through the actions of individual collectors, whose numbers run into the thousands.²⁴ They were civil administrators, sailors, physicians, teachers, planters, entrepreneurs and traders who bought objects at markets and in shops, commissioned them from craftsmen and women, or just ‘found’ them (a word that can refer to anything from picking up invaluable items from the street to coerced expropriation; two common situations were the taking of objects from archaeological sites and, in the case of the military, from houses, in the absence of their inhabitants). Private collectors, assembling collections of certain types of object, including art collectors, also fall into this category. Seldom are the ways in which the donor or seller obtained the objects documented in the museum records, as the method of collecting was not considered significant at the time. Hence, we have to decipher the ways in which collecting took place from a wider analysis of colonial society, supplemented with the information in the museum archives or in the written accounts of the collectors.

22 Short accounts of the research trip were published in the *Tijdschrift van het Aardrijkskundig Genootschap* (1916 and 1917).

23 See for instance the objects collected in Java by missionaries Wessel Hoetzoo (1826–1896), Carel Poensen (1836–1919), Jan Kruyt (1835–1918), Jan Willem Roskes (1842–1918) and Annie de Jonge (1892–1978), that are

now in the NMVW and Wereldmuseum Rotterdam collections.

24 Sarr and Savoy (2018a, 50) describe a similar situation for the African collections in museums in France.

Given the fact that a large part, perhaps even the majority, of museum objects from Muslim Indonesia (which in turn constitutes a significant portion of the Indonesia collection at large) was acquired through purchase, the legal system of the Dutch East Indies is of key importance to understand the context of collecting. The colonial legal system distinguished three legal classes: Europeans, who enjoyed the most civil rights, native inhabitants (*inlanders*), who had the least civil rights, and an intermediate class of foreign 'Orientals' (*vreemde Oosterlingen*), mostly Chinese and Arab citizens.²⁵ In this dual system there was one set of law and courts for the Europeans and one for the natives, while foreign Orientals were subject to their own laws and judged in native courts. A key question is how to assess acquisitions through purchase, given the context of structural inequalities between the parties involved in financial transactions under colonial law. In the literature on the ethics of colonial collecting and repatriation, which focuses largely on the spoils of war and other involuntary expropriation (the 'taking' and 'finding'), this question is, however, hardly addressed.²⁶

Individuals mainly donated objects from the areas they (had) lived in, so regions with large European populations, especially Java, are well-represented. Given the involvement of the large *Indisch* community, who had lived in Indonesia for generations and was often of mixed Indo-European descent, such interactions were often cross-cultural in more than one way. Moreover, the colonial elite also included Indonesians, who helped to build up collections for the Dutch

museums as well. In particular, members of the Indonesian royalty assembled collections for donation to museums in the Netherlands. In the late colonial period, a small number of Indonesians worked as curators and scholars in collaboration with Dutch colleagues. The Batavian Society of Arts and Sciences, a private learned society for the elite, played a central role in collecting, welcomed its first Indonesian member in 1826, and in 1930 10% of its membership was Indonesian (Mohr 2014, 30; Groot 2009, 95). For these reasons, colonial collecting cannot be reduced to a simple scheme of 'us' and 'them', but rather requires more complex readings.

Moreover, collecting in colonial Indonesia was characterized by a division of collections between the metropole and the colony, particularly Batavia, where the Batavian Society of Arts and Sciences was located. After 1862, it was government policy to divide the objects collected by civil administrators between the Society and museums in the Netherlands (Bataviaasch Genootschap 1864, 1 1863:150–51). According to Pieter ter Keurs (2009, 153), 'throughout the colonial period the Batavian Society and the colonial government did everything in their power to keep the best objects in the colony: to be stored, seen and researched in the museum in Batavia'. Although this was official policy, the power of the government in this matter was limited, or they chose not to exercise it, with the exception of some categories of objects, e.g. spoils of war and scientific expeditions under the auspices of the government. So, in reality almost all individual collectors decided themselves which institutions they left their collections to, even if they worked for the government. In the following chapters, we will see plenty of examples of civil administrators and military staff donating and selling object collections to the museums in the Netherlands.

In their report on the repatriation of colonial collections from France, Felwine Sarr and Bénédicte Savoy (2018a) make an important distinction between acquisitions from individuals connected to the colonial apparatus, e.g. civil

25 Studies by Bart Luttikhuis (2013) and others demonstrate that the boundaries between the legal classes were porous and inequalities unevenly distributed over the native population, hence my suggestion for further research into this subject in the context of collecting.

26 For instance, Jos van Beurden's important study (2017) mentions 'acquisition by normal purchase or barter, at equal level' and 'acquisition according to colonial legislation, at unequal level' (2017, 41) but does not further discuss these situations.

administrators or military staff, and those who were not directly connected to colonial power. For the first group, they reserve a separate status referring to the ‘iniquitous conditions notably tied to the asymmetry of the “colonial context”’ (Sarr and Savoy 2018b, 75). As the archives of the ethnographic museums of the Netherlands often did not record the profession of the donor or seller, but only the last name and initials, it is difficult to establish the share of objects collected within the direct realm of imperial power. My assessment, based on my research of collections from Muslim regions, holds that this share is large, although my judgment might be affected by the fact that the colonial elite are easier to trace than the average citizen, who usually remains unknown beyond the last name. A comparison of the lists of colonial administrators with the collection databases of the Dutch museums reveals that many of them left traces in the collections.

A number of colonial administrators tried to collect systematically. The best known of them are F.W. (Willem) Stammeshaus (1881–1957), who was stationed in Aceh, and O.L. (Oscar Louis) Helfrich (1860–1958), who collected in the Pasemah region of South Sumatra and in Jambi, Central Sumatra (Klein Nagelvoort 2019; Ter Keurs 2005). Others, like Jan Tideman (1874–1944) who collected in South Sulawesi, have received less attention. In contrast with previous research, my findings indicate that it was not just top-level civil servants who brought objects, but also the lower ranks of the civil administration like clerks and district officers (*controleurs*). The same can be said for low-ranking officers, and even soldiers, of the Netherlands East Indies Army (KNIL) and for small entrepreneurs.²⁷

²⁷ My observations add nuance to those of Caroline Drieënhuizen (2012b, 7), who concludes that collecting was ‘a pastime, exclusive for the top of the European elite’ residing in colonial Indonesia. This certainly was the case when it came to collecting in the sense of amassing precious objects or large numbers of items, the kind of collecting which is the focal point of Drieënhuizen’s research, but definitely not when it came to donating and selling to museums in the

An example is Sgt. F.W.E. (Friedrich Wilhelm Emil) Hess (1885–1972), who served in the KNIL between the age of nineteen and twenty-six, and returned home with more than ninety objects.²⁸ Research of this kind is hindered by the state of infancy of provenance research in the Dutch museums holding colonial collections, and no doubt additional insights will be gained when more object biographies can be traced and more names linked to objects. Nonetheless, in-depth research can only go one way, that is revealing more ties to colonial structures rather than less. Lastly, a small part of the collection is directly related to the system of colonial governance. This part, so far consisting of 651 identified items, consists of, among other things, correspondence of the colonial administration, military paraphernalia, identity cards (*kampongpassen*) that men in some regions were obliged to carry, medals and other awards presented to Indonesians who collaborated with the Dutch, travel permits for hajjis and declarations of subjugation signed by local rulers, the so-called *korte en lange verklaringen*.²⁹ The Wereldmuseum Amsterdam and its predecessors also documented its own functioning as a colonial institution by adding the memorabilia, medals and posters it issued to the collection, as well as photographic documentation of official events and exhibitions.

Furthermore, there was frequent gift exchange between the colonial government, local sultans and other Muslim rulers and community leaders (Protschky 2019; J.G. Taylor 2016; Wassing-Visser 1995). The practice of gift exchange started in the VOC period and continued until 1942. Although this only constitutes a small part of the collection, it often concerns valuable objects, making it a category of prime importance. As Jos van

Netherlands, which often happened in small numbers of invaluable items.

²⁸ 91 objects, Papua/Aceh/Java, early 20th century. Collection Wereldmuseum Rotterdam inv. nos. WM-28337/WM-28429. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/1112646>.

²⁹ Information TMS database National Museum of World Cultures. Accessed 14 August 2019. It excludes 25,000 identity cards for hajjis.

Beurden (2017, 41) has argued, gift giving frequently occurred in asymmetrical power relations and certain gifts were expressions of subjugation to the colonial powers.³⁰ Many of the gifts comprised *pusaka* (sacred heirlooms), artefacts that have acquired special spiritual, and sometimes physical, qualities through their history and connection to ancestors (Trigangga, Sukati, and Ismail 2006; Soebadio 1992). Complaints about the difficulty to obtain *barang pusaka* regularly appear in Dutch accounts; it often took months of negotiation and cash flow problems on the Indonesian side (Drieënhuizen 2012b, 238; Pott 1980, 185; Rouffaer 1901, 31).³¹ On rare occasions, royalty sold *pusaka* items to Dutch collectors, if they had lost their significance.³² Such was the case with the ceremonial coat (*kyai antakusuma*) worn by the sultans of Yogyakarta at coronations and Islamic festivals, which is discussed at length in chapter 8 (Shatanawi 2014, 226–27).³³

At the same time, Indonesian rulers went to great lengths to protect their *pusaka* against falling into Dutch hands involuntarily. The *pusaka* of the rulers of the various kingdoms in the archipelago are associated with another power; the objects conferred the right to rule. This capacity and this type of *pusaka* obviously aroused the colonial government's interest and made them key objects to

obtain. The Sultan of Aceh, therefore, made sure the court *pusaka*, or regalia, were brought to safety during his flight in 1874.³⁴ When such *pusaka* objects were captured as spoils of war, often negotiations followed. For example, in 1876 navy officer Francois Conrad Granpré Molière (1854–1921) looted the costume of Dano Baba Hasan, prince of Jailolo (Maluku), during a fight.³⁵ The prince then informed the naval authorities that he was unable to present his subjugation, because he was robbed of his costume.³⁶ *Controleur* Jan Tideman obtained a rare manuscript, formerly in possession of the Raja of Gowa, I Makkulau Karaeng Lembagaparang (c.1860–1906), as a gift from the Raja's brother-in-law in exchange for an even more precious lance that was looted during the attack on the Gowa sultanate in 1905 and returned by Tideman.³⁷ The careful control of *pusaka* items is the main reason that only a relatively small number of *pusaka* from the Muslim courts can be found in museums in the Netherlands.

A special category of individual collectors constitutes the military. The Indonesia collections of the Dutch museums contain only a few collections of spoils that were designated as state property, and even fewer concern Muslim majority regions.³⁸

30 The *keris* of the Sultan of Madura, a gift to King Willem I, is a clear example. Keris, Madura, c.1835. Collection Rijksmuseum inv. no. NG-NM-7115. <http://hdl.handle.net/10934/RM0001.COLLECT.241275> Letter of Sultan Cakra Adiningrat VIII of Madura to King Willem I, Madura, 20 Shawwal 1250 (19 February 1835). Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. RV-360-8080. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/651063>.

31 See also: letter G.C.E. van Daalen to Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje, 2 November 1903. Leiden University Library inv. no. Or. 8952 A: 238.

32 An example is the livery collar of the Sultan of Ternate, a present of the government of the Dutch East India Company in 1676, and sold by the Sultan in 1951 (see also Drieënhuizen 2018a). Livery collar, 17th century, Ternate. Collection Rijksmuseum NG-391. <http://hdl.handle.net/10934/RM0001.COLLECT.250475>.

33 *Kyai antakusuma*, 1855–1877, Yogyakarta. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. TM-1595-2. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/57842>.

34 The royal family deposited the court *pusaka* with Teuku Muda Baid. In 1878 he was forced to hand them over. The Teuku, however, did so reluctantly, and the remaining items were found in his house the following year (*Koloniaal verslag van 1879: Nederlandsch (Oost-) Indië* 1879, 9). The colonial government donated the regalia to the Bataviaasch Genootschap in 1884. In 1903, after Sultan Muhammad Daud's subjugation, the court *pusaka* were returned to him.

35 Costume, Galela, late 19th century. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. RV-193-22. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/597078>.

36 Letter J. Korndörffer to C. Leemans, 17 November 1877. NL-LdnRMV A1-3-388/390.

37 Lontaraq bilang, Gowa, 18th century. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. TM-668-216. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/176355>.

38 The most notable collections are the Lombok Treasure (1894) and Bali expedition (1906). The Dutch government initially donated the spoils of the military expedition against the Muslim kingdom of Bone (1905) to the Museum of Ethnology, but withdrew the collection in 1931 to return it to the descendants of the King of

One of the main reasons is the policy of the Dutch government to assign the Batavian Society of Arts and Sciences as a preferred destination for spoils of war, such as court *pusaka*, now owned by the state (Ter Keurs 2009).³⁹ Apart from these ‘complete’ collections, there are a small number of individual objects taken as official spoils during military expeditions, such as a *keris* dagger captured in 1812 during the British raid of the Yogyakarta court led by Stamford Raffles, which ended up in the Royal Cabinet of Curiosities.⁴⁰ However, although there are few official spoils of war, there are hundreds of officers and soldiers of the Netherlands East Indies Army (KNIL) among the individuals who collected for the museums.

The ethnographic collections assembled in military contexts are characterised by what Kate Hill (2016, 80) calls trophy-systematics; these collections not only ‘celebrate and materially demonstrate an unequal power relation, they explain and naturalize the reason for it, as a matter of inherent, scientifically determined superiority and inferiority’. This describes the effects of these collections, rather than the methods through which they came about. As with other collectors, the precise details of the collecting practices of military staff are often not known. As Sarr and Savoy (2018a, 51) point out, the same individuals taking war loot also acquired objects outside the battle field, by purchase or barter, making it difficult to identify which part of their collections is forcibly taken and which part is otherwise obtained. The next chapter, containing a closer examination of

the collecting practices during the various phases of the Aceh War, gives more insight into this question. In the case of some Muslim regions, notably Aceh, war is the primary context in which the shaping of the collections took place. In the next chapter I will discuss in detail what this means for the collections from Muslim Indonesia and for the position of Islam in museums of the Netherlands.

1.3 *The Emergence of Museums Holding Indonesian Collections*

Colonial collecting resulted in and was fuelled by the establishment of a significant number of museums that were devoted to Indonesian collections, but each specialized in a different task or genre. There were museums and collections attached to the schools for training colonial administrators (the Royal Academy and the *Indische Instelling* in Delft), the military academies (the *Koninklijke Militaire Academie*, or KMA, with branches in Breda and Kampen), veterans of the Netherlands East Indies Army (Museum Bronbeek), training of missionaries (the Missiemuseum in Steyl, the *Nederlandsch Zendeling Genootschap* or NZG, based in Rotterdam), museums devoted to scientific research on colonial products and agriculture (the Koloniaal Museum in Haarlem, the Koloniaal Landbouwmuseum in Deventer, and the museum of the Landbouwhogeschool in Wageningen). The first museum to call itself ‘Colonial Museum’ was based in the provincial town of Zwolle, and was established to house the collections of the *Tentoonstelling van Nationale Nijverheid van Nederland en Overzeese gebieden* (“Exhibition of national crafts of the Netherlands and territories overseas”), held in Arnhem in 1852 (Drieënhuizen 2012b, 144). When the demand for a particular specialty diminished, or interest in colonial exhibitions declined (after Indonesian independence), these museums were closed. Today most of these collections, or parts of them, have been integrated in the National Museum of World Cultures.

The first ethnographic museum of the Netherlands was the Museum of Ethnology in Leiden, which was founded in 1837 (Van Wengen

Bone (Budiarti 2007; Pronk 2006). The official spoils of war from Aceh are several cannons that currently are in Museum Bronbeek (Smits 1881, 54–59).

39 In 1962, the building and collections of the Batavian Society of Arts and Sciences were handed over to the Indonesian government. They now constitute the core of the Museum Nasional Indonesia (National Museum of Indonesia).

40 *Keris* dagger, Yogyakarta (produced in Bali), 18th century. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. RV-360-5393. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/609284>.

2002c).⁴¹ In the first period, the museum focused on Japan (the von Siebold collection), and only when Conrad Leemans (1809–1893) became director, in 1859, did a more serious orientation towards Southeast Asia develop, coinciding with the conquest of large parts of what is now Indonesia.⁴² From then on ethnological research was the main *raison d'être* of the museum, and this development was only strengthened during the 1880–1896 directorship of Lindor Serrurier, and his successors. The Museum of Ethnology remained closely tied to academic ethnology, especially as it was practiced at Leiden University, and changes in academic orientation at the university were noticeable at the museum, and vice versa. The museum was an influential force in the Dutch practice of structuralist anthropology, especially between the 1920s and 1960s. The collection policies were rather strictly focused on ethnological objects, defined as objects made and used by cultural groups of non-European countries. Being a national museum, it was linked to colonialism as a recipient of collections from colonial actors such as army officers or the Ministry of Colonies. Compared to other museums, such as the Colonial Institute, it was less active in the direct promotion of narratives about colonialism itself. Yet, colonial ideas were embedded in the museum through its strong association with science, as the discipline of anthropology emerged in tandem with colonialism.

The second large museum, the current Wereldmuseum Amsterdam, was established in 1864 in Haarlem by botanist Frederik Willem van

Eeden (1829–1901), who envisaged a museum with emphasis on colonial industry and production.⁴³ Seven years later, the Colonial Museum (Koloniaal Museum) opened its doors. It drew on numerous gifts from private donors, companies and colonial institutions. The emphasis lay on the display and study of resources from the Dutch colonies in the East and West Indies: raw materials, natural produce and applications of these resources, as in decorative art. The showcases contained models of transport and housing in the East Indies, bamboo and cane, varieties of wood, agricultural produce, minerals, fibres, resins, fruit and foods. Products were central; the cultural background of the inhabitants of the colonies was not explained to any significant extent. Lack of space in Haarlem led in 1910 to the establishment of a Colonial Institute Association (*Vereeniging Koloniaal Instituut*) with the task of raising money to finance a new location in Amsterdam. The massive building that now houses the Royal Tropical Institute (*Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen*) and the Wereldmuseum Amsterdam, was opened in 1926 by Queen Wilhelmina. Inside and out, murals, sculptures and reliefs tell of the institute's mission: to disseminate knowledge about the colonies. The new museum served first and foremost as a centre of expertise for those involved in commerce with the colonies. The idea was for companies to gain an overview of the situation in any given part of the Dutch territories, 'People are able to see the various colonial regions in the new Colonial Museum; they can walk through and get an impression of the characteristics of each area, both with regard to the land and the inhabitants,

41 The museum changed its name over the course of time; from 's Rijks Ethnographisch Museum (National Museum of Ethnography, 1837–1935) to Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde (National Museum of Ethnology, 1935–2005) to Museum Volkenkunde (Museum of Ethnology, 2005–2023) and Wereldmuseum Leiden (since 2023). For uniformity's sake I use Museum of Ethnology throughout the text when referring to the historical name and Wereldmuseum Leiden when referring to the current museum.

42 Between 1859 and 1880, Leemans held both the position of director of the Museum of Antiquities and the Museum of Ethnology.

43 Founded in 1864 as the Koloniaal Museum (Colonial Museum) in Haarlem, the museum expanded to become a research institute in 1910, under the name Koloniaal Instituut (Colonial Institute). Following Indonesian independence, the name changed to Indisch Instituut (Indian Institute) between 1945 and 1950. In 1950, it changed again to Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen (Royal Tropical Institute) of which the Tropenmuseum was part until 2013. In 2023, the name was changed to Wereldmuseum Amsterdam.

the kind of businesses that operate there, the products that people produce or can produce' (Blink 1910, 8). This approach also meant that the museum abandoned its technical bias, in which little attention was paid to cultural characteristics, and focused instead on a more ethnographic approach. A separate ethnographic department was opened in the Colonial Institute, showing the customs and traditions of peoples in the colonies. In 1950, following the independence of Indonesia, the museum again changed its orientation: now it considered its subject the countries of the tropics, *in casu* the so-called non-Western world.

The Museum of Geography and Ethnology in Rotterdam (the current Wereldmuseum Rotterdam) was founded in 1885 at the instigation of a group of members of the city's elite, mostly connected to international trade and the port of Rotterdam (Van Dongen and van der Linden 2020; Djajasoebrota 2002).⁴⁴ In 1884 the *Nederlandsch Zendeling Genootschap* (Netherlands Missionary Society, or NZG), based in Rotterdam, gave most of its object collections on loan to the museum in formation (Kanhai 2020).⁴⁵ Together with the collection of the wealthy physicist Elie van Rijkevorsel (1845–1928), the NZG collections constituted the founding collection of the Museum of Geography and Ethnology. The orientation of the museum was a mixture of different interests. The missionaries who collected for the NZG shaped the field of ethnology, as they published ethnographic studies of the societies they were based in (Molendijk 2005, 183). Van Rijkevorsel and

other 'gentlemen-collectors' collected with an eye on aesthetics (Gaba-Van Dongen et al. 2011; Djajasoebrota 2002, 155). Both approaches remained in effect throughout the museum's history, and objects were collected and interpreted for ethnological and aesthetic reasons.

The museums under the umbrella of the National Museum of World Cultures have in the course of their history absorbed a number of smaller institutional collections. The collection of the Royal Academy (Koninklijke Akademie) in Delft, established in 1842 for the training of colonial administrators, comprising 1,078 objects, was donated to the Museum of Ethnology when the academy was closed in 1864. Most of the approximately 1,100 objects from colonial Indonesia present in the Royal Cabinet of Curiosities (Koninklijk Kabinet van Zeldzaamheden, or KKZ) were transferred to the Museum of Ethnology in 1883. In 1903 it received the non-European holdings of the National Museum of Antiquities (Rijksmuseum van Oudheden). The Museum of Ethnology also received, in 1956, the greatest part of the collection of the Royal Military Academy (*Koninklijke Militaire Academie*, or KMA) in Breda, consisting of around 7,500 objects that had been collected since 1900. The Colonial Institute, precursor of the Wereldmuseum Amsterdam, received in 1921 the entire ethnographic collection of the Amsterdam Artis Zoo (*Natura Artis Magistra*, or Artis for short), comprising around 14,000 objects that had become part of the collection between 1859 and 1911. Artis, in turn, had inherited the collections of the *Nederlandsche Koloniale Vereeniging* (Netherlands Colonial Association, 1883–1905). The ethnographic museum at Artis Zoo had been set up to give an idea of 'the life of people in Dutch overseas territories as well as the life of primitive people in general', while the accompanying zoo gave an idea of the fauna of these territories. The presence of the ethnology collection at the zoological garden reflects the close connections between the disciplines of ethnology and geography in the mid-nineteenth century (Molendijk 2005, 203). Interestingly, although the Artis collection focused

44 Like the other museums, the museum changed its name over the course of time; from Museum voor Land- en Volkenkunde (Museum of Geography and Ethnology, 1885–1986) to Museum voor Volkenkunde (1986–2000) to Wereldmuseum (since 2000). For uniformity's sake I use Museum of Geography and Ethnology throughout the text when referring to the historical name and Wereldmuseum Rotterdam when referring to the current museum.

45 This was followed in later years by more loans. Eventually, the NZG donated and sold most of its collections to the Museum of Geography and Ethnology.

specifically on the Dutch colonies as well as ‘the natural peoples in general’ (Van Duuren 1991, 23), most of the Islamic objects were from urban populations in Persia and the Dutch East Indies. The Rotterdam Zoo also had an ethnographic collection, a substantial part of which is now in the collections of the Wereldmuseum Leiden and Rotterdam. The Wereldmuseum locations received, through donation or exchange, a total of 3,723 objects from colonial Indonesia from the Batavian Society of Arts and Sciences. In 2016, after the foundation of the National Museum of World Cultures, 3,200 objects from the Museum Nusantara (the former *Indische Instelling*, a training school providing instruction to colonial administrators) in Delft, which closed its doors in 2013, were added.⁴⁶ From my analysis it appears the museums largely tapped into the same network of donors and sellers. However, there were variations in the type of object they collected. Some institutions (e.g. the Museum of Ethnology, the Museum of Geography and Ethnology) limited themselves to ‘purely’ non-European objects, whereas other museums (e.g. the Colonial Institute, *Indische Instelling*) also accepted more hybrid forms and the material culture of Europeans living in the colonies.

As I will describe in chapter 6, the Rijksmuseum, the national museum of Dutch art and history, was reluctant to admit Indonesian objects to its collections, an attitude that only changed in the late colonial period.⁴⁷ The change resulted in the opening, in 1952, of a Museum of Asian Art at the Rijksmuseum premises, which housed the collections of the Asian Art Society (VVAK). Nevertheless, objects from colonial Indonesia kept being

donated to the Rijksmuseum and other museums dedicated to national and local history in the provinces and towns of the Netherlands. The interwovenness of Dutch history with its colonies assured a steady stream of acquisitions, be it under the umbrella of maritime history, or as historical costumes, paintings, drawings and photographs that were supposed to tell a story about the nation but revealed just as much of the shared history of the Netherlands and Indonesia (Stevens 2015).

Due to this particular history, in the Netherlands the largest museum collections from colonial Indonesia can be found at the museums of ethnology. In addition, there are large holdings in the natural history museums, for example the Naturalis Biodiversity Center in Leiden, a merger of several natural history collections, holds hundreds of thousands of specimens of plants and animals collected in colonial Indonesia, of which the colonial nature thus far has received little attention (Drieënhuizen and Sysling 2021; Weber 2019; Van Andel 2017).⁴⁸ Many of those collecting for the museums of ethnology also collected in the field of natural history. Outside the Netherlands, the successor of the Royal Batavian Society of Arts and Sciences, the National Museum of Indonesia (*Museum Nasional Indonesia*) has a collection of around 140,000 objects, mostly collected in the colonial period (Museum Nasional Indonesia, n.d.; Mohr 2014, 32). Smaller collections can be found in museums in other European countries, including Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom, as well as the United States (P.M. Taylor 1995, 109).

Colonialism in the Dutch East Indies also launched the collecting of objects from the

46 Information TMS database National Museum of World Cultures. Accessed 14 August 2019. For the history of Museum Nusantara, see Van Leur (1989).

47 The Rijksmuseum holdings have around 750 Indonesian objects; this number relates to objects made by Indonesians and collected in a colonial context and includes the permanent loan from VVAK. Jan de Hond, curator Rijksmuseum, email to author, 1 November 2019.

48 These collections include those of the National Museum of Natural History (Rijksmuseum van Natuurlijke Historie), the National Museum of Geology and Mineralogy (Rijksmuseum van Geologie en Mineralogie), the Zoological Museum Amsterdam of the University of Amsterdam, and the Dutch National Herbaria at the universities of Leiden, Amsterdam and Wageningen.

so-called heartland of Islam, as the first Arab collections were sent from the Dutch consulate in Jeddah, from where the Indonesian pilgrims were monitored. Besides colonialism, trade and diplomatic relations were at the root of the collections from the Middle East. Museums also received objects from the Dutch consuls stationed in places such as Tripoli, Istanbul and Bushehr.⁴⁹ Albert Hotz (1855–1930), a trader who was based in Iran, regularly sold and donated Persian artefacts. The objects from the Persian Pavilion he curated for the 1883 International Colonial and Export Exhibition in Amsterdam, acting as a commissioner of the Persian government, became part of various museum collections (De Hond 2009).⁵⁰ Yet generally, the Middle East and North Africa received relatively scarce attention in the decades before 1950, and collections would remain rather small compared to countries such as Britain and France that were the main colonizers of the region. In addition, as we will see, Dutch museum ethnologists had little interest in the region, or Muslim cultures in general, an attitude they shared with Dutch art historians. As a result, the field of Islamic art remained underdeveloped in universities and museums in the Netherlands, a situation further analysed in chapter 8.

2 Analysis of the Collections from Muslim Indonesia in the Netherlands

2.1 *Analysing the Research Sample*

In the collections of the National Museum of World Cultures I searched for patterns of collecting and interpretation. I was particularly interested in the moments when Islam was noticed and noted in the collection, and where, hence which

regions of Indonesia this concerned. To this end I delved deeper into the histories of classification to identify how Islam was qualified in the colonial period and thereafter. I identified three periods of time in which Islam was classified. Based on this, I drew a set of data consisting of all objects, collected in Indonesia between 1850 and 1950 that have been classified as being linked to the Islamic faith, a total of 1,244 objects.⁵¹ The set contains three subsets, representing different periods of classification in the ethnographic museum. I focus on group twelve, representing religion – and the highest level of civilisation – within a classificatory system comprising twelve groups of functional use (see chapter 7 for a detailed outline):

1. All objects from Muslim regions in Indonesia, classified as group twelve (religion) in the catalogues of the Museum of Ethnology, published between 1892 and 1932.
2. All objects from Muslim regions in Indonesia, classified as group twelve (religion, science and education) on the Tropenmuseum index cards (*zettels*) between 1940 and 2000, focusing on the objects classified as group 12.1 (funerary objects and ancestral cults) and 12.2 (objects related to offerings, amulets, temple statues, clothing and objects used by priests, headhunting, tools for divination, prayer mats, beggar's bowls, collection plates, incense burners).
3. All objects from Muslim regions in Indonesia classified as 'Islamic' in the category of religion (this is different from the functional category using the groups) in the digital database (The Museum System or TMS) from 2000.

This, in fact, was a re-interpretation of the earlier classifications; therefore, there is overlap with the two other subsets. Some objects that were

49 See for instance, the contributions of Jacques Clifford Kocq van Breugel (1799–1867), Dutch consul in Tripoli, discussed in chapter 6.

50 Currently, the NMVW and Wereldmuseum Rotterdam collections contain 541 objects that can be traced to Hotz. Leiden University Library holds a set of around 250 watercolour paintings.

51 The sample excludes the Wereldmuseum Rotterdam collection, because here classification is incomplete and unreliable, and the (former) Museum Nusantara collection because only a small proportion of the collection became part of the NMVW.

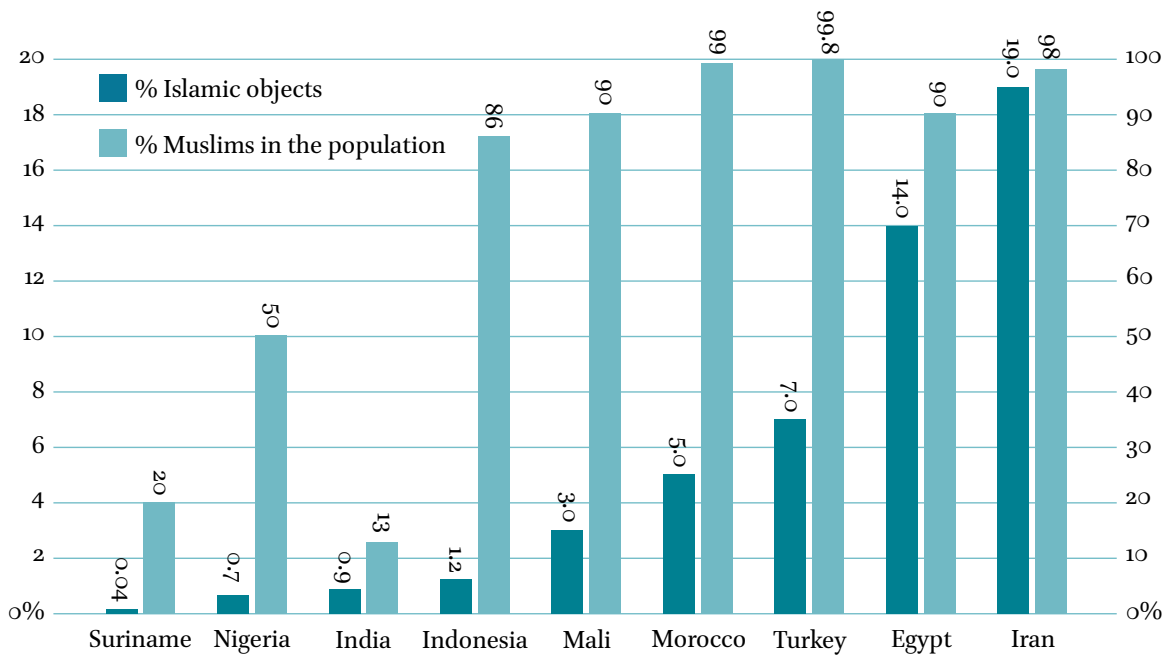


FIGURE 3 Share of Islamic objects in the Tropenmuseum collection, by country. Published in Shatanawi (2014, 31)

classified before under group 12 also belong to this set, whereas other objects earlier classified as group twelve are not considered religious under the new classification. Furthermore, the category of religion is used more consistently in the registration of the Tropenmuseum collections than for the Museum of Ethnology collections, resulting in an uneven distribution of objects.

Earlier research into the Wereldmuseum Amsterdam collection showed that 1.2% of the Indonesia collection is classified as pertaining to the Islamic religion (Shatanawi 2014, 31). This percentage is somewhat higher when looking specifically at the Muslim majority regions of Java (2%) and Sumatra (4%) (Fig. 3). However, the percentage of Islamic objects in the Indonesia collection is far lower than in the collections from other Muslim majority countries, such as Turkey (7%), Egypt (14%) or Iran (19%).

Using this set of data, I looked for patterns indicating in particular where and what type of object was collected. The most significant pattern I found is regional; there is a manifest contrast between the different regions of Indonesia (Fig. 4). It is clear

that collecting of objects classified as Islamic is dominated by Sumatra (53%). More than half the sample is collected there, whereas Java counts for one third (although the regions proportionally are differently represented, with Java taking up 28% of the total Indonesia collection and Sumatra 19%). Regions like Nusa Tenggara, Kalimantan, Maluku and Sulawesi only represent a few percent of the Islamic collection.

2.2 *Islam, Java and Sumatra*

The disparity in numbers between Java and Sumatra can be explained by a number of factors. First of all, the periodization and speed of collecting matters. Until the 1860s, collecting in Indonesia was more or less incidental (Effert 2011, 156). The large influx of Indonesian objects into the museums in the Netherlands only began in this decade and was related to the opening of museums focusing on objects from the colonies (see section 1.3). To illustrate the changing speed of collecting, the Royal Academy in Delft, operating between 1842 and 1864 as a training school for colonial administrators, gathered 1,078 objects in

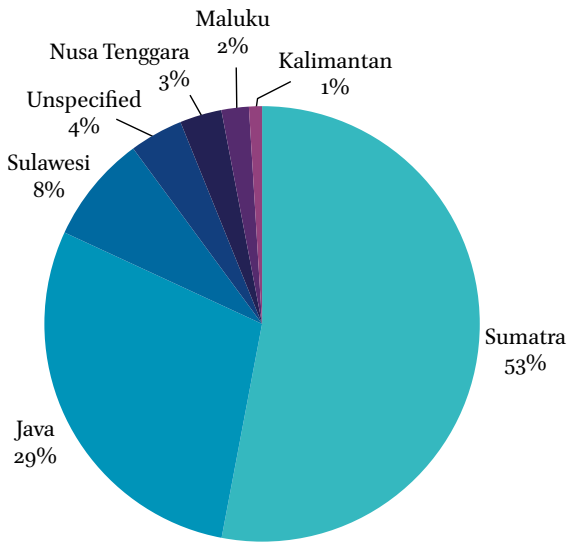


FIGURE 4 Division of the sample: Islamic collections by region
SOURCE: AUTHOR

twenty-two years of existence.⁵² By contrast, the Museum of Ethnology received 6,704 Indonesian objects between 1859 and 1880, and the next sixteen years (1880–1896) resulted in the addition of another 16,585 Indonesian objects (Van Wengen 2002a, 90).⁵³ The acceleration of collecting coincided with the period of conquest of Sumatra. In particular the prolonged Aceh War and the military administration of that region created conditions in which large scale and systematic collecting could take place. In Sumatra, several systematic collections were assembled by military officers and civil administrators, as well as by scientific expeditions to Central Sumatra. Although it can be argued that individual taste and perceptions also had a large influence on these collections, they

intended to give a scientifically rational overview of the people concerned, following encyclopaedic Enlightenment principles. Collecting developed from the need to know and control the newly conquered areas. Of the approximately 35,000 objects from Sumatra, at least 6,500 were collected systematically among the Muslim population.

In Java, however, collecting only reached full speed decades after the island was submitted to Dutch rule. Here, the acceleration of collecting after 1860 was related to increasing numbers of Dutch individuals going to live and work in the colony. In contrast to Sumatra, South Sulawesi or other recently conquered regions, Java was not 'unknown' territory which required extensive gathering of knowledge (Brinkgreve and van Hout 2005, 100). The Java collection is made up of more than 47,000 objects, gathered by around 4,000 individuals and institutions. The pattern here is a large number of donors and sellers, from highly diverse backgrounds, who each brought a small number of objects to the museums. Few of them assembled large collections (more than 500 objects), and none collected large assemblages that aimed to give a systematic overview of life in certain regions of Java. No research expeditions were undertaken to collect ethnographic information. It is also noteworthy that the many civil servants stationed on the island were not involved in systematic ethnographic collecting, like their colleagues in Sumatra, Sulawesi and the non-Muslim regions were.⁵⁴ Nonetheless, in museums and exhibitions, such as the International Colonial and Export Exhibition in 1883, efforts were made to present Java systematically (Bloembergen 2006). It can be argued, however, that this systematism

52 Information TMS database National Museum of World Cultures. Accessed 16 March 2020. 10% of the collection was of the representational kind, i.e. drawings and paintings by artist Hubertus Sieburgh (see Bloembergen and Eickhoff 2020, 43–45).

53 This number is influenced by the transfer of objects from the Royal Cabinet of Curiosities. Still, also at the Cabinet, the majority of Indonesian objects arrived after 1860.

54 Exceptions, albeit on a limited scale, were civil administrators W.L.H.A. Harloff and E.D. Levyssohn Norman, who in 1864 donated 279 objects from Central Java to the Batavian Society. The collection was divided into categories, such as agriculture, husbandry, various crafts, transport, medicine, household goods, weapons and objects used by thieves (Brinkgreve and van Hout 2005, 100).

was more the result of careful curating rather than systematic collecting.

A second factor explaining the disparity in numbers relates to perceptions of how Islam was lived and, more importantly, appropriated differently in Sumatra and Java. The colonial approach to Indonesia, in the administration as well as academia and museums, was through differentiation of its various ethnicities or 'races', in connection to the geographical regions of the archipelago. Each ethnicity was ascribed a set of characteristics of physical and behavioural appearances that supposedly was fixed in time. When it came to Islam two extreme images prevailed: on one end of the spectrum the Acehnese and their extreme Muslimness, on the other end the Javanese whose piety was considered a mere smoke screen for an essentially Hindu, Buddhist or animist religious nature. Other regions and ethnicities were positioned somewhere along the spectrum. For instance, like Java, and despite the current image of the Bugis and Makkassar people as steadfast Muslims, Sulawesi Islam was commonly discussed as a superficial layer on top of older non-monotheist traditions.

The images of Muslims in the archipelago were connected to ideas about fanaticism, and the association of anticolonial resistance with Islam, as well as Protestant conceptions of religion as beliefs following a rigid standard of dogmas that remained the same as they spread over the world. There is a close connection between Aceh's image of piety and the Aceh War (1873–1942),⁵⁵ owing to the fact that the resistance was cast in terms of jihad and the active participation of the 'ulama in the leadership of the resistance. It led to a construction of an image of the Acehnese not only as Muslims, but as 'singularly pious, militant defenders of the faith' (Wieringa 2017, 1170). Another element, which is quite central to museum

interpretations, relates to the historical relations between Aceh and the heartland of Islam, that is, the Ottoman Empire and Mecca. According to this view, the direct relations have resulted in an Islam that is closer to the Islam of the heartland and, by extension, purer. The idea of Javanese-ness as almost purely Hindu-Buddhist in nature was most strongly held with respect to Central Java, and its elite, the *priyayi* class. Banten, in West Java, on the other hand, was considered to be one of the major regions of particular Islamic fervour, much like Aceh and West Sumatra. Snouck Hurgronje, for instance, called Banten 'a centre of Mohammedan life' (*een brandpunt van Mohammedaansch leven*) (Gobée and Adriaanse 1959, 2:1319).

The alleged superficiality of Islam in Java, using popular metaphors that described Islam as a 'veil that conceals little and shapes nothing' (Snouck Hurgronje 1906: 1, 313) or a layer of veneer that could easily be scratched off, meant that Dutch collectors and museum curators seldom associated the region with Islamic piety and theology. When Islam in Java was discussed, it was often in terms of syncretism and thinly veiled Hindu, Buddhist or animist practices. It is telling that out of seventy-five Qur'ans collected in Indonesia during the colonial period, and among the more than 47,000 objects from Java, there is not one single Javanese-produced Qur'an in the NMVW collections and only two were collected in Java (but printed in India and Scotland).⁵⁶ Museum Bronbeek and Museon each have a number of Qur'ans from

55 In 1914 the Netherlands proclaimed an end to the Aceh War and different end dates for the war are mentioned. I hold on to the most common date in Indonesian historiography.

56 Qur'an, India, 1865. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. TM-H-2183. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/200271> David Bryce & Sons, Miniature Qur'an, Glasgow, c.1900. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. TM-6441-1. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/507561> The only Javanese Qur'an in these collections was purchased by the Museum of Geography and Ethnology in 1973 from connoisseur and collector K.R.T. Hardjonagoro (1931–2008). It is a composition of a Javanese manuscript and illuminations taken from a Singapore printed Qur'an. Qur'anic manuscript, Java, c.1870. Collection Wereldmuseum Rotterdam inv. no. WM-62154. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/1122889>.

Sumatra, especially Aceh, while the Rijksmuseum has none. Although Qur'ans produced in Java are present in other Dutch collections, notably the university libraries of Leiden and Utrecht (Gallop 2015; Voorhoeve 1980), their virtual absence from museum collections can be seen as symbolic of the lack of interest in Javanese Islam. The conflicts in Sumatra, where the Dutch were in direct military confrontation with Islam, resulted in more attention being paid to local forms of Islam and hence, the collecting of a larger number of objects that were framed as Islamic. Furthermore, Islam was seen as more rooted in Sumatra for historical reasons. This view was connected to the early arrival date of Islam in Aceh, in particular the fact that the kingdom of Pasai was the first kingdom in the archipelago to convert to Islam and to become the Samudera Pasai sultanate (thirteenth to sixteenth century).

Whether in Java or Sumatra, Islam was discussed in terms of caution and control. In a way, this attitude of containment stretched out to the walls of the museum. It can be detected in the relatively small number of objects that the museums identified as Islamic. It can also be seen in the acquisition histories of the objects, and the many cases in which conflict and resistance played a role. Finally, even though hundreds of objects related to Islamic rituals did make their way into the collections, the Islamic religion was rarely a subject of museum display, in contrast to other religious traditions of the archipelago. This attitude slightly changed in the later colonial period when both the Colonial Institute in the 1930s and Museum of Ethnology in the 1940s started to pay attention to the religious and artistic traditions of Indonesian Islam. However, at the same time this new development was a continuation of earlier viewpoints, as the focus was on Sumatra, on Aceh and West Sumatra to be precise, while Javanese and Sulawesi Islam remained largely ignored.

South Sulawesi provides the third largest number of Islamic objects in my sample, but in collecting and museum display it received almost no attention as a Muslim region. Collecting among

the Muslims of South Sulawesi took place in several ways. Systematic collections were assembled by civil administrators, military officers and the Bible translator Benjamin Matthes (1818–1908). The official spoils of war of the 1905 punitive expedition against La Pawawoi Karaeng Sigeri (d. 1911), the Raja of Bone, were donated to the Museum of Ethnology in 1906, but returned to the Dutch State in 1931, which in turn returned them to the ruling family of Bone in 1938 (Budiarti 2007; Pronk 2006). However, as Heleen Pronk (2006) writes, besides the official spoils of war, individual military staff also got hold of property. For instance, first Lieutenant Adrianus Hackstroh (1878–1915) managed to get his hands on a Qur'anic manuscript from the Raja's possessions.⁵⁷ Finally, the collections from South Sulawesi are characterised by a relatively large share of donations from Sulawesi royalty, some of whom also sent complete ethnographic collections to museums in the Netherlands. For instance, in the 1890s several members of the royal houses of Gowa and Bone, including I Malingkaan Daeng Nyonri Karaeng Katangka (d. 1895), Crown Prince of Gowa (and the later Sultan Idris), donated several series of ethnographic objects to the Museum of Ethnology. These gifts happened in the context of increasing Dutch control over the area, and at the instigation of Arnold Eerdmans (1855–1940), Secretary of Native Affairs in Makassar.⁵⁸

Another pattern I found in the collections relates to the type of object. Among the object collections from Muslim Indonesia, there are many objects that were collected as art objects, as samples of craft or because of their aesthetic appearance. Examples are batik and silk textiles, *wayang* puppets, weapons and carved woodwork. Yet very few of these objects were described as Islamic during the time of collecting, and none

57 Qur'anic manuscript, Sulawesi, 1864. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. RV-3600-453. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/770356>.

58 Letter Arnold Eerdmans to Lindor Serrurier, 29 July 1890. NL-LdnRMV A1-15-214/215.

were collected under the heading of Islamic art. Among the objects that did have the designation 'Islamic' at the time of collecting, three types of objects stand out in frequency: manuscripts, amulets and objects related to the hajj. Within the sample of objects classified as Islamic, there is a high number of manuscripts and printed books (28%), particularly from Aceh. Annabel Gallop (2004, 193) has remarked that during the Aceh War the focus of collecting shifted from literary and historical works to copies of the Qur'an, prayer books and works on Islamic doctrine and practice. The high frequency of amulets is partly connected to the strong emphasis ethnology placed on magical practices in the study of religion (21% of the sample of Islamic objects is currently classified under the heading "magical protection"). Yet the amulets can also be connected to instances of control and surveillance, as they were frequently seized when suspects were searched by the police and the judicial authorities, as the information given with a number of gifted amulets testifies.⁵⁹ Amulets and manuscripts, along with weapons and seal matrices, were also the objects most frequently looted from the dead bodies of fighters during the Aceh War.⁶⁰ Navy officer Johan Korndörffer stated in

1877 that the KNIL found at least one *jimat* (amulet) on every captive Acehnese fighter.⁶¹ Political motives also constitute the background of the relatively large number of objects related to the hajj, the annual pilgrimage to the holy sites in and around Mecca. The colonial government's fundamental distrust of the hajj, as a source for political unrest and anti-colonial activity, was the main driver for the collecting of these objects. In chapters 4 and 5, I look more closely at the making of these categories of objects between colonial perceptions and the realities of collecting, through the analysis of a number of cases.

3 Looking through the Lens of the Islamic

This book looks at the collections from colonial Indonesia through the lens of the Islamic, and by doing so, it is filling a gap in knowledge about collecting and museum practices in the period of Dutch rule. It demonstrates that collecting in the Muslim-majority regions at times followed different trajectories than in other regions of colonial Indonesia, and that a significant part of the Indonesia collections has slipped under the radar of previous research. The case of the missionary collections shows how bringing Islam into the analysis can produce entirely different findings. Research on missionary collecting in colonial Indonesia focuses on the so-called natural religions, such as those professed by the Minahasans of Sulawesi, the people of the Batu and Nias islands and the Batak of Sumatra (Mietus 2024; Kanhai 2020; Hård and Tjoa-Bonatz 2020; Weener 2020; Corbey and Weener 2015; Tjoa-Bonatz 2009; Nooy-Palm 2002). My findings, although by no means exhaustive, suggest that the removal and destruction of material religion is not intrinsic to missionary collecting (a point also made by Corbey and Weener 2015), but that it mattered how the missionaries framed the cultural practices with which

59 For instance, the amulets in series TM-1170, a 1937 donation of F.H. Poser LLM to the Colonial Institute, and those of series TM-864, in 1934 donated by C.Tj. Bertling LLM, which were 'worn by suspects during trials or by witnesses to protect themselves against perjury'. In 1893 civil administrator Tjalling Halbertsma donated the amulets (series 7082-S-84) that were found on village chief Atma Semedi, who was accused of theft of goods from the Yogyakarta *kraton*, to the *Indische Instelling*. In 1930 his colleague D.H. Burger donated a box full of amulets, found on another suspect, the *dukun* (healer) Krama Pagal, who was accused of murder, to the Colonial Institute. All are pieces of paper on which Islamic supplications and invocations are written.

60 Stamps or matrices, used to print seals, were often carried by Acehnese nobility. The KNIL collected stamps from dead bodies to identify the killed enemies, see Du Croo (1943, 165). There are 40 of such seal matrices from Aceh in the NMVW collections, and also some from other regions. See Gallop (2019) for an overview.

61 Notes with letter J.J. Korndörffer, 12 February 1877. NL-LdnRMV A1-3-211/244.

they were confronted. In other cases, such as the *pusaka* items, collecting followed common trajectories. Court *pusaka* had the interest of the government, because without these objects Indonesian rulers could not exercise their authority over the population; the capture of the *pusaka* equaled defeat. Yet in this matter, Muslim rulers were not treated differently from others.

The patterns I found in the museum collections largely conform to colonial conceptions of race, culture and religion. The disproportionate share of Sumatra, in particular Aceh, in the sample of objects classified as Islamic fits colonial images of

the intensely Islamic nature of the region. Another pattern relates to object genres, with manuscripts, objects related to 'magic' and to the hajj standing out in number. However, as I argue in the following chapters, these patterns are the result of an interplay of factors. Modes of collecting were influenced by policies and politics, whereas models of taxonomy and classification were grounded in scientific theories and their interactions with colonial governance and public image-making. Reconceptualisations of Indonesian Islam, examples of which are discussed in chapter 8, will bring about an entirely different set of patterns.

Collecting in Java and Aceh

The act of collecting, which is essentially a way of selecting, leads to the occurrence of memory gaps and silences. In this chapter I compare historical practices of collecting in two regions from where significant numbers of objects from the Islamic period are present in museums in the Netherlands: Java and Aceh. Besides giving an overview of practices of collecting in distinct colonial contexts, my interest concerns the ways in which the conditions of collecting have impacted memory-making in museums. In particular, I am concerned with the circumstances which allowed Islam to be ‘seen’ and understood in certain ways, given the divergent conditions of colonialism in these two regions.

1 Collecting in Java

Collecting in Muslim Java differed from most other regions in colonial Indonesia, in the sense that hardly any systematic collecting took place, and collecting was predominantly small-scale and non-institutional. Academic research on collecting in colonial Indonesia tends to concentrate on scientific expeditions and missionary activities among the non-Muslim communities (e.g. Weener 2020; Ter Keurs 2007a; Schefold and Vermeulen 2002b). Concerning Java, most attention has been given to the collecting of Hindu-Buddhist antiquities (e.g. Drieënhuizen 2012b; Lusingh Scheurleer 2007). Even though the majority of objects collected in Java in the NMVW collections originate from Muslim communities on the island, to my knowledge no research has been carried out into how collecting of Islamic-period objects among these communities took place.¹ This research gap

is an extension of the colonial emphasis on the pre-Islamic history of Java and the neglect of the Muslim heritage of the region. Another reason is that collecting practices in Java have largely fallen outside common categorisations, for example military and scientific expeditions, causing a blind spot for research. Due to this lack of academic literature to build on, my overall analysis is largely based on my own observations in the museum archives.

Most organised collecting in Java happened in the early nineteenth century, before and during the Dutch conquest of Java, and during the brief period of British colonial rule (1811–1815). Botanist Caspar G.C. Reinwardt (1773–1854), resident Frans Valck (1799–1842) and the British Governor Thomas Stamford Raffles (1781–1826), each assembled collections of Javanese antiquities (Drieënhuizen 2012b; Hoijtink 2012). The focus of these collectors was Hindu-Buddhist heritage, laying the ground for the identification of Java with its pre-Islamic past. Organised collecting of Islamic-period objects was typically small-scale, involving dozens rather than hundreds of objects. An exception is the collection of arts and crafts from different parts of the archipelago assembled by Johann Ernst Jasper (1874–1945), a civil administrator of Indo-European descent (Brinkgreve and van Hout 2005). Jasper sold parts of his collection, including 620 examples of braid work, weaving and batik textiles from Java to the Museum of Ethnology and the Colonial Museum.

Many individual acts of small-scale gathering of objects, however, aggregated massive collections from the Islamic period. The NMVW collections from Java, comprising around 47,000 objects, were

¹ Francine Brinkgreve and Itie van Hout (2005) give an overview of collecting on Java, but their presentation is

by no means comprehensive. They discuss three types of collecting practices: systematic collecting of ethnographic objects, diplomatic gifts, and the study of crafts.

brought together by more than 4,000 individuals and institutions, the vast majority of whom each brought a small number of items (usually less than twenty) to the museums.² Noteworthy are the highly diverse backgrounds of the donors and sellers, both in terms of their professions and cultural backgrounds, reflecting the diversity of colonial society in Java. The Royal Military Academy collection is a case in point. Whereas the objects from Aceh originate from military staff, with few exceptions the Javanese objects were donated by a variety of people, ranging from civil administrators and railway employees to Javanese *priyayi* (an elite class).³ In Java, like in other regions, most collecting took place in the period when Java was under full Dutch control, between 1860 and 1942. Java was the administrative and economic heart of the colony. It was also the home of a large European community, numbering in 1900 around 95,000 individuals in Batavia alone (U. Bosma, Raben, and Willems 2006, 35). Europeans worked in Java in the colonial administration, or they held non-governmental professions as doctors, teachers, planters, and entrepreneurs. Indo-Europeans made up 80% of the European community of the Dutch East Indies (U. Bosma, Raben, and Willems 2006, 147).

The collecting in Java was mostly done through purchase and exchange. Many of the Javanese objects that ended up in the museum collections were originally acquired by members of the European community as objects to use in their households for aesthetic or functional purposes. According to the statements of donors and sellers I found in the museum archives, they obtained the

objects typically through purchase at the bazar or antique shops. The *kelontong*, or haberdashery (often of Chinese descent), is also frequently mentioned.⁴ Other objects were received as gifts of administrative or business relations. In addition, objects were commissioned from crafts people, and even ethnographic objects, such as talismans, were sometimes commissioned. In the extensive account of the making of his collection, Anne Tjibbes van der Meulen (1862–1934) describes similar acquisition methods, including scrap iron and junk shops (*oudroest en rommelwinkels*), Chinese sellers and commissions (Van der Meulen 1906).⁵

The objects found in European households were generally commodities that were widely available, and so the Dutch museum collections contain many sequences of similar objects, brought to the museums by a wide range of people. Moreover, Muslim craftspeople often adapted their products to suit European tastes, as can be seen from, for instance, the batik samples and other types of textiles. Europeans who went on to live in the Netherlands could only bring a limited number of objects with them, and of manageable size. Therefore, it was an active decision to bring certain things to the Netherlands and to leave other things behind. This selection process may be the reason behind the presence of particular types of objects. For instance, the inscribed brass bowls in the NMVW collections were, as mass-produced

2 Information TMS database National Museum of World Cultures. Accessed 13 February 2020. My estimate is that at least three-quarters of the Javanese objects (which equals 20% of the Indonesia collections) fit the definition of Islamicate. Yet the diversity of the collections, including many representational objects, and incomplete registrations, e.g. antiquities not registered as such, make it difficult to give exact numbers.

3 Information TMS database National Museum of World Cultures, series RV-3600. Accessed 15 December 2020.

4 It is assumed that the collector Elie van Rijckevorsel (1845–1928) bought objects from art dealers and haberdasheries in Indonesia (Gaba-Van Dongen et al. 2011, 112; Djajasoebrata 2002, 155). In the letters Van Rijckevorsel wrote during his travels, he mentions buying from ‘natives’ and visiting markets, as well as gifts offered to him by local dignitaries (Van Rijckevorsel 1878).

5 The Indonesian collection assembled by Van der Meulen is now part of the Prinsessehof Ceramics Museum in Leeuwarden and is partly loaned to the NMVW. See also Van der Meulen’s letter to museum director Joh. F. Snelleman, 4 November 1906, in which he mentions he has asked the Chinese owner of a pawnshop to sell him antiquities and his intention to collect ‘from the Arabs’. NL-RtSA Archives of the Museum voor Land- en Volkenkunde and Maritiem Museum Prins Hendrik, 563 no. 24.

objects from Mecca, widely available in the Dutch East Indies and they made nice, exotic and easy to carry souvenirs.⁶ The same can be said for the thousands of *wayang* puppets, and dozens of Qur'an stands and prayer beads. The decision to bring these objects to a museum usually came after the family had returned or migrated to the Netherlands, and it was not uncommon for this decision to be made over one or two generations. The influx of objects that were collected during the colonial period continued for many decades after Indonesian independence and goes on today.

To illustrate the diversity of backgrounds of those selling or donating Islamic objects from Java to the museums, I will briefly sketch the careers of three women collectors and one man. I will start with the extraordinary Martine Tonnet (1866–1919), who went to Java in 1893 as a governess. In her mid-thirties she decided to change careers and in 1904 she earned a degree in Indonesian Literature from Leiden University. In 1908 she became the first female curator of the Batavian Society. In those years, she donated more than forty objects to the Museum of Ethnology and the Colonial Museum, including toys and musical instruments as well as several talismans and Hindu-Javanese artefacts. After her death in Kolkata (formerly Calcutta), several Javanese manuscripts at her bequest were donated to the Museum of Ethnology.⁷

Another female professional, Annie de Jonge (1892–1978), worked as a gynaecologist in Mojowarno at the hospital of the Netherlands Missionary Society (NZG), before and after Indonesian independence. In 1938 she donated two,

almost identical, sets of objects to the Museum of Ethnology and the Colonial Institute. The object sets relate to contraception, birth and maternity rituals and were made for the museums by a female *dukun* (healer).⁸ In the accompanying letter, De Jonge expresses her surprise at some of the magical objects in use with *penghulu* families (religious dignitaries); 'it's strange that the Mohammedans still use all these *sarats*'.⁹

Sophia van IJsseldijk-Withof (1867–1963), like most Dutch women who went to the Indies, followed her husband who worked as a manager for the Malang tram company. After a stay of more than twenty-five years, they returned to Haarlem around 1920. Her 1963 bequest to the Tropenmuseum is a typical souvenirs-from-Java collection, of which there are hundreds in the museum. It comprises *wayang* lamps and *sirih* (betel nut wood) boxes, most of them adapted to European taste, but it also includes a rare *zakat al-fitr* beaker (Fig. 8) and two, more common, hajj souvenirs.¹⁰ Sophia was no stranger to museum donation, sixty years earlier she and her husband Egbart van IJsseldijk (1864–1931) had given several Javanese objects to the Hoofdcursus of the military academy in Kampen (*Jaarboekje van den hoofdcursus te Kampen* 1904, 116).¹¹

6 There are 30 brass bowls that were brought from Indonesia in the NMVW collections. Some of them are ascribed to Aceh, even if the donor lived in Java or elsewhere in colonial Indonesia. This may be a result of the identification of Aceh with Islam.

7 A total of 153 objects collected by Martine Tonnet became part of the NMVW collections, many from Java but also from India where she lived from 1915 onwards. For example: *Tutur nabi Yusuf* manuscript, 19th century, Java. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. RV-1994-11. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/730354>.

8 Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. nos. RV-2383-1/8 and TM-1194-1/17. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/738997>.

9 Letter J.A. de Jonge to W. Rassers, 1 December 1937. NL-HaNA Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen, 1910–1995, 2.20.69 no. 7494_66.

10 Brass *zakat al-fitr* beaker, Java, 1820. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. TM-3272-15. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/101705> Brass bowl, Mecca, 19th century. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. TM-3272-11. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/101701> Kohl container, souvenir from the hajj, 19th century. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. TM-3272-27ab <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/101721>.

11 In 1923 the collection of the Hoofdcursus merged with the Royal Military Academy (KMA) and in 1956 the objects became part of the Museum of Ethnology. Egbart's brother, Hendrik Theodorus van IJsseldijk (1862–1916), was keeper of the Hoofdcursus collection.



FIGURE 5 Reception room at the home of Sophia van IJsseldijk-Withof, Malang, 1911. Page from a family photo album. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. TM-ALB-1937-8



FIGURE 6 Dining room at the home of Sophia van IJsseldijk-Withof, Malang, 1911. Page from a family photo album. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. TM-ALB-1937-9



FIGURE 7 Sophia van Ijsseldijk-Withof, her husband Egbart and daughter Margaretha in the vegetable garden, Malang, 1911. Page from a family photo album. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. TM-ALB-1937-10



FIGURE 8 Brass *zakat al-fitr* beaker (Java, 1820), one of the Islamic objects Sophia van Ijsseldijk-Withof displayed in her dining room. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. TM-3272-15

In contrast to Sophia's middle-class background, Jacques Ernest van Cattenburch esquire (1867–1938) was of noble birth and owned several sugar plantations in Malang. In 1921 he returned to the Netherlands, taking with him two impressive six metres wide and four metres high, intricately carved wall panels of Jepara woodwork. Van Cattenburch had bought them from a hajji in Kudus, who had claimed that his fellow believers had objected to the sale of these old works of art to a Dutchman (Jasper 1922, 29). It took a month to make the shipping crates, but after arrival Van Cattenburch found out there was no way the huge panels would fit in his home in The Hague. Thereafter, he sold the two panels for 2500 guilders to the Colonial Institute.¹² Importantly, apart from De Jonge, neither of the four collectors described the objects in terms of Islamic art or culture.

The context of war only constitutes the background for a limited number of Javanese objects in the NMVW collections. There is only a handful of objects that were evidently taken as war booty during the Java War (1825–1830), of which the *keris* of Pangeran Diponegoro that was returned to Indonesia in 2020 is the most famous (Tempomedia 2020).¹³ The small number is partly explained by the timing of the institutionalisation of museum collections, which only came to full development after Java was brought under Dutch control. In the Royal Cabinet of Curiosities (1816–1883), the most likely public collection for such objects to be kept, provenance was only rudimentarily registered, so it is possible that in a number of cases the context of war has been lost.

During my search of the collections, I also identified six objects that were seized as spoils of war or 'found' during the War of Independence (1945–1949), all of them in Java.¹⁴ Resistance to colonial rule, however, persisted throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, also in Java, and so sometimes it suffices to scratch the surface of an object's acquisition history and find a history of conflict and opposition. This is especially the case with objects related to the hajj, which testify of the Dutch policy to contain and control Islam. Other object-testimonies of the Dutch policy vis-à-vis Islam entered the collections through the mediation of colonial officers.

Many colonial administrators were among the more than 4,000 constituents donating or selling Javanese objects to the NMVW museums. They differ from other individual collectors, because they also submitted objects that were directly related to colonial governance. Civil administrators sometimes assembled small collections at the museum's request. A typical example is Dionijs Huibert Burger (1900–1976), then a deputy judge of the native court (*landraad*) in Pati, who in 1927 wrote to curator Johann Lamster of the Colonial Institute that he was informed of the museum's wish to receive objects related to ceremonies and the judiciary.¹⁵ For this purpose, he collected fifteen objects, including a fly wisk and two *kain* (waistcloth) suspenders that were used in

¹² Information TMS database National Museum of World Cultures, inv. no. TM-420-1/2. Accessed 17 June 2020. Correspondence between J.E. van Cattenburch and Directors of the Colonial Institute, November 1927. NL-HaNA Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen, 1910–1995, 2.20.69 no. 7486_21. The panels are now registered as missing, but probably they are still present in the Wereldmuseum Amsterdam storage.

¹³ There were, in fact, several *keris* daggers that were promoted as the *keris* of Diponegoro, see Drieënhuizen (2012b, 113–16).

¹⁴ For example, the amulet cloth from Cianjur, which is discussed in chapter 5. Collection Wereldmuseum Rotterdam inv. no. WM-74271. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/1123725> More objects seized during the War of Independence are part of the collections of Museum Bronbeek and the National Archives.

¹⁵ Letter D.H. Burger to J.C. Lamster, 31 January 1927. NL-HaNA Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen, 1910–1995, 2.20.69 no. 7484/189. Some objects were made especially for the donation. For instance, Burger commissioned fishermen to make some fishing gear and he organised a contest at a school in Juana to make dolls to ward off evil spirits. He also offered to collect holy water and edible earth that was consumed during secret gatherings, 'if that kind of stuff was not too primitive for the museum'.

circumcision ceremonies for Muslim boys after the foreskin had been removed, as well as amulets that were seized during a court case (see chapter 5). It is remarkable that although there were many civil administrators who, like Burger, sent ethnographic objects to the museums, none tried to assemble a systematic ethnographic collection of a particular region or ethnic group of Java.

Throughout the colonial period, the Javanese elite submitted objects to the museums in the Netherlands. These included diplomatic gifts to Dutch officials and royalty. Over the course of colonial rule, the Javanese royalty became increasingly intertwined with the Dutch government. Gift giving in this context was the display of status and the negotiation of relations. The gifts of the colonial period can be seen as embodying 'statements about power, sacredness and projection of the royal self' (J.G. Taylor 2016, 120). An example is the letter of Cakra Adiningrat VIII, the Sultan of Madura, to King Willem I, in which he offers him a golden *keris* dagger with diamonds and wishes the king a long life and the continuation of his rule, while emphasising his own subordinate role.¹⁶ The complexity of colonial relationships is exemplified by the diplomatic gifts of Pakubuwono X (r. 1893–1939), the tenth Susuhunan of Surakarta. In 1898, on his way to the coronation of Queen Wilhelmina, he made audiences at various royal houses in Europe and presented them precious gifts. This worried the Minister of Colonies, J.T. Cremer, who thought the Susuhunan may have been under the false impression he was on par with European rulers (Wassing-Visser 1995, 109). The gifts of the royals generally represented the arts and crafts of Java, as well as its Hindu-Buddhist heritage, thus emphasising notions of Javanese-ness (Bloembergen and Eickhoff 2020). Objects that directly referred to the Islamic faith were seldom presented; one example of some exceptions is a sword topped with the

Dutch crown but of which the blade is engraved with the *shahada*, the Islamic declaration of faith, presented by Pakubuwono X to Prince Hendrik in 1901 (Wassing-Visser 1995, 154).¹⁷ The gift sent an ambiguous message: was the Susuhunan implying that the sovereignty of Allah was greater than the Queen's? The same ruler donated a writing desk to Queen Wilhelmina in the shape of the *minbar* (pulpit) of the Great Mosque of Surakarta and decorated with the Dutch crown and the sultan's coat of arms.¹⁸ In the accompanying letter Pakubuwono compared the Queen's role to the mosque's imam: 'May Her Majesty marshal Her thoughts with the same power on the matter which claims her exalted attention, as She sits at this desk' (Wassing-Visser 1995, 194–95; 203; J.G. Taylor 2016, 129). Thus, gift-giving was a form of political communication; through these donations Javanese rulers sent messages about themselves and the power relationships they aspired to have. As Susie Protschky (2019, 120) has shown in relation to photographs, the gifts were used 'to negotiate a more nuanced recognition of their own sovereignty in dialogue with Dutch authority'.

Besides presenting diplomatic gifts, Javanese members of the elite also assembled collections for donation to museums. These include the submissions of various Javanese royals and regents to the International Colonial and Export Exhibition held in Amsterdam in 1883 (Bloembergen 2006; Veth, Wilken, and Klinkert 1883a). Through the donations, Indonesians could demonstrate that they belonged to the colonial elite, and could make an equal contribution to science. For instance, Pakualam VII (1882–1937) sent a collection related to Javanese arts and crafts, agriculture and husbandry, to the exhibition of colonial agriculture, which was organised in Deventer in 1912 (Arnoldus-Schröder 2002; Groneman 1912).¹⁹ There were also

16 Letter of Sultan Cakra Adiningrat VIII of Madura to King Willem I, Madura, 20 Shawwal 1250 (19 February 1835). Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. RV-360-8080. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/651063>.

17 Sword engraved with the *shahada*, Java, c.1900. Collection House of Orange-Nassau Historic Collections Trust inv. no. 3566.

18 Collection Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands.

19 This collection is now part of the Universiteitsmuseum (University Museum) in Groningen.

a number of instances in which Javanese royalty donated collections directly to museums. An example is Pangeran Arya Purbonegara (d. 1948), brother of Pakubuwono X, who donated in 1936 a set of clothing, head gear, weapons and other objects that were representative of Surakarta to the Royal Military Academy in Breda, from where he had graduated.²⁰

In Dutch colonial culture, 'collecting' also took representational forms; collections of models, miniatures and dolls were common in museums (Van J. van Dijk and Legêne 2011, 155). These objects depicted miniature versions, sometimes made to scale, of buildings, people and entire scenes in colonial Indonesia, contributing to what Susan Legêne (2009) has called a 'home colonial culture', thus the colonial culture in the Netherlands. Islam in Java, especially institutionalised Islam, was also visualised through these representational objects, including models of mosques, scenes at a *pesantren* (Islamic school) or native court (*landraad*), and dolls depicting 'types' such as a hajji or a *penghulu*. Models were sometimes used as substitutes for 'real' objects when they could not be collected. For example, the Artis Zoo collection contained copper replicas of the *upacara* (ceremonial objects) of the Sultan of Yogyakarta; the original golden objects represented the ruler's divine power.²¹ Usually the models and miniatures were made by Indonesian craftsmen on the request of colonial administrators, including, occasionally, Javanese regents. In the mid-nineteenth century, such collections were used in the training academies for colonial administration, for instance, at the *Indische Instelling* in Delft. Later they were popular items in exhibitions, both in

museums and world exhibitions. In these displays the models and dolls were 'corporeal image productions', substitutes for the cultures and people of colonial Indonesia (Westerkamp 2015, 91). The Java Gallery of the Colonial Institute (1926–1960), for instance, comprised a large case full of dolls, designed to present a comprehensive overview of the 'folk types' of Java (Lekkerkerker 1927, 57–64).²²

After the independence of Indonesia, the circumstances for collecting changed. A large part of the acquisitions continued to consist of donations and bequests from individuals who had lived in Indonesia during the colonial period. In the souvenirs-from-Java collections, Islam generally was not an area of interest, and although most items were Muslim-made this fact was not given relevance in the museums. From the 1960s onwards, curators also travelled to Java to collect. Most of the curators for Southeast Asia at the various museums had *Indisch* backgrounds and many had spent part of their lives in Indonesia, usually in Java. With the collecting trips they aimed to give the collections a new direction. At the Tropenmuseum in particular, collecting was aimed at the decolonisation of the collections (Kreps 2020; 1988). At some of the museums, post-independence collecting included the realisation that the Islamic religion was under-represented. However, this insight did not result in significant changes, apart from the acquisition of a few singular Islamic religious items.²³ It is difficult to pinpoint the reasons behind this lack of change. For one, the academic training the curators received in the field of the material culture of Indonesia remained focused on the same topics

20 He was awarded a silver museum medal for the donation. The 38 objects are now part of the collection of the National Museum of World Cultures, inv. nos. RV-3600-2685/2718. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/772838>.

21 There are eight *upacara*, but there are only six replicas (left). See also <https://www.kratonjogja.id/regalia>. Copper replicas of the Yogyakarta regalia, late 19th century. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. nos. TM-A-1581a/f. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/186569>.

22 A.G. van Agtmaal, Display case with dolls at the Java Gallery of the Colonial Institute, 1926–1943. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. TM-60040483. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/210263>.

23 For instance, in 1973 the Museum of Geography and Ethnology acquired a Qur'anic manuscript from Java and in 1974 the Museum of Ethnology purchased a panel of Jepara woodwork depicting the conversion of Sunan Kalijaga. Pak Dul, panel depicting the conversion of Sunan Kalijaga, Jepara, 1970. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. RV-4725-4. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/795607>.

that were *in vogue* during the colonial period, with a heavy focus on the non-Muslim cultures of Indonesia. It may have also been related to personal political reasons, namely the resentment in many *Indisch* families against the nationalist movement and its association with a renewed Islamic orientation. Post-independence collecting did not result in the presentation of a new image of Islam in Java in any Dutch museums.

2 Collecting in Aceh

Aceh was the location of the longest colonial war in Dutch history (1873–1942). Compared to other regions in Indonesia, the Aceh collections in museums in the Netherlands stand out because the vast majority of the individuals collecting were members of the Netherlands East Indies Army (KNIL). Jean Gelman Taylor (2011) has argued that the Aceh War shaped official historiography and popular conception to such an extent that at present, both in Indonesia and the Netherlands, Aceh is rarely shown in dimensions other than war. She also points to the image of Aceh being ‘strongly Islamic’, often presented in books and exhibitions as self-evident (J.G. Taylor 2011, 209). Taylor’s argument is confirmed by the museum collections from Aceh in the Netherlands, as I will demonstrate in the following analysis.

The collections of the National Museum of World Cultures comprise 8,346 objects from Aceh, that were, almost without exception, taken out of Aceh during the colonial period. Using a number of examples from these collections, as well as objects in other museums and libraries, in what follows I investigate how conflict influenced what was collected in Aceh, and how this in turn influenced colonial perceptions of Acehnese Islam, which has then influenced current perceptions of Acehnese religion and culture. I explore the question of what it means that all collecting was done by military staff and civil administrators in the context of conflict and resistance to colonial rule. Focusing on different phases of the conflict, I

will try to explain the emphasis on certain object types (e.g. manuscripts) when material from Aceh did make its way into museum collections, as well as to account for its absence in other domains. Finally, the only collection I encountered in which Islam plays a significant role was collected in Aceh between 1904 and 1931 by KNIL sergeant turned civil servant Willem Stammeshaus.

The army was deeply implicated in collecting in Aceh. Out of the 500 individuals who were involved in collecting for the NMVW locations, the vast majority were active in the KNIL. Most of them were army staff of diverse ranks, from general to foot soldier, who each donated a small number of objects to the various museums. This indicates that taking souvenirs from the war zone was common practice, despite the discouragement of looting.²⁴ Around 20% of the total collection of Acehnese objects in the National Museum of World Cultures are weapons, reflecting the fact that most collecting was done by the army. Aceh was also a place where large scale and systematic collecting took place. After the Dutch left in 1942, Dutch collecting stopped entirely. In contrast to other parts of Sumatra and Java, where curators undertook collecting trips from the 1970s onwards so that museums could represent contemporary Indonesia, the NMVW collections contain virtually no objects from Aceh from the post-independence period.²⁵ This effectively freezes Aceh in its image as a setting of colonial conflict.

The Aceh War can be divided into different phases, with each phase characterised by its own collecting practices. The first phase of conquest must be seen in the light of the desire

24 Until 1928 the KNIL did not have official guidelines, but individual commanders gave instructions to the troops and sometimes this included the issue of looting (Teitler 2001).

25 The only items dating after 1942 are two hats, acquired for the exhibition *Urban Islam* (2003) at Museum Nusantara (inv. nos. 7082-S-3754-3 and 5), and a set of women’s clothing, acquired for the exhibition *For Modesty’s Sake?* (*Stuiers ontsluiterd*, 1996) at the Museum of Ethnology (inv. nos. RV-5768-1/4).

to bring all of Sumatra under Dutch control and the strengthening of the Dutch trading position, especially after the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869. An 1871 treaty with Britain assured that the British would no longer block full Dutch influence in Aceh. Initially, the Dutch army attempted to conquer Aceh with a tried and tested method: during two invasions in 1873–1874, the sultan's compound (the royal court, or *dalam*, often indicated as *kraton* in Dutch sources) were seized and the Acehnese sultanate abolished. Shortly afterward the young Sultan of Aceh died from cholera. In 1878, the Acehnese proclaimed another royal, Muhammad Daud Syah (1864–1939), the new sultan. Soon the Dutch discovered that the sultan was less powerful than expected and much power was in the hands of Aceh's hereditary chiefs (*ulèëbalang*), often indicated with the title Teuku, and with the Islamic scholars (*ʿulama*), who bore the title of Teungku. In the 1890s, Snouck Hurgronje devised a policy which emphasised the appeasement of the *ulèëbalang* and bringing them under Dutch control, while cracking down on resistance emanating from the *ʿulama* or the non-compliant *ulèëbalang*. The resistant forces mobilised parts of the population and continued their struggle in the hills and jungle territory, resorting to guerrilla warfare. Many Muslims who joined the resistance fought under the flag of jihad (struggle for the faith), known locally as *perang sabil*. In response, the Netherlands East Indies Army formulated a counter-guerrilla strategy that deployed light-armed *marechaussee* units. Between 1896 and 1905 district after district was conquered, using brutal violence, destroying villages that put up resistance and killing their inhabitants. Sultan Muhammad Daud Syah finally surrendered to the Dutch in 1903 and was exiled in 1905. A final blow was dealt in 1904 with the Dutch invasion in Aceh's inner lands, the Gayo and Alas regions. *Marechaussee* troops under the command of Colonel Frits van Daalen crushed the resistance, killing large numbers of Acehnese men, women and children, and brought the inner lands under Dutch control. Until the end of Dutch colonial rule, however, throughout

Aceh the resistance remained active, using tactics like sabotage and suicide attacks. In 1942, sixty-nine years after the first invasion, Dutch rule ended with the Japanese occupation of the Dutch East Indies.

2.1 *Collecting During the Aceh War: 1873–1874*

Collecting started immediately during the first attacks on the Aceh sultanate in 1873 and 1874. Directly after the battles, medical officer Jan Semmelink (1837–1912) and navy officer Johan Korndörffer (1829–1882) each donated dozens of objects to the Museum of Ethnology, in 1874 and 1875 respectively. Among the objects they collected were a few large and heavy artefacts, like a gravestone for a woman, decorated with floral motifs and stylised Arabic script, which was taken from the cemetery of Peunayong, the village where the Dutch had set up a military base.²⁶ However, most were small and inexpensive household items. The collecting notes of Semmelink read like a road trip through the small strip of land the Dutch army had managed to conquer: “Qur’anic stand, from kampung Peunayong at the Aceh river”, “basket, from kampung Jawa at the Aceh river, December 1873”, “drinking bowl, from kampung Peunayong at the Aceh river, in every house there was a bowl like this”, “cannon ball, fired from the sultan’s kraton 8th of January 1874”, “ceramic pot with some left-over ashes, found on top of one of the graves at the kraton’s cemetery”, “amulet holder, found on the left upper arm of a wounded Acehnese”, “manuscript pages, found in the sultan’s house”.²⁷

The circumstances in which Semmelink and Korndörffer made their ‘finds’ are aptly described by Johan Kerlen (1850–1927), a young officer of the

26 Gravemarker of a woman's grave, Peunayong, 16th–17th century. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. RV-148-1. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/596590>.

27 Notes with objects RV-148-2; RV-163-13; RV-163-3; RV-148-16; RV-163-6; RV-163-2; RV-163-48. Information TMS database National Museum of World Cultures. Accessed 10 September 2016.

KNIL Engineering Corps, who wrote his memoir about his time in Aceh:

“On January 24th the kraton fell into our hands. From this day on the men of the Engineering Corps marched every day from Peunayong to the kraton to make it ready, so we could settle more permanently there. The day after we took possession [of the area], Pey and I went to the kraton to see if we could find something to our liking in the sultan’s buildings; we only nicked a porcelain soup-tureen and a big brass cooking pot.²⁸ Pey took the former and I used the pot as a bathtub in our living spaces in Peunayong and from there we took it back again to the kraton [after it had become a military base].”²⁹

A precise description of what Semmelink and other KNIL staff saw inside the sultan’s house is given by an anonymous navy officer who sent a letter with his eyewitness account to the newspaper *Amsterdamsche Courant*, just after the conquest of the *dalam* in January 1874. The choice of words testifies of the Orientalist expectations that coloured many accounts of the time:

“Somewhat to the right of the gunpowder house, behind a wall, is the sultan’s actual house. Those who fantasized about oriental splendour will be very disappointed! The building is made from wood and although it is a beautiful type of wood, it is unpainted. The carvings and the carefully made carpentry, the copper hinges and a few gilded parts show this was not the house of an ordinary native [...] It is always a badly chosen moment to enter a

house right after the last inhabitant has left it. That is especially the case here, because the holes and crevices in the walls and the roof, the large cracks in the floor planks, caused by grenades, form a sad whole, together with the broken pots and pans, the few empty chests, the torn books, the ripped cushions etcetera. It comes to no surprise that the sultan was not able to hold out here for very long. After we took a few pages from a Malay manuscript as a souvenir, we swiftly left the sad royal house.³⁰ (*De Tijd: godsdienstig-staatkundig dagblad* 1874)”

Soon after the attack of the sultan’s quarters objects poured into the museums.³¹ In 1877, Herman Jacob van Nouhuys, captain in the merchant navy, sent a sandstone panel of one of the sultans’ graves, engraved with the *shahada*, to the Museum of Ethnology. When he visited one of the *dalam*’s cemeteries it was entirely in ruins, so he took the piece hoping ‘it would have value for the museum’.³² Navy captain Pieter Swaan (1835–1883) also took a tomb ornament from one of the *dalam*’s cemeteries, as did Lieutenant Godfried Vinkhuizen (1846–1919).³³ Willem Dommisse (1848–1877), a sailor, seized a flag when the *dalam* was captured.³⁴ Lieutenant Colonel Aegidius Luijmes (1834–1918) laid hold of a European-style writing

28 This citation is from a transcript of Kerlen’s memoir and the verb ‘pikken’ (to nick) may be a copying mistake, as it continues with ‘op de kop’. ‘Op de kop tikken’ roughly translates in English as ‘to get a bargain’.

29 *Memoires van generaal-majoor b.d. der genie J.G. Kerlen, was als hoofdofficier van de genie nauw betrokken bij de aanleg van de tram in Atjeh, betrefende zijn diensttijd in Nederlands-Indië in de periode 1870–1906* (transcript). NL-HaNIMH *Koloniale eeuw Nederlands-Indië* (1814–1941), 543 no. 87.

30 I did not manage to find the present whereabouts of this manuscript.

31 Thus far, I have encountered 25 objects originating from the *dalam* in museums in the Netherlands. Manuscripts from the *dalam* can also be found in the university libraries of Leiden and Manchester (Gallop 2022).

32 Letter H.J. van Nouhuys to Conrad Leemans, 20 January 1877. NL-LdnRMV A1-3-290. Tomb panel, Banda Aceh, 16th or 17th century. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. RV-179-1. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/596916>.

33 Tomb ornament, Aceh, 17th century. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. TM-A-6445. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/194779>. Tomb ornament, Aceh, 18th century. Collection Museum Bronbeek inv. no. 1999/00-461.

34 Flag, Aceh, late 19th century. Collection Rijksmuseum inv. no. NG-83. <http://hdl.handle.net/10934/RM0001.COLLECT.351872>.

desk that belonged to the sultan.³⁵ Fusilier A. Beekman came back home with a manuscript copy of the *Wasit nabi*, dated 1798, that he had found in the sultan's house.³⁶ Sergeant Arie de Wit found a printed Qur'an, according to an inscription inside the book.³⁷ Jan Semmelink took at least twelve items, most of them kitchen utensils and manuscripts, including a rare copy of the *Hikayat Makkah Madinah*.³⁸

From the military base in Banda Aceh, the Dutch conquered more and more parts of Aceh in the following years. In the early days of the Aceh War, the collected objects were considered above all as ethnographic curiosities which served to enrich the academic knowledge pursued in the museums. František Czurda (1844–1886), a Czech army doctor who served in the KNIL between 1876 and 1882, gave detailed information on how he purchased most of the objects of his collection; in Aceh his purchases often concerned objects taken earlier from burned-out or deserted houses (Pospíšilová 2009, 136; 138; Czurda 1883). Collecting mainly had the character of accidental finds, as Czurda (1883, 1v) also remarked:

“I was in Aceh at a time of warfare and the circumstances were not favourable to the assembling of a well-organised ethnographic collection. Everywhere I came I encountered destroyed fields, burned forests and villages that were blown to pieces or burned out. Everything I got came into

my hands by accident, because there was no sign of the population. The men who were fit to bear arms faced us like archenemies, while the women, children and elderly men had fled to the mountains and the inner lands. The weapons came from the various battles and were brought to me by my servants, or by soldiers who had seized them and offered them for sale. Just like the various objects that served peaceful ends and which my servants or the soldiers found in burned-out villages, where the inhabitants had had no time to take everything with them.”³⁹

Islamic objects were among the collected goods, simply because they were present in the Muslim communities of Aceh. Mosques, however, were frequent targets because of the presence of fighters. Czurda bought a number of Islamic books that were ‘saved’ during the attack on the mosque of Lambadak (the current Lambada Lhok) in 1877 (1883, 169–70). During the attack the mosque's library was set on fire, an event Czurda describes as follows:

“These Qur'ans, like the books presented below, were found in Aceh in a mosque that the Dutch captured and burned to the ground. The Acehnese defended it with true contempt for death, until they were finally given the old cool steel by a battalion of African Negroes.⁴⁰ The Africans threw all the books they found into the fire and only by accident a small number [of books] was saved.”

35 Writing desk, 19th century. Collection Museum Bronbeek inv. no. 1877-07-2.

36 *Wasit nabi* manuscript, Aceh, 1798. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. TM-A-6482. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/194840>.

37 However, it cannot be the book in question, as it was produced in a later year. Rather, the inscription is a testament to the mythmaking surrounding objects that came from the *kraton*. Qur'an, printed in Mumbai, 1881. Collection Wereldmuseum Rotterdam inv. no. WM-27163. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/1112674>.

38 *Hikayat Makkah Madinah* manuscript, Aceh, 1713–1874. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. RV-163-48d. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/596697>.

39 The objects Czurda collected are today part of the Weltmuseum in Vienna and the Náprstek Museum in Prague. A small number is part of the collections of the Museum of Ethnology in Dresden.

40 He refers to the *Belanda Hitam* (black Dutchmen) who were KNIL soldiers recruited in West Africa, see Van Kessel (2002). For the attack, the African soldier Jan Kooi was awarded a knighthood in the Military Order of William. The Qur'ans are now part of the Weltmuseum in Vienna, inv. nos. 18088/18090, along with 25 other books and manuscripts (Hesser 2011, 21; 49). Pavel Durdík took books from a similar mosque attack, but their current location is unknown (Pospíšilová, Hladká, and Jezberová 2010, 22).

Czurda continues with a description of the types of books he collected from the mosque which also served as a Qur'anic school, described as a 'school for priests' (*Priesterschule*). The building contained so many books that the KNIL military nicknamed it the 'academy' and the 'student society' (Brooshooft 1886, 145). The targeting of mosques and Qur'anic schools was common practice, as can also be seen from the frequent appearance they make in the collecting notes provided with objects in the National Museum of World Cultures collections from this period.⁴¹

2.2 *Collecting During the Aceh War: Frits van Daalen*

The list of 500 individuals who brought objects from Aceh to the museums demonstrates that the vast majority of them were military staff. But how widespread was collecting among them? To gain insight into this question, I compared the lists of the KNIL's *marechaussee* officers of the years 1900, 1905 and 1910 with the NMVW and Museum Bronbeek databases: out of the fifty-two officers employed in these years, nineteen (37%) made a contribution, directly or indirectly, to the ethnographic collections.⁴² Three of them accumulated large collections (Frits van Daalen, Theo Veltman and Hans Christoffel) and one became curator at the Colonial Institute (Johann Lamster), while

another would become a well-known artist (Johan ten Klooster).⁴³

In my research I found four army officers who assembled large collections of more than 500 objects during the Gayo and Alas campaigns (1901–1904). In contrast with the 1873–1874 invasion, these collections included precious objects, like gold jewellery and textiles made from expensive materials. Among them are the ethnographic collections of Frits van Daalen and Theodorus Jacobus (Theo) Veltman which are today in Museum Nasional Indonesia and Wereldmuseum Leiden and Rotterdam. Medical officer George Frederik van Laaren (1868–1945), amassed around 1,000 objects during the 1904 campaigns.⁴⁴ Another medical officer, Lodewijk Hendrik Lebbe (1861–1933) assembled a collection of sixty-four objects that he donated to the Batavian Society in 1902 (Bataviaasch Genootschap 1904, XLI 1903:81). Other military staff, such as Hans Christoffel and Willem Stammeshaus, acquired their first objects during these campaigns and would continue building their collections for many years after, eventually developing large but less systematic collections (Durinx, Catteeuw, and Francken 2019;

41 Bloembergen and Eickhoff (2020, 14) state that 'Islamic sites – mosques and sacred graves in particular – were often respected or left to the care of the local population, even in times of violent conflict or war', but in Aceh this was not the case. The destruction of the mosque of Banda Aceh is not exceptional, its reconstruction commissioned by the colonial government, however, was.

42 This count excludes what officers sent to other institutions. For instance, Klaas van der Maaten (1861–1944) did not leave any collected items to these museums, but books and manuscripts he captured became part of the collections of Leiden University Library and the Batavian Society.

43 The Hans Christoffel collection, comprising 1,200 objects, is part of the collections of Museum aan de Stroom (MAS) in Antwerp (Belgium); the collections compiled by Van Daalen (640 objects) and Veltman (702 objects) are part of the Wereldmuseum Leiden. The Wereldmuseum Rotterdam also owns 128 objects collected by Van Daalen, 233 specimens are part of the collections of Naturalis Biodiversity Center and the Museum Nasional Indonesia in Jakarta has more than 600 objects that were donated by Van Daalen to its predecessor, the Batavian Society.

44 The fate of the Van Laaren collection remains unknown. In 1911 the Colonial Museum intended to buy the objects, but the sale fell through. In 1922 the collection was exhibited at the *Indische tentoonstelling* ("Indian exhibition") at the Kurhaus in Scheveningen. On 24 May 1922, newspaper *Haagsche Courant* wrote that the collection 'of high artistic and historic importance' was up for sale and it was to be hoped it would stay in the Netherlands, 'as we have heard that there is a danger that the entire collection will move to America. And that would be a pity!'



FIGURE 9
George Nijpels's weapon collection in his office in The Hague, 1937. Collection National Museum of World Cultures RV-11996-2

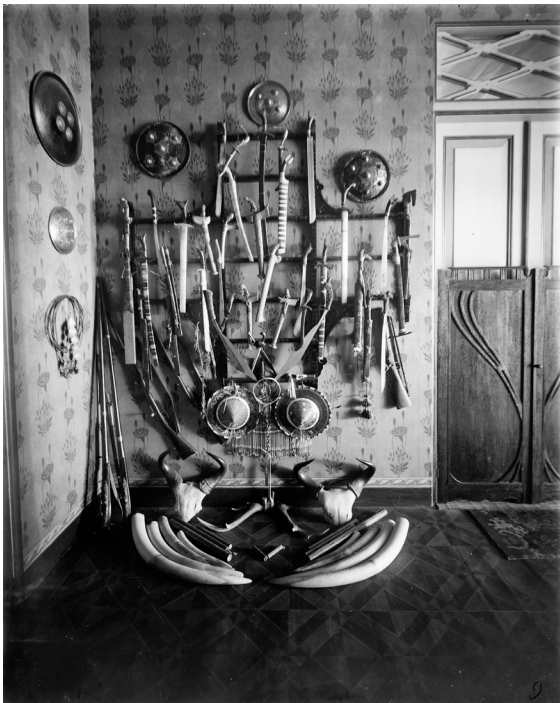


FIGURE 10 Henri Swart's weapon collection in his residence in Banda Aceh, 1915. Collection National Museum of World Cultures TM-10020629

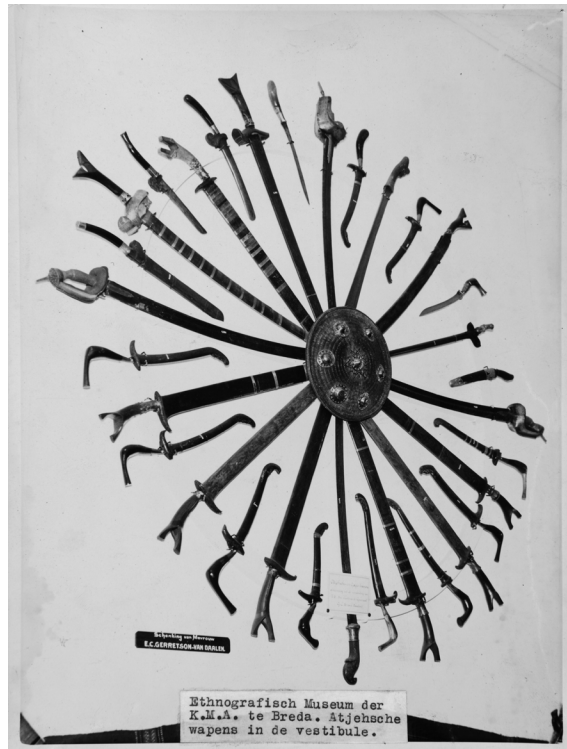


FIGURE 11 Frits van Daalen's weapon collection, exhibited at the Museum of the Royal Military Academy in Breda, c.1938. Collection National Museum of World Cultures RV-11996-1

Klein Nagelvoort 2019).⁴⁵ Van Daalen's adjutant and author of the report of the 1904 campaigns, J.C.J. (Johannes) Kempees (1873–1956), would in time assemble a collection of trophy objects of notorious enemies of the Dutch, such as Teuku Umar (1854–1899) and Si Singamangaraja XII (1849–1907).⁴⁶

The collecting practices of Frits van Daalen give some insight into the methods used by these officers to obtain objects. Van Daalen compiled the collections during two important campaigns: the 1901 exploratory mission to the Gayo region and the 1904 extremely violent campaign to conquer the Gayo and Alas regions. The last expedition had both a military and a scientific purpose, as the official report explains: 'the goal is to also get scientific results, as far as the military aims and the difficult circumstances in which the column has to operate will allow [...] finally a very complete and extensive report on the Alas people, who were entirely without description until now, will be brought out' (Kempees 1905, 223). To this end, a botanist of the 's Lands Plantentuin in Buitenzorg came along to collect specimens of plants and insects, cartographic mappings of the terrain were carried out and a mining engineer collected specimens of the soil (Bijl 2015, 74; Naarding 1938, 60; Kempees 1905, 223).⁴⁷ Van Daalen took it upon himself to collect ethnographic items and

manuscripts; the first to be sent to museums in Batavia, Leiden and Rotterdam and the latter directly to Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje.⁴⁸ Previously, curators and scholars have claimed that little is known about how Van Daalen acquired objects in the field, apart from the general observation that officers most likely bought objects from the local population (Ter Keurs 2009; Stevens 2007; 2005; Van Wengen 2002c, 27). A deeper investigation of Van Daalen's archival papers, as well as physical examination of the artefacts, reveals that he used a combination of methods: objects were looted, 'found', excavated, bought and commissioned. As the examples below demonstrate, the acquisitions, be they sales or loot, came about in the context of intensive control of the regions of Aceh and their populations.

To start with the looting, previous publications assumed that looting did not take place because collecting took place in a systematic manner (Van Wengen 2002c, 27) or because General J.B. van Heutsz at the start of the campaigns to the inner lands of Aceh in 1901 had given explicit instructions not to plunder: 'Firm action should be taken to ensure that nobody will be guilty of damaging Gayo property' (Stevens 2007, 119; see Van Heutsz 1902, 85). Furthermore, the official report of the 1904 campaign stated that: 'here too the population was clothed from head to toe in fine clothing, and many men were wearing precious silk hajji cloths as well as jewels. It was strictly observed that the troops did not rob the dead bodies of their belongings' (Kempees 1905, 127; translation as in Stevens 2007). Yet practices on the ground did not always live up to the formal instructions, and colonial-period sources frequently mention looting. According to *marechaussee* officer Harko Schmidt

45 A similar case is the collection of KNIL officer Jean Beijens (1835–1914), who started to collect during two years of service in the Dutch East Indies, but acquired most of his collection through donations from fellow military men (Hermkens and Venbrux 2023).

46 Information on inventory card TM-1552-17. Information TMS database National Museum of World Cultures. Accessed 10 March 2020. Objects from the Kempees collection were auctioned in 1908; one of them, a *kupiah* (headgear) allegedly worn by Teuku Umar ended up in the Tropenmuseum. Kupiah, Aceh, late 19th century. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. TM-1552-17. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/57200>.

47 Van Daalen sent some of the botanical specimens to the Rijksherbarium, but most seem to have been sent to 's Lands Plantentuin in Buitenzorg (the present-day Bogor Botanical Gardens) as the invasion report implies (Kempees 1905, 223). Today, 233 of the

Rijksherbarium specimens are part of the collections of Naturalis Biodiversity Center.

48 Van Daalen sent 159 objects to the Batavian Society after the 1901 campaign and 453 objects in the period 1901–1904. For the inventory lists, see *Notulen Bataviaasch Genootschap* (1903, XL 1902: bijlage 1) and *Inventaris van voorwerpen afkomstig van de Gajō-, Alas- en Bataklanden* (1905a).

(1879–1953), Van Daalen habitually confiscated looted weapons to add to his collected items:

“During a fight under his command, one of the officers captured a lance with a golden shaft in a man-to-man fight. He asked Van Daalen if he could have the weapon as a keepsake. Van Daalen took the weapon with an ice cold [stare] and handed it to the orderly who was standing behind him. Then he said: ‘if one of us has the right to this weapon, it is me’. And the lance went to a museum. With the troops the “iron” general had the reputation for everything to be *gua punya* [mine] in his eyes. But *there* they did not know, and Van Daalen did not deem it necessary to inform them that all the loot was sent to the museums.” (Du Croo 1943, 65)

Moreover, the NMVW collections contain several objects that were taken from the population by military officers under Van Daalen’s command during the campaigns of 1904.⁴⁹ Plundering did not stop after the conquest of Aceh. In 1906, sergeant Willem Stammeshaus was stationed in the town of Blangkejeren in the Gayo region. When a fellow soldier discovered a group of about ten men, chewing *sirih* (areca or betel nut) under a tree, they suspected them of being resistance fighters and fired at them. In his diary Stammeshaus wrote: ‘Loot: a *rencong* [dagger] with ivory hilt, a *keris* with lots of *suasa* and gems, a *gliwang* [sword] with silverwork, a sabre, a number of *gliwangs* without much value. In addition: two *bungkoih*s [sirih bags] with lots of silverwork, many *kains* and cloths, plaited bags, tobacco boxes, boxes with mirrors, needlework, *sirih* utensils and a *topi* [headgear] etcetera. The soldiers and the forced labourers each take some of the *barang* [goods], only the weapons and *bungkoih*s have to be turned in as evidence.’⁵⁰

49 Information on inventory cards. For instance, the first objects Willem Stammeshaus collected were booty taken when he was employed as a KNIL sergeant during the campaigns in the Gayo and Alas regions.

50 Diary of F.W. Stammeshaus, 25 June 1906. Collection John Klein Nagelvoort. Two objects from the *barang* are now part of the Wereldmuseum Amsterdam

Thus, while it is clear that in this period looting was discouraged from the top, the museum object records and other unofficial sources make no secret of it happening anyway.

Van Daalen’s own notes also shed new light on what he considered within the lines of permissibility. In the inventory list he sent to the Museum for Geography and Ethnography in Rotterdam he mentions, for instance, the *kejurun* (ruler) of Babel, Badul Samat, who was killed by Van Daalen’s troops on the 19th of May 1904, after which his *payung* (ceremonial umbrella, a *waardigheidsteken* or symbol of dignity) was ‘taken away’.⁵¹ In 1904 he wrote to Snouck Hurgronje about the find of several antique pieces of *kain* (waistcloths) in a hiding place in Krueng Pante Raja, which were now in his possession.⁵² In his private correspondence, Van Daalen expressed himself more directly on looting. In the letters he wrote to his wife Betsy in 1896, looting is mentioned on several occasions, for instance when writing about the plan to burn down and plunder the house of Teuku Cut Mahmud.⁵³ Two weeks later, he reported the capture of arch enemy Teuku Umar’s house in Lampisang, ‘Umar’s house

collection: Two embroidered strips for men’s clothing, Gayo Lues, c.1900. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. nos. TM-674-314a/b. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/176898> Bronze sirih lime box, Gayo Lues, c.1900. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. TM-702-162. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/178652>.

51 Letter J.H. Morbeck (on behalf of Van Daalen) to Joh. F. Snelleman, 28 July 1906. NL-RtSA Archives of the Museum voor Land- en Volkenkunde and Maritiem Museum Prins Hendrik, 563 no. 24. The *payung* (WM-8969) is no longer in the collections of the Wereldmuseum Rotterdam; according to the register it has been destroyed (no reasons or date are mentioned).

52 Letter G.C.E. van Daalen to C. Snouck Hurgronje, 2 February 1904. Leiden University Library inv. no. Or. 8952 A: 240. The waistcloths were donated to the Batavian Society (Bataviaasch Genootschap 1905b, XLII 1904:26).

53 Letter G.C.E. van Daalen to C.E. de Lang Evertsen, 13 May 1896. Leiden University Library/Collection H.T. Damsté.

is beautiful and well furnished. He, however, had smashed a lot. Still our troops found many useful things that we have taken along, such as a huge music box worth 300 guilders, chairs, cupboards and liquor.' Van Daalen himself managed to get his hands on a 'beautiful Qur'an'.⁵⁴ In July he wrote to Betsy about the killing of 110 Acehnese men within fifteen minutes in the *benteng* (fortified village) of Anagalung, 'of course we took as booty many weapons, of which I have three beautiful ones. [...] we then advanced to Sibreh and Pasar Sibreh, and after destroying that area we went home with lots of loot. You'll understand that everybody was happy with our success, and many congratulated us.'⁵⁵

Earlier scholarship on Van Daalen was correct in its conclusion that many objects were not looted but rather bought from the population.

54 Letter G.C.E. van Daalen to C.E. de Lang Evertsen, 27 May 1896. Leiden University Library/Collection H.T. Damsté. I did not manage to locate the Qur'an. Possibly Van Daalen donated it to Snouck Hurgronje, as he used to do with other manuscripts, and it may now be part of the Leiden University Library collections or the Perpustakaan Nasional in Jakarta. Another Qur'an from Teuku Umar's possessions, captured that day by quartermaster Lt. Ferdinand Kenninck (1868–1915), is now part of the Wereldmuseum Rotterdam collections. See <https://carolinedrienhuis.wordpress.com/2016/06/08/het-merkwaardige-boek-de-koran-van-teuku-umar-in-nederland>. A third one was captured by warrant officer (*opperwachmeister*) Meyer Content (1862–1930) and donated to Leiden University Library in 1900. Qur'an, printed in Mumbai for matba'a al-hasaniyya, 1879. Collection Wereldmuseum Rotterdam inv. no. WM-74931. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/1177952> Ibid. Collection Leiden University Library inv. no. 866 D 18. https://catalogue.leidenuniv.nl/permalink/f/n95gpj/UBL_ALMA21162325180002711 In addition to the Qur'ans, at least one other manuscript ended up in a Dutch collection after the attack on Lampisang (Daneshgar 2022). Untitled manuscript, 15th or 16th century. Collection Leiden University Library inv. no. Or. 7056. https://catalogue.leidenuniv.nl/permalink/f/q6ueoj/UBL_ALMA11374471690002711.

55 Letter G.C.E. van Daalen to C.E. de Lang Evertsen, 4 July 1896. Leiden University Library/Collection H.T. Damsté.

Van Daalen's report on the 1901 excursion (1902, 66) mentions that inhabitants of the Gayo villages visited the military base 'to sell some curiosities to the officers, who the previous day had been inquiring about them.' On several occasions, Van Daalen gave the officers under his command assignments to search for specific objects. First Lieutenant H.J. (Harko) Schmidt was sent over to the villages of Aceh to find a rare antique sword, a *gliwang puco meukawet*, to add to Van Daalen's private collection of Acehnese weapons.⁵⁶ When he failed to find one, Schmidt commissioned an armourer to copy a sword from another officer's collection.⁵⁷ In 1903 van Daalen wrote to Snouck Hurgronje about a number of precious and 'very old' objects, such as a golden *keris*, a silver gilded bowl and a copy of the *Hikayat Pocut Muhammad*, all of which he bought from Habib Hasan and Tuan Aja, both descendants of Sultan Djeumaløj (i.e. Jamal ul-Alam Badr ul-Munir, who reigned 1703–1726). He also sent Snouck Hurgronje a copy of the *Adat Makuta Alam* and a genealogy of the Acehnese sultanate, given to him by Raja Uдах, who claimed to have copied, without permission, original manuscripts in possession of a member of Aceh's royal family, Tuanku Mahmud. Van Daalen added, 'it is possible that more will become available. Several things are in the hands of Teuku Nè and Teuku Padang and others, so it will be difficult to get hold of them [lit. to get them out of their hands]'.⁵⁸ In 1906, after Van Daalen was appointed

56 After Van Daalen's death, his children loaned his private collection to the KMA. In 1956 the collection was returned to them; in 1958 they donated several objects to the Museum of Ethnology. See a photograph of the display of Van Daalen's collection at the KMA museum, c.1938 (Fig. 11). Collection National Museum of World Cultures, inv. no. RV-11996-1. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/1358061>.

57 Information written by F.W. Stammeshaus, inventory cards TM-674-669 and TM-1704-11. Information TMS database National Museum of World Cultures. Accessed 10 March 2020.

58 Letters G.C.E. van Daalen to C. Snouck Hurgronje, 24 September and 2 November 1903. Leiden University Library inv. no. Or. 8952 A: 238. All objects were donated



FIGURE 12 Teuku Teungoh, drawings of Buraq, 1900–1904. Pencil on paper. On the reverse the imprisoned Teuku wrote a plea for help directed to the civil governor. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. RV-1429-134/134a

as civil and military governor of Aceh, he tasked Major M.W.E. Bloemen Waanders with the investigation of the cemeteries of the Samudera Pasai sultanate, again at Snouck Hurgronje's instigation. At one of the sites, Bloemen Waanders dug up several golden coins and other valuables, which Van Daalen duly sent to the Batavian Society and led him to remark 'it is a pity that so many lovers [of Acehnese things] have bought such things from the people here.'⁵⁹

On closer inspection, some of the objects reveal information that was previously concealed. In 1904, van Daalen donated to the Museum of Ethnology two drawings of Buraq (Fig. 12), the creature with which the Prophet Muhammad made his night journey and his ascension to Heaven (*al-ʿisraʾ wal-miʿraj*).⁶⁰ They were made by Teuku Teungoh, *ulëëbalang* (aristocratic leader) of the village of Pate on the west coast of Aceh. The drawings contain on their reverse side pencil inscriptions in Malay in Jawi script, written by Teuku Teungoh, and addressed to the civil governor, probably KNIL Captain Theo Veltman. On one of the drawings Van Daalen noted in Dutch that the Teuku was writing from prison in Pulo Raya, and that he is requesting: 1) grace; 2) a knife; 3) permission to take a walk. However, the first line in Malay is not a specific request for grace or a pardon, but just the conventional Malay preamble appropriate for a humble request made to an overlord.⁶¹ The request reveals that the Teuku

tried to use the occasion of the presentation of the drawings to Veltman to send out a cry for help. He is strengthening his plea by referring to an object, possibly a receptacle, which Veltman apparently had requested him to make:

"Many greetings, I proffer my pardons to beneath the shoes of Sir, hoping for help for my affairs, because I am but a poor man, hoping for forgiveness for any wrongdoings.

This is what I am hoping for: unless Sir gives me a small knife, it will no longer be possible for me to make it, Sir, because I will not be able to make the receptacle [?]."

The inscription on the second drawing commences with a similar expression of humility and is, again, followed by a rather desperate plea for help:

"Many greetings, to beneath the shoes of Sir, with my hopes for permission from Sir, that Sir should give the order for me to be taken for a walk each day, because for so long now I have been kept in, unable to see anything, and I have frequently fallen ill; this is my never-ending hope entrusted to Sir."

The investigation of the collecting practices of Van Daalen gives an overview of the different methods he used to obtain objects. The detailed description above gives some insights into how collections were formed during the Gayo and Alas campaigns. A number of conclusions can be drawn. First, it is evident that in many cases, but not all, violence and duress played a considerable role. For instance, in the cases when inhabitants of the Gayo villages offered objects for sale to Van Daalen and his fellow officers, it can be argued, considering the excessive violence of the 1904 campaigns, that there is a fine line between purchase and plunder. Paul Bijl aptly comments on Van Daalen's acquisition practices: 'of course, there is only a subtle difference between stealing and buying when you are pointing your rifle at the sales person' (Bijl 2015, 75). The war and

to the Batavian Society (Bataviaasch Genootschap 1905b, XLII 1904:26). The manuscripts are part of the collections of Leiden University Library inv. no. Or. 7954.

59 Letter G.C.E. van Daalen to C. Snouck Hurgronje, 10 October 1906. Leiden University Library inv. no. Or. 8952 A: 240.

60 Teuku Teungoh, drawings of Buraq, 1900–1904. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. RV-1429-134/134a. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/707093> Th.J. Veltman collected thirteen similar drawings by Teuku Teungoh. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. nos. RV-1599-669/680.

61 I want to thank Annabel Gallop for the translation of the Malay inscription and providing this information.

subsequent impoverishment stimulated the sale of valuables to Dutch collectors, or as Anne Mens Fiers Smeding (1862–1923) phrased it, ‘because of the war the private possessions of the Acehnese become less and less’ (Rouffaer 1901, 32). Mens Fiers Smeding worked between 1891 and 1894 as a solicitor in Aceh and assembled a collection of silk items that way; ‘more and more Acehnese showed up, making use of the quiet afternoon hours, to offer me a fine *kain* for sale, when money problems forced them to dispose of such a *pusaka* item’ (Rouffaer 1901, 31).⁶² Another conclusion drawn from the archives is that in Van Daalen’s eyes the dispossession of political enemies was not considered plunder, which gives a different insight into Van Heutsz’s ban on looting. Official regulations only came into effect in 1928, but between 1818 and 1934, the Dutch armed forces, including the KNIL, used the *Crimineel wetboek voor het krijgsvolk te lande* (“Criminal code for the soldiery in the field”) as an ethical guideline. According to Petra Groen (2012, 279), ‘it imposed few restrictions on the troops in terms of dealing with the population, although it did prohibit the use of violence against peaceful residents, looting, and the destroying of villages and means of subsistence without orders.’ The crux of the matter is, of course, who constituted ‘peaceful residents’ in a situation of guerrilla warfare in which the entire population was perceived to be the enemy.

Second, the invasion in the Gayo and Alas regions facilitated large scale and systematic collecting of objects. It is clear that systematic collecting was possible, as Van Daalen’s search for specific objects indicates. Moreover, the collections assembled by officers consisted of the same categories of objects, i.e. jewellery, clothing and textiles, household objects, weapons. Systematic collecting emphasised classification, in this case

exemplified by the categories. With these categories, examples were collected, each intended to stand for all the others of their kind. Thus, the category of clothing in the Van Daalen and Veltman collections was compiled of men’s, women’s and children’s clothing, preferably of different ethnic groups, to complete a set.

Third, the collections gathered in the campaigns set the standard for later collecting in Aceh: they were canonized through exhibitions and publications mapping the Acehnese population, such as exhibition catalogues and scholarly publications (e.g. Veltman 1904; 1912). Despite the fact that more than five hundred different individuals were involved, they all collected more or less the same types of object, creating a ‘material archive’ (Legêne 2007) of Acehnese culture. Certain types of objects were present in each collection, like the Aceh flag, which to the Dutch army was an important symbol or trophy of victory. Van Daalen and Veltman were often praised for their knowledge of Acehnese culture, however both officers looked at Islam as a hostile religion. After the campaigns, Frits van Daalen was promoted to the governorship of Aceh. His policy followed Snouck Hurgronje’s ideas, and aimed to separate the ‘ulama from the population, ‘here we are fighting against Islam – a fight that will continue for many more years. Only when we destroy the most eminent *ulama* families and neutralise the influence of the *gampông* clergy by opening normal schools (without the Qur’an), will the pacification [of Aceh] be achieved’ (Naarding 1938, 80).

Shortly after the end of the conquest of Aceh, the collections assembled during the campaigns were exhibited in various colonial and ethnographic museums. The exhibitions followed a fixed pattern, combining the photographs of the Gayo and Alas campaigns with ethnographic objects. The first exhibition to present the collections to the public took place at the Batavian Society between 5 and 12 February 1905, six months after the campaign ended, and showed the collection of Van Daalen (Stevens 2007, 118; Bataviaasch Genootschap 1905a). It was followed in 1907 by an exhibition of

62 Part of his collection was donated to the Museum of Ethnology in 1939. Various silk items, Aceh, late 19th century. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. nos. RV-2387-1/8. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/739148>.



FIGURE 13 Exhibition of the Van Laaren collection, assembled during the 1904 Gayo campaign, at the Colonial Museum in Haarlem, 1912 (photograph Berend Zweers). Collection National Museum of World Cultures TM-60040399

the Veltman collection at the Museum of Ethnology in Leiden (A. Bosma 2018; Fischer and Veltman 1907), and the display of the Van Laaren collection at the Colonial Museum in Haarlem in 1912. The exhibitions presented an ethnographic mapping of the newly conquered territories and served as propaganda to show the European public in Batavia and back home in the Netherlands the successes of the Netherlands East Indies Army and government. In the exhibitions colonial conquest and exploitation were presented as self-evident. The layout of the Van Laaren exhibition (Fig. 13), with trophy objects at the centre, including Teuku Umar's flag and scores of weapons, and flanked by ethnographic objects, unmistakably communicated colonial conquest. The photographs of landscapes and ethnographic 'types', made by Henricus Marinus Neeb, served to visualize the conquered population.

In the exhibitions the religious meanings of Islamic objects were closely associated with hostility and religious militancy and, through their triumphant display, juxtaposed with Dutch military and cultural superiority.

In the museums a diametrically opposed process simultaneously took place, stripping the objects of their connection to the war. When, in 1912, the Museum of Ethnology published a complete catalogue of its Aceh collections, including the object collections assembled by Semmelink, Korndörffer, Van Daalen and Veltman, the objects were presented in a neutral tone with emphasis on their ethnographic meanings, erasing the battle fields or other contexts of violence from where they were taken (Ter Keurs 2007b, 6; Stevens 2007, 118; A. Bosma 2018). The donations of objects Van Daalen made after the 1904 invasion counts dozens of

ceremonial waistcloths (*opoh*), jackets (*baju*), hajji coats and headgear (*kupiah*), the clothing worn by Gayo Muslim men and women in preparation for their deaths,⁶³ but in the museum's ethnographic description no mention is made of this 'practice' nor of the circumstances in which the outfits were collected. Only one remark in the introductory chapter, emphasising that most collectors were army officers, hinted at the violent context in which collecting took place (Fischer 1912, v), although occasionally the object descriptions also mention that objects were 'found' on bodies or 'taken' from opponents. In the catalogue to the Sumatra gallery at the Colonial Institute in Amsterdam, which appeared fifteen years later (Kreemer 1927), the Aceh War is not even mentioned.

2.3 *Seeing Islam: Willem Stammeshaus*

The Stammeshaus collection of Acehnese artefacts is the only collection from colonial Indonesia in Dutch museums in which Islam plays a prominent role, and one that was brought together from the perspective of interest in Islam. During his career as a non-commissioned officer (*onderofficier*) in the KNIL, and later as a civil administrator, Willem Stammeshaus (1881–1957) assembled a large collection of ethnographic objects. In both professions, his collecting activities profited from the circumstances of war and colonial governance. Like his peers in the army and the civil administration, Stammeshaus looked at Islam as a hostile movement of anti-colonial resistance. Yet unlike many of them, he also showed genuine interest in Islam as a force in the daily lives of Muslim believers. Therefore, the collection raises intriguing

questions about the conditions and circumstances which allowed Islam to be 'seen'.

Willem Stammeshaus was born in 1881 in Sigli, Aceh, as the son of a KNIL medical officer from Prussia and a Peranakan mother from Java (Klein Nagelvoort 2019). Quite typical for this kind of relationship, his father sent away his *nyai* (housekeeper and concubine) when he married a Dutch wife, although he recognized his *voorkind* (before-child) Willem, thus securing for him the legal status of European. Rather untypical was his decision to send Willem to the Netherlands to get a solid education. From age ten to nineteen Willem lived with foster parents in Breda. When money ran out, he had to drop out of school and, at the advice of his father, he signed up for the KNIL. As we have seen, collecting objects 'in the battlefields' was common practice among KNIL officers and soldiers. The first objects of Stammeshaus's collection were looted from villages in the Batak, Gayo and Alas areas (Klein Nagelvoort 2019, 28).⁶⁴ The army turned out to be a great disappointment, and Willem detested the violence and the killing. In 1909, he managed to make a career change to the civil administration, first as clerk, then moving up to work as assistant district officer (*assistent controleur*) and district officer (*controleur*) in various regions of Aceh. In those years, he accumulated a large collection of miscellaneous objects. Between 1915 and 1931, he also fulfilled the position of curator of the Aceh Museum (Atjeh Museum) in Koeta Radja (today's Banda Aceh), which was then furnished with his collection of Acehnese artefacts. In 1931, he left for the Netherlands and sold a part of his collection, 1,300 items, to the Colonial Institute.⁶⁵ The agreement included an honorary

63 'The enemy fought very fanatically, which was disclosed by the loud praying perceived continuously all through the attack as well as by the fact that all, including women and children, were dressed in ceremonial outfits to prove that the fighters had devoted themselves to death. The men wore colourful hajji coats, and the white turban or koepiah; the women in their new sarongs (*opoh*) and jackets (*badjoe*) are, just like the children, covered with silver jewellery' (Kempees 1905, 40) translation adapted from Bijl (2015, 48).

64 This first object of the Stammeshaus collection was looted on 22 June 1904. Tobacco box, Alas area, late 19th century. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. TM-674-918. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/177742>.

65 In total 2,144 objects from the Stammeshaus collection are now part of the collection of the National Museum of World Cultures. It is the largest collection of Acehnese artefacts in the Netherlands. In addition,

position for himself; he became assistant curator and until his retirement in 1946 his job was to sort and document the objects he had sold. In these years he also wrote his ‘memoirs’ of Aceh; these are not personal accounts, but rather a collection of all the information he gathered.⁶⁶

The context in which Stammeshaus assembled his collection was one of changing colonial policies. In 1903, the Sultan of Aceh, Muhammad Daud Syah, surrendered and one year later the resistance of the inner lands of Gayo and Alas was crushed during the Van Daalen expedition. In the years that followed several pockets of resistance were eliminated and eventually, in 1914, the Dutch government declared the end of the Aceh War. The Dutch policy of these years envisioned a gradual installation of civil rule. A civil administration was staffed, with Stammeshaus as one of them, in order to develop Acehnese society, and stimulate the economy through education and improvement of the infrastructure. The corps of civil administrators (*corps Binnenlands Bestuur*) to which Stammeshaus belonged felt it had special commitments to the populations it governed (Kommers 2002). Especially after the introduction of the Ethical Policy in 1901, civil administrators perceived themselves as being in close contact with the population, having ‘insiders’ views’ and being the representatives of the ‘natives’ with the government and other powerful Europeans.

The *ulèëbalang* (aristocratic leaders) played an important role in the colonial system of government; they were allowed to govern their own territories on condition of declaring their loyalty to

the colonial government by signing the *korte verklaring* (short statement). Civil administrators like Stammeshaus worked closely with the *ulèëbalang* in their regions. Following Snouck Hurgronje’s advice, the Dutch policy aimed at isolating the *‘ulama* from the population and diminishing their power. Stammeshaus, however, also had close ties with several ‘friendly’ *‘ulama*, both for work and personal relations, even friendship. Until 1918 the governor of Aceh came from military ranks, but from then onwards the position of governor was filled by a civil administrator. All the same, there was a continued suppression of all who resisted colonial rule. Periodic revivals of resistance went hand in hand with armed confrontations, especially in the 1920s and 1930s. In these years, the civil administration in Aceh gradually developed ‘a system of state repression, cultural imperialism, and an active meddling in “indigenous” matters, which was increasingly conservative and paternalistic in nature’ (Kloos 2014, 29).

2.4 *The Stammeshaus Collection*

The Stammeshaus collection is characterised by its eclectic nature. Among the items in this collection are porcelain plates, old coins, brass boxes, as well as several valuable gold jewels and weapons. But there are also many unusual items such as a beer bottle and the administration books of merchant Nya Kahar from Calang of the period 1903–1907. The objects related to the Islamic faith stand out because of both their quantity and diversity. They cover a wide range of the Islamic spectrum: from *hiyakat prang sabi* manuscripts and pages of calligraphic artwork to a document explaining the division of the inheritance according to *shari’a* law, awls used for piercing rituals of the Rifa’i Sufi order, edible earth to cure ailments, a quadrilingual dictionary for pilgrims to Mecca, a blueprint of a mosque, a horn used in a *meunasah* (community and prayer house) and a bottle of earth from the sacred grave of Teungku Chik Lam Peuneu’euén. The choice of these objects indicates a familiarity with Islamic practices that was unusual for Dutch collectors.

there are 29 specimens (shells) in the collections of Naturalis Biodiversity Center and 3 objects in Museum Bronbeek. A few objects are still in the possession of the Stammeshaus family. The Aceh Museum still exists: the remaining objects from the Stammeshaus collection disappeared in WWII. After Indonesian independence the museum was nationalised and the collection rebuilt, see <https://museum.acehprov.go.id> and Nurdin AR (2012).

66 The Stammeshaus archives, including the memoirs, are in private hands: a part is still in the family, another share is kept by John Klein Nagelvoort in Amersfoort.



FIGURE 14 Collection of Willem Stammeshaus, displayed in his home in Seulimeum (Aceh), 1912
PHOTO FROM THE STAMMESHAUS ARCHIVES, COURTESY OF JOHN KLEIN NAGELVOORT

The collection also stands out because of the meticulous descriptions that accompany the objects. It is remarkable, and atypical for individuals collecting in colonial Indonesia, that Stammeshaus noted for each object the exact place of origin and the date of collecting, as well as the names of the people who made and sold or donated it, usually members of the Acehnese elite, i.e. Islamic leaders or members of the nobility. The information is sometimes extended to their family histories or, in the case of Sufi objects, the chain of spiritual ownership (*silsila*). For instance, the information with a miniature copy of the Qur'an, produced in Scotland, mentions that Stammeshaus received it as a gift from Habib Uma, son-in-law of the ulèëbalang of Lageuën on 22 February 1921.⁶⁷ It also mentions it was brought three years before from Mecca by Cut Peudada, 'the wife of the late Teuku di Krueng, who is the younger brother of Teuku Cumbo Pedir, ulèëbalang of Lam Meulo'. The object records thus give a wealth of information about the Acehnese elite, their relationships to the colonial administration, as well as the objects in circulation at the time.

The exceptionality of Stammeshaus's collecting practices can be assessed if we compare him with two other civil administrators who collected in Aceh. Lourens Berkhout (1873–1941) worked only two years (1913–1915) as a *controleur* on the island of Simeulue off the Aceh coast and afterwards made donations to the Museum of Ethnology and Museum for Geography and Ethnography.⁶⁸

67 Information in memoirs F.W. Stammeshaus, volume 1, p. 94. Private collection. Miniature Qur'an, David Bryce & Co., Glasgow, c.1900. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. TM-687-49. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/177893>.

68 130 objects, Simeulue, early 20th century. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. nos. RV-1862-1/35; RV-1867-1/43; RV-1978-1/58; WM-21087/21091. Berkhout made these donations together with Edward Jacobson (1870–1944), biologist and ethnographic collector. It is not clear what was the division of roles between them.

Out of these 130 objects only three are related to the Islamic faith. Curator Willem Rassers praised Berkhout for his systematic collecting and the even distribution over the twelve groups (see chapter 7), which according to him must have been difficult considering the ways in which the 'benign and childlike population' practiced Islam and which would 'find offence with Acehnese and Malay theologians' (Fischer 1920, v). Yet whatever these seemingly unorthodox practices were, Berkhout largely failed to apprehend them, as can be seen from the objects he sent to Leiden: a prayer mat, an amulet, and a model of a *minbar* or pulpit. Jan Kreemer, the former *controleur*, whose assignment for the Colonial Institute included assembling a systematic collection of Acehnese objects, collected more Islamic objects than Berkhout: 52 out of a total of 857. Like Stammeshaus, he worked with Acehnese informants. Kreemer included a number of objects that testify to a deeper knowledge of Islam, such as an amuletic banner placed at the entrance of a village to ward off epidemics, and a wooden ring (*rateb pulet*) used in *nasib* recitations accompanied by bodily movements.⁶⁹ Kreemer (1923, vol. 2, vol. 1 414–427) gives a lengthy description of the *rateb* rituals, distinguishing between religious and secular rituals and a third group which 'stands in between religious and secular'. Yet the (Acehnese) sources of his information remain unnamed.

Several factors explain the attention given to Islam in the Stammeshaus collection. The first one concerns Stammeshaus's motivations for making his collection. Museum historian Susan Pearce (1994) distinguishes several modes of collecting,

69 *Rateb pulet*, Aceh, early 20th century. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. TM-45-131. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/143238> Banner with Islamic invocations, Aceh, early 20th century. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. TM-45-367. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/143669> According to van Daalen, the *marchaussee* encountered these banners on almost every house it approached, this time to ward off the Dutch army (Bataviaasch Genootschap 1903, XL 1902:appendix I, xv).

adding that many collectors practice a mix of these styles. Although it is not easy to fit Willem Stammeshaus into any of the common categories of collectors, he was definitely an obsessive collector (Pearce uses the term fetishistic), whose motivations are first and foremost personal; this kind of collection is formed by ‘people whose imaginations identify with the objects which they desire to gather’ (Pearce 1995, 200). Although he collected what appears to be random samples (as Pearce calls them), rather than an organised range of examples as in systematic collecting, there is definitely also a scientific motivation to the collection, or at least a desire to educate people about life in Aceh. The more than 2,100 objects Stammeshaus collected, each accompanied with detailed information about its use, reveal an almost obsessive drive to document Acehnese society through its material culture. The hundreds of pages in the twenty notebooks he left behind testify of an immense desire to learn and capture daily life in the regions he lived in.

The second explanation can be found in Stammeshaus’s method of collecting. Through the many notes he made, it transpires that in every location where Stammeshaus was stationed he relied on a network of Acehnese individuals, whether it concerned his work as inspector or his collecting activities. He had this in common with other collectors who collected in close relation to the community, such as the missionaries in Java and his fellow administrators in Sumatra. Members of the Acehnese elite located interesting items for his collection and provided him with the information necessary to make object descriptions. For instance, in April 1930 Teuku Ali Basyah, ulèëbalang of the VI mukims of Peukan Bada, went to the prayer house (*deah*) of the village of Lam Tutui, which was located in the area under Basyah’s jurisdiction. The village was heavily damaged in a tsunami and the *deah* was now defunct. Ali Basyah removed a panel of the sandstone *mihrab* (prayer niche), which was decorated with the *shahada* (declaration of faith), and donated

it to Stammeshaus.⁷⁰ The close involvement of a large number of Acehnese individuals in the collecting practices of Stammeshaus encouraged him to collect a number of objects that were out of reach to other collectors in Aceh. His acquaintances were the ones who pointed out these objects and explained their importance to him. Combined with the fact that Stammeshaus did not collect along pre-set lines, but followed a personal style of collecting, his methods resulted in a collection in which Islam was represented in much more varied ways than in comparable collections.

Being a civil administrator, the relationships between Stammeshaus and members of the Acehnese elite were strongly influenced by the colonial system. Gift giving in these relationships was part of a system of services in which obligation and autonomy intermingled (Van Beurden 2017, 41). The extensive notes Stammeshaus made indicate that he received ‘gifts’ for performing his regular duties. For example, on the 30th of May 1913, he received rings from two men, Teungku Usuh and Husin Haji Nya Polim, who wanted to make the pilgrimage to Mecca and needed the obligatory permits (*reispassen*, see chapter 5).⁷¹ Four days later, the permits were issued. But Stammeshaus also went out of his way to do things that were not required from a civil servant. An example is one of the gifts Stammeshaus most cherished (Klein Nagelvoort 2019, 90; A.A.J.T. Stammeshaus 1977, 14–18). In 1910, an old man came to his office in Seulimeum because he had lost his *pas badan* (or, in Dutch, *kampongpas*), the identity card all

70 Mihrab panel, Lam Tutui, 16th–18th century. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. TM-674-859. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/177661>.

71 Information from notes F.W. Stammeshaus. Collection John Klein Nagelvoort. As a clerk Stammeshaus may have prepared the permits, but the final decision was taken by a higher-ranking administrator. One of the rings is no longer traceable. Silver ring, Aceh, late 19th century. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. TM-674-190. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/176699>.



FIGURE 15 Golden ring with engraved *shahada* calligraphy, acquired in Mecca, late 19th century (photograph John Klein Nagelvoort). Willem Stammeshaus received this ring as a gift. Stammeshaus replaced the original silver ring with gold, the stone is probably Indian or Iranian work. Private collection
COURTESY OF HEIRS F.W. STAMMESHAUS

Acehnese men were obliged to carry. As he had no means to buy a new one, Stammeshaus paid from his own pocket. One hour later the man returned with a gift: a silver ring with a green jade stone containing an engraved inscription of the *shahada*, also known as the *kalimah* in Aceh (Fig. 15). The man had received the ring from a holy man in Mecca and, no doubt, it was one of the most precious items he brought home from the pilgrimage. The gift may seem exorbitant, but it was not, considering that the failure to show the *pas badan* could result in severe punishment (Wekker 1907, 49). Yet it is telling that Stammeshaus took the gift for granted and only had doubts about the permissibility for him, as a non-Muslim, to wear a sign of the proclamation of the Islamic faith. After consulting with one of the local *‘ulama*, Teungku Bén, he decided in favour of wearing it.

Notwithstanding the context of colonial hierarchies, in some of these relationships there was a certain degree of voluntariness, and even friendship. This can be seen, for instance, in the case of Teuku Mansur (c.1888–1932), an intellectual and imam who lived in Leupueng (Lhoknga region), and was well-known in colonial circles

for his outstanding knowledge of Acehnese culture. The correspondence between Mansur and Stammeshaus shows that they exchanged information; for instance, when Stammeshaus lent Mansur his copy of Kreemer’s *Atjèh* so he could make a genealogy of the sultans of Aceh, combining and comparing Acehnese and Dutch sources. When Stammeshaus, who was a devout Catholic, received a papal award in 1927, Mansur sent him a poem in Malay to congratulate him with ‘the holy star’ of the ‘Almighty Pope’, indicated by Mansur as *wakil anbija*, the representative of the Prophets.⁷² In his poem, Mansur speaks of the three religions – Islam, Christianity and Judaism – as serving the same God. In addition, Mansur not only made several pieces for Stammeshaus, but also published his ideas about Islam and Acehnese culture, making his objects among the few about which the maker’s interpretation is known.

The drive for knowledge, be it personal or professional, behind Stammeshaus’s method of collecting was the principal cause of his unusual inclusion of Islam. To Stammeshaus, who lived and studied Acehnese culture for decades, Islam was an essential part of its society. These ideas were formed by colonial framings of Islam that identified Aceh as the most Islamic region of the archipelago. Stammeshaus’s outlook on Islam was fully in line with the Islam policies of the colonial government. In his eyes, most Islamic practices were part of ‘good’ Islam, but some practices – and some Acehnese Muslims – belonged to ‘bad’ Islam (cf. Kloos 2018; Gedacht 2015; Mamdani 2004). These ‘bad’ practices mostly concerned political activities; he supported the dissolution of the Acehnese branch of the political Islamic movement *Sarekat Islam* and described the anti-colonial *hikayat prang sabi* as ‘a very dangerous text for the stupid and fanatic people of Aceh’ (see chapter 4). Yet as a civil administrator he encouraged most Islamic practices and incorporated them in his working method. Let us return to the *shahada*

72 Letter Teuku Mansur to F.W. Stammeshaus, 30 March 1927. Collection John Klein Nagelvoort.

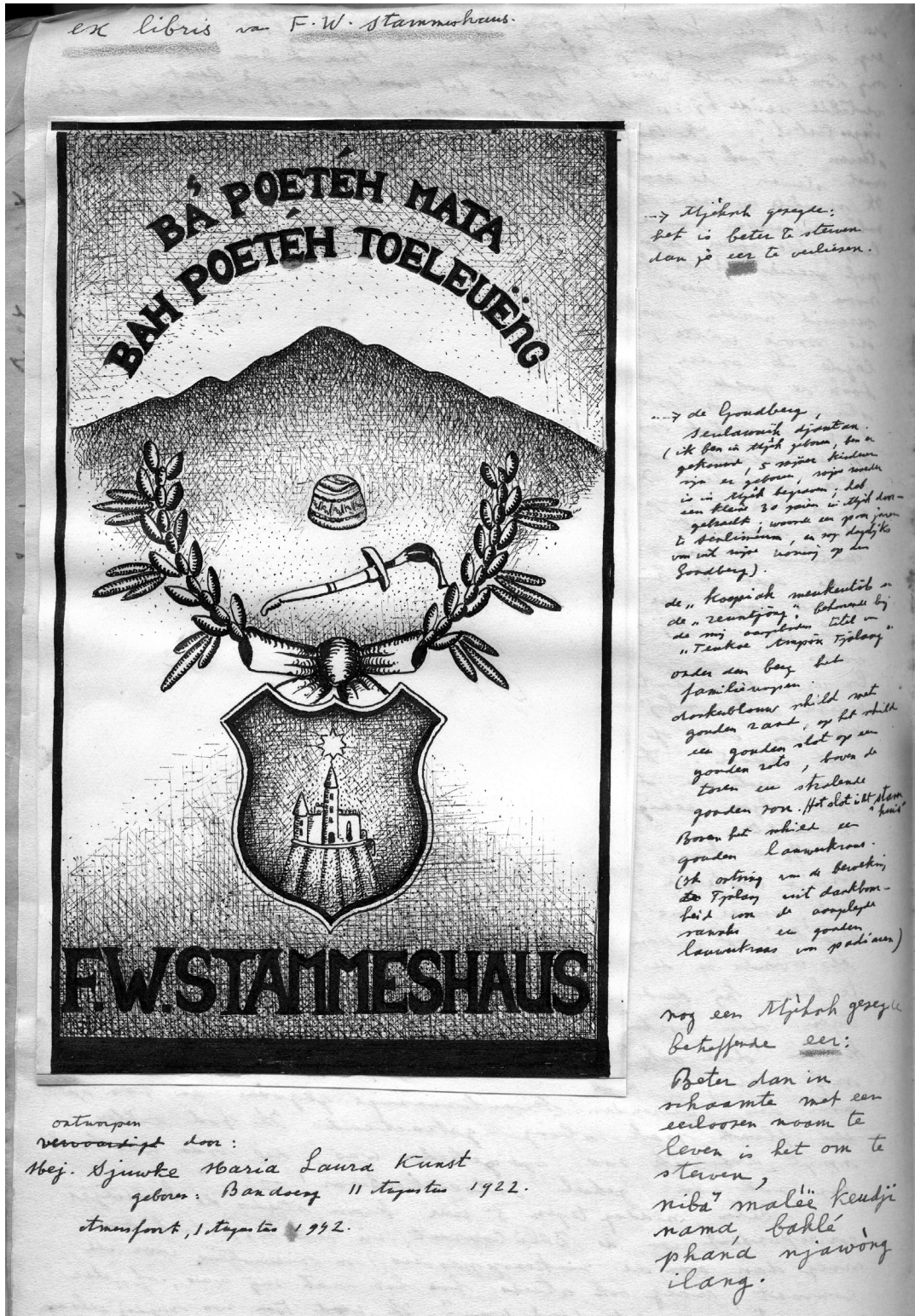


FIGURE 16 Page from Stammeshaus's memoirs with explanation of his ex libris (design Sjuwke Kunst). Private collection
COURTESY OF HEIRS S.M.L. KUNST AND HEIRS F.W. STAMMESHHAUS

engraved ring for an example. Stammeshaus wore the ring on a daily basis, and in his memoir he writes that he believed it to bring luck because the old man who had given it to him had let the stone touch the Ka'ba in Mecca. Every now and then, someone came to touch the ring, as Stammeshaus writes, 'it happened several times that I was woken up at night because Acehese folks came with a bowl with water and asked me to put the ring inside. They believed the water then turned into medicine (*djeuët keu oebat*) and in case of illness, they drank the water and were cured. The simple *gampong* dwellers attributed the effect to the *kalimah*: there is one God and Muhammad is his Prophet.' The belittling tone of his account positions Stammeshaus as the rational European versus the gullible villagers. Still, his actions are more ambiguous, because as a Dutch administrator he was not at all obliged to comply with the rituals.

It is insufficient to explain collecting styles solely in terms of grander paradigms, and to ignore individual biographies. In the case of Stammeshaus, the question is to what extent his zeal to document the culture of Aceh can be linked to his origin. As a child in Breda, he was treated as an outsider and at school he was bullied because of his dark complexion and distinctive Chinese traits. Stammeshaus had no opportunity to complete his secondary education, but decided to return to Aceh and spend most of his adult life in the region where he was born. In his position as a colonial administrator, as well as his legal status as European, Stammeshaus was an outsider to Acehese society. In the racial hierarchy of the colonial state, his European status secured him certain privileges and like many Indo-Europeans, he identified fully as European. Conscious of this position, in his diary and other writings he emphasised time and again the need to become as close as possible to the local population. He maintained close relationships with several Acehese men, referring to some of them as friends. Yet even if he did not identify as *Achinese*, he did identify strongly with *Aceh*. His *ex libris* (Fig. 16) visualises the different parts of his identity: the coat of arms

of the Stammeshaus family, and above it the *rencong* (dagger) and *kupiah* (headgear) as symbols of the Acehese title of Teuku Ampun Calang (Sir Calang) bestowed upon him by the *ulëëbalang* of Calang, recognising him as one of their own. At the top is the saying *ba puteh mata, bah puteh tuleung* ("better to die than to lose your honour"). In the background is the Seulawah Agam mountain (*Goudberg*), a symbol of the Acehese earth and of his roots. Beside the mountain Stammeshaus wrote, 'I was born in Aceh, I married there, my five children were born there, my mother is buried in Aceh, I have spent almost thirty years of my life there.' Was collecting a means to get closer to his own history and make a connection with the people to whom he felt related through his childhood?

In 1931 Stammeshaus sold the greatest part of his collection to the Colonial Institute, moved to Amsterdam, and took up the position of assistant curator. One of his first jobs was to curate a new gallery dedicated to Aceh. One section of the exhibition was devoted to Islamic religious practice, represented by a glass case full of prayer beads, Qur'anic manuscripts and items related to the service in the mosque (Fig. 46). Another section focused on the Aceh War, and symbolised the Dutch victory over the resistance movement. The display contained weapons as well as objects that had once belonged to Teuku Umar, and therefore, seems to have been the archetypal trophy display.⁷³ The remaining sections were dedicated to Acehese antiquities, including Islamic gravestones, and local craftsmanship. The exhibition concept thus made a clear division between the local culture and Islamic religious practice on the one hand, and on the other hand political Islam. Moreover, in the musealized presentation

73 There is no visual documentation of the Aceh War display, but the objects related to Teuku Umar, owned by the Colonial Institute in 1931, included a printed Qur'an as well as his now-famous coat and several letters. Apart from the Qur'an, all of these came from the Stammeshaus collection. For a provisional list of Teuku Umar objects in public collections, see Drieënhuizen (2012b), bijlage (appendix) A.



FIGURE 17 Friday prayers at the meunasah Dagang, 19 May 1922 (photograph F.W. Stammershaus). Stammershaus noted the name of the imam as Teungku Hajji 'Abd al-Amin mu'min. Private collection
COURTESY OF HEIRS F.W. STAMMESHAUS

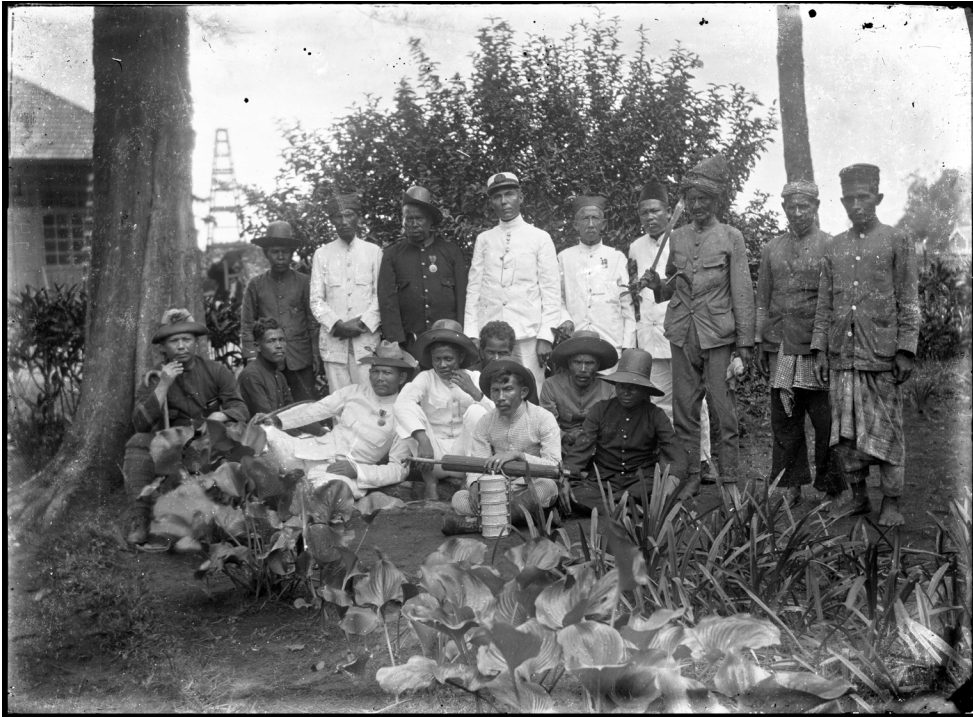


FIGURE 18 Willem Stammeshaus and his closest associates during his time in office at the west coast of Aceh. Calang, 26 September 1920. He wrote in the caption: 'some of the trusted ones, with whom I shared the good times and the bad.' Private collection
COURTESY OF HEIRS F.W. STAMMESHAUS



FIGURE 19 Willem Stammeshaus, his wife Nelly and colleagues attending a *kanduri* (ritual meal), Calang, 11 December 1921. Private collection
COURTESY OF HEIRS F.W. STAMMESHAUS

of Stammeshaus's collection, the network of Acehnese individuals, who had shaped the collection and defined its contents, disappeared from sight (cf. Legêne 2007, 226). A similar process happened during the documentation for the collection; the inventory cards he prepared for the museum contain substantially less information about his network of informants than the object descriptions in Stammeshaus's personal memoirs than. With the exhibition, Stammeshaus succeeded in negotiating a place for Islam at the Colonial Institute, but he did so by closely following colonial paradigms or discourses that distinguished between 'good' and 'bad' Islam, and between 'religion', 'culture' and 'politics'.

3 Memories of Collecting

In this chapter I have given a rudimentary account of collecting practices in Java and a rather detailed account of those in Aceh. The disparity reveals the availability of sources, but even more so, it demonstrates how gaps in memory are made. The systematic collecting that was done in Aceh, involving key individuals and specific events, often of the military kind, readily fits current models of studying collecting practices in colonial contexts. In addition, military collecting leaves more traces in the archives, as I argue in the next chapter.

From my analysis in this chapter and the previous one, it thus transpires that the existing models of analysing colonial collecting only partly apply to the collections from Muslim Indonesia. This is particularly valid for Java, where hardly any systematic collecting took place. The unwieldiness of collecting in Java has led to a situation in which the presence of histories of collecting has not been turned into memory-making in museums. Most of the approximately 4,000 individuals who

donated Javanese objects to the National Museum of World Cultures belonged, or had belonged, to the large (Indo)European community residing there. Previous research has been concerned with relatively prominent members of the community. Little is known about the average railway employee or his wife who offered a few objects to one of the museums, yet the donations of people like them make up a significant share of the circa 47,000 objects from Java. Likewise, there is a considerable amount of research done on the governance of Islam in colonial Indonesia, but hardly anything is written from the perspective of the lives of (Indo) European citizens and their everyday interactions with Indonesian Muslim identity. The inability, or failure, to 'see' Islam in the collections may partly be related to the invisibility of Islam in the daily lives of Dutch citizens living in the colony, who later became donors to the museums or, in some cases, curators.⁷⁴ Although I found glimpses in the research material pointing in that direction, they were not substantial enough to discuss this topic in this book, and I suggest this is an important angle for further research. Moreover, memory gaps like this one have clouded the role of Islam in the collections. In this way, the silences created during colonialism are being perpetuated in research as well as museum practice today.

74 This point was brought to my attention by Pim Westerkamp. Almost all curators of Indonesia in Dutch museums of the post-independence period were from *Indisch* families, who had lived in the colony. During a conversation with Alit Djajasoebrota (b. 1935), curator Indonesia of the Wereldmuseum Rotterdam between 1965 and 2001, she told me that in her youth in Bandung (she left in 1950) there was much less Islam than today. She also believed the Muslim faith did not express itself materially, so it was difficult to collect. Conversation with author, 17 June 2021. I had similar conversations with Pienke Kal (b. 1940), curator of the Tropenmuseum between 1967 and 2005.

Collecting Islamic Objects: Manuscripts and Gravestones

The collecting of objects in colonial contexts occurred at the intersections of different relationships, linking museums to the colonial administration, scholarship and public image-making (T. Bennett, Dibley, and Harrison 2014). In this chapter and the following, I take a closer look at the ways in which object collecting occurred in the context of the institutions and policies of the colonial administration, universities and the academic study of material culture, and the relationship with public image-making, in particular museum display, but also newspaper reporting and the popular press.

In this and the next chapter, I will follow four categories of objects: three dominate the category of the Islamic in museum classification: manuscripts, amulets, and objects related to the hajj. A fourth category, gravestones, is not present in high numbers, but exemplifies a type of object later described as Islamic art. Although the classification patterns can be explained by various factors, such as the presence of Arabic script and conceptualisations of religion in museum ethnology (see chapter 7), I am interested to find out if they were preceded by interest in the Islamic, and how that might interrelate with colonial governance, science and the public sphere. Together the case studies examine the changing relations between museum practices and the governance of populations in colonial Indonesia. The examination of their trajectories shows in which ways material culture shaped the place of Islam in the divergent and shifting Dutch colonial imagination, and how these images shaped the presence of Islamic material culture in museums in the Netherlands.

In this chapter the focus is on two object genres that can be considered part of the domain of local communal knowledge: books and manuscripts, and gravestones. The books and manuscripts

seized by the KNIL during military raids were often a part of the libraries of mosques and Qur'anic schools; some belonged to the royal library of the Sultanate of Aceh. These texts became a collecting target because of fear about their political impact on the population. In the late nineteenth century, the royal cemeteries of Aceh, which are the subject of this chapter, had a historical as well as ceremonial function. During Islamic festivals and on other important days, the local population visited the graves to pay respect to the dead and to pray near them. Offering flowers, burning candles and incense on the tombs was a custom that had existed since the time of Sultan Iskandar Muda (Lombard 1967, 144; 211). In chapter 5 I will follow two types of objects which are also directly related to personal piety: amulets and objects related to the hajj, the pilgrimage to the holy places in the Hijaz.

1 Manuscripts: Communal Knowledge and Colonial Intelligence

Manuscripts and printed books as well as written amulets make up a significant share in the sample of objects classified as Islamic, and the majority of Islamic manuscripts and books in Dutch museum collections originate from Aceh. Besides Qur'ans, they comprise works about medicine, local histories, grammar books and theological treatises used in Islamic schools, Sufi collections in various languages, and manuals for the production of amuletic items. Many of the works represent local knowledge, many also testify to global connections and networks across the Muslim world. From the histories of collecting outlined in the previous chapter, it is clear that in the early days of the Aceh War, the collected objects were considered above all ethnographic curiosities which served to enrich

academic knowledge. At first, collecting had the character of accidental finds, whereas the intense military campaigns of the early 1900s resulted in large-scale and targeted collecting. Initially, Islamic objects were among the collected goods simply because they were present in the Muslim communities of Aceh and soon thereafter because they represented the belief system of the enemy. Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje may have been the main instigator of the large numbers of Islamic writings making their way to museums and libraries in Batavia and the Netherlands (Gallop 2004, 193). Not only had he encouraged Van Daalen and his fellow officers to compile ethnographic collections for study purposes, in his advice to the colonial government he also emphasised the role of Islamic writings in shaping political Islam in Aceh, identifying it as a source of revolt and *kafirhaat* or hate against infidels (Snouck Hurgronje 1957). Although there is a substantial presence of books and manuscripts from Aceh in the Netherlands, a systematic study of the relationship between the colonial war effort and the content of museum and library collections has never been undertaken (Witkam 2019, 87).¹ Like other objects, once they were part of collections, their violent acquisition history was largely forgotten, but not erased.

Islamic manuscripts had an unusual status, because as 'boundary objects', they could be of use for both the ethnographic analysis made in the museums and the philological research pursued at Leiden University. Frequently, manuscripts were not donated to one of the museums but rather sent directly to the Orientalists in Leiden and other universities or the Batavian Society, when Snouck Hurgronje held the chair. For instance, Captain J.H.A. IJssel de Schepper (1839–1906) found an illuminated Qur'an next to the body of a dead 'Acehnese priest' after the storming of

the Great Mosque ('missigit') of Banda Aceh in January 1873 and sent it to the scholar Michael Jan de Goeje (1836–1909). According to a note by IJssel de Schepper, the importance of the manuscript was not only owing to its provenance but also because of the notes on the first pages of the manuscript (in fact, they are talismanic invocations). He also notified the newspaper *Leidsche Courant*, resulting in a short report about the donation of this 'very curious object'.² On the request of the Museum of Ethnology, De Goeje also analysed the various manuscripts navy officer Johan Korndörffer (1829–1882) had donated to the museum. In his request, museum director Conrad Leemans, stressed the 'enormous scientific importance' of the manuscripts, a phrase he repeated after Korndörffer, but De Goeje took just one day to send his devastating reply: the manuscripts, two works on Arabic grammar and a fragment of the Qur'an, were of 'little value'.³ Nevertheless, in Korndörffer's view the manuscripts provided a desirable contribution to knowledge about the Acehnese population, as testimonies of the interest in scientific topics and 'appreciation of civilisation of the mind'.⁴ De Goeje also analysed a collection of documents, described by Korndörffer as 'some old paperwork' which he had found 'on the body of a hajji who had fallen in battle'. Apparently, Korndörffer had solicited native

1 Witkam (2019, 96–97) identifies 74 manuscripts captured in Aceh, and now present in the University Library Leiden, as war booty. He also provides a (rather incomplete) list for the Museum of Ethnology, but not for other museum or library collections.

2 Qur'anic manuscript. A copy of the report in the *Leidsche Courant* 9 July 1873 is glued on the opening page. Collection University Library Leiden inv. no. Or. 2064. <http://hdl.handle.net/1887.1/item:1564749>.

3 Letter of C. Leemans to M.J. de Goeje, 26 May 1876. NL-LdnRMV A1-3-8. Letter of M.J. de Goeje to C. Leemans, 27 May 1876. NL-LdnRMV A1-3-39. Letter of M.J. de Goeje to C. Leemans, 12 November 1877. NL-LdnRMV A1-3-391/392. The manuscripts are RV-164-14 and RV-164-15, both contain a number of treatises on Arab grammar and syntax, such as al-Jurjani's *al-ʿAwamil al-miʿah* and *al-Ajurrumiyya* by Ibn Ajurrum as-Sanhajji, and RV-164-16, Qur'an Surah 2:1–4:27. De Goeje also analysed two other manuscripts from the Korndörffer collection, a printed Qur'an (RV-185-25) and a prayer book (RV-187-4), 'found in a conquered pirogue, Batee Puteh, north coast of Aceh, June 1876'.

4 Notes with letter J.J. Korndörffer, 12 February 1877. NL-LdnRMV A1-3-211/244.

information because he noted that according to the *krani* (clerk) of Meulaboh ‘a booklet with Qur’anic verses, mainly about the death of those who are not Muslims’ was among the papers.⁵ It is interesting that from the concerned Qur’anic verses, Surah 33:34 through Surah 36:27, the *krani* emphasised those verses encouraging *jihad*. Or, perhaps, the fact that Korndörffer singled out this detail is indicative of the emerging interest in the ideological roots of the Acehese resistance.

1.1 *Trophies and Relics*

As we see from the above examples, the acts of collecting and donating performed several tasks at the same time. The gifts served to enhance the status of the donor as a contributor to science. But the manuscripts, books and amulets were also souvenirs narrating and commemorating acts of violence and conquest. As museum historian Kate Hill (2016, 7) explains, the trophy is a particular form of souvenir, in which ‘collecting is clearly intended to create prestige for the collector’. Trophies express victory, ownership and control and, in this sense, they are ‘objects onto which have been projected the social relations of mastery and domination’ (Hill 2016, 7). A trophy is ‘the celebration, the material expression, of the collector’s power over the collected’ (Hill 2016, 71). This explains why the objects collected from the battlefield are almost the only objects in my sample with comprehensive provenance information, detailing how the object was obtained, often the date when it was captured and where, the name of the individual from whom it was seized, and even a description of the circumstances.

Henrietta Lidchi and Nicole Hartwell (2022, 69) characterise military colonial collecting as taking place ‘in the midst of heightened emotions and political circumstances, in extremis amidst conflict and death, as well as amongst fallen combatants – friend or foe.’ This explains, they say, the tendency for objects to be orientated towards

commemoration, and the frequency of modifications and additions made to objects. Books and manuscripts present ample opportunities for such additions, because one could write in and on them. In my sample there are many examples of inscriptions in copies of Islamic texts, commemorating the taking and hence, victory (Fig. 20). Clearly, in KNIL circles it was a question of personal pride as well as public importance to memorialize the enemy’s submission. Most of these inscriptions concern books and manuscripts taken in Aceh, because that is where conflict lasted the longest, but also other regions are represented. An example is a Qur’anic manuscript taken by a KNIL officer as a trophy during the conquest of the Pasemah region of southern Sumatra in 1866. A separate handwritten note in the volume states: ‘This Qur’an, belonging to Mr Augustinus van Delden Esq., was found in an abandoned house after the conquest of a fortified *dusun gampong* during the Passumah expedition (Sumatra) in 1866, and was given to him by his friend and fellow officer L.G. Diepenheim as a keepsake to remember the campaign.’⁶ Another striking example is a very common printed Qur’an that is accompanied by two notes. One note, written on the first page of the book, appears to be written by medical officer Nicolaas Pieter van der Stok (1841–1907). It reads ‘Aceh, Musapi 14 December 1873’, followed by Van der Stok’s signature. The second note appears to be written in 1957 by museum staff when Van der Stok’s granddaughter Dolly donated the book to the Royal Military Academy (KMA). Scribbled on a slip of paper are the words ‘medical officer Dr van der Stock knight MWO’, ‘great grandfather Dolly’, ‘taken from the bleeding hand of rebel leader hajji Saleh’ and ‘Aceh 1873’. Apparently, these are the details granddaughter Dolly recollected from the stories told about Van der Stok’s heroic deeds in Aceh. Here we see how status and prestige, victory

5 Letter J. Korndörffer to C. Leemans, 18 August 1877. NL-LdnRMV A1-3-374/376.

6 Qur’anic manuscript, mixed Sulawesi and Aceh styles, Sumatra, 19th century. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. TM-3355-1. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/103917>.

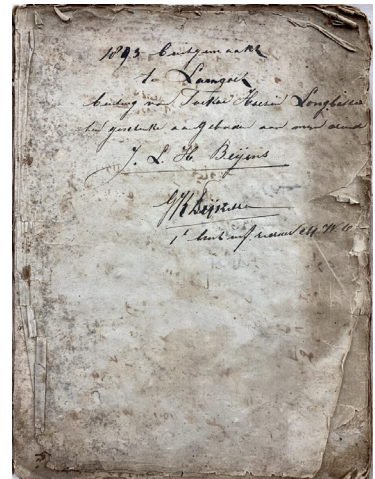
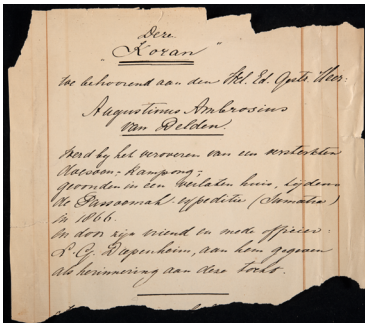
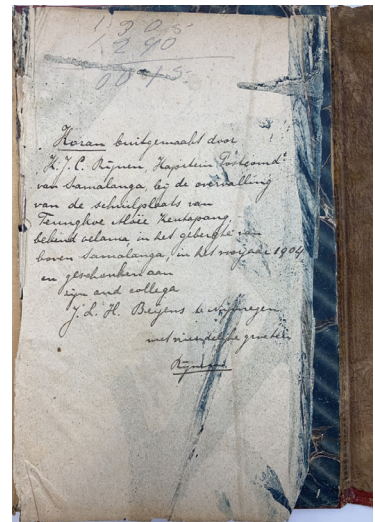
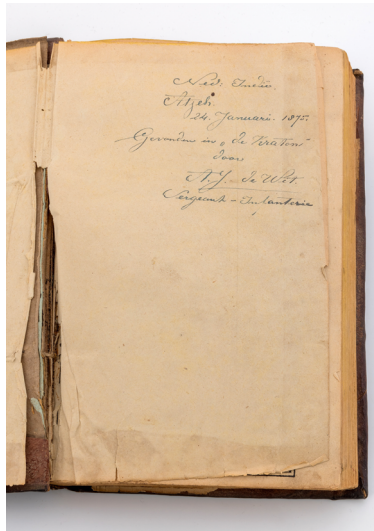
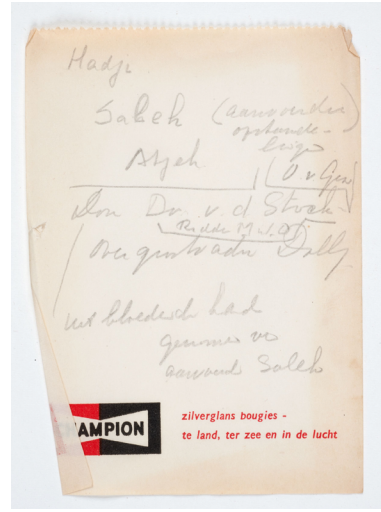


FIGURE 20 Notes in Qur'ans and religious manuscripts detailing names, dates and places of looting. Collection Museum Bronbeek (Beijens collection), Wereldmuseum and NMVW

and domination are projected onto an otherwise indistinctive object.⁷ Hajji Saleh's Qur'an is the typical trophy, not only because of the inscribed meanings but also because it is the only object Dolly Macgillavry-Van der Stok found worthy enough to be added to a museum collection. Two significant facts about the object are that the captured book is a Qur'an, and the mentioning of the hajji status of the 'rebel leader' (*opstandelingenaanvoerder*) Saleh; both underline common images of Islam as the enemy's ideology and hajjis as the most fanatic Muslims.

One word frequently occurs in the provenance information of trophies from Muslim Indonesia ending up in museums: bodies. Islamic writings – books, manuscripts and amulets – were often said to be 'found' on the dead body of the enemy.⁸ Inevitably, the frequent mentioning of bodies is related to the concept of relics in military collecting. Like a trophy, a relic is 'a material object that relates to a particular individual and/or to events and places with which that individual was associated' (Walsham 2010, 11). What distinguishes the relic from the trophy is its relation to a body, whether they are corporeal relics, consisting of body parts such as bones, teeth and hair, or contact relics, non-corporeal items that were possessed by or came into direct contact with the individual in question (Hooper 2014, 194; Walsham 2010, 11). In the case of military relics, the intimacy of contact with the deceased enemy intensifies the sensation of power and victory. The relic is an extension and even a substitute for the enemy's body. This is expressed in the statement of KNIL officer Herman Kooij (1868–1950) who obtained

headgear of Daeng Pabarang (c.1856–1913), a messianistic leader of the resistance in South Sulawesi (Amir 2017; Van der Lijke-Prins 1917). The charismatic Daeng Pabarang (also known as Petta Barang) was accused of preparing the population to resist the Dutch occupation, especially through the sale of amulets for invulnerability. During the chase by the KNIL, he escaped by slipping into a canyon, and lost his *songko* (headgear) along the way (Fig. 1).⁹ The rice left behind in his hut was still warm, and as Kooij describes with restrained excitement, the *songko* could be identified through the smell of the Daeng's hair:¹⁰

"A few years ago, when I got my hands on the *songko* of Daeng Pabarang of South Sulawesi, there was some doubt if it really was his headgear. An acquaintance of his smelled it, carefully and solemnly like natives do, and returned it to me with the words "This is Daeng Pabarang's *songko*." (Kooij 1911, 359)

In Kooij's story, apocryphal or not, the smell of Daeng Pabarang's hair stands in for the capture of his body. Yet the frequent occurrence of the body in collecting statements is also related to Islamic practices in relation to sacred texts. In colonial Indonesia, Islamic writings, including Qur'ans and other religious texts as well as amulets, were often worn on the body for protection. Amulets and talismans were indicated with the Malay word *jimat* or the Acehnese *ajeumat* (both from the Arabic 'azima, "spell" or "incantation"). Often Islamic

7 Qur'an, printed in Mumbai, India, late 19th century. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. RV-3600-10104. Donation Adolphiene Eleonora ("Dolly") Macgillavry-Van der Stok (1895–1972) to the Royal Military Academy in 1957. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/778347>.

8 For example, journalist H.C. Zentgraaff (1938, 62) lists 'curious papers ... found on the bodies of fallen enemies' among the items in the typical souvenir collection of a *marechausee* officer.

9 In 1913 he was arrested and sentenced to twenty years of forced labour (Van der Lijke-Prins 1917, 392). He died shortly after the verdict (Amir 2017). See also: L.A. Emanuel, *Levensgeschiedenis van Daeng Pabarang*, 28 November 1947. Leiden University Library (KITLV) inv. no. D H 906d.

10 Letter H.A. Kooij to H.C.G. van Lawick, 18 November 1938. Archives of the Wereldmuseum Leiden / Koninklijke Militaire Academie NL-LdnRMV-A16-36. Headgear (*songko*), Boni, early 20th century. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. RV-3600-6087. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/776594>.

talismans consisted of a piece of paper on which Qur'anic verses, a prayer (*du'a*) or other incantations were written. This type of amulet is called *rajaḥ jimat*. The talisman could be placed inside a container or worn directly on the body to give protection, for healing or inducing health or wellbeing (Yahya 2016). During the Aceh War, those going to face the Dutch enemy would wear amulets or carry sacred books and Sufi pedigrees for protection. Such writings were believed to grant their owners invulnerability (Laffan 2011, 158; Zentgraaff 1938, 243–60). As we shall see, taking away such protective equipment was a common tactic deployed by the KNIL. It has precedents in the early years of the colonisation of Indonesia; one of the best-known manuscript-trophies is a prayer book believed to be seized from Tuanku Imam Bonjol (1772–1864), the leader of the Padri Movement in Central Sumatra, in the 1830s (Witkam 2019, 87).¹¹

One of the most coveted trophies was the Aceh flag. The flag came in different designs, with the one most clearly a symbol of the sultan's house being a red flag (*alam cab peudeuëng*) with a white *dhu'l-faqar*, the double-edged sword associated with the Prophet Muhammad and Ali ibn Abi Talib (Reid 2014, 90). Other flags were purposefully designed for war and included Arabic inscriptions praising God and the Prophet Muhammad and other supplications invoking blessing (*baraka*) as well as curses directed to the Dutch (Stevens 2015), such as the flag captured in Lhokseumawe by KNIL officer Hendrik Colijn (1869–1944), the future prime minister of the Netherlands, in 1902.¹² The design clearly has an Ottoman connection, with *dhu'l-faqar* making a frequent appearance on Ottoman flags (Yürekli 2015; Zahamri 2011). The use of symbols and phrases associated with Shi'ite Islam, such as *dhu'l-faqar* and the *nadi*

Ali, in a Sunni environment initially led to confusion in Dutch circles. The Orientalist Abraham Wilhelm Theodorus Juynboll (1833–1887) made an extensive analysis of one of the earliest flags captured by Dutch forces, in which he read the Arabic invocations on the flag as if they were a theological treatise (Stevens 2015, 57–61).¹³ His analysis led to bizarre conclusions, such as that the Acehnese using the flag must have been moderate Shi'ites and that the Acehnese in general had limited knowledge of Islam (A.W.T. Juynboll 1873, 9). Juynboll's final statement links Islamic significance to state authority and makes it clear that both needed to be crushed: 'For Aceh, no doubt, it was a terrible blow to see a banner of such authority and such great sanctity in the hands of enemies [...] And to our people, what a sweet victory!' (A.W.T. Juynboll 1873, 16). The political, historical and religious meanings of the flag were also noticed in military circles, as the description of navy officer Johan Korndörffer of a flag captured by Dutch forces in the Aceh campaign of 1873–1874 confirms.¹⁴

The multi-layered significance of the flag made it one of the most prized trophy items of the war: it signified the sultan, the imperial aspirations of Aceh, the ummah, and anti-colonial resistance, all in one. Moreover, flags could be associated with important enemies, and owning a designated flag was a source of pride; medical officer Van Laaren owned the flag of archenemy Teuku Umar (1854–1899), and Frits van Daalen had the flag of

11 Prayer book in Arabic and Malay, Natal, Sumatra, 1814. Collection University Library Leiden inv. no. Or. 1751. https://catalogue.leidenuniv.nl/permalink/f/q6ue0j/UBL_ALMA21323077950002711.

12 Flag, Lhokseumawe region, late 19th century. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. RV-3600-973. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/770915>.

13 According to Reid (2014), the talismanic flag captured by Dutch forces in the battle for Barus in 1840 is the oldest known Aceh flag; it is now in the Rijksmuseum (Stevens 2015, 52–65; Drieënhuizen 2012b, 133–36). Al-Iskander banner, Aceh, before 1840. Collection Rijksmuseum (actually Museum Bronbeek collection) inv. no. NG-1977-279-2-A. <https://id.rijksmuseum.nl/20063495>.

14 This flag is most likely part of the Wereldmuseum Rotterdam collection. J.J. Korndörffer, Drawing of an Acehnese flag, 1877. Collection Wereldmuseum Leiden inv. no. RV-225-10a. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/597233>. Flag, Aceh, late 19th century. Collection Wereldmuseum Rotterdam inv. no. WM-71240-2. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/1204811>.

Teungku Chik di Tiro (1836–1891).¹⁵ Newspaper reports of the fighting regularly mentioned the capture of flags, frequently referred to as ‘banners of war’ (*oorlogsvlag*), and many became part of museum collections in the Netherlands.¹⁶ In exhibitions, such as the Trophy Gallery at Museum Bronbeek, they occupied, quite literally, a central position symbolizing the ‘sweet victory’ of the Dutch over the sultanate of Aceh (for the Trophy Gallery see Smits 1881). The three flags in the gallery, ‘bearing the visual signs of our hits’, came from the great mosque of Lambadak, the same mosque that was torched by the KNIL (and from which Durdik and Czurda ‘saved’ several books, see chapter 3). Proudly the museum catalogue stated that the capture of the most important flag, the one of the ‘chief priest’, must have been a devastating loss for the enemy (Smits 1881, 74).¹⁷ As Caroline Drieënhuizen (2012b, 135) points out, this kind of display of power must be seen in the context of the impotence of the state and the army to get Aceh under full control. The material evidence of victory served to convince the public of the successes of the nation, but also to let them forget the struggle and the Dutch losses during the war.

1.2 *Hikayat prang sabi*

The majority of objects with detailed provenance information in my sample consists of seized weapons and Islamic manuscripts. The weapons are an obvious case, since taking the enemy’s weapons was not forbidden but a military obligation. Yet newspapers reporting military actions

occasionally mentioned weapons and literature in the same breath. For instance, in 1901 Van Daalen’s troops claimed to have killed Islamic leader Teungku di Cot Plieng (they were mistaken), and newspaper *De Tijd* reported that they took as spoils ‘three Beaumont rifles, two guns and various manuscripts’ (*De Tijd: godsdienstig-staatkundig dagblad* 1901). Phrases like these suggest that Islamic literature was seen as equivalent to weapons, especially since the listing was usually limited to the weapons only. The high frequency of Islamic literature among the donations of military staff certainly indicates that they were encouraged to confiscate writings of Islamic nature.¹⁸ The Qur’ans captured in the first phase of the Aceh War were seen as ‘curious objects’ or as beautiful, intriguing, or rare exotic books. However, when the Aceh War was progressing, books and documents were increasingly seized for intelligence purposes (Witkam 2019, 86) and scrutinized for ‘useful clues’ (Du Croo 1943, 44).¹⁹ For instance, when in 1912 the *marechaussee* killed the famous Islamic scholar (*ulama*) and leader of the resistance Teungku di Barat, newspaper *De Tijd* published an extensive report on the liquidation and its aftermath:

15 Flag of Teungku Chik di Tiro, Aceh, late 19th century. Collection Wereldmuseum Leiden inv. no. RV-1429-212. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/707177>.

16 Aceh flags are present in the collections of the Wereldmuseum Leiden (Semmelink, Van Daalen, Veltman collections), Wereldmuseum Amsterdam (Stammeshaus collection), Wereldmuseum Rotterdam (Korndörffer collection), Netherlands National Military Museum, Museum Bronbeek, Rijksmuseum, Mariniersmuseum, Museum aan de Stroom (Christoffel collection), as well as private collections.

17 Flag, Lambadak, late 19th century. Collection Museum Bronbeek inv. no. 1878/05-1-3.

18 For instance, in 1901 the civil and military governor of Aceh offered a collection of 313 Arabic, Malay and Acehnese manuscripts and books (as well as two flags) to the Batavian Society. They were seized in Keumala (Pidie) by the *marechaussee* troops headed by Captain Klaas van der Maaten. According to Snouck Hurgronje, the collection consists of the remains of the libraries of the ‘ulama who had migrated to Pidie at the beginning of the Aceh War (Bataviaasch Genootschap 1891, xxviii 1890:18 and bijlage vii).

19 Witkam (2019, 86 note 9) writes that the standard procedure was to send seized books and manuscripts to the Batavian Society, but I believe that if there were such a standard procedure it was not strictly followed. As the examples in this chapter show, military commanders sent them, at their own discretion, to experts like Snouck Hurgronje and Henri Damsté; some ended up in private collections, some in museums and libraries in the Netherlands and some at the Batavian Society or Aceh Army Museum (see also Gallop 2004). It is also clear that many of these books were never analysed at all.

“It took three days before they arrived in Lho Soekon with the body of Teungku di Barat. The troops fired shots of joy and the inhabitants came to the streets, fearing an attack by *djahats* [thugs]. That was convenient, because now they could identify the Teungku’s body. The courageous commander [i.e. Henri Behrens] of the tireless troops, and the master of this success, went to Koeta Radja to personally report the event. He brought with him to the capital, besides the seized weapons, a collection of manuscripts of the late Teungku. And those turned out to contain much information that is useful for our understanding of the recent events in Aceh. (*De Tijd: godsdienstig-staatkundig dagblad* 1912)”

The report seems to hint at a manuscript of the *hikayat prang sabi* that was among the Teungku’s possessions and later became part of the Wereldmuseum Amsterdam collections (Damsté 1912).²⁰ The *hikayat prang sabi* (which translates as “the story of the war in the path of God”)²¹ is a genre of epic poetry that developed in the late nineteenth century and concerns the defensive war (jihad) against Dutch aggression (Ahmad 2018; Hadi 2011; Alfian 2006; Wieringa 2017; 1998).²² The text takes two forms: narratives of the battles and exploits of Acehnese fighters against the Dutch, and religious sermons inciting the Acehnese Muslims to

fight the Dutch with all means possible. The *prang sabi* poetry belonged to the tradition of oral literature and the texts were orally performed, in this way reaching the illiterate village population of Aceh, as well as written down to be used in recitation sessions (Wieringa 2017). The *hikayat* texts were clearly written with the intent to cast the war against the Dutch as a religious cause. To this end, they made reference to conceptions of jihad in Islamic theology, for instance stating that the fight was a *fardh ‘ayn* (individually incumbent duty) to defend the Islamic religion and therefore mandatory (*wajib*) for every believer (Hadi 2011; Taslim 2010). The text enjoyed great popularity in Aceh, both because of the content of its message and the beauty of its composition (Hadi 2011, 185).

The *hikayat* texts were evidently a thorn in the side of the Dutch authorities, leading them to adopt a policy of confiscating and burning any copies of the work they could trace (Hadi 2011, 185; Damsté 1928, 545). The *prang sabi* literature was seen as one of the main instigators of *Atjehmoorden* (Aceh murders), the attacks of Acehnese individuals on Dutch targets, which were often suicide attacks (Kloos 2014). Between 1910 and 1937, at least 120 Acehnese men and women carried out such individual attacks. The existence of the *hikayat prang sabi* and other works inciting the population to turn against the Dutch, prompted the KNIL to seize any book or manuscript in Arabic script from suspected enemies, looking for traces of jihadi thought.²³ As in other instances, such as the hajj, it can be argued that the colonial authorities overestimated the role of the *prang sabi* literature and that they focused on the incentive, in order not to discuss the deeper cause. It can certainly be questioned if the *hikayat* was really that successful in seducing young Acehnese to aspire martyrdom (Kloos 2018, 42; Wieringa 2017, 1152).

20 *Hikayat prang sabi*, Aceh, 1900–1912. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. TM-674-790. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/177580>. This manuscript ended up, with four other manuscripts and documents seized from Teungku di Barat, in the Stammeshaus collection at the Wereldmuseum Amsterdam.

21 *Perang* or *prang* is a Malay/Acehnese term meaning war or struggle and *sabi* or *sabil* comes from the Arabic *fi sabil Allah*, thus making up the Indonesian equivalent of *jihad fi sabil Allah* (struggle on the path of God). Colonial-era Dutch newspapers sometimes used the word *sabilinner* to denote jihadists.

22 For an overview of *hikayat prang sabi* manuscripts in Dutch collections, see Voorhoeve (1994, 72–79). Modern scholarship has paid much attention to *hikayat prang sabi* literature, and as Michael Feener (2014, 27) remarks, to the extent of being disproportionate.

23 As most officers and soldiers did not read the Acehnese language, they just seized any text in Arabic script. Only after examination by experts such as Snouck Hurgronje or Damsté could the precise nature of the manuscripts be established.

The colonial authorities were not only keen to seize the texts in order to remove the threat, but also to analyse their contents for intelligence purposes. Civil administrator Henri Damsté (1874–1955) writes:

“In 1911 I studied in Idi the Acehese writings of war that the military administrators of the North coast were kind enough to send to me. These were papers seized from hiding places or from the bodies of those who still put up resistance.²⁴ It wasn't exactly clean study material! Written in Acehese-Arabic script, often by unskilled hands, using a kind of sooty water by way of ink, dirty and well-thumbed, stained with *sirih* and occasionally blood, these papers weren't love at first sight!” (Damsté 1928, 545)

Damsté made this remark prefacing his translation of a *hikayat prang sabi* manuscript collected in 1904 by then Colonel Frits Van Daalen (Wieringa 1998).²⁵ Like other writings collected by his troops, Van Daalen had sent it to the famous scholar of Islam Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje, who at the time combined his academic work with strategic advice to Lieutenant General J.B. van Heutsz. Damsté, who was an avid collector of *hikayat prang sabi* manuscripts, had a long-standing fascination for this genre of literature (Voorhoeve 1994, 72–79). In 1924 he got his hands on another copy of the *hikayat prang sabi*, prompting him to comment:

“In the course of 1924, the *hikayat* was on everybody's tongue! Attack and murder, everything was caused by the *hikayat*! ... A hunt was organised, and, wherever they found them, the *hikayats* were confiscated and destined for the fire. On

my request, a few of the doomed ones were sent to me, and yes, I did recognise my old friends!” (Damsté 1928, 545)

The cheerfulness of Damsté's comment is typical for the civil administrator who knows he belongs to the triumphant party. The consequences for the Acehese involved, however, were serious. This particular copy was seized during a house search in the Daya region, near Calang, and was used as evidence in a court case.²⁶ The arrested suspects were believed to have planned a *gliwang* attack on a Dutch military base after the *kenduri*, a ritual meal for *puasa* or Eid al-Fitr (Klein Nagelvoort 2019, 177–79). Teungku Akub, a local Islamic scholar, was suspected to have recited the *hikayat prang sabi* on various occasions and ‘to arouse the desire in a few young men for a pious and sacred adventure.’²⁷ His colleague Teungku Aman Seuman, in whose house the copy was found, was sentenced to four years in jail in a trial at the *meusapat* (native court). A few months later, a similarly planned attack would succeed (*De Sumatra post* 1924). When, in 1955, the manuscript entered the Tropenmuseum (the former Colonial Institute) collections, the hatred, and perhaps fear, felt for the *hikayat prang sabi* texts was still alive, as is evidenced by the condescending remarks, similar to Damsté's, on the inventory card. For instance, it is remarked that the grey looking paper is sullied by ‘licked dirty fingers’ and ‘self-made ink of all grades of inadequateness.’²⁸

24 According to Taslim (2010, 142), some people believed that the texts endowed them with invulnerability, or *kebal*, and they attached them to their bodies before going to fight.

25 Nyak Puteh or Teungku M. Nurdin, *Hikayat prang sabi*, Aceh, 19th century. Collection University Library Leiden inv. no. Or. 8133. https://catalogue.leidenuniv.nl/permalink/f/003ulj/UBL_ALMA21323620570002711.

26 *Hikayat prang sabi* including partial transliteration and Dutch translation, Aceh, c.1924. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. TM-2454-4abc. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/81710>.

27 Information by E.K., inventory card TM-2454-4a. Information TMS database National Museum of World Cultures. Accessed 20 April 2020.

28 Ibid. On the inventory card of another manuscript, curator Willem Stammeshaus described the *hikayat prang sabi* as ‘a very dangerous text for the stupid and fanatic people of Aceh’, adding ‘for this reason, the government is always trying to get these *hikayats* out of the hands of the people, and so are the heads who are loyal to us.’ Information written by F.W. Stammeshaus, inventory card TM-674-876. Information TMS database

Like other Islamic writings, the *hikayat prang sabi* manuscripts in the collection of the Colonial Institute were briefly exhibited in the Sumatra gallery (1926–1950). This gallery displayed a mix of aesthetically pleasing and more mundane objects. The latter category aimed to give insight into the customs of the Sumatrans that ‘just like the knowledge and capacities of the still animist human being, are completely dominated by his mystical metaphysical thoughts resulting from this world-view’ (Kreemer 1927, 111:17). It can be argued that once the texts had become part of museum collections they were neutralised and their hostile contents deactivated. Generally, Islamic writings, other than Qur’ans, were only exhibited during the colonial period. After that, changing exhibitionary policies and the preference for less crowded displays (large parts of the collection not being shown) prevented them from being exhibited. In the new political context, the texts could no longer fulfil the function they had before. When the Muslims of Aceh were no longer sworn enemies of the Dutch nation there was apparently no need to get to know their inner thoughts through the display of hostile objects. Finally, the thematic approach of the galleries from the 1950s, focusing on economic and social development, did not provide useful angles for the display of the manuscripts.

2 Gravestones: Sources for the History of Islam

In contrast to the manuscripts and books discussed above, Muslim gravestones do not stand out in number in the NMVW collections. They make, however, an interesting case because gravestones with Arabic calligraphy are the only museum objects from Indonesia that were discussed in terms of Islamic art during the colonial period. In the museums of the Netherlands, I encountered

39 gravestones and tomb ornaments from Muslim Indonesia.²⁹ The ones featuring Arabic inscriptions all have the Aceh Besar region as origin and were produced during the period of the Aceh Darussalam sultanate (1496–1903).³⁰ The graves can be divided in two categories: large, ornamented tombs and a smaller type of gravestone known as *batu Aceh* (Acehnese stones). The relatively small number present in museums can be explained by the weight of the stones, which made them inconvenient collectables, and by governmental regulations that discouraged the export of antiquities, although the latter restriction is open to debate, as the account below demonstrates.

The removal of the Acehnese gravestones and tomb ornaments and their re-inscription as museum objects occurred on four occasions.³¹ Six of them were removed from the sultan’s district (*dalam*, indicated in Dutch colonial sources as *kraton*) of Banda Aceh in 1874–1876, in the period directly following the conquest and the transformation of the *dalam* into the head district of the Dutch military and governmental administration.

²⁹ 37 gravestones and tomb ornaments are in the NMVW collections, and Museum Bronbeek has two (inv. nos. 1999/00-461 and S 6244-71). A small number of Acehnese gravestones, collected in the period of Dutch rule, are in museums in other European countries. There are two *batu Aceh* in Musée Guimet in France, inv. nos. MG 18250/18251. The French adventurer-geographer Paul Fauque removed them from a cemetery near Banda Aceh in 1884, see the discussion in Bloembergen (2021). The National Museum of Denmark has a top ornament and two gravestones, inv. nos. Cc.322abc, that were donated in 1877 by F.C. Køebke, Danish consul in Bangkok (Von Folsach, Mortensen, and Lundbæk 1996, 377).

³⁰ Besides 33 gravestones and tomb ornaments from Aceh Besar, there are two Javanese gravestones and four gravestones or markers from South Sulawesi in museum collections in the Netherlands.

³¹ According to G.L. Tichelman, marble tombstones were also removed by Acehnese individuals and sold as antiquities (*barang zaman*) or shipped to Penang. I have not encountered any of these in collections in the Netherlands. Concept-artikel Op zoek naar vorstengraven, 1933. Leiden University Library/Collection G.L. Tichelman.

National Museum of World Cultures. Accessed 20 April 2020.

In 1901, KNIL officer George Nijpels (1859–1950) donated eight gravestones to the Hoofdcursus in Kampen that were removed from a cemetery in Lhoknga shortly before.³² The cemetery was cleared because the civil governor, Petrus Antonius Hubertus Heldens (1861–1934), was a great fan of horseraces and desired the space to construct a racecourse (Gobée and Adriaanse 1957, 1:339). The course had little success however, and the following year a new course was constructed in Banda Aceh (Damsté 1932, 195). A further nineteen gravestones were taken in 1928 by Willem Stammeshaus from a cemetery in Lam Tutui, a village on the coastline.³³ According to Stammeshaus, the village cemetery was greatly damaged by floods and the gravestones had drifted away from the graves. Lastly, in the 1920s and 1930s rubbings (*wrijfprenten*) and squeezes (*abklatschen* or *papierafdrukken*; a reverse copy of an inscription, made by applying moist paper into the indentations) of the gravestones, made for scientific research, were donated to the museums in the Netherlands.³⁴

32 8 gravestones, Lhoknga, 16th–18th century. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. nos. RV-3600-589/596. The correspondence with Nijpels is part of the (still uninventorised) archives of the Royal Military Academy museums at the Archives of the Wereldmuseum Leiden, NL-LdnRMV A16 Archief Justinus van Nassau.

33 19 gravestones, Lam Tutui, 16th–18th century. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. nos. TM-674-770a/t. One of the gravestones was sold by the Colonial Institute and eventually ended up in Museum Bronbeek, inv. no. S 6244-71.

34 Jean Jacques de Vink, 172 squeezes of which 114 of graves in Aceh, c.1912–1932. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. nos. TM-936-1/71d. Squeezes of inscriptions on graves from the Pasai sultanate, c.1912–1930. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. RV-2239-1. The squeezes are no longer present. Snouck Hurgronje's archive at Leiden University also includes material on the graves. Jean Jacques de Vink, squeezes of inscriptions on Islamic tombstones of the Pasai and Aceh sultanates, 1912–1913. Collection University Library Leiden inv. no. Or. 8319. https://catalogue.leidenuniv.nl/permalink/f/003ulj/UBL_ALMA21323643800002711.

In this paragraph I discuss the fate of the gravestones and tombs of Aceh in the context of colonial heritage policies and practices. From the early days of the colonisation of Aceh, they were seen as historical documents and appreciated aesthetically. Yet the role and position of the graves in heritage-making changed over time. Scientific research started fairly late, around 1900, at a time when several of the more significant graves had already fallen victim to the KNIL's urge to destroy. Government regulations issued in 1840 prohibited the export of antiquities from Java without the permission of the Governor General. New legislation in 1878 defined antiquities as pre-Islamic (or a little later) and Hindu (*Staatsblad van Nederlandsch-Indië 1878 besluit 146*). Thus, legally the export of Islamic material was allowed. Yet the shipping of parts of the graves to the Netherlands was controversial at the time. George Nijpels explicitly mentioned that he had notified 'all authorities concerned' (*alle betrokken autoriteiten*).³⁵ Another donor, captain of the merchant navy Herman Jacob van Nouhuys (1836–1920), asked director Conrad Leemans of the Museum of Ethnology if he thought that the fact that he took away a tomb panel would provoke comments from the government (*aanmerkingen van gouvernements wege*).³⁶ In that case, Van Nouhuys would rather prefer the museum to mark his donation as anonymous.

Until 1913, when the Archaeological Service was established, the surveillance and care for antiquities was left to the civil and military administration. The year 1901 saw the introduction of the Ethical Policy, which aimed to improve the living conditions of the Indonesians and to enlighten them, by providing education and amelioration of the infrastructure (Locher-Scholten 1981). Ultimately, the goal was to prepare the Indonesians for self-government under Dutch supervision. The

35 Letter G. Nijpels to J.M. Somer, 27 October 1937. NL-LdnRMV A16 Archief Justinus van Nassau. The letter is also cited in Willemsen (2011, 16).

36 Letter H.J. van Nouhuys to C. Leemans, 20 January 1877. NL-LdnRMV A1-3-290.

change in policy also had implications for heritage. Increasingly, the Dutch authorities came to see the care for antiquities as an ethical responsibility (Bloembergen and Eickhoff 2020, 95). In 1913 the government created the Archaeological Service (*Oudheidkundige Dienst in Nederlands-Indië*) and tasked it with the investigation and care for antiquities in the Dutch East Indies, and explicitly mentioned Hindu, Islamic and Dutch antiquities (*Staatsblad van Nederlandsch-Indië* 1913). In the following years, researchers of the Archaeological Service surveyed Islamic sites, mostly cemeteries, in Java, Aceh and other places in Sumatra. The service also oversaw and occasionally carried out restoration work of Islamic-era buildings, such as the *kraton* (royal court) of Cirebon (*Oudheidkundige Dienst in Nederlandsch-Indië* 1931). The care of the Islamic heritage still in use was generally left to local communities, for instance as property of a *waqf* (religious endowment), with the Archaeological Service in the role of advisory body. Maintenance and surveillance of other Islamic sites, which fell outside community care, was seen as the responsibility of the civil and military administration. The administration's judgement of what was considered an antiquity, and what was not, mattered, as will be shown in the following analysis.

2.1 *The Sultans' Tombs in Banda Aceh*

Dutch interference with the graves started directly after the conquest of Banda Aceh in 1874. The KNIL installed itself in the *dalam* and converted it into a military base cum administrative head district. Officers and soldiers roamed the compound searching for valuables. The army command hoped to find treasures that could cover the costs of the expedition, although their search was in vain. Army staff, however, found bits and pieces, which they took home as keepsakes or sent to museums in the Netherlands. Their 'finds' included parts of graves. Shortly after the conquest, the army started to photograph and to measure the terrain. Several maps were published, all of them based on the information provided by the army. The *Brief description of the kraton of Great*

Aceh and its environments (Beknopte beschrijving van den kraton van Groot-Atjeh en omstreken, alsmede van zijne verdedigingskracht en bewapening en van de merkwaardigheden daarin aangetroffen 1874), published by the Ministry of Colonies, and the accompanying map, list five different cemeteries. When the map is compared to the eyewitness accounts of military officers, it becomes clear that not all graves are indicated. Moreover, a comparison with today's situation shows that several graves have disappeared.

The map identifies a large cemetery (currently known as Kandang XI1) on the left bank of the river, but the *Description* only mentions in some detail a number of cemeteries on the right bank of the river. The remarks about the cemeteries in the *Description* are rather derogatory; the graves are 'derelict' and 'devoid of royal splendour', even though the only remarkable features of the *kraton* are the graves of the sultans 'that feature stones resembling urns on top, and which are decorated with Arabic script'. The latter remark refers to the graves of Sultan Alauddin Ibrahim Mansur Syah (d. 1870) and around ten of his relatives, housed inside a building with a palm leaf roof (the present-day name of the cemetery is Kandang Meuh). Several of the cenotaphs indeed feature vase-shaped head and footstones with calligraphic designs, as well as a few small panels with plant-based ornamentation. Only the cenotaph of Sultan Alauddin Ibrahim Mansur Syah has friezes, which in relief have a repeating *shahada* in a simple angular script, as well as a brief epitaph.

There are several eyewitness accounts describing the *dalam* just after the conquest, which give similar praise to the graves. One of the most elaborate accounts was published in a letter of an anonymous navy officer to the Dutch newspaper *Amsterdamsche Courant*, and reprinted in other newspapers, just a little over two months after the conquest:

"Left of the women's district we see a building, which protects the magnificent graves of the former sultans against the weather. The graves

are truly beautiful and in an excellent state. The distinctive Mohammedan features are present. The carvings consist of arabesques and sayings from the Qur'an, all suffused with magnificent colours, which would be called variegated (*bont*) if the bright sunlight did not wonderfully blend all those colours. The usual red and yellow curtains above the graves are also present, just like the payung-shaped sacrificial hats of coloured paper. (*De Tijd: godsdienstig-staatkundig dagblad* 1874)"

Similar descriptions are given by navy officers Johan Kruyt (1841–1928) and Johan Korndörffer (1829–1882) (Kruyt 1877, 121; Korndörffer 1877, 17). Korndörffer arrived in Banda Aceh in February 1875 and observed in the surroundings of the city countless cemeteries 'that belong to the history of the country'. He sent a copy of his notes to the Museum of Ethnology, in which he describes the tombs of Sultan Alauddin Ibrahim Mansur Syah and his relatives as 'beautiful' and equipped with 'extraordinary ornamentation', with a special mention of the 'carved Qur'anic verses' and the 'magnificent colours' of the paintwork.³⁷ In support of his observations, Korndörffer also sent a pencil drawing of the tomb of Sultan Alauddin Ibrahim Mansur Syah, which is similar to a drawing sent by his colleague medical officer Jan Semmelink (1837–1912).³⁸ Both drawings are likely to have been done by Frederic Eugène Pierre (1840–1875), a French KNIL soldier who was tasked with doing drawings during the expedition.³⁹

It is clear that the Dutch misunderstood some aspects of the cemeteries. The unnamed navy officer did not seem to know that the 'excellent state' of the tombs at Kandang Meuh was the result of the graves being only a few years old at the time. The map with the *Description* describes Kandang XII as 'the burial place of individuals belonging to the entourage of the sultan' (*personen behoorende tot de omgeving van den Sultan*). The same wording is used in the map reproduced in General Jan van Swieten's *De waarheid over onze vestiging in Atjeh* (1879). In reality, it contained the tombs of the sultans of the sixteenth-century dynasty that founded the Aceh Sultanate, starting with Sultan Ali Mughayat Syah (d. 1530) and his sons. The cemetery was named *bayt ar-rijal* (Arabic for 'House of the Great') in the seventeenth century and currently it is indicated as Kandang XII, the name that also seemed to be used at the time of the conquest (Kalus and Guillot 2010).

In the Dutch accounts of the 1870s, the sixteenth-century tombs of Kandang XII received considerably less aesthetic appreciation than the nineteenth-century tombs. The cemetery was enclosed by walls and almost entirely overgrown by a giant tree (Fig. 21) and housed twelve tombs that showed similarity in style, in particular because each cenotaph was adorned by a pair of cube-shaped tombstones. The headstones and footstones of the cenotaphs of sultans are topped with a large curl, whereas those of the sultan's sons end in a pinnacle. A remarkable feature are the stones of the tomb of Sultan Ali Ri'ayat Syah (d. 1579), which are covered in bronze to create a shimmering effect.⁴⁰ Pinholes in the other tombstones indicate that they must have had a similar covering (Kalus and Guillot 2010, 212). The cenotaphs are made following a stepped design and the principal ornamentation is epigraphic.

37 Notes with letter J.J. Korndörffer, 12 February 1877. NL-LdnRMV A1-3-211/244.

38 Frederic Eugène Pierre, Tombeau d'un Sultan, situé dans le cimetièr affecté a ces potentats dans le Kraton intérieur - Atjeh, Sumatra, pencil drawing, 1874. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. RV-148-17a. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/596612>.

39 Frederic Eugène Pierre's record in the Register of the KNIL. NL-HaNA Ministerie van Koloniën: Stamboeken en pensioenregisters van Militairen KNIL in Oost- en West-Indië, 1815–1949, 2.10.50 no. 174. Haks and Maris (1995, 266) incorrectly spell his name as Frédéric Tierre.

40 Frederic Eugène Pierre, Tombeau surmonté de deux socles en bronze situé dan l'intérieur du Kraton, photograph of drawing (1874). Collection University Library Leiden inv. no. KITLV 36C312. <http://hdl.handle.net/1887.1/item:856089>.

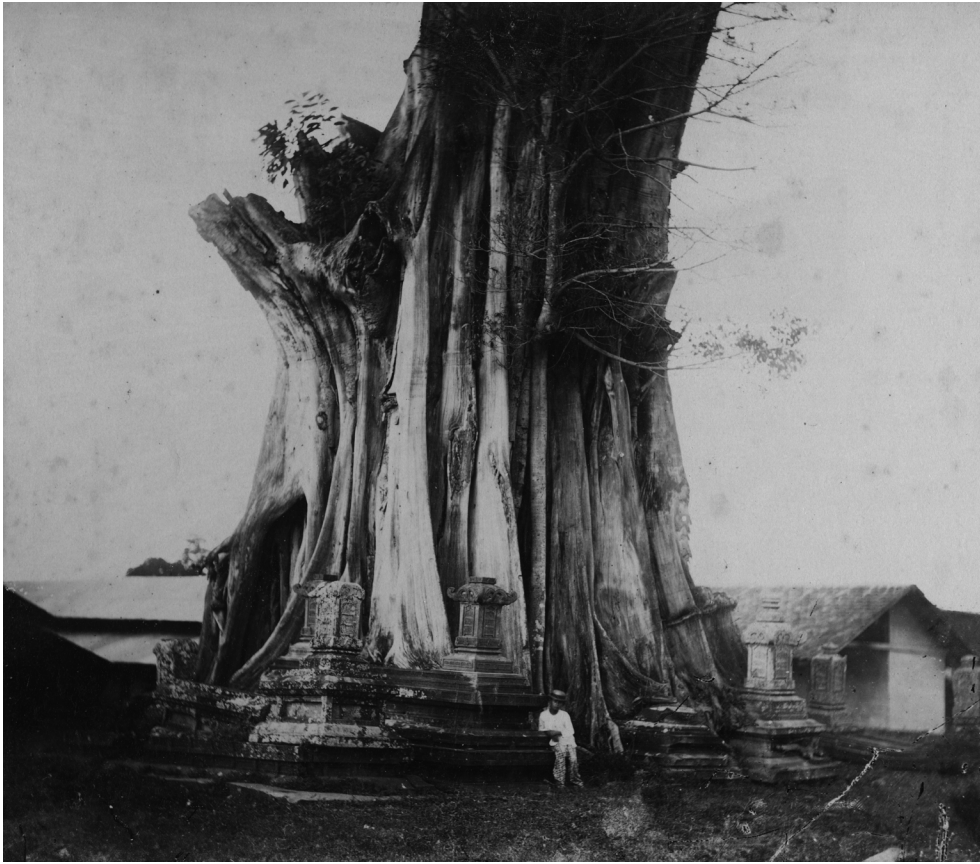


FIGURE 21 Tombs at Kandang XII and KNIL barracks, Banda Aceh, 1891. Collection University Library Leiden inv. no. KITLV 116418

The epitaph and a range of Islamic phrases are arranged in horizontal panels as well as bands and cartouches and inscribed in a refined style of mostly *thuluth* script. Some of the poetic inscriptions reference a Sufi worldview (Herwandi, Yusdi, and Ibrahim 2019). Besides epigraphy, the ornamentation includes floral and plant-based motifs as well as meshwork (a motif named spider web) and suspended lamps (Herwandi, Yusdi, and Ibrahim 2019). Interestingly, most of these details escaped the Dutch officers who visited the former *dalam*. Johan Kruyt is among the few who mentioned the tombs in some detail:

“Under the sound of gun shots that became louder and louder, we visited the so-called hill. On it is the large tree that one can see from the anchorage as a symbol of the *kraton*. Here the remarkable bronze

gravestones are visible and in between them many roots of the giant tree have grown, testifying to their very old age.” (Kruyt 1877, 122–23)

Also remarkable is the absence from all Dutch accounts of the graves of the sultans of the Bugis dynasty and the eighteenth-century tombs of Sultan Alauddin Mahmud Syah I (d. 1781) and his relatives in the vicinity of the nineteenth-century tombs. They did describe, however, a number of cemeteries that were destroyed in the early years of the Dutch occupation of the *dalam*. One of the most important burial sites was Kandang Mas with the grave of Sultan Iskandar Muda (c.1583–1636), who was credited with bringing the Aceh Darusalam sultanate to the peak of its power.

The conversion of the *dalam* into a Dutch quarter started immediately after the conquest. The

various eyewitness accounts describe how the buildings of the sultan and his entourage were torn down one after the other. The transformation reached full speed when Karel van der Heijden (1826–1900) became military governor of Aceh in June 1877. The actions of Van der Heijden are an illustration of the double-faced agenda when it came to Islamic heritage. In his memoir Van der Heijden (1882, 107) writes that he ordained the restoration of the tombs of Sultan Alauddin Ibrahim Mansur Syah (d. 1870) and his relatives, which were now located next to the newly built governmental offices. Indeed, photographs dating from the 1880s show the graves in a renovated building under a corrugated iron roof.⁴¹ The cenotaphs and tombstones are freshly painted, as are the new wooden walls. Yet Van der Heijden also writes that during the conversion, many graves (inclusive of human remains) inside the compound were cleared, as the *kraton* was ‘littered with them’ (*als ‘t ware overdekt*). The clearing included a large *kramat* (Islamic sacred space, usually a grave) on the west side, by which he probably meant a seventeenth-century cemetery of the sultanate that is mentioned in several accounts (Wessing 1991).⁴² In 1879 he removed

‘very old graves’ (*zeer oud grafgesteente*) of individuals who were, according to Van der Heijden, not revered and whose names were even unknown (Van der Heijden 1882, 36). The graves, situated on the east side, were at least 300 years old, and the human remains underneath pulverized to dust when they were dug up (Van der Heijden 1882, 182). Assistant resident Abraham Sol (1846–1935) identified these graves as belonging to the famed Sultan Iskandar Muda, his wife Putroe Phang, his daughter Sultana Taj ul-Alam Safiatuddin Syah, Sultan Iskandar Thani and several others.⁴³ The space was used to build administrative and military buildings.

The destruction of the funerary heritage of Banda Aceh brought Van der Heijden into conflict with Governor General Johan Wilhelm van Lansberge (1830–1903). The two men were embroiled in a power struggle, and Van Lansberge took this opportunity to accuse Van der Heijden of desecration, which prompted Van der Heijden to write a response in defence of his actions.⁴⁴ The rather convoluted and at times contradictory defence (1882, 182–85) centres on three arguments.

41 Unknown photographer, Sultans’ graves, 1888. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. RV-A122-3-15. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/910329>.

42 Based on many sources, most importantly the 17th century manuscript *Bustan al-Salatin* by Nuruddin al-Raniri as well as the *Description* and Johan Kruyt’s account, Robert Wessing (1991) concludes that the enclosure (*kandang*) next to the *gunungan*, just outside the *dalam* in Kota Pecut, was not an actual cemetery but mere symbolic. Both Kruyt and the *Description* mention gravestones with ‘richly gilded inscriptions’, the presence of which Wessing disputes. Wessing does not mention the account of Johan Korndörffer (1877, 22), which is more detailed and contradicts his findings: ‘One discerns the cemetery of the queens (*ratoes*), enclosed by a wall of 3 metres high and one metre deep that is adorned with decorations on and around the moulding. The whole forms a 20-metre-long and a 15-metre-wide rectangle, shaded by waringin trees. The wall suffered much from our grenades and gun bullets, no spot has been left free, as it were. Numerous gravestones with richly gilded inscriptions can be found

there; some have been turned up by the roots of the waringin trees, proving that they are very old. Because we enclosed and fortified this place, barracks with officers’ houses and a kitchen have been built inside.’ Gerlach (1876, 3:242) cites an anonymous account also mentioning the graves inside an enclosure with marble walls, now turned into a military fort, ‘In the shade of the trees and perhaps not fulfilled with enough awe for the pitiful remains of so many Acehnese beauties, we reclined on the grave court, and let the cork of a bottle of champagne pop. With the officers of the occupation, we drank a glass to king and country and a second glass on the ghosts of Aceh’s sultanas. Then we mounted our steeds to ride to the *kraton*’. According to Korndörffer, both Kota Pecut and the *kraton* were seen as sacred places, attracting pilgrims in lieu of Mecca.

43 Letter A. Sol to Governor General J.W. van Lansberge, 24 January 1879. NL-HaNA Geslacht Van Lansberge en aanverwante geslachten, 1610–1967, 2.21.103 no. 138. See also Kreemer (1922, 1:53).

44 See also letter K. van der Heijden to Governor General J.W. van Lansberge, 20 February 1879. NL-HaNA Geslacht Van Lansberge en aanverwante geslachten, 1610–1967, 2.21.103 no. 129.

First, Van der Heijden claims that the clearing of graves, after a certain period, is habitually done in the most civilized societies. So, who dares to call the scientific collectors of Egyptian mummies desecrators, he rhetorically asks. Secondly, the clearing was done after consultation of the highest Acehese leaders, Teuku Kali (i.e. the Qadi Malik al-Adil) and Teuku Nya Muhammad, and they did not raise objections. Falsifying the truth, he stated that inquiries made by assistant resident Sol revealed that the graves belonged to 'rulers or important individuals from Merdu.' In other words, according to Van der Heijden, they were of little importance, to which their neglected state also testified. Finally, he claims that since 1874 numerous graves inside the *kraton* had been cleared, the material was used to construct new roads, and none of the chiefs had ever expressed objections.

KNIL generals Jan van Swieten (1879, 318) and Karel van der Heijden (1882, 182–85) both claimed that the army only removed graves of lesser importance and spared the monumental sultans' tombs. Their recollection of the events is contradicted by the accounts of other officials working in the *dalam*, among them Van Swieten's son Karel Frederik (1851–1927), who worked as a civil administrator (*controleur*) in Banda Aceh between 1878 and 1880. Writing under the pseudonym Soedadji, he gave a different narration of the events:

"After our conquest of the *kraton*, it appeared that the space and its environments were swampy enough for a Dutch settlement. Of course, then we had to construct various buildings, barracks, warehouses etcetera. However, we encountered the objection that on almost every spot a grave was found, if it was not already taken by one of the buildings of the former sultan. No ordinary people were buried there. No, each and all of them were sultans or sultanas, kings or queens, who had found their last resting place there. Under a large tree no less than twelve royal individuals had met, so twelve of their gravestones were standing next to each other. The subjugated Acehese chiefs,

already to be reckoned with in those days, objected to the desecration by a spade or pickaxe of any one of these graves. We, however, considered that we came to the *kraton* in spite of the fierce opposition of the living Acehese, and that it would be foolish now to be displaced by the dead ones. Therefore, we made an agreement and were pointed out the most sacred ones of all these sacred graves. Fortunately, the one that had the honour, the founder of the Mohammedan religion in Aceh, had a rather secluded spot on the left bank of the Krueng Daroy and was not really standing (or rather lying) in the way. In order to give evidence of our good will to meet the conscientious objections of the Acehese, we respected that grave and some more in its vicinity and we even protected it from rain and evildoers by an enclosure and a roof." (Soedadji 1881, 154)

An even more precise account of the destruction of the tombs of one the sultanas is given in Karel van Swieten's personal notes, written in 1879:

"At present almost all the old junk (*oude rommel*) has been cleared and our main military buildings have replaced it. [...] Until recently, one of the sultanas was lying undisturbed in her high stone grave at a forgotten corner of the *kraton*. Yet the building of new civil offices made it necessary that we also have that spot at our disposal. Before we began to demolish the grave, one of the Acehese chiefs informed us that we would find a gold treasure. The sultana was allegedly buried in a pure golden chest, on her own request, because she was afraid to be eaten by worms.⁴⁵ The digging therefore was done with utmost care and, lo and behold, it resulted in the find of several plates of gold. Together they were worth 40 to 50,000 guilders, although it had been said that the treasure was worth millions. The gold was sent to Batavia

45 Perhaps the main figure of this story was Putroe Phang, the Malay consort of Sultan Iskandar Muda, see Wessing (1991, 7).

and it will probably be sold for the benefit of the public treasury.”⁴⁶

The report written by navy officer Johan Korndörffer (1877) negates Van der Heijden's claim (1882, 183) that since 1874 ‘it had never occurred that Acehese chiefs, be they of more or less importance, desired to visit these graves.’ In contrast, Korndörffer, who worked in Banda Aceh in 1875, describes the destroyed cemetery as the most sacred one of the *dalam*.⁴⁷

“Further afield one finds a cemetery on an elevated location that must be very old, because the grave-stones have been entirely supplanted by waringin trees. Some top pieces of the graves are made from casted bronze and very beautifully decorated. The cemetery had suffered tremendously from an earthquake. Most of the stones are mixed up and the walls are torn.⁴⁸ The Acehese consider it the most sacred place in the kraton. This was proven when a highly placed Acehese, who came to offer his subjugation, requested first to visit this cemetery before touring the kraton. After his ablution, he went there, turned towards the east, bowed down and prayed.” (Korndörffer 1877, 17)

The various accounts reveal that the destruction of the graves of Sultan Iskandar Muda and the members of his dynasty ran in parallel with intense negotiations with the Acehese leadership. From this Dutch narration of events, it is not clear

whether Teuku Kali and Teuku Nya Muhammad deliberately gave wrong information, in an attempt to mislead the Dutch, or whether their information was correct and simply shoved aside. For Van der Heijden the question of the destruction was to be judged solely in terms of respecting ‘the feelings of the natives, even according to European standards’ (Van der Heijden 1882, 183). At no point did he consider the graves as valuable remains from the past and therefore as antiquities that fell under his protection. On the contrary, the fact that they were old and partly in ruins was central to his argumentation. From Abraham Sol's account it transpires that the main motivation was to dig up the golden treasure hidden in the graves.⁴⁹ The brand new and renovated tombs of Sultan Alauddin Ibrahim Mansur Syah and his relatives became the showpiece of Van der Heijden's rule in Aceh. Meanwhile, the discussion about the responsibilities of the colonial government vis-à-vis the Hindu-Buddhist antiquities was still in its infancy (Bloembergen and Eickhoff 2020, 88). Regardless, what was happening in Banda Aceh took place at large distance from the deliberations about the protection of Hindu-Buddhist sites in Java.

The fate of the funerary monuments at the *dalam* show similarity to that of the Great Mosque of Banda Aceh, which was rebuilt at a time when other mosques were plundered and burned down (for example the mosque of Lambadak, see chapter 3). In the first decades of the Aceh War, showing respect to what the Acehese held most sacred went hand in hand with utter contempt for the same heritage. Thus, the parallel trajectory of destruction and renovation of Islamic sites demonstrates the dual usage of heritage as a bargaining chip to put political pressure on the Acehese leadership and as showpieces promoting the advantages of Dutch rule.

46 K.F. van Swieten, notes in a photo album assembled in 1879. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. TM-ALB-0095. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/184135> For an analysis of the photo album see Janse (2007).

47 A similar description can be found in J.J. Korndörffer's notes with his letter, 12 February 1877. NL-LdnRMV A1-3-211/244.

48 An almost identical description is given in the newspaper account by the anonymous navy officer (*De Tijd: godsdienstig-staatkundig dagblad* 1874). Since Johan Korndörffer arrived in Aceh in February 1875, almost a year after this account was published, he cannot be the author of that piece, but he may have copied it.

49 Letters A. Sol to Governor General J.W. van Lansberge, 29 October 1878 and 24 January 1879. NL-HaNA Geslacht Van Lansberge en aanverwante geslachten, 1610–1967, 2.21.103 inv. no. 138. See also Kreemer (1922, 1:53).



FIGURE 22 Sandstone tomb panel, probably from the Kandang Mas graveyard that the KNIL demolished in 1879. Banda Aceh, 16th or 17th century. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. RV-179-1

Amidst the turmoil and ‘clutter’ of the *dalam* conversion, the KNIL and navy officers made their finds and sent them to museums in the Netherlands. Johan Korndörffer found a grave marker ‘along the road in Kota Radja’ and Colonel Godfried Johan Vincent Vinkhuizen (1846–1919) a lotus-shaped tomb ornament.⁵⁰ Yet arguably the most important ‘souvenir’ is the grey sandstone panel that Herman Jacob van Nouhuys, captain in the merchant navy, found on the ‘large grave of the sultans’ (*het groote graf der sultans*) in 1876 (Fig. 22).⁵¹ According to Van Nouhuys this particular cemetery was entirely in ruins (*het geheel toch in een puinhoop verkeerd was*). This description

matches the damaged tombs at Kandang Mas, reported by Korndörffer and fellow navy officers, that fell victim to Van der Heijden’s demolition hammers in 1879. Moreover, the elegant *thuluth* script of the panel’s inscription indeed points to an age prior to the eighteenth century, when such calligraphic inscriptions were common on the funerary monuments of Banda Aceh.

2.2 *Remaking Heritage*

According to Acehnese accounts, either the Dutch forgot where the burial place of Sultan Iskandar Muda had been, or they wanted to keep the place a secret. During the colonial period, there was an Acehnese saying: ‘Aceh cannot remain subjected by someone as long as the bones of Iskandar Muda remain in Aceh’ (Bolland 1971, 177).⁵² Colonial

50 Grave marker, Banda Aceh, 18th–19th century. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. RV-157-1 <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/596638>. Tomb ornament, Banda Aceh, 18th century. Collection Museum Bronbeek inv. no. 1999/00-461.

51 Sandstone tomb panel, Banda Aceh, 16th or 17th century. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. RV-179-1. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/596916>.

52 In 1914, a search by Hoesein Djajadiningrat and Jean Pierre Moquette of the Archaeological Service did not reveal the location of Sultan Iskandar Muda’s grave (Moquette 1914, 73–80). In 1929, Djajadiningrat was still

government buildings, among them the governor's office, were erected on the location of the former cemetery. After Indonesian independence, in 1952, the resurrection of the grave was heralded by Pocut Meurah (before 1860–1955), widow of Sultan Alauddin Mahmud Syah who had perished during the Dutch invasion of 1874.⁵³ Pocut Meurah, descendent of the sultanate family, remembered that in her youth she had participated in ceremonies at the grave and recalled that its location was exactly forty-four steps from the Krueng Daroy. She laid a wreath, a rather European ritual, on the spot she indicated as the right one (*Het nieuwsblad voor Sumatra* 1952a). The resurrection of the grave must be seen in the context of nation building after independence (Bloembergen and Eickhoff 2020, 221); here with a strong local emphasis. Lembaga Purbakala, the Aceh branch of the new archaeological service of the Republican government and headed by Tengku Ismail Jacob, organised a conference to consult historical sources, in order to reconstruct the tomb in a correct manner (*Het nieuwsblad voor Sumatra* 1952b). Subsequently, the colonial offices were pulled down and replaced by a massive tomb painted in white, green and gold, of which the cenotaph is inspired by the nineteenth-century sultans' tombs at Kandang Meuh and the cube-shaped tombstones by those at Kandang XII. None of the seventeenth-century tombs had survived the Dutch occupation and so could not serve as a model for the remaking of history.

Today the reconstructed tomb of Sultan Iskandar Muda is a tourist site, where visitors come and pray, especially on the day marking the sultan's death. The intermingling of tourism with ritual has its precedence in the colonial period. The Dutch

accounts from the early years after the conquest of Banda Aceh make mention of the visits, prayers and sacrifices made at the graves. By way of evidence, medical officer Jan Semmelink brought home a ceramic dish with remains from ashes that had been found on one of the tombs at Kandang Meuh.⁵⁴ General Karel van der Heijden (1882, 107) took pride in the fact that the KNIL staff and other Europeans removed themselves as far possible so as not to disturb the hundreds of men, women and children who came to visit the graves during Islamic festivals. Yet, as early as 1875, a transformation of the graves into a public attraction was visible. Whereas reports from 1874 mentioned the red and yellow curtains surrounding the tombs at Kandang Meuh, as well as 'payung-shaped sacrificial hats of coloured paper', navy officer Korndörffer (1877, 17) observed that soon after the Dutch conquest the worn-out curtains were removed and not replaced. Photographs from the 1890s show the complex with a small sign indicating in a mixture of Dutch and Malay that the graves belonged to 'familie dari Sultan Mansur' (relatives of Sultan Mansur, see Fig. 23). A visit to the graves was a regular feature of the tour of the 'entirely recreated kraton of their former sultans', presented to Acehnese leaders who came to offer their subjugation to the Dutch (Soedadji 1881, 155). Together with the ice factory and the telegraph office, the cemetery was one of the main sights of the town. At Kandang XII, the enormous tree enclosing the tombs was cut down, probably in the late 1880s or early 1890s. Freed from the tree, the tombs were neatly lined up and became a tourist attraction for Europeans and the Indonesian elite. Medical officer Julius Jacobs (1842–1895), who worked in Aceh in the early 1890s, judged them as 'testifying of a highly developed sense for art and a great skill in sculpting' (1894, 1:355), signalling a shift of opinion regarding the tombs.

unaware of the location of the grave, as he writes that 'even the memory [of it] has gone' (1929, 108).

53 According to Bolland (1971, 177), this happened in 1942, during the Japanese occupation. Both Dutch historical sources and contemporary Indonesian governmental websites present the year as 1952.

54 Ceramic dish, Banda Aceh, late 19th century. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. RV-163-6. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/596651>.



FIGURE 23 Graves at Kandang Meuh, after restoration by the KNIL, Banda Aceh, 1885–1895 (photostudio G.R. Lambert & Co.). Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. TM-60022774

A further musealisation of the funerary monuments of Aceh Besar occurred with the opening of the Aceh Museum in 1915. The museum, an initiative of Governor Henri Swart, was situated to the west of the former *dalam* and was largely furnished with Willem Stammeshaus's collection of Acehnese artefacts (see chapter 3). In front of the museum a small pavilion housed the *cakra donya*, a large bronze bell with inscriptions in Chinese and Arabic script, a present of the Chinese Muslim Admiral Ceng Ho to the Sultan of Pasai in the fifteenth century (Arainikasih and Hafnidar 2018; A.A.J.T. Stammeshaus 1977, 19–26; Tichelman 1939). The bell had been part of a mosque complex on the other side of the river, next to Kandang Meuh, and although the KNIL demolished the mosque in 1874, they left the adjacent tree with the suspended

bell.⁵⁵ A collection of *batu Aceh* originating from various sites in Aceh Besar encircled the pavilion (Fig. 24). Stammeshaus probably intended this rather unusual placement to signal the transition of the gravestones to musealized heritage.

55 There are several colonial period images showing the *cakra donya* at its original location. The oldest is a drawing by Frederic Eugène Pierre, Cimetière des Marabouts et Kiosque-Mosquée, photograph of drawing (1874). Collection University Library Leiden inv. no. KITLV 36C313. <http://hdl.handle.net/1887.1/item:855451>.

The last one is a photograph made by *controleur* Christiaan Frederik Staargaard on the moving day. *Cakra donya*, Banda Aceh, 20 December 1915. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. TM-60042757. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/240460>.



FIGURE 24 Gravestones exhibited in front of the Atjeh Museum in Banda Aceh, 1924–1926. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. TM-60023674

Whereas the *kraton* was once ‘littered’ with grave-stones like these ones, they were now contained and presented in an organised way. Moreover, as they were no longer directed towards Mecca, the gravestones were turned into secularized heritage to be appreciated aesthetically. The bell underwent a reverse trajectory; it was frequently visited by Acehnese Muslims who prayed there, burned incense and offered food or other sacrifices. Yet it only took on its function as *kramat* after the Dutch invasion and heritagisation (Tichelman 1939).

2.3 *Epigraphic Evidence*

Colonial sources mention 1884 as the year when the gravestones first gained scholarly attention (Tichelman 1940; Kreemer 1922, 1:54; Moquette and Djajadiningrat 1919). In that year, Governor of Aceh Philip Laging Tobias (1834–1910) reported to the Batavian Society of Arts and Sciences about his search for antiquities in Aceh (Bataviaasch Genootschap 1885, XXII 1884:51–53). His main find was the tomb of Sultan al-Malik al-Salih of Pasai

(d. 696/1297).⁵⁶ In June 1899, Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje departed on a short military expedition to Aceh’s north and east coast under the command of Colonel Jo van Heutsz. Snouck used this opportunity to verify the rumours about the presence of Islamic monuments in the Pasai region. After he had seen them with his own eyes, he began to send regular pleas to the military and civil authorities for the preservation and research of the funerary sites (Gobée and Adriaanse 1957, 1:396–405). Snouck intended to write a major epigraphic study based on the inscriptions, but it would never see the light of day. To this end, he sent precise

⁵⁶ He was, however, not the first Dutchman. Johan Kruyt visited the cemetery Kuta Kareueng around 1875. He praises the ‘symbolic and artistic’ carvings on the marble graves and observes that the graves are considered to be sacred sites (1877, 203–4). In order not to cause offense, he refrained from making drawings or sketches. Kruyt and Snouck Hurgronje worked closely together in Jeddah in 1884, so Snouck must have been aware of Kruyt’s observations.

instructions to Frits van Daalen and other governors of Aceh detailing the drawings, photographs and measurements he needed to study the graves. Governors Van der Wijck and Van Heutsz requested the help of the Islamic scholar Habib Cut to make drawings of the Arabic inscriptions.⁵⁷ Van Daalen tasked several of his officers with the investigation of the graves, but this clearly did not yield the results Snouck desired.⁵⁸ In 1906 Snouck also turned to Dirk Fock, Minister of the Colonies:

“Now, in particular since the subjugation of Aceh and dependencies to the Dutch authority, such a precious collection of hitherto unknown information about Sumatra’s past has been trusted to the Indies government, it is obvious that these treasures should not be left unused, and no less should be left to undergo further disintegration or to be buried under the ground or swallowed by water.” (Gobée and Adriaanse 1957, 1:403)

Playing on Fock’s consciousness, he suggested that action should be taken, ‘even just to avoid the reproach to have left unused and lost such important resources for the knowledge of the history of [our] own possessions and more generally the expansion of Islam in the past centuries’ (Gobée and Adriaanse 1957, 1:403).

The academic interest focused in particular on the cemeteries of the Samudera Pasai sultanate (thirteenth to sixteenth century) in the Lhokseumawe region of northeast Aceh, because they were perceived to be the oldest Islamic remains in Aceh and even the Indonesian archipelago. Being made from stone, gravestones were among the few types of material culture that could last for centuries in the tropical climate of the

Indonesian archipelago.⁵⁹ After years of insistence, Snouck Hurgronje got his way and in October 1906 a research team under the supervision of Hendrik Lodewijk Leydie Melville (1859–1921) was sent to Lhokseumawe on behalf of the Archaeological Commission (*Commissie in Nederlands-Indië voor oudheidkundig onderzoek op Java en Madoera*) to start mapping the cemeteries. However, the situation in Aceh continued to be tense and the KNIL had to provide protection to the research team at all times, prompting governor of Aceh Henri Swart to abort the mission in August 1908 (Tichelman 1940, 207). Four years later, a new attempt was made. Between 1912 and 1917, a team of the newly established Archaeological Service of the Netherlands Indies (*Oudheidkundige Dienst in Nederlands-Indië*) travelled across Aceh to measure and describe the graves as well as to make photographs, squeezes (*abklatschen* or *papierafdrukken*) and drawings. The team included Jean Pierre Moquette (1856–1927), a self-made archaeologist, and photographer Jean Jacques “Jan” de Vink (1883–1945). On request of Snouck Hurgronje, De Vink made the astounding number of around 1,500 photographs, but Snouck never found the time for a systematic study, much to the chagrin of the Archaeological Service (Scalliet 2008, 398).⁶⁰ He did, however, send the photographs to specialists like the renowned Swiss epigraphist Max van Berchem (1863–1921) to decipher the inscriptions.⁶¹

The Dutch effort to study the gravestones mainly concentrated on epigraphic research, as

57 Letters J.C. van der Wijck to C. Snouck Hurgronje, 1 and 7 July 1904. Letter J.B. van Heutsz to Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje, 25 March 1904. Leiden University Library inv. no. DH 1411.

58 Letters G.C.E. van Daalen to C. Snouck Hurgronje, 10 October 1906, 25 February 1907 and 21 July 1907. Leiden University Library inv. no. Or. 8952 A: 240/241.

59 This is one of the reasons why they play a disproportionately large role in historical research (Feener et al. 2021, 2).

60 Letter W.F. Stutterheim, director of the Archaeological Service, to Colonial Institute, responding to a request for photographic prints, 3 September 1937. Archives photographic collection Wereldmuseum Amsterdam, *verwervingsmappen*, no inventory number. Up until today, the photographic archive, still present in Jakarta, has not been systematically studied (Wain 2020, 608; Lambourn 2004, 246).

61 Letters M. van Berchem to C. Snouck Hurgronje, 1907–1911. Leiden University Library inv. nos. Or. 8952 A: 159 and 161.



FIGURE 25 Jan de Vink of the Archaeological Service, working on drawings of gravestone inscriptions in his Banda Aceh office, 1915. Collection University Library Leiden inv. no. Or. 20.965: 380 (4)

the inscriptions were seen as important sources for the study of the history and religion of Aceh (Wain 2020; Perret 2007, 314). Two questions were central to the line of research. First, to be able to reconstruct the genealogies of the Pasai and Aceh sultanates. The second line of inquiry concerned the origin of Islam in the Indonesian archipelago, focusing on both from where and in which region Islam was first introduced. Scholarship considered both an Arab and an Indian origin, and the epigraphic evidence on the gravestones could support either hypothesis. The scholarly emphases fitted in with the general objectives of colonial archaeology in the Dutch East Indies: the reconstruction of dynastic histories and the creation of a periodic timeline of Indonesian history (Bloembergen and Eickhoff 2020, 11). Through

epigraphic research of the inscriptions on the graves, as well as on coins found in their vicinity, a chronology of Aceh's rulers was established (see for example Kreemer 1922). A major breakthrough in European knowledge was Moquette's discovery that the tomb of Sultana Nahrasyiyah (d. 831/1428) at the Kuta Krueng cemetery near Lhokseumawe was of Gujarati origin, as were other tombs in the Pasai region (Lambourn 2003; Moquette 1912a; 1912b). The tombs are carved from cream marble, their headstones are decorated with calligraphy and fine panels of *naskh* and *Kufic* script, and they often have floral footstones and ornate lids. Similar ornamentation can be found on the grave of Malik Ibrahim (d. 822/1419) in Gresik, Java. It did not take Moquette long to find out that the stones were in fact imported from Khambhat, Gujarat (also known

as Cambay), and that some of the marble was recycled from Jain and Hindu temples. A total of fifteen Khambhat-made tombs have been identified in the two sites of Pasai and Gresik.

Based on the connection with Khambhat, Moquette (1912b) concluded that Islam arrived in the Indonesian archipelago from India, Gujarat in particular, first in Sumatra and then in Java. This hypothesis was previously advanced in Snouck Hurgronje's inaugural lecture *Arabia and the East Indies* (1907). Snouck positioned the graves as evidence of Indonesia's absorption into the global *ummah* from the 12th century onward. It mattered where Islam came from, he argued, because dissemination by trade led to different patterns of conversion compared to dissemination by the sword. More importantly, the origin question played a major role in Snouck's understanding of the nature of Indonesian Islam. In this respect, he was building on scholarly ideas of historical lineage as a route to discover the true core of culture. Due to its Indian origin, the 'spiritual atmosphere' of Indonesian Islam was one 'mystical pantheism', and contrasted with the dogmatism and fanaticism found in the Arabian Peninsula (Snouck Hurgronje 1907, 15). In other words, the discovery of the ancient graves in Aceh fitted in neatly with the grand narrative of a benign Indonesian Islam, which could only be corrupted by the more recent political influence of a fanatical Arab Islam, while at the same time alluding to the Orientalist imaginings of India as an inherently spiritual place.

The strong emphasis on epigraphic research led to the underestimation of ornamentation as a source for the study of the history of Islam in Indonesia.⁶² Although Snouck Hurgronje instructed the military authorities and the Archeological Service to document the graves in full, first of all

the textual inscriptions and secondly the ornamentation (Gobée and Adriaanse 1957, 1:400; 404), his plan failed due to the sheer number of graves. In 1913 Moquette agreed with Snouck to only document those graves that were of historic importance, which in practice boiled down to those with epigraphic inscriptions. This policy was in remarkable contrast with the study of Islamic sites in Java, where the Archeological Service made an intense study of ornamentation in order to be able to determine the transition from Indo-Javanese to Islamic artistic forms. Meanwhile, the Indian origin of the graves led several scholars in the late colonial period, including Willem Stutterheim, to remark that the only Islamic art to be found in Indonesia was foreign (Stutterheim 1952).⁶³

As part of the research endeavour, a visit to Banda Aceh was made to inventorise the graves that were considered of historical importance. The research team was, for this occasion, accompanied by Dr. Hoesein Djajadiningrat (1886–1960), philologist and government advisor on linguistics. Inside the terrain of the former *dalam*, research concentrated on the site of Kandang XII. In his report, surveyor Jan de Vink (1914, 83) remarked that many of the gravestones were fully or partially damaged by grenades. Traces of black lacquer on the larger gravestones demonstrated that they were once entirely gilded and one of the duplicate tombstones of Sultan Ali Mughayat Syah's grave still had some of the gilding (Moquette 1914, 79). Research leader Jean Pierre Moquette (1914, 80) decided that he would not take a second look at the graves at Kandang Meuh and would exclude them from the inventorisation, because the inscriptions contained no historical information and they were illegible due to 'colourful painting'. Forty years after the conquest of the *dalam* the judgements about the value of the two funerary sites had been entirely inverted.

A part of the duties of the Archaeological Service was the prevention of damage, demolition and

62 Recent research has demonstrated the crucial importance of the ornamentation for the history of Muslim cultural expressions in Indonesia. Feener et al. (2021) assert that some of the motifs testify to the early circulation of new Islamic styles across the Indian Ocean world. Moreover, not only India but also China played an essential role in the formation of Islamic funerary art in Indonesia (Wain 2020; Lambourn 2004; 2003).

63 According to Stutterheim, there was hardly any Islamic art in Indonesia and most of it was foreign (see chapter 8).



FIGURE 26 Visit to the Tengku Batee Balee graveyard, 4 March 1933. Left to right: Teuku Ali Basya, Gerard Tichelman, Muhammad Salim al-Kalali, Teuku Raja Pedir. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. TM-10016644

theft of antiquities. Although export of antiquities from Sumatra was not legally prohibited, the Service took the position that removal of objects from the sites under its supervision had to be prevented.⁶⁴ It did, however, remove a panel from the tomb of Sultana Nahrasyiyah to send it to the Batavian Society for research (Moquette 1912b, 541). Furthermore, the short-staffed service did not live up to its ambitions in terms of preservation. Report after report mentioned the poor state of the graves in the Lhokseumawe region. In 1933, *controleur* Gerard Tichelman (1893–1962) visited the graves of the Pasai sultanate, in the company of

Teuku Raja Pedir (Fig. 26), and concluded that the deterioration of the ‘valuable monuments of antiquity’ defied description (*tart elke beschrijving*).⁶⁵ He commissioned the concerned Teuku to inventurise, clean and preserve the graves and urgently recommended the authorities to fundraise to this end. As a result of the policy of the Archaeological Service to keep the graves intact, no parts of the Samudera Pasai sultanate graves ended up in museum collections in the Netherlands, as far as I know. Instead, members of the research team

64 In reality, objects were sometimes removed from archaeological sites, even on behalf of the Archaeological Service, e.g. when they were considered ‘duplicates’ (Bloembergen 2021, 190–91).

65 Diary G.L. Tichelman 1932–1933, 3 March 1933. NL-HaNA G.L. Tichelman [1893–1961], 1916–1937, 2.21.097.01 no. 29. See also Teuku Ali Basha, G.L. Tichelman, Muhammad al-Kalali and Teuku Raja Pedir at the Tengku Batee Balee cemetery, 4 March 1933. Collection National Museum of World Cultures TM-10016644 <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/234021>.

donated the squeezes and photographs they had made. Jan de Vink made duplicate sets of the *abklatschen* and donated 172 pieces to the Colonial Institute, including two of *Kandang XII*.⁶⁶ Henderik Roelof Rookmaaker (1887–1945), who was assistant resident in north-eastern Aceh in 1928–1930, donated squeezes that were made for research purposes.⁶⁷ Jan Kreemer, who worked for the Colonial Institute, collected a plaster cast made from one of De Vink's *abklatschen*, representing an originally marble panel from the grave of Mawlana

‘Abd al-Rahman Taj al-Dawlah wa al-Din Qutb al-Ma’ali al-‘Ali (d. 816/ 1414) at the Teungku di Ibus cemetery.⁶⁸ Even though Snouck Hurgronje's grand study never materialised, a number of articles appeared based on the information collected by the Archaeological Service (Tichelman 1940; Moquette and Djajadiningrat 1919; Moquette 1913; 1912a; 1912b). These publications were eagerly read and cited in the museums, and the photographs exhibited (e.g. Koloniaal Instituut 1938, 15). In the 1940s, the research materials of the Archaeological Service were used to recreate one of the Samudera Pasai sultanate graves at the Colonial Institute, one of the few instances that Indonesian art was exhibited under the heading of Islamic art (see chapter 8).

66 According to the annual report of the Colonial Institute (1935, 42), the museum used the *abklatschen* to create plaster casts; ‘at the moment we are working on casts of old Mohammedan gravestones with Arabic inscriptions from Aceh, Java and elsewhere’. After casting the paper moulds would have become useless, so they were probably discarded. Shortly before 1970, the museum's plaster workshop was dismantled and the casts thrown away (Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen 1970, 23).

67 Letter H.R. Rookmaaker to H.H. Juynboll, 28 October 1931. NL-LdnRMV A1-108/368. He too alluded to Indian roots when he wrote that they ‘had contributed to the history of the arrival of the Hindus in the Netherlands East Indies’. The squeezes are no longer in the collection.

68 Plaster cast of the gravestone of Mawlana ‘Abd al-Rahman Taj al-Dawlah wa al-Din Qutb al-Ma’ali al-‘Ali, 1913–1916. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. TM-45-453. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/143824>. Museum Nasional Indonesia has a plaster cast that probably dates from the same period. Plaster cast of the gravestone of sultana Nahrasyiyah, date unknown. Collection Museum Nasional Indonesia inv. no. 44549.

Collecting Islamic Objects: Hajj-Related Items and Amulets

The Dutch colonial policy distinguished between a political Islam and an Islam of piety, and aimed to leave the latter unaffected. The Indonesian Islamicist Husnul Aqib Suminto (2011) has argued that in reality the policy exhibited lack of consistency, as the boundaries between tolerance and interference were vague and unreliable. Maintaining peace and order (*rust en orde*) was at times the rationale behind the curbing of Islamic practice. In the previous chapters, several incidents revealing the ambiguity in these matters have been reviewed. In this chapter I zoom in on objects connected to personal piety, investigating the frictions between these highly personal objects and the world of colonial imagination. By its very nature the hajj, the pilgrimage to the holy places on the Arabian Peninsula, is as much an individual journey as it is a communal experience. Colonial control sought to regulate this tension between individual and community but failed to resolve it. Amulets and talismans were among the most intimate objects of piety since they were worn on the body. In colonial Indonesia the use of amulets was ubiquitous, and it was of utmost importance to keep their contents a secret. A main point of interest in this chapter is the agency of the object, enabling it to defy and contradict the colonial order of things and shaping its presence today.

1 Hajj Objects: Between Benevolence and Surveillance

In his essay *The Dutch Empire and the hajj* (2014), Eric Tagliacozzo describes the colonial project of governing Islam as guided by two impulses: the concern with maintaining some sort of coercive control and the simultaneous urge to facilitate Islam, even in philanthropic ways. In the end, he

argues, the twin impulses of benevolence and surveillance both served the agenda of the consolidation of the Indies as a Dutch colony. The twin impulses of the management of Islam in colonial Indonesia were strongly felt with regard to the hajj (Alexanderson 2019; 2014; Tagliacozzo 2014; 2013; 2009; Laffan 2002). Coupled with the prominent place the hajj occupied in the colonial imagination, as a source of fear and fascination, the hajj policies imposed by the government led to a surge of objects entering the museums in the Netherlands. The result is that in comparison with other European countries, such as the United Kingdom, the museum collections in the Netherlands have significantly more objects in relation to the hajj that were collected in the colonial period.¹ The National Museum of World Cultures collections include approximately 400 objects relating to the pilgrimage from colonial Indonesia, and an additional 400 objects from Western Arabia that were collected by diplomats who were stationed there to guide and control the Indonesian pilgrims.²

From the early days of colonial rule, the Dutch authorities closely monitored the pilgrims going and returning from the holy places in Arabia. By facilitating the hajj, the authorities made sure Dutch business, such as shipping companies, took

1 Personal communication John Slight and Venetia Porter, Conference *Kampong Kaji to the Holy City: scholarship and stories of the hajj*, Malay Heritage Center (Singapore), 2 March 2019.

2 This number excludes the 25,000 ID cards of Indonesian pilgrims as well as the extensive collections of photographs by Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje and Daniel van der Meulen, among others. Quite important is also *Het Groote Mekka-feest* (1928), the first documentary film of the hajj, made by the Indo-European director George Krugers, of which the original film rolls are today kept at the EYE film museum in Amsterdam (Reichling 2023).

financial benefit from the large sums of money Indonesian pilgrims spent on the trips, as well as giving the pilgrims some protection against usurpation and disease. Furthermore, facilitation of the hajj was seen as an opportunity to win over the Indonesian pilgrims for the colonial project. At the same time, the rise of pan-Islamism and the supposed dissemination of anti-colonial ideas from places such as Mecca and Cairo prompted the Dutch authorities to set up a surveillance network on their colonial subjects. Over the course of the nineteenth century, the fear of the hajj as a hotbed for radical ideas grew to such an extent that the pilgrimage became a political and administrative obsession. The anxiety spilled over to the popular imagination. The 'hajji' became the archetypical image of the deceitful native, especially among the European population living in the colony (Florida 1997). Tea planter and advisor for Native Affairs Karel Holle even referred to the anxiety in colonial circles as 'hajjiphobia' (Van den Berge 1998, 240).³

In the museums in the Netherlands the concern about the hajj found expression in the large numbers of hajj-related objects. The diplomats stationed at the Dutch consulate in Jeddah, a chief spider in the web of colonial surveillance, assisted the museums with the formation of collections. The concern felt and communicated by the highest political echelons put the hajj high on the agenda of the colonial administration. In turn, civil and military administrators in the Indies were a major force in the transfer of objects to the museum collections. These combined facts led to a surge of hajj-related objects, ranging from dolls depicting hajjis used for the instruction of colonial administrators, to clothing, in particular the outfits worn by Indonesian hajjis to mark their status as pilgrims, maps, books, certificates and souvenirs brought back home from the holy places. The politics of surveillance materialised

in the collections in the form of documents such as the mandatory permits, including 25,000 ID cards of pilgrims travelling in the years 1937–1939 (Shatanawi 2022a) (Fig. 27).⁴

Colonial governance in the Dutch East Indies also gave impetus to object collections from the so-called heartland of Islam. In 1884, scholar of Islam Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje went to the Arabian Peninsula to study society there first-hand, supplemented by a mission to monitor the Indonesian pilgrims, whom the Dutch government suspected of spreading anticolonial ideas. Snouck Hurgronje made use of the opportunity to pursue his own research agenda. He had written a PhD thesis on the rituals of the hajj, without visiting Mecca nor Arabia, and wanted to complement his findings with ethnological research on daily life in Mecca (Snouck Hurgronje 1888). Assembling objects was part of this endeavour, as well as photography and the recording of sound (Mols and Vrolijk 2016).⁵ After Snouck Hurgronje's departure in 1885, he encouraged the Dutch diplomats and agents residing in Arabia to collect artefacts for the museums in the Netherlands.⁶ Throughout the period of colonial rule, collections poured out of the Dutch consulate in Jeddah into Dutch institutions. Eventually the collection assembled

3 Letter K.F. Holle to Governor General C. Pijnacker Hordijk, 20 September 1890. NL-HaNA Ministerie van Koloniën, 1850–1900, 2.10.02 no. 6198.

4 25,000 ID cards of Indonesian pilgrims, 1937–1939. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. nos. RV-A258 (55 batches). <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/857698>.

5 In 1919 Snouck Hurgronje eventually donated the largest part of his collection to the Museum of Ethnology. 235 objects, Jeddah and Mecca, c.1885. Collection National Museum of World Cultures, inv. nos. RV-628-1/7; RV-1973-1/153 and RV-2107-1. The photographic collection and the audio recordings are part of the special collections of Leiden University Library (see Mols and Vrolijk 2016).

6 This development had set in earlier with the donation of Johannes Adrianus Kruyt (1841–1928), consul in Jeddah, to the Museum of Ethnology in 1880. Kruyt's donation not only comprised objects from Arabia but also objects from Indonesia which he gathered during the twenty years he served in the navy (he also appears in the account on the Acehnese gravestones in chapter 4). He may have inspired Snouck Hurgronje in his endeavour to collect. For the relationship between Kruyt and Snouck Hurgronje, see Vrolijk and Van Leeuwen (2014, 120–21).

7a

Volledig in te vullen op het bureau van afgifte in Nederlandsch-Indië. Bestemd voor het Consulaat te Djeddah.

BEHOORT BIJ DEN REISPAS NAAR MEKKA.

op den 16den Augustus 1937 192
 onder No. 133 door den Controleur
 van Indr. Benedenlanden uitgereikt
 aan Hadji Gesoep bin Sadam met echtgenoot
 gen. H. Maimoenah en 2 kinderen gen. H. Ismail
 en Zabidan.
 laatstelijk woonachtig te Teloek Dalam

SIGNALEMENT:

Geslacht: mannelijk
 Ouderdom: 50 jaar
 Gestalte:
 Lengte:
 Aangezicht:
 Oogen:
 Wenkbrauwen: (1)
 Neus:
 Mond:
 Kin:
 Knevel:
 Baard:



Bijzondere kenteekenen: zie foto

Eigenaar van dezen pas verzoekt dat hij zijn eventueel
 Eigenaresse zij haar embilan
 overlijden zijn haar zij geld en goederen die zij bij zich heeft,
 in bewaring gegeven zullen worden aan zijn reisgenoot
zijn eigen vrouw H. Maimoenah No.>
 of (pas No.>
 of (pas No.>

(1) Alleen in te vullen indien het portret ontbreekt.

7a


Volledig in te vullen op het bureau van afgifte in Nederlandsch-Indië. Bestemd voor het Consulaat te Djeddah.

BEHOORT BIJ DEN REISPAS NAAR MEKKA.

op den 22en September 1937 1937
 onder No. 24 door den Assistent Resident
 van Malakka uitgereikt
 aan Tarawa
 laatstelijk woonachtig te Malakka

SIGNALEMENT:

Geslacht: so paar
 Ouderdom: mannelijk
 Gestalte: (plaats voor portret)
 Lengte:
 Aangezicht:
 Oogen:
 Wenkbrauwen: (1)
 Neus:
 Mond:
 Kin:
 Knevel:
 Baard:



Bijzondere kenteekenen:

Eigenaar van dezen pas verzoekt dat hij zijn eventueel
 Eigenaresse zij haar zij overlijden zijn haar zij geld en goederen die zij bij zich heeft,
 in bewaring gegeven zullen worden aan zijn reisgenoot
Hadji Saadamaq Tarawa (pas No. 25)>
 of (pas No.>
 of (pas No.>

(1) Alleen in te vullen indien het portret ontbreekt.

FIGURE 27 Indonesian pilgrims were required to leave their ID cards behind at the Dutch consulate in Jeddah; these are a few of the 25,000 ID cards that are now part of the NMVW collection; all cards date from 1937–1939. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. nos. RV-A258 (55 batches)

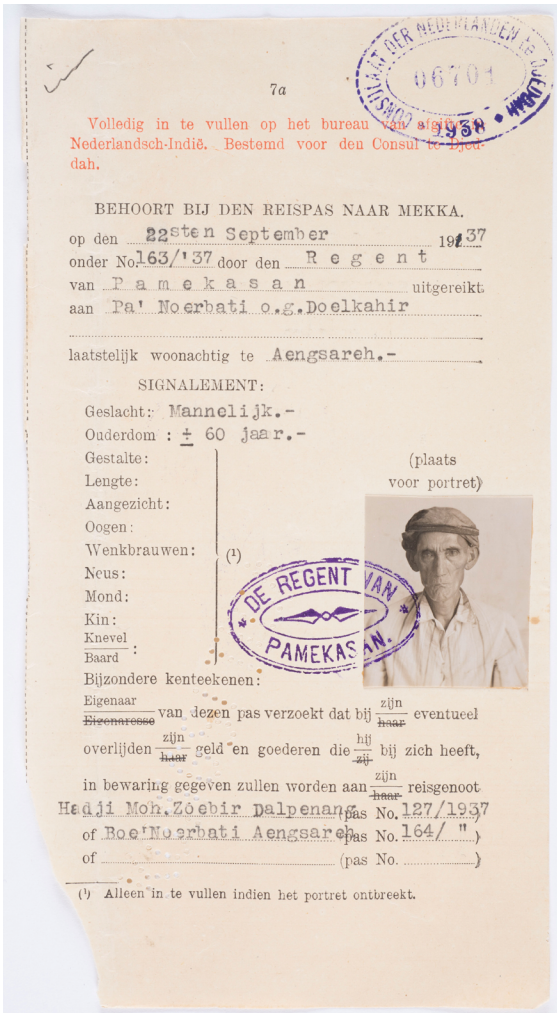
by the consuls would amount to approximately 400 objects.⁷ The Museum of Ethnology was the main recipient (see Mols and Vrolijk 2016, 9), but the *Indische Instelling*, the Museum of Geography and Ethnology and the Colonial Institute received objects as well.⁸ Not all donors were Dutch; in 1884 the Museum of Ethnology received gifts

from Hassan Jawhar, a wealthy Indian merchant, Umar al-Saqqaf, from a merchant family in Singapore, and Yusuf Qudsi Efendi, the dragoon (interpreter) for the British Consulate in Jeddah (Mols and Vrolijk 2016, 9; *Nederlandsche Staats-Courant* 1884).⁹ The three men had just

⁷ That is in addition to the objects collected in Indonesia.

⁸ Daniel van der Meulen (1894–1989), Dutch consul in Jeddah in the 1920s and 1940s, bequeathed his vast photographic oeuvre to the Tropenmuseum.

⁹ Women's trousers, Jeddah, c.1880. Collection National Museum of World Cultures, inv. no. RV-431-18/20. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/659190> Men's overgarment, Jeddah, c.1880. inv. no. RV-431-9. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/659181>.



entered into a scheme with the Dutch consul Johan Kruyt, and Pieter Nicolaas van der Chijs, agent for the Nederlandsche Stoomvaart Maatschappij, to establish a highly profitable monopoly on the transportation of Indonesian pilgrims (Low 2020, 238). This, and a little encouragement from Kruyt, who was a regular donor to the museum, may explain their generosity.

The object collections from Indonesia were used for the training of civil servants and to familiarize those who were going to live in the Indies with the hajj as an Indonesian phenomenon

and the appearance of the hajjis in particular. Intertwined with the government's interest, the pilgrimage became a topic of scholarly interest, as we have seen in the work of Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje. This, in turn, influenced collectors like Willem Stammeshaus, who considered hajj-related objects one of his priorities in collecting and even wrote a short treatise in Malay about the hajj (F.W. Stammeshaus 1924). An exception may be certain types of souvenirs, such as *kohl* containers and brass bowls, which were available for a European clientele at antique shops and in the selection of

objects sold by haberdasheries and often bought as decorative items. In chapter 3 we encountered Sophia van IJsseldijk-Withof's collection of pretty things which included several hajj souvenirs of this kind.¹⁰

Besides being of importance locally, many items in the collections show the embeddedness of the Indonesian experience in a global Muslim network, and testify to the transnational heritage of the hajj. This applies to the hajj souvenirs, acquired by Indonesian pilgrims in the holy places, but which were frequently produced elsewhere, for instance in Britain, India, Turkey or Egypt.¹¹ The hajj also introduced new products and lifestyles in Indonesia, such as the use of *kohl* (eye cosmetic) and the face veil. The *kupiah*, the quintessential Muslim headgear, was introduced as the *kufiya*, headgear worn by the Arabian elite in the Ottoman period, and was, according to Snouck Hurgronje, Indian-made (*Nederlandsche Staatscourant* 1887). In the late nineteenth century the *kupiah* (the Arabic name adapted to Indonesian languages) began to be crafted locally and underwent a stylistic revision.¹²

The pattern of donation of objects related to the hajj shows a development in object type over time. Hajj objects began to arrive at the museums around 1880, in particular in connection with the world exhibitions in Paris (1878) and Amsterdam (1883). The earliest donations were indicative of an interest in hajji dress, in the context of the desire to map the colonised population. General Karel van der Heijden (1826–1900) exhibited several *costumes populaires d'Atjeh* (folk costumes of Aceh) at the 1878 exhibition, including an embroidered waistcoat, made in Aceh in Arab style. After the exhibition, it became part of the collections of the Museum of Ethnology.¹³ Costumes like these were also used to create life-size representations of Indonesians, as stand-in for actual people, who were sometimes flown in as well. For instance, the International Colonial and Export Exhibition in Amsterdam in 1883 featured a display of three 'statues of natives', made by sculptor Bart van Hove (1850–1914), and dressed in 'real native clothes' (Veth, Wilken, and Klinkert 1883b 11–12; no. 19). Next to 'a chief's daughter, in dancing costume' from Lampung and 'women in Batavian clothing, playing a game of dakon', Aceh was represented through 'a female hajji', dressed from top to toe in Arab style.¹⁴ Indonesian pilgrims were also present in the collection of 350 dolls, made in 1893 for Queen Wilhelmina as a present for

10 Interestingly enough, after their arrival at the museum these souvenirs were attributed to Aceh, in line with Aceh's image as a thoroughly Islamic place, although Sophia, as far as it is known, never set foot there. Brass bowl, 'Aceh', 19th century. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. TM-3272-11. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/101701> Kohl container, 'Aceh', 19th century. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. TM-3272-27ab <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/101721>.

11 The Stammeshaus collection includes several examples, such as a miniature Qur'an produced by the Scottish firm David Bryce & Sons around 1900, bought in Mecca in 1918 by the female pilgrim Cut Peudada. Miniature Qur'an, Glasgow, c.1900. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. TM-687-49. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/177893>.

12 Kufiya, Mecca, c.1885. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. RV-559-3. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/662970> Kupiah, Aceh, late 19th century. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. RV-3600-644a. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/770554>.

13 Waistcoat, Aceh, late 19th century. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. RV-300-125. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/599747>.

14 The contributor(s) of the clothes are not mentioned. In the case of Aceh, it may have been the governor. The Aceh doll was donated to the Museum of Ethnology after the exhibition. It has not been preserved, but three items of the costume remain. Dutch East Indies section of the International Colonial and Export Exhibition of 1883 at Amsterdam's Museumplein (photograph Pieter Oosterhuis). Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. TM-60015892. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/18779> Headscarf, face veil and tunic, Hijaz, c.1880. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. nos. RV-370-2991/3. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/656488>.

her thirteenth birthday.¹⁵ The collection aimed to give an authentic representation of the regional attire (*kleederdrachten*) of the various regions of Indonesia, and included at least 22 hajjis (Serrurier 1894, 18–19). The ultimate aim of exhibiting the dolls was to fulfil the duty of ‘getting to know the country and population of the colonies’ and ‘distributing this knowledge to the educated people in the Netherlands’ (Serrurier 1894, 6). As was the case with the world exhibitions, dress was here approached as a marker of ethnicity and the hajjis an important ‘type’; hence their omnipresence in representational sets of objects, such as instructional illustrations and doll sets.¹⁶

Mapping the population remained important in the late colonial period, but slowly other types of hajj-related objects started to make their way into the collections. Souvenirs, such as brass kohl containers and coffee jugs, started to arrive in the twentieth century as objects donated or sold by individuals who went on to live in the Netherlands. The official documents are mostly donations of the various colonial authorities to the museums, such as the two hajj certificates issued by Ahmad ‘Abdallah ibn Mustafa, the Shafi‘i imam of Mecca’s Great Mosque, to two Indonesian pilgrims. Since they passed away before they could return home, the Dutch consul in Jeddah, Henri Spakler (1861–1937), donated the certificates to the Museum of Ethnology.¹⁷

1.1 *Hajji Dress*

The significant presence of hajji dress among the early acquisitions is related to the high profile of

the special clothing in the nineteenth-century colonial imagination. In Indonesia, it was customary to dress in Arab style for those who had made the pilgrimage to the holy places and who wanted to share this fact with the outside world. The distinctive hajji dress, which was available in male and female varieties, was either brought from Arabia or made in Indonesia, copying Arab styles. Jan Kreemer observed in 1916 that, in Aceh, hajjis wore the imported clothing until it was completely worn out and then returned to wearing local dress (Kreemer 1923, 2:498). As an important visual marker of religious status, the clothing raised the anxiety of the colonial authorities. The government feared that the outfits raised the status of those who had made the pilgrimage, and made other less ‘fanatical’ Muslims susceptible to their views. In political debate, hajji clothing was continually analysed within the triangle of Europeanness, Arabness and the position of the local Muslim population, and as the material manifestation of an eminent political threat.

A prominent voice in the debate on hajji dress was tea planter Karel Frederik Holle (1829–1896), who was appointed in 1871 as honorary advisor to the Office for Native Affairs in the colonial government (Steenbrink 2006, 78–85; Van den Berge 1998). In 1884, he donated twelve costumes from the Priangan area in West Java to the Colonial Museum, including three outfits of hajjis.¹⁸ The costumes Holle sent to the Netherlands were first exhibited in the International Colonial and Export Exhibition in Amsterdam in 1883, to be part of the ethnographic exhibit in the Pavilion of the Dutch colonies (Veth, Wilken, and Klinkert 1883b, 11:48). These are the only items originating from Holle in Dutch museum collections.¹⁹

15 Dolls depicting a male and female hajji, Java, 1893. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. nos. RV-1108-6/7. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/683870>.

16 Another marker was facial features, hence the hiring of ‘native’ woodcarvers to make the dolls.

17 Hajj certificates of Muhammad Tayyib Kadu and Maryam Kadu, Mecca, 26 dhu al-hijja 1308 AH (2 August 1891). Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. RV-870-23. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/675171>.

18 ‘Friday clothes of a well-to-do female hajji’, ‘Friday clothes of an ordinary male hajji’, ‘Friday clothes of an ordinary female hajji’, Priangan, ca. 1883. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. nos. TM-H-240abc; TM-H-241abcdefg; TM-H-242abcd. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/200608>.

19 He did, however, donate a number of items to the Batavian Society of Arts and Sciences (see Groot 2009, 493).

Karel Holle owned a tea plantation in the Garut district of the Priangan. Besides running his business, and without any formal education, he profiled himself as a public intellectual by writing articles in the colonial press and publishing books. Holle had outspoken ideas about how the local population should cultivate rice, be educated and perform their Islamic duties. He saw himself as an expert on local Sundanese culture, including religion, and maintained close ties to the Muslim elite. Similar to what Snouck Hurgronje asserted years later, Holle was convinced that Islam was deeply rooted in Javanese society. He seems to have converted to Islam, if only in name, to be able to tie the Islamic knot with the sister of his best friend, Muhammad Musa, the Chief Penghulu of Garut (Laffan 2011, 117). He adopted the Muslim name of Said Mohamad ben Holle (Laffan 2003, 81). Despite his flirt with Sundanese culture, in his letters of advice to the colonial government, Holle consistently warned about Islam as a destructive force that had to be contained. When Javanese showed signs of 'fanaticism', a code word for anti-colonial activities, he blamed foreign, in particular Arab, influence (Laffan 2002, 95–101). In his view, not Islam as such, but any foreign influences, including those emanating from the hajj, should be discouraged.

Holle donated the costumes in a period of great anxiety about the hajj in colonial circles. The Dutch blamed the growing disaffection with colonial rule on the hajjis. They believed that these pilgrims' contacts with Arab Islam, which in Dutch perceptions was fanatical and violent, was having a negative influence on local Muslims. Moreover, the annual pilgrimage seemed to be giving local religious leaders the opportunity to develop resistance strategies with Muslims from other colonised territories. This fundamental distrust of the hajj, combined with a significant increase in the numbers of pilgrims after the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, prompted a series of strong measures. Already in 1825, financial guarantees, special permits (to be obtained from the Dutch government for exorbitant fees), and

an examination on return were obliged for every pilgrim (Jaquet 1980). In 1859, new legislation came into effect, making the permits (*reispassen*) free of charge, but continuing the remaining obligations. The government also restricted permissions to wear the distinctive hajji outfit to those who had actually been to Mecca (*Staatsblad van Nederlandsch-Indië* 1859, no. 42).

Twice, in 1873 and in 1890, Holle was asked to give advice about whether the government should outlaw the costume. His advice was meant to be pragmatic, but in reality it was unpractical and pointless, as Snouck Hurgronje explicated (Gobée and Adriaanse 1959, 2:322). In Holle's view the government should keep the law as it is, and only take action when people start wearing clothing that showed too much religious zeal, by which he meant Arab dress. Holle's main argument was that in many cases the costume was ethnically Javanese, but that when the garments were Arab they were a sign of radicalisation. Indeed, he asserted that 'with these [Arabised] clothes they also put on a different mindset', which would eventually lead to hate against the Europeans.²⁰ Holle truly believed that one could change behaviour when changing material appearance, and for similar reasons he tried to discourage the use of Arabic script (Laffan 2011, 117; Van den Berge 1998, 206). Just like Indonesian converts to Christianity should not be allowed to wear full European dress, Javanese Muslims should be forbidden to wear Arab dress. The authorities should ensure that every group would wear clothing matching their ethnicity and position in the colony. Stipulations to that effect were already enforced in the Police Criminal Code of 1872 (*Staatsblad van Nederlandsch-Indië* 1872 *besluit* 110 and 111). In the case of transgression, Holle argued that government intervention was warranted to restore the public order. In his own words, such transgressions happened 'when a hajji has completely Arabised, or when an ordinary

20 Letter K.F. Holle to Governor General J. Loudon, 20 August 1873. NL-HaNA Ministerie van Koloniën, 1850–1900, 2.10.02 no. 2684.

native is decked out in excessive gear in order to try to get attention, or when a female hajji walks the street dressed like a mummy and makes the folks gawk at her in astonishment ... and, finally, when converts (*moealabs*), be they Dutch or Chinese (and they do exist), adopt native or half Arabian dress.²¹ Like many Europeans in the colony, Holle himself frequently transgressed these boundaries, when he donned a batik *kain* or was photographed wearing a fez (Van den Berge 1998, 191). That he could do so and argue, without irony, that others were incapable of escaping the identity or mental effects, underlines his privileged position as a European.

A closer look at Holle's argumentation reveals that his main concern was about the effect of new legislation on colonial control of the behaviour of Muslims. Arguing against a full ban of hajji dress, he wrote that the ban would create bad blood with Muslims, leaving them humiliated and driving them into the arms of fanatics.²² With so few Muslims dressing completely in Arab style, he believed there were more efficient ways to fight resistance. Holle, therefore, recommended that changes in dress be closely monitored by the colonial authorities rather than banned, because 'on the road to outward or real piety, some will become more susceptible to fanaticism, our biggest enemy.'²³ To lend more weight to his argument, he sketched his own experiences in Garut:

"that folks and their entourage started to dress differently – fully or in half, and with these clothes they started to adopt other ideas. Gradually, they started to look down upon their fellow believers, seeing them as less good, and from there it is only a small step to hate against the European."²⁴

Holle made a separate mention of the women, who, according to him, were seldom fully veiled, which he considered a great blessing because 'women are often the driving force behind fanaticism.' As was the case with much of the advice Holle provided, it did not make a huge impression on the authorities. The government decided to heed his advice not to impose a ban on hajji dress in general, but ignored his plea to specifically outlaw or monitor Arab clothing.

In 1881, when Holle warned once more against hajjis dressed like Arabs, the Orientalist L.W.C. (Lodewijk) van den Berg (1845–1927), another advisor to the colonial government, felt compelled to compose a critical reply (Laffan 2002, 98–101; Van den Berge 1998, 239). Arab-style dress, he argued, was the result of the 'vanity of the natives and their lust for beautification', but was devoid of political meaning.²⁵ The style of clothing, and the number of 'Arab' items, was rather a matter of individual choice, and of wealth. And, regarding Holle's advice to outlaw excessive Arab dress, at what point would the government need to draw the line? At the third piece of Arab-style clothing, or the fourth? A few years later, Holle's successor Snouck Hurgronje argued in similar fashion against a ban on hajji clothing, because it would be extremely difficult to enforce and basically purposeless (Tagliacozzo 2009, 138). Snouck's points about hajji dress, in typical Snouck style, argued that there is no such thing as 'Arab dress' (Gobée and Adriaanse 1959, 2:1321–23; 1325–28). Indonesians are merely following the fashions of the Meccan middle classes, because 'they are inclined to acknowledge the superiority of other races' (Snouck Hurgronje 1924, 4 1:359). Moreover, there is nothing Islamic about the clothing. In fact, the hajji dress which causes the colonial government so much worry, is *adat*, not Islam. The only item that follows from Islamic law is the turban.

21 Ibid.

22 Letter K.F. Holle to Governor General C. Pijnacker Hordijk, 20 September 1890. NL-HaNA Ministerie van Koloniën, 1850–1900, 2.10.02 no. 6198.

23 Ibid.

24 Ibid.

25 Letter L.W.C. van den Berg to director Education, Religion and Arts, 15 September 1881 in mailrapport 978. NL-HaNA Ministerie van Koloniën, 1850–1900, 2.10.02 no. 6414.

But to wear the turban in Meccan style, wrapped around a *kupiah*, men need to shave their heads, and this, Snouck argued, is prescribed by Islamic law. Responding to the reluctance of the colonial government to interfere in religion proper, he warned that a prohibition of the turban, therefore, could be interpreted as an attack on Islam, and even be dangerous. Instead, Snouck proposed to do a 360-degree turn, and advised the government to encourage every Indonesian Muslim to wear hajji dress. Then, the attire would lose its popular appeal, and bring an end to the veneration of the hajjis as if they were a class of clergy.

Considering the great emphasis Holle put on the dangers of Arab dress, it is remarkable that each of the three outfits he contributed to the 1883 exhibition indeed included Arab-style coats, dresses and sandals. Some items, such as a silk blouse and silver-embroidered face veil, were most likely made in the Hijaz and exported to the Priangan. Other items display a mix of styles, for instance, with Arab tassels dangling from a Javanese sarong. It may be that Holle failed to realise the extent to which Meccan fashion styles blended in with Javanese styles, and that he only recognised the more pronouncedly Arab garments, such as the characteristic overcoat (*jubbah*) and the turban with *kupiah*. Or did he intend his entry to the exhibition to be a warning? This may explain why he selected a face veil to show to the world exhibition's crowd, even though he asserted there were hardly any fully veiled women in Java. By doing so, it can be argued Holle did his part to contribute to the hajjiphobia he so often mocked.

Holle was right to observe a greater orientation to the Middle East in Java; in fact, he was an eyewitness to what would become a great move towards a global Islam. Holle's ideas were rooted in the widespread belief that Indonesians by nature were indolent, but their dormant capacities for 'fanaticism' could be stirred up through contact with Turkish or Arab Muslims. In his zeal to control unwanted political expressions of Islam, he overlooked other meanings the clothing could have for Indonesian men and women, as Van

den Berg rightly pointed out. The Arab clothing, imported to Indonesia, was a prized possession and Indonesians were known to wear the outfits until they were worn out. The silk and cotton garments are full of stylish details, such as embellishments of embroidered flowers and paisley motifs, gold sequins and woven patterns in gold and silver thread. Given the expensive textiles and styles used in the garments, people obviously could wear them as expressions of affluence and affiliation with the higher classes. Delicate lace trimmings in a Turkish style (*oya*) testify to the fact that the textiles were made at the time of the Ottoman rule of the holy cities. Embroidered motifs in the *badla* technique, originating in India, connected South Asia to the Hijaz. At home, Indonesians would wear them in combination with local styles, like the *sarong*, *kain* or *selendang*. Seen from this perspective, the hajji dress also testified to a desire to be fashionably Muslim as part of a global *ummah* (Moors 2007).

It has been noted above that, in the period of colonial rule, hajji dress merely played the role of ethnic marker in museum displays, within a framework emphasising otherness. No trace of the fierce political debate, or Holle's role therein, was found in the presentations of Holle's outfits; first in the International Colonial and Export Exhibition in Amsterdam, where Holle's outfits were described as 'clothing from the Priangan regencies' and arranged according to gender, use and class, and then in the Colonial Museum in Haarlem, where they became part of a packed display of 'native clothing', giving 'a good overview of the native's everyday and festive dress' (*Gids voor de bezoekers van het Koloniaal Museum te Haarlem* 1902, 18) (Fig. 28). Interestingly, after Indonesian independence the outfits were utilised to bring out a new message. In the 1967 exhibition *Van top tot teen* ("From head to foot") at the Tropenmuseum, they were juxtaposed with a photo of young Dutch women dancing in miniskirts to convey the main curatorial line; despite differences in appearance, humans around the world use dress to distinguish themselves (Fig. 29). In the words of head curator



FIGURE 28 Hajji outfits, an 1883 donation by Karel Holle, exhibited at the Colonial Museum in Haarlem, 1900–1923. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. TM-60040425

Joop Jager Gerlings, ‘We are just as crazy. Sure, we laugh at the clothing, jewellery, [body] painting and customs of primitive people, but on closer inspection we and our western civilisation display similar behaviour’ (*Algemeen Dagblad* 1967). The message of the exhibition emanated from policies of decolonisation at the Tropenmuseum in this period, which aimed to represent the formerly colonised on an equal footing with the West. The museum still struggled to do so and this exhibition is just one out of many centring around the binary of tradition and modernity (Shatanawi 2014, 50–51), here represented by Indonesians wearing century-old religious attire versus Dutch women in the latest fashion performing the secular activity of dancing in a club. Despite Jager Gerlings’s good intentions, the differences with the dividing lines in colonial days are hard to spot.

2 Amulets: Taking Away Islamic Protection

Besides manuscripts and hajj-related objects, amulets make up a large part of the objects classified as Islamic in my sample of NMVW objects (see chapter 2). Twenty-one percent of the sample of Islamic objects is currently placed in the category “magical protection” of the OVM thesaurus (see chapter 7). The objects in this group have different origins; all Muslim regions of Indonesia are represented, although many are from Aceh and Java. They include amulets as well as other objects, such as brass bowls inscribed with Qur’anic verses, also known as *baté arab* (Arab bowl) in Acehnese, *mangkuk penawar* (healing bowl) in Malay and *schrikschaal* (fear cup) in Dutch, which were often brought to Indonesia as souvenirs from the hajj.



FIGURE 29 Holle's hajji outfits exhibited at the Tropenmuseum, 1967. The display is meant to make a contrast with scantily clad Western women, marking the binary traditional/modern. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. TM-60058168

About half the amulets are pieces of paper on which Arabic religious invocations are written. The other half are made from natural materials such as palm leaves (*lontar*), shells or petrified animals, but do not have Arabic writing. In the systems of the museums, such objects were classified as Islamic because they were used by Muslims in practices of ‘magic’ and protection.²⁶ As I describe in chapter 7, museum ethnologists of the nineteenth and early twentieth century had great interest in such practices because they considered them primitive stages of religion, and therefore well-suited to study earlier stages of human civilisation. This partly explains the frequent occurrence of amulets and other ‘magical’ objects in my sample of Islamic objects. Another explanation can be found in the relationship between colonial governance and control and collecting practices in this period.

As with other parts of the Muslim world, in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Indonesia the use of objects to communicate with *al-ghaib* (the unseen) was common practice. Amulets and talismans, known as *jimat* (and variations of this term) in Indonesian languages, were frequently used. Some amulets were intended to be seen and could be openly displayed. This was the case, for instance, with batik head cloths with amuletic designs or the brass bowls, which were also widely available for non-Muslims to buy. For another category of amulets, ‘small objects imbued with magical power that are used for various purposes such as protection, healing, inducing love and attracting customers’ (Yahya 2016, 28), their effectiveness was dependent on secrecy. The small packages, containing natural substances or Islamic phrases and signs (*rajah*) on paper, were often wrapped in headgear and other clothing. It was of utmost

importance not to open such a *jimat* or reveal its contents to the outside world for it to remain effective. This type of Islamic amulet was generally custom-made by a *dukun* (healer), a *kyai* or another Islamic specialist. This meant that they were not turned into commodities for a European clientele, due to their secrecy but perhaps also due to a lack of interest and demand. This explains that the majority of the Islamic amulets from Indonesia entered the museum through involuntary acquisition, that is, as war loot or material confiscated by the police or judicial forces.

Being part of everyday religious practices of protection in colonial Indonesia, it is not surprising that the *jimat* played an empowering role in anticolonial movements. Historian Sartono Kartodirdjo (1972) places the use of amulets and talismans in these movements within the context of the absence of political power among the lower classes, in the face of which ‘the *jimat* cult gave enormous spiritual security and encouragement’ (1972, 79). Those joining the resistance often visited religious specialists to receive a *jimat*, which would provide them with invulnerability or invisibility. The amulets were part of a broader esoteric practice intersecting with Sufi practices, which included rituals of initiation in esoteric arts (see also de Grave 2014). Pilgrimages to the tombs of Sufi masters or men and women with special powers were also made as part of the preparations for anticolonial resistance.

In Dutch colonial government sources, the use of amulets by ‘rebels’ and criminals, such as thieves and murderers, gets ample attention (e.g. Meijer 1935), overlooking the fact that the practice was widespread in all segments of society. As in other parts of the Muslim world, Indonesian Muslims did not consider the use of amulets to be part of (black) magic (*sihr*) but rather to belong to the realm of Islamic protection, thus, sustaining aspects of the Islamic faith (Fogg 2020, 82; Sevea 2020; Yahya 2016, 25; Gruber 2016, 34). This view contrasted with Dutch colonial scholarship that saw amulets as a part of magical practices outside the realm of scriptural religion.

26 European scholarship has dismissed these Islamic practices as ‘magic’ since the early 19th century, see Sevea (2020, 1). Whenever I use the term magic in this book, I refer to European conceptions of Islamic practices of power and protection, such as ‘performing miracles for material activities, mediating spirits and interceding between believers and God’ (Sevea 2020, 17).

2.1 *Colonial Control of 'Magic'*

In the following paragraphs I build on the extensive work of Margaret Wiener (2015; 2007; 2003) on the politics of magic in colonial Indonesia. She argues that colonial authorities in their approach to 'magic' set out to draw a distinction between European rationality and Indonesian irrationality, thus reinforcing positions of superiority and justifying the colonial project to bring modernity to the archipelago. In a sense, she claims, 'colonialism required native magic, as its foil and ground' (2003, 140). Yet, at the same time, the colonial positions were fractured and instable, and in practice, the colonial administration's views and actions were more complicated than its policies might suggest. Wiener states that dealing with magic in the everyday practice of administration required mediation work that produced 'disconcerting hybridities' (2003, 149), and could position colonial officials not only as producers of discourses about magic, but also as objects of these discourses (2003, 132). Therefore, it is important to bear in mind that the colonial relationship to magic was situated in the multi-sited imperial space:

"To speak of colonial magic in relation to the Indies would require attending to what Dutch actors (from different regions and different social classes) brought with them, rethinking their accounts of what Indonesians were doing, considering how Dutch efforts to render Indonesian activities as magic and/or witchcraft changed those activities, and noting which reworked concepts returned to the Netherlands – and also travelled beyond it. (2015, 485)"

Wiener's analysis focuses on Bali, and hence bypasses the Islamic element in many of these beliefs and practices. Accordingly, she misses some of the intricacies of the colonial relationship to magic. I argue that shifting the gaze to the role of Islam will show that the colonial positions and discourses not only attempted to draw a distinction between Europeans and non-Europeans, but also reinforced a distinction between certain

Indonesian beliefs, which were perceived as proper and to some extent fit for modernity, and other, superstitious and backward, beliefs. Additionally, introducing Islam enables a more focused analysis of the ways in which Dutch administrators linked belief systems to anticolonial resistance. Finally, bringing in museums as a site for the neutralisation of magical objects, my research presents examples of how these reworked concepts of magic were received and appropriated in the Netherlands.

Throughout the colonial period, the Dutch authorities ascribed subversive powers to amulets (Fogg 2020, 81), and, as I will show, Islamic amulets in particular. In the weekly mail reports (*mailrapporten*) of the period 1869 to 1881, sent by administrators from all over the colony to the Ministry of Colonies in The Hague, subversive incidents related to Islam were infrequently reported. Yet if they were, common elements in the reports were contacts with Arabs, the danger of the hajji, and 'rebels' gathering in mosques or at the homes of their teachers to collect white garments or amulets of invulnerability (Laffan 2002, 81; Florida 1997, 192). In Dutch eyes, both types of object signified preparation for armed struggle and martyrdom.

Like books and manuscripts, amulets and talismans were collected as intelligence, and as trophies from the bodies of enemies. In both instances, the magical objects were not only taken away to study, but also because of what they represented: a source of strength for the enemy. In his popular account of the exploits of the *marechaussee* in Aceh (1938), H.C. Zentgraaff, a journalist and former KNIL sergeant, describes a number of occasions when amulets were captured with the purposes of weakening the Acehnese resistance. For instance, when Cut Ali was killed the *marechaussee* took away his 'religious and magical archive', which according to Zentgraaff's extensive description (1938, 243–60), contained *hikayat prang sabi* manuscripts as well as books and tools for divination.

In 1881 in Palembang, an incident involving amulets occurred, which was the subject of extensive research by Michael Laffan (2002). Stirred up by

William Henry Read (1819–1909), the British-born consul of the Netherlands in Singapore, the colonial authorities began to worry about an imminent uprising, forecasted for 1882, or 1300 of the Muslim calendar. Read had learned from his cousin that Abdulhamid II, Sultan of the Ottoman Empire:

“[would] send letters to all places in Arabia with the order addressed to all Muslims [*muzelmanen*] to enact a war against the Kafirs which will take place in two years’ time. The Mohamedans believe that, with the turning of the year 1300 of the Arabian calendar, and as is foretold in the kitab, a leader called Imam Mahadie will appear in Mecca at the time, then they will have to wage war against the unbelievers. He will already have been born and will be about 38, though his birthplace is unknown. Forty days or forty years after his appearance nabi Isa [Jesus] will come to meet him and a few days later the Imam will die and the reign of nabi Isa will commence ... It is unknown to me to what extent the views above have found acceptance among the Mohamedans and what the preparations for the war, that they will wage in two years’ time, contain.”²⁷

The news of the imminent threat caused civil administrators in the Muslim regions of the Dutch East Indies to be on the lookout for suspected insurgents. In Palembang, a plot was uncovered that involved the relatives of the former sultan, who was dethroned by the Dutch in 1823. Laffan’s research uncovers how a toxic cocktail of fear for a pan-Islamic uprising, longstanding distrust of Arabs as the agitators of passive Indonesians, and a lot of misinformation, led to a witch-hunt against a number of Turks and Arabs residing in the archipelago. One of them, the Meccan ‘Abdul Wahib, who had served as an officer in the Ottoman army, was accused of holding ‘secret

meetings’ with the sultan’s relatives, in majority ‘fanatical Mohammedans’ and plot a massacre at the Palembang fort (*De locomotief: Samarangsch handels- en advertentie-blad* 1882). During his arrest, the suspicious and overzealous resident of Palembang, Philip Laging Tobias (1834–1910), confiscated ‘one thousand’ amulets, of which he later donated forty-six to the *Indische Instelling* in Delft (Fig. 30).²⁸ The amulets were probably supposed to be incriminating evidence against ‘Abdul Wahib, who, according to Laging Tobias, preached jihad (and whom he mistook for an Egyptian at first).²⁹ Moreover, ‘the intercepted documents proved that frantic efforts were made to stir up zealotry’, as part of a larger project of the Arabs to stimulate fanaticism among the population of Palembang (*Koloniaal verslag van 1882: 1. Nederlandsch (Oost-)Indië* 1882, 11–12).

A closer look at the amulets, however, reveals that they are of quite a different nature than jihadist literature. Printed in Turkey, each amulet consists of four strips of paper that glued together forms a scroll of 170 centimetres length and nine centimetres width. In terms of content, the scrolls had multiple purposes, densely filled with all sorts of prayers, invocations, magic squares and signs, protecting against different diseases and other misfortune. Prominently featured are the seven signs of Solomon, a frequent element in Islamic magic (Porter, Saif, and Savage-Smith 2017; Winkler 1930, 35–96). A picture of a sword indicates it can be used as protection against violence,

27 Letter R.B. Read, 11 February 1881 in mailrapport 259. NL-HaNA Ministerie van Koloniën, 1850–1900, 2.10.02 no. 6403. Translation adapted from Laffan (2002, 88–89).

28 Forty-six talismanic scrolls, printed in Turkey, late 19th century. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. nos. 7082-S-121-9-1/46. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/1035291> The information on the inventory card mentions that the amulets were confiscated from Achmat Effendi, a former Turkish officer, but the description of the incident highly resembles the events of ‘Abdul Wahib, so I reckon Ahmad must have been ‘Abdul Wahib. Information TMS database National Museum of World Cultures. Accessed 24 April 2020.

29 Telegram Frank, 8 February 1882 in mailrapport 201. NL-HaNA Ministerie van Koloniën, 1850–1900, 2.10.02 no. 6419.



FIGURE 30
 Some of the printed talismans, seized from 'Abdul Wahib in 1881. Forty-six talismanic scrolls, printed in Turkey, late 19th century. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. nos. 7082-S-121-9-1/46
 COURTESY OF MUSEUM NUSANTARA (1962–2013)

while two images of intestines at the bottom aligned with prayers shows it is particularly effective against intestinal problems and flatulence. The large number of identical scrolls apparently in 'Abdul Wahib's possession indicates that he must have imported them for business purposes. The panicky reaction to the amulets is indicative of the colonial administration's fear of foreign, in particular Ottoman and pan-Islamic, interference with the Muslims in the Indies, which could lead to political awareness and encourage dissent. The presence of Arabic texts, indecipherable to most in the administration (and in fact, to many Indonesians), fuelled these fears. The incident, therefore, was not an isolated one. In the correspondence archive of Snouck Hurgronje there are numerous letters of civil administrators enquiring about a particular *primbon* or *jimat* they confiscated from citizens in their districts (Gobée and Adriaanse 1959, 2:1182–1236). Yet, without exception Snouck Hurgronje informed them that the confiscated materials, according to him, were heterodox riddles and 'contained nothing of direct or indirect political meaning' or 'did not point to a nature or activity that could harm peace and calm' (ibid).

Like 'Abdul Wahib's amulet scrolls, a number of Islamic amulets entered the museums in the Netherlands through the legal system (Fig. 31). Article 545 of the Criminal Code of the Dutch East Indies, in effect from 1918 onwards, stipulated that divination and dream interpretation were prohibited, and articles 546 and 547 forbade the possession and sale of amulets or the use of amulets while testifying under oath (*Wetboek van strafrecht voor Nederlandsch-Indië* 1917). Besides amulets, there was a legal ban on *ilmu* (Javanese: *ngelmu*, from the Arabic *ilm*, science), a generic term for magical practices, if it was used to encourage commitment of criminal acts without being caught. Although the code was valid for all citizens of the Dutch East Indies, including Europeans, these articles were drafted with the native population in mind, who were presumed to have a 'different psyche' (Fasseur 1988, 43). Similar stipulations

existed under the Police Criminal Code of 1872 (*Staatsblad van Nederlandsch-Indië* 1872 besluit 110 and 111).

The legal ban was the result of the colonial government's fear of disorder and dissent, and although the ban targeted all kinds of amulets, magic as such was never a major concern for the colonial authorities (Wiener 2015). This was also the view in colonial circles. Henri Swart, Vice President of the Council of the Dutch Indies, stated that the stipulations did not result in 'draconian persecution'.³⁰ Thus, in practice, the legislation was aimed against two types of delinquency: crime and political revolt, the latter in particular if it was Islamically inspired. Amulets were regularly found during house searches and police arrests (cf. Bloembergen 2012; Meijer 1935). In addition, when suspects or witnesses were strip searched before trial, any amulets or talismans they were wearing were confiscated. Frequently, witnesses wore the protective bundles, wrapped in a comb or other headgear, so the amulets would be between them and the Qur'an held above their heads when taking the oath. In this way, the amulets would protect them when committing perjury (Cassutto 1927, 265; Hirsch 1919, 582).³¹ The jurist Bernard Taverne (1919, 147) claimed that, despite the oath on the Qur'an, perjury occurred often because the system of justice was controlled by a Christian government, and disowned by the Muslims in the colony.

2.2 *The Jimat and Islam Policies*

The ban on amulets and divinational tools was in line with the Dutch colonial policies vis-a-vis Islam. Throughout the colonial period, the colonial

³⁰ Letter H.N.A. Swart to to Governor General J.P. van Limburg Stirum, 2 July 1919. Leiden University Library (KITLV)/Collection G.A.J. Hazeu.

³¹ For example, the amulet found in the headdress of witness Hasan, Java, c.1930. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. TM-1170-6a. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/48003>. Three amulets found in the headdress of witnesses, Java, c.1910. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. TM-H-827. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/203433>.

government operated with the principle to closely monitor but not to interfere in Islamic affairs, unless there was political anti-colonial activity or if Islamic practices resulted in 'social unrest' (Bloembergen and Eickhoff 2020, 51; Buskens and Kommers 2002). Maintaining peace and order, in other words to preserve *rust* (calm), had highest priority. The ban was justified with the claim that it would 'protect' the 'gullible natives' from being exploited and discourage them from committing criminal acts (Cassutto 1927, 264; Hirsch 1919, 581–83). This line of reasoning followed from the Ethical Policy that was adopted in 1901 which aimed to educate and enlighten the Indonesian population (Wiener 2003, 138; see also Locher-Scholten 1981). Jurist Abraham Hirsch (1919, 582) reasoned that 'these practices could best be combatted by educating and developing the native', but as long as this goal had not been reached, the option of repression should be in place. Moreover, the legislator referred to 'rebel leaders' who had used such objects to rally the population against the government, had used *ilmu* to bless weapons, or provided amulets for invulnerability. The fact that amulets were 'so often of sizes and materials that made them easy to overlook and easy to conceal and which enabled their possessors to act in ways that were otherwise unlikely, made them especially threatening' (Wiener 2015, 511). All of this undermined the public peace and order. Yet, as in other cases of policies on Islam, there was a certain ambiguity in the colonial government's actions; the fact that Dutch legislators felt compelled to impose a ban on magical and divinational attributes was also a sign of a degree of belief in their effectiveness, if only in the minds of 'gullible natives'. This was the belief that the colonial authorities wanted to eradicate, both because it represented the 'superstitious and irrational' beliefs, perceived to be outside Islam, which were incompatible with the Ethical Policy's civilising mission, and because it was a source of revolt. The world of Islamic mysticism and protection was impenetrable and elusive, and above all it was deemed unreliable and unpredictable, and therefore it had to be contained.

The ban occasionally resulted in intense debate, which lays bare the paradoxes of colonial discourse, as can be seen in two cases in 1919, concerning multiple batches of printed amulets detected at the port of Tanjung Priok. These amulets, judging from the descriptions provided by the Attorney General's office, seem to have been similar to those found in 'Abdul Wahib's possession.³² Printed with Arabic text, most likely published in Cairo or Istanbul, the first type of amulet focused on the seven signs of Solomon, and the second on the miracles performed by the Prophet Muhammad. Both were illustrated with common protective symbols such as the scorpion, the snake, and Ali ibn Abi Talib's sword *dhu'l-faqar*. The discovery led to a heated correspondence between the office of the Attorney General, Gerhard Wilhelm Uhlenbeck (1865–1933), and G.A.J. (Godard) Hazeu (1870–1929), Snouck Hurgronje's successor to the office of Native and Arab affairs, who was then acting as High Commissioner. The Attorney's office insisted that the legislation against amulets was to be seen in the context of another ban, that of the import and distribution of dangerous foreign printed matter, which came into effect in 1900 (decision 317) and was based on similar grounds of disturbance of public order ('Lijst der wetten en besluiten vervat in het staatsblad van Nederlandsch-Indië voor het jaar 1900' 1901). Hazeu, who was generally seen as having a 'soft spot' for the Indonesians, expressed his surprise at the legislation, based on the fact that the use of *ilmu* and amulets was widespread; he argued that 'more than 90% of the native population uses amulets or talismans of any type, without noticeable disturbance of the public order'.³³ His advice was to allow the amulets, citing Snouck Hurgronje's policy of being strict on criminals but tolerant

32 Appendix to letter G.W. Uhlenbeck to G.A.J. Hazeu, 33 (sic) May 1919. Leiden University Library (KITLV)/Collection G.A.J. Hazeu.

33 Letter G.A.J. Hazeu to Governor General J.P. van Limburg Stirum, 27 May 1919. Leiden University Library (KITLV)/Collection G.A.J. Hazeu.



FIGURE 31 Amulets, confiscated at various *landraden* in Java. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. nos. TM-630-12a/TM-865-2/TM-865-5/TM-865-7/TM-1170-3f

of those who provide amulets to repel evil and bring luck (Gobée and Adriaanse 1959, 2:1222–31). In the meantime, he consulted Barend ter Haar (1892–1941), chair of the native court (*landraad*) of Yogyakarta. Ter Haar provided Hazeu with a loophole in the legislation: technically speaking, these were not amulets but templates to create amulets. Moreover, he pointed out that the law was inconsistent because it also prohibited amulets that did no harm at all. Yet if decision 317 was invoked, this meant in effect that printed amulets were treated differently than other types made from ‘animal teeth or whatever’.³⁴ In other words, the jurisprudence discriminated against Islamic amulets, whereas other types that could serve similar criminal purposes were left untouched. Armed with these arguments, Hazeu insisted that the amulets

should be allowed to enter the country when, just a few weeks later, new batches of printed talismans were discovered in Tanjung Priok. This time the Governor General gave in. In the same year, however, Hazeu was ‘promoted’ to a professorship at Leiden University after being accused of being too lenient on political Islam during the Garut affair, in which amulets, again, played a supporting role (Laffan 2011, 205–8).

The arguments brought forward for and against the ban revolved around the same questions, as the Garut Affair of 1919 discloses. At the centre of this incident was a farmer, Hajji Hasan, who resisted the mandatory sale, at a fixed price, of rice to the government. The government responded with force and Hajji Hassan was killed, along with several others, a course of action that Hazeu judged indefensible. In the aftermath of the affair, the Dutch authorities made much of Hajji Hasan’s visit to a *jimat* seller, and his alleged connections to the political movement *Sarekat Islam*. The

34 Letter B. ter Haar to B.J.O. Schrieke, 28 June 1919. Letter B. ter Haar to G.A.J. Hazeu, 13 Juli 1919. Leiden University Library (KITLV)/Collection G.A.J. Hazeu.

prominent Javanese aristocrat and intellectual Soetatmo Soeriokoesoemo (1888–1924) provided a sharp analysis (1919) of the affair.³⁵ He concluded that ‘neither the flawed administrative measure nor the passive resistance of the people can count as the actual cause of this sad incident. The suggestive root cause is the current opinion about the *jimat*. This is, however, barely noticed in the general excitation and nervousness’ (Soeriokoesoemo 1919, 160). The essence, he stated, is a clash in opinion. For the Javanese the *jimat* is an essential part of Javanese culture and ‘a symbol of his faith’, while the European association is one of death and destruction. The authorities ‘in their blindness’ turned to ‘reasoning backwards’, as if they were infected by the ‘*jimat* bacillus’, which ‘leads even the foreigner to believe in miracles’. The real question was, according to Soeriokoesoemo, why did people revolt? Do they revolt because they are invulnerable or believe in invulnerability? Or do they have a certain goal in mind? The answer was that ‘every revolt has its origin in dissatisfaction with existing or new situations’ (Soeriokoesoemo 1919, 162). In other words, the obsessive focus on the *jimat* provided the government with an excuse to concentrate on the symptoms of resistance, rather than its root cause.

In his analysis Soeriokoesoemo went further than Snouck Hurgronje and Hazeu, who as government advisors for Native Affairs were continuously balancing Muslim piety and protection of the colonial status quo. Both advisors went to great lengths to explain to the administration that amulets were innocent and omnipresent in daily life in Java. Yet neither disputed the right of the government to interfere with religious practice when the colonial state of affairs was undermined. Snouck Hurgronje went as far as to specify seven types of behaviour that the government should outlaw, including ‘those who predict the imminent reversal of social or political relationships’ and ‘those [...] who distribute *jimats* of which the knowledge and

possession is suggested to be a remedy during such a reversal’ (Gobée and Adriaanse 1959, 2:1231). At the same time, their viewpoints are indicative of the divergent opinions in the colonial administration, which varied between a hard-line approach and the greater lenience of the Office for Native Affairs.

2.3 *War of Independence*

The distrust of Islamic amulets continued to the very end of colonial rule in Indonesia. During the revolution of 1945–1949, Islamic militias fought with a future independent Indonesian state, based on Islamic principles. In various places, special prayers for independence were held (Fogg 2020, 83–84). The fighters of the Islamic militias (and those of the Indonesian armed forces as well) frequently made use of protective rituals and amulets, believing that they would render them invulnerable (de Grave 2014). Such amulets ranged from a small slip of paper issued by local ‘ulama, sometimes wrapped in a belt around the waist, to a strip of fabric worn across the forehead when going into battle, to an heirloom *keris* dagger, blessed by an Islamic leader and imbued with power (Fogg 2016, 119). For those fighters, ‘a wide range of non-textual Islamic practices were taken as not only aligned with Islamic beliefs but at the core of an Islamic method of fighting this war’ (Fogg 2020, 92). The Islamic militias were typically formed in local communities, and often the fighters were recruited in Islamic schools. Kevin Fogg (2016, 121–22) underlines the religious character of the struggle of the militias:

“The new role for *ulama* and the new vehicle of Islamic militias both characterized the Indonesian Revolution in many communities. This was more than Muslim participation in a greater, neutral, nationalist decolonisation struggle. Instead, by putting religious leaders in charge of their communities and entering battle in Islamic groupings, deploying Islamic practices, and inspired by Islamic messages, one can see how Islamic communities chose to participate in Islamic ways, suggesting that they understood the struggle to be a religious one, too.”

35 For the ideas of Soeriokoesoemo, see also Fakh (2012) and Bloembergen and Eickhoff (2020, 150–52).



FIGURE 32
Waist belt with pockets for amulets, seized from Kusumo, Yogyakarta, 1946–49. Collection Museum Bronbeek inv. no. 1996/03/14-4-1. The items, including amulets on paper with the Throne verse (*ayat al-kursi*) and various formulas, are glued on a wooden board together with a 1962 letter from the Royal Tropical Institute with an explanation of the Arabic texts, probably written by Remt Mellema

This renewed Islamic militancy clearly made the Dutch forces nervous. The archives of the Netherland Forces Intelligence Service (NEFIS) contain numerous documents, including several amulets, seized from Islamic militias and accompanied by explanations for the intelligence officers to study.³⁶ These range from printed talisman scrolls with the seven signs of Solomon to formulas scribbled on small pieces of paper and elaborate mystical schemes based on the *‘abjad* system. They include, for instance, a sleeve band of the Pemberontakan Kaum Muslimin (“Revolt of the Muslim People”) militia with the first part of Qur’an 3:19 ‘The true religion with God is Islam’, captured in Tasikmalaya (West Java) in July 1946. On the inside a handwritten paper amulet is sewn, containing the *basmala* and *huruf muqatta’at*, the mysterious letters that appear at the beginning of some chapters of the Qur’an. Evidence that fighters of the Indonesian army also wore amulets comes in the form of an amulet belt, seized in Yogyakarta from Kusomo, an officer of the Indonesian armed forces (TNI) (Fig. 32). A cloth, which was seized from the Siliwangi division near Cianjur, together with a typewriter, six rifles, a gun and several documents, tell a similar story.³⁷ The textual programme on the cloth references the worldview of the Ba’Alawi Sufi order, which originates in the Hadhramaut and spread to Indonesia along with the Hadhrami diaspora, including invocations of the great Sufi shaikhs ‘Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani and Ahmad Rifa’i as well as the lesser-known Ahmad Safiyuddin. In bold letters it states the *hawqala*, the *basmala* and various *salawat* (salutations upon

the Prophet).³⁸ There are also some images of daggers and a gun. In Islamic Southeast Asia, guns were perceived as both material and supernatural objects, or technologies connected to the *‘alam ghaib*, the world of the unseen. There was a close link to Sufism, with gun gurus providing spiritual guidance on shooting and some (European-made) guns even had Sufi genealogies (Sevea 2020, 181–210).

2.4 *Haunted by Teungku di Cot Plieng*

One of the conclusions Margaret Wiener draws about the colonial relationship with magic is that the ‘efforts by colonial administrators to engage with native populations for whom “magic” was part of the fabric of everyday life invariably produced disconcerting hybridities’ (2003, 149). She refers to the acts of manipulation performed in colonial government, which made ‘tricking themselves [...] as important as duping the natives’ (ibid). Wiener asserts that the rejection of magic as part of the Dutch self-image of rational control, in practice was bound to contradict itself. The case of the *rante bui*, one of the most powerful amulets of the Aceh War, which I discuss below, is ridden with such contradictions. It involves, once again, Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje, but the main character is an *‘alim* from Pidie named Teungku di Cot Plieng (d. 1905).

In the second week of October 1884 Snouck Hurgronje took a photograph of four Acehnese pilgrims, unaware of the fact that in twenty years’ time one of them would become one of his fiercest opponents (Fig. 33). Snouck was in Jeddah as part of his assignment for the Dutch Ministry of Colonies to collect information on the Indonesian community residing in Arabia, and, in particular, to find out whom might pose a threat to the Dutch rule in Indonesia. He used the opportunity

36 National Archives/Netherland Forces Intelligence Service (NEFIS) and Central Military Intelligence Service (CMI) in the Dutch East Indies inv. nos. 3512/3585/3898/4746. The National Archive of the Republic of Indonesia (ANRI) also has several amulets that were used during the revolution, see Fogg (2020, 86). NIOD has one dated 1942–1945. NL-AsdNIOD Collectie Voorwerpen Nederlands-Indië, 417 no. 2.

37 Amulet cloth, Cianjur, c.1949. Collection Wereldmuseum Rotterdam inv. no. WM-74271. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/1123725>.

38 The invocation of ‘Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani (1077–1166) was common in the *debus*, or invulnerability rituals, of Banten and Cirebon, while the shaikh was known for the protection he provides against injury. Information provided by Martin van Bruinessen, 1995. Wereldmuseum Rotterdam archives.



FIGURE 33 Group portrait of four pilgrims from Aceh and their *wakils* (local agents) at the Dutch Consulate in Jeddah, October 1884 (photograph Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje). Second from the right (sitting) is Teungku di Cot Plieng. Plate from *Bilder-Atlas zu Mekka von Dr. C. Snouck Hurgronje* (1888). Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. TM-60057109

to pursue his own research interests, which were both philological and ethnographic in nature. As part of the ethnographic analysis he intended to make, Snouck Hurgronje took portrait photographs of the Indonesian pilgrims and the local Jeddah elite at the sunlit court yard of the Dutch Consulate (Van der Wal 2011). The Indonesian community was quite numerous, as many went on hajj and extended their stay to study with the eminent *‘ulama* present in Mecca. Teungku di Cot Plieng was one of them; he stayed in Mecca for at least ten years and left around 1895.

Almost twenty years after the photo session at the consulate, the two men would oppose each other. After the liquidation of resistance leader Teungku Chik di Tiro in 1891, and Teungku di Cot Plieng’s subsequent return to Aceh, the latter

became an eminent leader of the so-called *‘ulama* resistance. According to Snouck, this was in fact the principal reason of the Teungku’s return. Snouck Hurgronje strongly warned Governor General van Heutsz against Teungku di Cot Plieng, describing him as ‘our main enemy among the *‘ulama*’ (Gobée and Adriaanse 1957, 1:306). A subsequent request to return to Mecca was declined, as Snouck cautioned Van Heutsz that such a desire could only be understood within in the Islamic concept of *hijra* (migration). If Teungku di Cot Plieng, the most esteemed *‘alim* of the Pidie region, migrated to Mecca, he could signal to his followers that Aceh had become *dar al-harb*, a land where Muslims cannot live according to Islamic rules. Being seen as the most prominent enemy of the Dutch in Pidie, Teungku di Cot Plieng was relentlessly

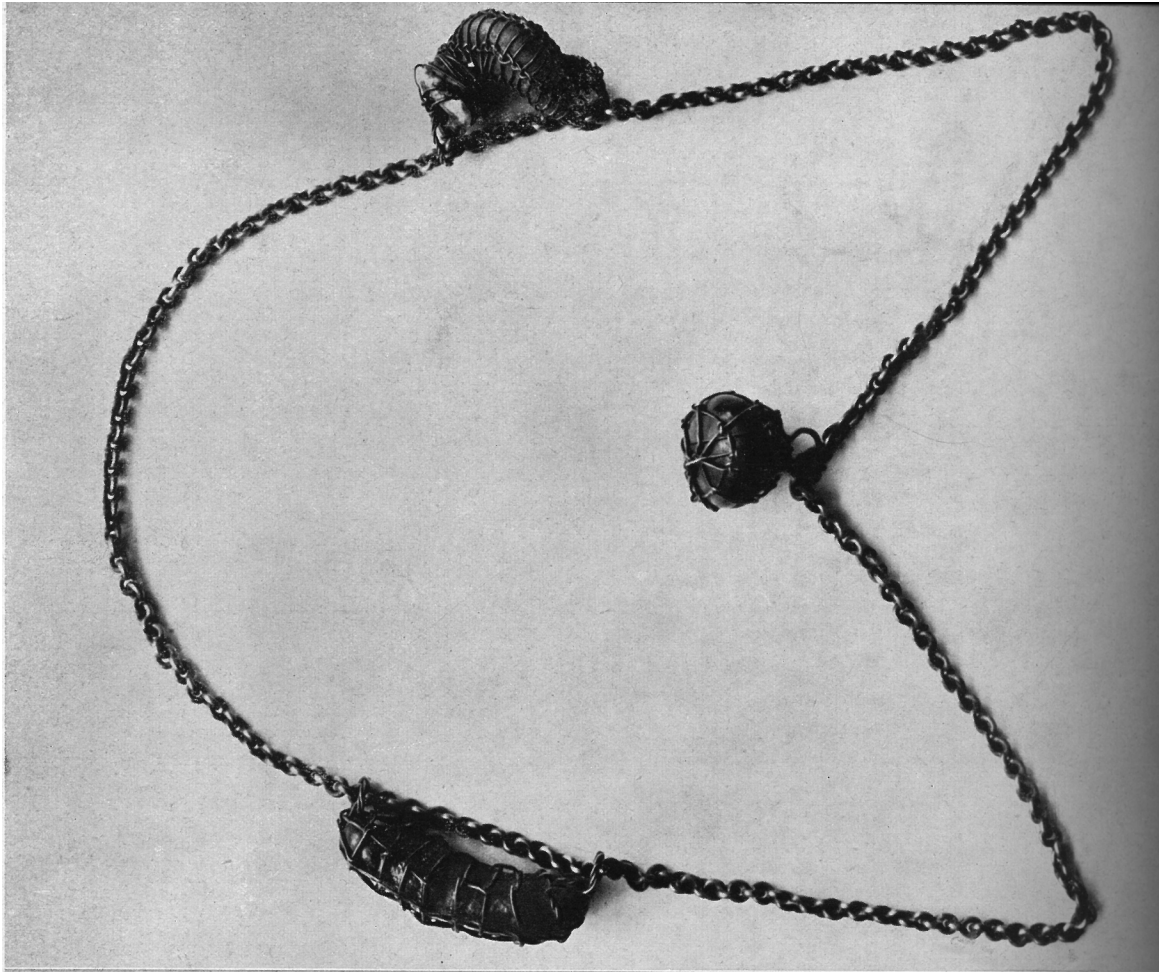


FIGURE 34 Teungku Cot di Plieng's *rante bui*. Image from *The Blood of the People: Revolution and the End of Traditional Rule in Northern Sumatra*, by Anthony Reid (1979). Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. TM-599-2

chased by the KNIL. In 1901, Van Daalen claimed to have traced and killed him but that turned out to be false information. Only in 1905 was the Teungku accidentally found and liquidated.

In what follows, I will analyse the relationship between the Acehese *ulama* resistance and the Dutch colonial establishment, including museums, through the biographical analysis of one of Teungku di Cot Plieng's most valuable possessions: his *rante bui* amulet (Fig. 34).³⁹ This *jimat* was an amulet of invulnerability, made out of a silver

chain and three petrified objects: one unidentified bullet-shaped thing (possibly an egg), a petrified caterpillar, and most importantly, a *rante bui* (boar chain), a rarely occurring petrified worm said to have been carried in the nose by a wild boar. The petrification had made the insects become almost metal-like in appearance and charged with miraculous powers. *Rante bui* amulets were extremely rare and were seen as the most powerful among the *peugawe*, a class of amulets made from petrified animals. This, of course, made them into highly coveted trophies. Indeed, as my analysis shows, the *rante bui* tells a rich metaphorical story of the Dutch fear of Acehese power and the museum as a site to disable it.

39 *Rante bui*, Aceh, 19th century. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. TM-599-2. The *rante bui* is missing.

I start with a reading of the colonial-period stories circulating about Teungku di Cot Plieng's *jimat*. I am reading these stories 'along the grain' (Stoler 2009), in order to uncover the colonial attitudes and sentiments towards 'magical' objects, but more importantly, towards the owners of these objects. The first story was noted down in 1930, when former *marechaussee* officer Th. J. (Theo) Veltman (1868–1943) donated the *jimat* to the Colonial Institute:

"In all of Aceh (during the war period) there were only three *rante buis* acknowledged as such by the Acehnese. The first one is in the possession of Teuku Chik of Salamanga (a gift from his father-in-law Teuku Nè of Meurasa). The second belongs to Teuku Hajji Brahim Njong, the third one belonged to Teungku di Cot Plieng, one of the most prominent ulama leaders. When the last-mentioned was killed in war in 1904(?) this *jimat* fell into our hands. It was donated to the guide Wakil Wahab, one of the most useful guides during the Aceh war, who had always remained faithful to us.⁴⁰ Wakil Wahab eventually was transferred from Koeta Radja [Banda Aceh] and gifted this *jimat* as a *tanda tangan* [signature, here: souvenir] to the former Lieutenant Colonel Veltman, whom he still knew from Veltman's period as a lieutenant in the XXII mukims. This happened when he [Veltman] was transferred from Koeta Radja to Sigli to replace chief Scheepens. The donor states that during the war huge amounts were paid for *rante bui jimat*s. He estimates the price that the above-mentioned people paid for them was around a couple of thousands of Singapore dollars. An amount of two to

three thousand dollars in payment was mentioned to him."⁴¹

The second story was published in 1938 by journalist and Aceh War veteran H.C. Zentgraaff (1938, 224):

"They took the *rante bui* of the Teungku's body and gave it to van Daalen. Yet he was not the kind of man for such a magical thing and he donated it to Waki Wahab, the Acehnese man who worked many years with us as a spy. The 'lobe', that's how they called him because he had a protuberance to his neck. He could use such a protective thing; spies live an unhealthy life ... The 'lobe' actually was a great sinner and he would have felt uneasy with the amulet of a holy man like the martyred ulama. That's how it happened that, when the big job in Pidie was finished, he gave it as a present to Veltman who was ill. Perhaps it would cure him, the donor must have thought. But Veltman did not wear it either; men of this kind put more trust in an ell of sharp steel and a good service revolver. He is probably the only European who once possessed a '*rante bui*'; later he donated it to the Colonial Museum in Amsterdam, and there it still is, as part of an ethnographic collection from Aceh."

The stories express various beliefs surrounding the body and magical powers, and here we see an intermingling of Acehnese beliefs and the Dutch appropriation of these beliefs. For instance, Acehnese beliefs held that objects that had been in contact with a dead body have strong powers (Kreemer 1923, 2:581). The body of the Teungku, however, was no ordinary human body, various Dutch sources assert. On account of his holiness, the body did not decompose. Let's return to Zentgraaff's account:

40 Waki (from the Arabic *wakil*, deputy) Wahab was a nobleman and a relative of Panglima Polem IX. Wahab worked for years as one of the informants (euphemistically called 'guides') for the KNIL. Military and civil governor Klaas van der Maaten called him 'my Acehnese confidant and helper' (Van der Maaten 1948, 1:43). See also the photo of Waki Wahab, taken in Van der Maaten's office between 1903 and 1906, Collection Leiden University Library inv. no. KITLV 90416. <http://hdl.handle.net/1887.1/item:925753>.

41 Memorandum of information provided by Th.J. Veltman, probably recorded by J.C. Lamster, 7 April 1930. NL-HaNA Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen 1910–1995, 2.20.69 no. 7508.

“The *rante bui* that was found on his body had not been able to ward off his fate. Doesn’t magic teach us, all over the archipelago, that mystical things do not remain of value and will lose their powers in the end? But still: see what happened to his body. It was taken to one of the bivouacs for identification and after a few days it still showed no sign of decomposition. Even Panglima Polem was called to identify him. He bent over the dead body that did not smell, surrounded by a group of Acehnese who were stupefied with awe by this proof of Allah’s mercy. ‘This was God’s secret’, the old Polem told me the last time we met.” (Zentgraaff 1938, 223)

Zentgraaff (1938, 223) relates that the decline of the Teungku was brought about in 1904, when the Dutch troops discovered his hiding place, and he had to flee, losing his Qur’an and his amuletic seal stamp (Fig. 35).⁴² The seal had the shape of the Prophet Muhammad’s sandal. From the thirteenth century, the Prophet’s sandals were kept in Damascus as relics. Images of the tracings of the two sandals (*na’lain*) or one of them were often used as an amulet, carried at all times on one’s body and functioning effectively as extensions of the relics (McGregor 2021). During the 19th century, these images gained significance throughout the Muslim world as essential symbols utilized by the anti-colonial resistance movement (Flood 2025). The stamp had once been the property of Teungku Chik di Tiro (Gallop 2019, no. 422; Snouck Hurgronje 1906a, 1:181), also known as Muhammad Saman, and as such it was a *pusaka* relic that transferred the Prophet’s powers onto the Teungku and then onto his successor. Teungku Chik di Tiro’s seal was so important that after the

loss of the original stamp, a wooden version of it was carried by his son and successor, which was later captured as well (Du Croo 1943, 156; 163).

Like the seal stamp, the *rante bui* was charged with powers from various sources: from the petrified boar chain, from the physical contact with Teungku di Cot Plieng, and from his dead body. In other words, the *rante bui* was a sacred heirloom, a *pusaka* object that through its history had acquired special physical and spiritual qualities. No longer fully protected, with only the *rante bui* as his main source of defence, the Teungku had become vulnerable, or as Zentgraaff puts it, ‘his armour had been broken’. It was now a matter of fate. ‘All that is written is *di taqdir*’, Zentgraaff writes, ‘it will happen to the believer, and that’s how the *ulama*’s ill fate approached’ (1938, 223), in this way validating Islamic beliefs in predestination (*al-qadar*).

In the Dutch sources the Teungku’s saintly status is a recurrent theme. For instance, newspaper *Algemeen Handelsblad* (1905) wrote about the Teungku’s ‘exceptional reputation of holiness’ (*zeldzame reuk van heiligheid*), which was enhanced by his travels to Mecca and the hermit’s life he led. Van Heutsz wrote to Snouck Hurgronje that he had been able to find Acehnese individuals who were willing to betray the sultan’s hiding place, but he never found anybody who would betray Teungku di Cot Plieng, because he was too *kramat* (Gobée and Adriaanse 1957, 1:271; see also Zentgraaff 1938, 223). In the story of the *rante bui* we see this theme make an appearance when Waki Wahab could not wear the *jimat* because, as a collaborator with the Dutch, he led a sinful life. According to Acehnese beliefs, the efficiency of a *peugawe*, such as the *rante bui*, was conditional on the wearer leading a religious life; if this was not the case, the *jimat* would not protect the wearer’s body but rather cause irritation (Snouck Hurgronje 1906b, 11:37). As Indo-Europeans, who grew up in ethnically mixed families in Makassar and Semarang respectively, and who were experts on Acehnese culture, Van Daalen and Veltman must have been well-aware of such beliefs.⁴³ It is,

42 I was unable to trace the Qur’an. The silver seal stamp was donated by Van Daalen to the Batavian Society (Bataviaasch Genootschap 1908, XLVI 1908:LXXVIII). It is now part of the collections of Museum Nasional Indonesia, inv. no. E165. The museum also owns a blood-stained Acehnese flag showing depictions of the sandal seal, a donation by General Van Heutsz, inv. no. 9813. Snouck Hurgronje owned an imprint of the seal, which is now part of the collections of Leiden University Library, inv. no. Or. 8232.3. https://catalogue.leidenuniv.nl/permalink/f/q6ue0j/UBL_ALMA21323619860002711.

43 In the sources about both officers (e.g. Naarding 1938; Zentgraaff 1938), it is often mentioned that they

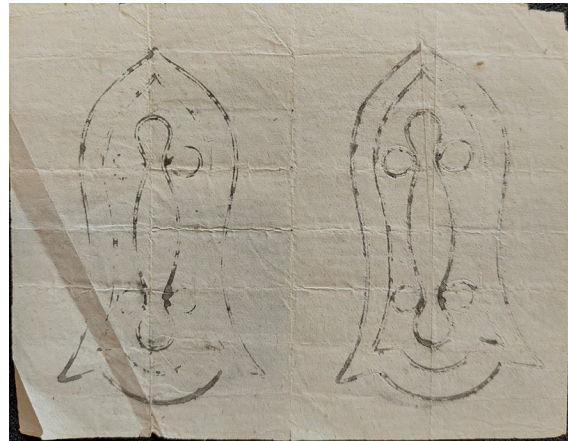


FIGURE 35 Silver seal stamp, seized from Teungku Cot di Plieng in 1904. 7 × 4 cm. Collection Museum Nasional Indonesia inv. no. E 165. Imprint of the stamp, owned by Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje. Collection Leiden University Library, inv. no. Or. 8232.3

PHOTOGRAPHY AUTHOR

however, their validation of these beliefs and the apparent contradiction of the colonial self-image that is noteworthy.

In the stories various tropes come together that are by now familiar. Zentgraaff's account juxtaposes European rational beliefs ("he was not the kind of man for such a magical thing") and scientific progress ("men of this kind put more trust in an ell of sharp steel and a good service revolver") against Acehese beliefs in supernatural forces. His apparent validation of these beliefs primarily serves to reinforce the contrast. Islam is framed as a mysterious and strong power, symbolised by *pusaka* objects such as the *rante bui*, which feed the opposition to Dutch rule. The capture of the *rante bui* obviously made it a trophy and a celebration of the power of the Dutch over Teungku

di Cot Plieng. As a source of strength, it had to be contained and silenced. Indeed, the storyteller emphasises the role of Frits van Daalen, the highest in command, who was the first to receive the *jimat*. Hence, also, the emphasis on the rarity and high financial value of the *rante bui* in Veltman's account. Yet, the amulet is also a relic, and more precisely a contact relic that derives its power from bodily contact with the Teungku; therefore, it was important to mention it was taken from the Teungku's body. As such it is not a mere symbol or indicator of the Teungku's presence, after his death, but it is an actual physical embodiment of him (cf. Walsham 2010, 12). The Dutch appropriation of this belief can be seen in the circulation of the *rante bui*, which was passed on from person to person, like a hot potato, because nobody felt relaxed in its presence, rather they felt *uneasy*, as Zentgraaff writes. The transfers of the amulet convey another belief, the belief in its magical powers,

spoke the Acehese language and were familiar with Acehese culture.

as it was given away because it could assist another person – in his dangerous profession or illness. Yet as the *rante bui* was inalienable to Teungku di Cot Plieng, the amulet was imbued with the intrinsic qualities of its previous owner. His powers were, in effect, those that were passed around and which caused great anxiety and uneasiness to its successive owners, blurring the boundaries of the dichotomy between rationality and superstition that undergirded colonial policies.

2.5 *The Afterlife of the Jimat as a Museum Object*

Museums welcomed the acquisition of the amulets, whether they were seized as criminal evidence or war loot. In 1884, Lindor Serrurier, director of the Museum of Ethnology, wrote to Philip Laging Tobias, then Governor of Aceh, and later to his successor Henry Demmeni (1830–1886), asking them to send ‘weapons, clothing, household goods, and other objects that were taken as booty during expeditions or that belonged to executed native criminals.’⁴⁴ He also requested Governor General Pijnacker Hordijk to send the amulets that were seized during ‘the recent disturbances in the Surakarta regency’ (i.e. in 1889) to the museum. The Governor General thought that, as such, it was a good idea to make the amulets available for ethnological research. However, he preferred the museum of the Batavian Society as a destination, so that the amulets could stay in the Dutch East Indies. In this way, the administration would be able to consult the collection on a daily basis and gain insight into the ‘population’s frame of mind’ and, especially, into which papers steered up ‘unrest, discontent, fanaticism and hatred of the

government.’⁴⁵ He ordered that the amulets be sent to the Batavian Society, to start a study collection there, and to send any doubles to Leiden (decision no. 7, 9 July 1890). In later years, a number of such amulets, coming from the courts of indigenous affairs (*landraden*) in Java, ended up at the Colonial Institute and the *Indische Instelling*, as gifts of administrators, lawyers and judges.⁴⁶

Once the amulets had entered the museum collections, they followed a familiar pattern. They were stripped of their political, military and legal significance (no inventory card or catalogue mentions the ban on amulets) and then re-interpreted in an ethnological framework. The publications on which the object descriptions were based deployed the frame of Islam as religion; amulets were primarily viewed as expressions of animistic and superstitious beliefs that conflicted with sincerely Islamic practices. A popular source in the museums for the interpretation of amulets from Java was *De Javaansche geestenwereld* (“The Javanese world of spirits”), written by clerk and amateur ethnologist Hendrik Alexander van Hien (1849–1924) and first published in 1894.⁴⁷ Van Hien’s

44 Letter L. Serrurier to Ph. Laging Tobias, 30 June 1884. NL-LdnRMV A1-192-445b/447. Letter L. Serrurier to H. Demmeni, 30 November 1884. NL-LdnRMV A1-193-568/570. In 1886, Demmeni indeed sent 35 objects to the museum, but it is not clear how he acquired them. Some seem to have been commissioned. Various objects, Aceh, late 19th century. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. nos. RV-540-1/29.

45 Letter Governor General C. Pijnacker Hordijk to Minister of the Colonies Æ. Mackay, 9 July 1890. NL-LdnRMV A1-15-170/179. The minutes of the Batavian Society indeed mention the receipt of a collection of amulets from Surakarta, seized by the police (Bataviaasch Genootschap 1891, XXVIII 1890:127). For the next two years the Batavian Society received more confiscated amulets, but then the influx stopped.

46 I have traced six donations of groups of amulets that originate from *landraden* in Java in the NMMV collections: series TM-630, TM-864, TM-865, TM-1170, 7082-S-84 and TM-H-827. Most are pieces of paper on which Islamic supplications and invocations are written. See also Meijer (1935) who discusses a group of amulets that was part of the collection of the Police Museum in Surabaya (Wiener 2007, 57). Snouck Hurgronje claimed to have researched a collection from Surakarta, possibly the collection at the Batavian Society (Gobée and Adriaanse 1959, 2:1226).

47 H.A. van Hien was a product of Dutch Empire. Born into one of the families governing the Dutch Gold Coast (present-day Ghana), and of mixed Dutch African descent, he started a career in the Dutch East Indies in 1877. Due to a lack of formal training, and

starting point was the prevailing idea of Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and Christianity as superficial layers on top of older animist religious traditions. Written in an entertaining tone of voice and drawing heavily on the textual genre of experiential knowledge of the 'native', which was popular around the turn of the century (see Kommers 2002), Van Hien's account focuses on the strange and exotic behaviour of the Javanese.⁴⁸ According to him, Javanese Muslims hardly knew anything about Islam, and under the heading of Islam numerous other religious traditions were practised (Van Hien 1912, 3). With these views, Van Hien can be grouped with the dominant current in colonial scholarship which stated that core indigenous animistic beliefs remained strong. In academic circles, Van Hien's work was generally seen as ethnologically descriptive rather than for its contribution to new theoretical, methodological or discursive perspectives (Wiener 2013, 505). It was, however, mined for its data on Javanese customs, exactly the reason for its popularity among museum curators.

In the case of the Acehnese amulets and talismans, Kreemer's *Atjèh* (1922; 1923) was consulted. This publication starts its extensive description of the different types of amulets with the refutation of protective practices: 'The same tendency to regard peculiarities and strange individuals to be miracles – and to ascribe even more miracles to them, with the help of the imagination – has led [them] to consider objects that attract special attention to be amulets, i.e. as magical things' (1923, 2:576). Kreemer's amused tone positions himself as the lucid observer who distances himself from the foolish beliefs of the irrational native. His remark follows the logic of his book, which

makes a sharp distinction between Islam and popular beliefs (*volksgeleof*), discussing them in separate chapters. Islam, according to Kreemer, is 'the imported and acquired religion, which, like any other religion, one can choose to profess' (1923, 2:473). The popular beliefs, however, are innate, and when natural people (*natuurvolken*) develop into cultural people (*cultuurvolken*), they start to separate them from religion proper and only express these beliefs as part of superstition. So, Kreemer characterises the embracing of Islam in the Indonesian archipelago as partial, 'wherever pagans have embraced Islam, emerges, to some extent, a blend of native and foreign ideas that appears to be Muslim, while the ancient pagan beliefs are merely left intact' (1923, 2:473). Amulets are, of course, the physical embodiment of such pagan beliefs and Kreemer treats them as part and parcel of superstition, even if his description contains pages full of Islamic texts and symbols typically found on a *raja* *jimat* and which he discusses in terms of their 'Semitic origin'.

Thus, there was incongruence between the colonial administration, which saw the amulets as criminal tools and sources for rebellion and mutiny, and colonial ethnology, as practiced in the museums, which approached them as empirical evidence of the primitive belief systems of the Indonesian people. The two framings of Islam, as political force and religion, converged here. In the museum displays, the objects were presented as ethnographic curiosities, with little explanation. In the museum storages, the amulets, which were meant to remain unseen, were opened up (although not always), and their contents described in a seemingly objective scientific language. If they had written texts, attempts were made to decipher the Arabic formulas and phrases. In doing so, the esoteric nature of the amulets was violated by subjecting them to the outsider's gaze. Such actions must be seen in the light of the desire to appropriate 'other cultures' and to bring them under the control of rational and 'objective' science. Despite the developments in Dutch anthropology at the time, and the

perhaps his African ancestry, he never rose above the lowest ranks. He, however, made a name for himself as an amateur ethnologist.

48 According to Wiener, the sources of Van Hien's accounts are dubious. He claimed to have based his account on information from Javanese interlocutors while in reality publications of other Europeans appear to be a primary source (Wiener 2013, 505).

increasing emphasis on socio-historic developments (see H.F. Vermeulen and Kommers 2002), the museum presentations continued to obliterate (or render totally insignificant) the study of the social organisation of Islam.

In the museum, the political dimension of the amulets was obscured, but the implications of this process were omnipresent. Indeed, the worldview of ethnologists and administrators was based on the same premise of modernity and the position of Islam within it. Through the creation of Islam and magic as distinctive categories, museum ethnology broke apart what Indonesian Muslims, at least those who used the amulets, saw as inseparable. Most of the amulets seized at the Java *landraden* were exhibited at the Colonial Institute's Java gallery (1926–1960) where they were placed in a case devoted to the *adat* (customs) of Java. The exhibition provided no information about the amulets, although the catalogue emphasised the difference between the Western mindset, based on scientific evidence, and the irrationality of the Javanese person, who 'zealously practices Islamic mysticism and Islamically inclined magic – all of which must seem strange for the Westerner who is used to critical analysis and definitions as well as systematic dogmatic and propagandist teachings' (Lekkerkerker 1927, 29).

With Veltman's donation of the *rante bui* the Colonial Institute received one of the most powerful objects from Aceh. Through the donation the *jimat's* power was disabled and its agency affected. In fact, the addition to the museum's collections not only served to archive the *jimat*, it was also an act of neutralising its powers. Once it entered the collections, the *rante bui* was exhibited in four different locations in the Indonesia galleries, until around the 1970s.⁴⁹ This kind of display was, however, discontinued in the galleries that succeeded it. In the post-independence period, paper amulets were seldom put on display, perhaps because they were seen as having little intrinsic value. Still,

for the decades to come the distinction between Western modernity and non-Western traditional societies would govern the displays of the former Colonial Institute, which now went by the name Tropenmuseum (Shatanawi 2014, 50–51).

The most significant *jimat* in the Dutch collections, the *rante bui*, slowly disappeared from sight, quite literally as no physical traces can be found of it since it was put in storage. Yet out of sight does not mean out of mind. The story narrated in Zentgraaff's *Atjeh* and the published photograph started to live a life of their own, especially after Anthony Reid's publication in English (1979). The Dutch journalist Ewald Vanvugt listed the *rante bui* as sacred war loot in a number of publications (Vanvugt 2018; 2017; 1989), writing that 'besides golden objects and diamond brooches, the Dutch military loved to rob valuable spiritual objects' (Vanvugt 2017, 130). Acehnese academic publications had a different tone, emphasising the role of Teungku di Cot Plieng in the resistance against Dutch rule (e.g. Alfian 1987, 187). Today, numerous takes on Zentgraaff's account circulate on Indonesian websites, in YouTube videos and social media accounts (e.g. Haba Asa News 2020; Ansari 2017), making the *rante bui* one of the most shared and discussed objects of the NMVW collections. The internet postings follow Zentgraaff's text closely, but they also re-appropriate the story when they devote much attention to the mystical powers of the *jimat* and the Teungku's role in fighting the Dutch. The collaborator Waki Wahab, on the other hand, is rarely mentioned. Remarkable is also the scarce attention to the *rante bui's* afterlife as a museum object and the absence of pleas for its return.

In each of the different readings of the *rante bui*, silences are created of various degrees and kinds; in the process of turning sources into facts some details are highlighted while others are obscured. The museum not only silenced the Teungku's resistance, but through its nonchalant care of the *rante bui*, it silenced the material source of the account. Yet, perhaps, the *rante bui* does not need physical presence to defy its absence. Surely, the

49 NL-AsdTM, location card catalogue Wereldmuseum Amsterdam (Tropenmuseum), card TM-599-2.

narration of the events has replaced the materiality of its existence, and even made the powers of the *rante bui* more present than its adversaries could anticipate.

3 (Un)making the Memory of Islam

In this chapter and the preceding one, I discussed collecting practices in the Muslim regions of Indonesia through several case studies, following the trajectories of four types of objects: manuscripts, gravestones, objects related to the hajj, and amulets and talismans. These types of objects were all collected in one way or another in relation to Islam, but each differs in its entanglements with colonial governance, science, and the public sphere, thus exemplifying the frames through which Islam was approached: an ideology of resistance, a historical presence, and a source of sacred and political power. Each case is related to divergent views and negotiations within the colonial administration regarding material culture, as well as to varying forms of knowledge – ethnology, philology and archaeology. The case studies in this chapter demonstrate that object collecting was an act which was balancing colonial perceptions and realities on the ground.

The cases reveal certain patterns in the colonial memory complex with regard to Islam. The first concerns the conditions in which Islam was seen and acknowledged; these cases closely relate to instances of control: the removal of manuscripts and talismans, as well as the strong interest in the hajj. They also reveal disagreement about what deserved to be remembered and what was there to be forgotten. Those who brought objects to the museums were inclined to emphasise the role of Islam in resistance to Dutch domination or hegemony, as well as their own role in breaking the opposition. In the museums an inversion

occurred. As with all items that were brought to the ethnographic museums, the amulets were recrafted as markers for ethnicity, and their status as objects of resistance was camouflaged, or only occasionally revealed under certain conditions of museal display. Often, traces of Dutch interference were obscured, and objects became ‘pure’ specimens, serving the purposes of the museum.

The second pattern revealed by the cases is the double-faced agenda of the colonial authorities – intense control of Islam on the one hand and facilitation on the other – extended to the management of heritage. This is evident in the fate of the ancient tombs of Banda Aceh. While the KNIL destroyed the tombs of some of Aceh’s most important historical figures, it also restored and protected the cemetery where Sultan Alauddin Ibrahim Mansur Syah and his family members were laid to rest, in an attempt to appease the Acehnese elite and to prove the benevolence of the new regime. Similarly, the government facilitated the hajj, but those who returned were closely monitored, as were the material expressions of their experience. A third observation is that the making and unmaking of Islamic heritage occurred in a discursive context of intense debate. Divergent views within the colonial administration in relation to Islam extended to material culture and were coupled with negotiations with various actors in Indonesian society. Yet this rich discursive context of collecting was generally not transferred to the museum, and even if it was, processes of forgetting took place. Thus, after musealisation, objects not only lost the original user-context, but also much of their colonial biographies, and assumed new meanings at the museum. In the following chapters I discuss the mechanisms of occlusion of memory in museums and the consequences for the interpretation and presentation of Islamic heritage today.

PART 2

Organising the Material Archive



Taxonomies: Nineteenth-Century Collections and Museum Narratives of Islam

The presence of colonial paradigms within the museum landscape of the Netherlands is exemplified by collections of Middle Eastern art and culture, as well as the broader Islamic world. In Western European museums, these collections are typically distributed among various museum subject areas, which are connected to different time periods, and appreciated differently. These divisions arose from taxonomic models influenced by disciplinary formations, leading to the establishment of dedicated museums focused on art, archaeology, and ethnology. By examining the development of colonial narratives in museums, we can observe how identities were defined, categorised, and negotiated from the early nineteenth century to the present.

To explore the formation of the category of 'Islam', this chapter investigates the historical separation and reunification of Middle Eastern and Indonesian collections. How have Dutch museums conceptualized and constructed 'Islam' through classification practices, after the objects from colonised regions were transformed into museum artefacts? The objects discussed in this chapter originate from various regions of the Muslim world, encompassing North Africa, the Middle East, Mughal India, and colonial Indonesia, thus adopting a broad perspective on the notion of the 'Islamic', and incorporating all types of objects created or used by Muslims in these diverse regions and time periods. This enables an exploration of the meanings attributed to these objects and how they connect to their origins and perceived qualities.

Taking a diachronic approach, this study traces the shifting interpretations of these artefacts over time. Europe has a long history of perceiving

Muslim cultures as 'in-between' cultures, with Islam seen as a religion occupying an intermediary space between salvation and paganism. The term 'Middle East' itself suggests this sense of in-betweenness. As Edward Said (1978) noted, the Middle East was Europe's closest Other and one of its fiercest cultural contestants. Yet when in the nineteenth century Muslim cultures were no longer perceived as rivals, their contemporary objects were placed in ethnographic museums, together with those other regions that supposedly had no history – Africa, Oceania and much of Asia. It seems that more distance needed to be created between the Muslim world and Europe the closer to the present time one came. This ambivalent attitude towards the Muslim world underscores the relevance of examining the treatment of objects from Muslim regions.

1 Categorising Islamic Things

My point of departure is the idea of different types of museums – the archaeological museum, ethnographic museum, art museum and the so-called universal or encyclopaedic museum – as functioning as a discursive chain. The division starts somewhere in the late nineteenth century, when multidisciplinary cabinets of curiosity transformed into museums that were increasingly more specialised and separated by discipline. This was the period of formation of the 'exhibitionary complex' as described by Tony Bennett (1995), when processes of inclusion and exclusion from Europe unfolded. Bennett attributes the emergence of the public museum in the nineteenth century to the development of academic disciplines:

“The birth of the museum is coincident with, and supplied a primary institutional condition for, the emergence of a new set of knowledges – geology, biology, archaeology, anthropology, history and art history – each of which, in its museological deployment, arranged objects as parts of evolutionary sequences (the history of the earth, of life, of man, and of civilisation) which, in their interrelations, formed a totalising order of things and peoples that was historicised through and through.” (T. Bennett 1995, 96)

In this period, objects from European (and later Western) and non-European (non-Western) cultures were separated. Historian Susan Legêne (2002) has referred to this process as ‘the creation of worlds apart’. The separation of cultures has been one of the most dramatic changes in the European museum landscape and it fundamentally altered the way in which culture and cultures were represented in museums. Today the dichotomous model on which the institution of the museum is based, and the underlying hierarchy of cultures, form an obstacle to achieving many of the social goals to which museums ascribe, that is ‘to inspire hope and healing, improve lives and better the world’ (Silverman 2010, 2).

As my analysis shows, after the separation museums representing European cultures and those representing non-European cultures started to function as communicating vessels. In a Saidian sense, each type of museum was showing the self-image of Europe in a colonial context. As Christina Riggs (2010, 1132) writes:

“Museums provided a space where the fruits of colonial contact – art, artefacts, “knowledge” of the colonized country – could be ordered and arranged to create knowledge of oneself and one’s own society, the colonizer. To this end, museums displayed objects in categories presented as intuitive (Europe or other? painting or sculpture? early or late?), little acknowledging their own role in the creation and promulgation of these categories.”

In the course of their ‘social lives’ as things, objects were moved back and forth between different types of museums. Hence what went in the glass case in one museum, went out in another. Yet contrary to Bennett’s assertion, processes of classification were anything but straightforward, and they were continually undermined by the elusiveness of the objects concerned. Haidy Geismar (2018, 1) argues that the unwieldiness of the collections regularly undermines the linear trajectory used to describe the history of museums, ‘this teleological perspective, in which disorder gives way to order, chaos to rationality, polyphony to stable meaning, and private to public, is continually confounded by the same sets of objects used to constitute it.’

In this chapter I examine what makes the Islamic objects studied here ‘a certain kind of thing’ (Kopytoff 1986, 64) and if and how this ‘being-of-a-certain-kind’ was framed by wider scientific worldviews. Two decisive moments will be analysed: the dissolution of the Royal Cabinet of Curiosities in 1883, when the majority of the collection was divided along the lines of ethnology versus craftsmanship, and the secession of the non-European collections from the Museum of Antiquities in 1903, and their subsequent transfer to the Museum of Ethnology. Questions of classification are at the core of this inquiry. The moments when life-changing decisions were taken are revealing, and they are particularly fruitful for historical inquiry because of the traces of argumentation they leave behind in the archives. In these instances of separation and classification, discontinuity can be identified (Hooper-Greenhill 1992, 196). Yet the ‘underlying purposes and interests are revealed even more clearly in moments when classifications were or are questioned, abandoned or overthrown’ (Förster and Von Bose 2018, 50). I am particularly interested in how categories like ‘European’ and its mirror image ‘non-European’ came about, and the ways in which they are associated with and are echoed by the categories of ‘art’ and ‘ethnology’. My interest stems from the notion that these categorisations came to qualify

the structural inequalities between cultures and groups of people in museum representation. Yet at the same time, I am interested to discern the coherence of history and agency in the objects themselves, enabling them to defy the categorisations of museum practice.

2 Separating 'Europe' from 'Islam': The Royal Cabinet of Curiosities

In the Netherlands, there were two decisive moments marking the separation of European and non-European collections. The first happened in 1883, when the Royal Cabinet of Curiosities (Koninklijk Kabinet van Zeldzaamheden, or KKZ) was split up, an event of major consequences. The second moment occurred in 1903 when the Leiden Museum of Antiquities decided to deaccession its non-European collections.

The Royal Cabinet of Curiosities was founded by the Dutch King Willem I in 1816 and until its dissolution in 1883 it was housed in various buildings in The Hague, including what is now the Mauritshuis museum. The collections were an eclectic mix, consisting of objects relating to important events in Dutch history, but also ethnographic collections and objects resulting from trade relations, in particular through the Dutch East India Company, such as weapons from Sri Lanka and jewellery from Mughal India. Contained within the cabinet were a number of royal collections, including the curiosity collection of Stadtholder Willem V, especially the luxury objects made from gold, silver and ivory coming from those collections. A large part of the collection was dedicated to objects from Japan and China. Indonesia was poorly represented until the 1860s when serious efforts were started to enhance the collections from the region (Effert 2011; 2008; Legêne 2002). Legêne places the creation of the Cabinet in the context of the 1813 restoration of the monarchy in the Netherlands:

“The Dutch governors, diplomats and navy men who were sent to all corners of the world in order

to regain Dutch overseas positions and possessions, were instructed to collect objects of art and culture both as a source of information and to testify of the Dutch international orientation at home. At the same time, politicians in the inner circles around the King donated objects that were regarded part of Dutch national history. Filling the Cabinet of Curiosities with this mix of collections was one of the ways to tie all these nation builders together and strengthen the nucleus around which the new nation evolved.” (Legêne 2002, 633)

From the beginning the Royal Cabinet was an odd manifestation as it was a continuation of the encyclopaedic tradition of royal and stadtholders' collections of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, while the tendency in the early nineteenth century was, also in the Netherlands, to open museums specialized in a particular discipline (Bergvelt 2013; Effert 2011; T. Bennett 1995). Just a few years after the establishment of the Royal Cabinet, a number of specialized museums opened in Leiden, such as the National Museum of Antiquities (*Rijksmuseum van Oudheden*, 1818) and the National Museum of Natural History (*Rijksmuseum van Natuurlijke Historie*, 1820). In 1837, the Museum of Ethnology was founded. All the time, the Royal Cabinet operated in competition with these and other museums organised by discipline, and tried to defend its boundaries.

The Royal Cabinet contained around three hundred Islamic objects, although, as far as I have seen, none were described as such.¹ Even so, in the

1 This is a rough estimation, based on the databases of the NMVW and Rijksmuseum, combined with objects mentioned in the correspondence present in the Archives of the Royal Cabinet of Curiosities. Of the latter category many objects could not be found in the databases so presumably they have been lost. My estimation includes objects for ritual purposes, as well as what is commonly categorised as Islamic art, e.g. luxury objects from the Muslim courts in the Middle East and South Asia, and paintings made in the Islamic regions, and for the purposes of my research I have also included the Muslim courts of Indonesia, which generally are not included in the category of Islamic art.

descriptions of some of the objects Islamic practices were mentioned, such as the case of a book bag with Arabic script from a 'Negro' named Peter from Surinam, which entered the Royal Cabinet in 1828. The donor, judge Adriaan François Lammens (1767–1847), describes the previous owner, apparently an enslaved man, as 'very pious and proper' who 'when he sensed his life was ending, he asked for some paper from his master, and that which he should write to have delivered to another Negro, named Cachet, and translated some moral lessons from the Qur'an' (translated in Effert 2008, 266).² Likewise, military physician Jan Gramberg (1823–1888) who in 1860 donated a Sufi prayer book from West Africa,³ among other objects, gave the following description:

"A Qur'an or Arabic prayer book written by the Mandingo Negroes. In these lands they establish the financial value of the book in a rather peculiar manner. A pious man or scholar (*mallem*) carries the book as decoration and amulet on his chest. When he falls into poverty because of old age or illness, he will sell the Qur'an to a richer man for a slave who will work to earn money for his new master. In this region a slave ordinarily will cost 75 to 100 guilders."⁴

Gramberg concluded his letter with the observation that 'remarkably, everything coming from Negroes practising the Mohammedan faith is evidence of a greater degree of development than the objects of the Fetish tribes', thus alluding to the intermediate position of Islam in the hierarchical ranking of races and cultures.

2 Letter A.F. Lammens to R.P. van de Kastelee, 1 April 1828. NL-HlmNHA Koninklijk Kabinet van Zeldzaamheden, 1815–1883, 476 no. 855/032. The book bag could not be traced.

3 Prayer book (*wird*) in leather case, West Africa, before 1860. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. RV-360-5317. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/609209>.

4 List of items J.S.G. Gramberg, 1860. NL-HlmNHA Koninklijk Kabinet van Zeldzaamheden, 1815–1883, 476 no. 856/052_053.

Among the Islamic objects from the Royal Cabinet are talismans from Sumatra, *keris* daggers donated as gifts from Indonesian sultans, Moroccan slippers, Persian weapons and Ottoman almanacs. About half of the objects are paintings made in Ottoman Turkey or Mughal India for a European clientele. They include sixty-six early to mid-nineteenth century Ottoman albums paintings that, like the Indian paintings, were made for European patrons; in this case to satisfy a curiosity about how Ottomans dressed and how the army was organised.⁵ Ottoman costume books were often commissioned by European diplomats, so they could identify the dignitaries of the palace and the military staff with whom they had to interact (Fraser 2018).

In what follows I will examine the life histories of the Islamic objects, and in particular their afterlives: how, once they entered the museum collections, they were interpreted, categorised and presented. I am not the first to do so. Historian Susan Legêne has used Marie-Louise Pratt's notion of the contact zone to trace the biographies of nineteen agricultural tools, brought from Libya to the Netherlands by consul Jacques Clifford Kocq van Breugel (1799–1867), and to analyse them as an encounter between Europe and non-Western societies (Legêne 1998a; 1998b). In 1830 Van Breugel presented his modest collection, used by Bedouins in the environments of Tripoli, to the director of the Royal Cabinet of Curiosities in The Hague.⁶ In her analysis, Legêne frames the Bedouin collection in the context of anti-Islamic sentiments in the Netherlands, which she describes as a mixture of political and religious considerations and above all directed against the Ottoman Empire of which Libya was part. The fact that Van Breugel collected Greek and Roman antiquities, as well

5 Ottoman album paintings, Istanbul, c.1826–1840. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. nos. RV-360-7364/7429. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/650429>.

6 Nineteen objects used in agriculture and horse husbandry, environments of Tripoli (Libya), c.1830. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. RV-360-514/5127. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/609017>.

as contemporary Bedouin objects, but showed no interest whatsoever in the material culture of Libya's cities, she sees as a reflection of Van Breugel's lack of contact with (urban) Muslims and his uncomfortable feelings towards contemporary Islamic culture. While culture and life in the city of Tripoli did not appeal to him, Van Breugel described the lifestyle of the Bedouins (who were also Muslims, of course) with slightly more empathy, although his account echoes numerous Orientalist tropes. From the memorandum describing the objects, sent by Van Breugel to the Royal Cabinet, it seems that he was primarily interested in proving the 'primitiveness' of the region where he was stationed.⁷ According to Legêne, his judgement of these artefacts stood in contrast to the Greek and Roman antiquities he excavated 'as if to strengthen – through the antiquities he brought to the Netherlands – the bond of European culture against the world of Islam' (Legêne 1998b, 28).

2.1 *Ethnology or Decorative Arts?*

When in 1883 the Royal Cabinet of Curiosities was closed, most of its collection of around 15,000 objects was divided over two museums: the 'ethnographic' objects were given to the Museum of Ethnology in Leiden, and the European objects as well as objects relating to 'comparative decorative arts' (*vergelijkende kunstindustrie*) were donated to the Netherlands Museum for History and Art (Nederlandsch Museum voor Geschiedenis en Kunst, abbreviated NMHA), which was housed in the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam.⁸ This sparked

a debate among the museum directors in charge of the division: didn't many non-western objects belong to 'comparative decorative arts'? They agreed that objects belonged in the Museum of Ethnology if they 'enhance the knowledge about the customs, habits, and nature of the peoples outside Europe, with the exception of objects that directly belong to the domain of art and decorative arts'.⁹ Accordingly, they decided to determine for each group of objects whether its aesthetic value or functional use was more important. The resulting division now may seem arbitrary, but it nicely followed nineteenth-century lines of thought. In this chapter I examine the discourse underpinning the division, and the concluding chapter will discuss how its traces can still be found in the museums involved today.

According to David van der Kellen (1827–1895), the director of the Netherlands Museum for History and Art, aesthetic value was measured by 'beauty in shape, colour, material or craftsmanship'.¹⁰ The judgment was part of a wider debate on the position of non-European art, particularly Asian art, within the dividing lines between 'art' and 'crafts'. For the

7 Letter J.F.H. Clifford Kocq van Breugel, 1 June 1830. NL-HlmNHA Koninklijk Kabinet van Zeldzaamheden, 1815–1883, 476 no. 855/051_059.

8 The Rijksmuseum currently has 3,681 objects with a Royal Cabinet pedigree and the Museum of Ethnology has 10,259. The original number must have been higher, as between 1883 and the present (2022) hundreds of objects have been lost and some objects have been exchanged with other museums. A small number of objects were donated in 1883 to other museums: the Royal Cabinet of Coins and Cut Stones, the National Museum of Geology

and Mineralogy, the National Herbarium, the National Museum of Natural History and the National Museum of Antiquities (NL-HlmNHA Koninklijk Kabinet van Zeldzaamheden, 1815–1883, 476 no. 1076/02). The National Museum of Antiquities currently has 104 objects with a Royal Cabinet pedigree (information TMS database. Accessed 24 January 2019). An inventory list of the Royal Cabinet, drawn up in 1879, counted 10,090 objects (Effert 2008, 226), but, as it was based on archival documents rather than physical presence it also included objects that in reality had never been part of the collection.

9 Letter D. van der Kellen to Minister of the Interior, 19 December 1880. NL-HaNA Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken: Afdeling Kunsten en Wetenschappen, 1875–1918, 2.04.13 no. 1952. At the time, the terms *kunstindustrie* and *kunstnijverheid* were used interchangeably to denote 'luxury products' (Simon Thomas 1988, 27); for this reason I use the translation 'decorative arts' throughout the text.

10 Memorandum D. van der Kellen, 16 February 1882. NL-HaNA Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken: Afdeling Kunsten en Wetenschappen, 1875–1918, 2.04.13 no. 1952/473.

first time there were scholars who argued that these objects could be classified as art, rather than crafts or minor arts, or only as objects to be judged on their ethnological value (Marchand 2009, 392). This nascent debate informed decisions on what was considered 'good art' and 'bad art' (or no art) according to nineteenth-century European norms, as we can see in the case of the objects from Mughal India present in the Cabinet (made in approximately the same period). A painted bowl and jar as well as an ivory chess piece ended up at the Rijksmuseum,¹¹ but all the miniature paintings were sent to the Museum of Ethnology, where they could be studied as illustrations of life in India.¹² A collection of Indian jewellery was sent back and forth between the Rijksmuseum and the ethnology museums a couple of times, as curators were not sure if they were indicative of Indian craftsmanship or habits of dress.¹³ Finally, in 1972, they ended up in the Asian art department of the Rijksmuseum.¹⁴

The respective directors of the two museums quickly agreed on a number of categories. Objects from Africa and Oceania, without a doubt, had no artistic value and belonged to the Museum of Ethnology. But China and Japan, and also Indonesia, were a different story.¹⁵ Van der Kellen complained that he and his colleague Lindor Serrurier (1846–1901), director of the Museum of Ethnology, disputed the fate of the Indonesian objects, in particular the 'sophisticated and prized' *keris* daggers.¹⁶ According to him, it was fully comprehensible that objects could have as much value in terms of origin, function and use as they have in terms of beauty in shape, colour, material and decoration. In that case, 'a random decision' should be made. Director Conrad Leemans (1809–1893) of the Museum of Antiquities in Leiden had made similar remarks when the Ministry first argued for a division. According to him, if decorative art was art applied to crafts, then we are talking about objects of everyday use. But to which category do the 'splendid artistically produced Javanese

11 All these objects hail from the collection of Jean Theodore Royer (1737–1807). After his death, Royer's collection was bequeathed to King Willem I. Bowl, jar with lid and saucer and huqqa base, India, c.1775–1800. Collection Rijksmuseum inv. nos. AK-NM-6981-A/AK-NM-6982-1/AK-NM-6622. <http://hdl.handle.net/10934/RM0001.COLLECT.295331> Ivory chess piece, India, c.1760–1780. Collection Rijksmuseum inv. no. AK-NM-7003. <http://hdl.handle.net/10934/RM0001.COLLECT.316106>.

12 There is no archival information on why the twenty-six paintings were assigned to the Museum of Ethnology and how they were appreciated there. From the available information it seems they were not exhibited until the late twentieth century. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. nos. RV-360-990/993 and RV-360-6998/7001 and RV-360-7346/7363. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/604626>.

13 Jewellery, Surat, c.1750. Collection Rijksmuseum inv. nos. AK-NM-7050/7089 and AK-NM-7121. <http://hdl.handle.net/10934/RM0001.COLLECT.56183> Former collection Museum of Ethnology inv. nos. RV-2364-348/389.

14 The jewellery was assigned to the NMHA in 1883 and became part of the Rijksmuseum collection. When the Colonial Institute opened in 1926, it received a set of the jewellery to put on display in the so-called Treasure Room, together with the Lombok Treasure.

In 1937, the Colonial Institute was required to return the loan and the objects were transferred (including ownership) to the Museum of Ethnology after the latter museum opened its own treasure room and argued that the pieces had significant ethnographic value. In 1972 the Rijksmuseum reversed the transfer and the jewellery returned once more. The transfer also included an 'exotic' looking necklace, which recently turned out to be Hungarian-made and probably originated from the royal collections in the Royal Cabinet. Necklace, Hungary, early 17th century. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. RV-2364-352. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/738432> Documents concerning the Lombok Treasure, 1925–1937. NL-HaNA Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen, 1910–1995, 2.20.69 no. 4407. Art objects from the Lombok Treasure [transfer] to the National Museum of Ethnology, 1937. NL-HlmNHA Rijksmuseum, 476 no. 2447. NL-LdnRMV, file series RV-2364.

15 The objects from China and Japan were distributed to the two museums, more or less according to the agreed division. See Effert (2008) and Van Campen (2000).

16 Memorandum D. van der Kellen, 16 February 1882. NL-HaNA Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken: Afdeling Kunsten en Wetenschappen, 1875–1918, 2.04.13 no. 1952/473.

weapons' belong, and the fabrics, the jewellery, the clubs from Polynesia etcetera?¹⁷

Serrurier agreed that any division would be to some extent artificial, however he developed a more detailed set of principles to guide his judgment. To the domain of ethnology belonged 'all objects originating from a people', while the decorative arts limited this selection to those 'objects of daily use, which through their decoration are witness to the artistry (*kunstzin*) of a people.'¹⁸ For the latter category, the value of the material and the elaborateness of the decoration was of vital importance, while ethnology attached importance to the extent of information available about the nature, use and origin of the objects. In this spirit, Serrurier wrote, he made his selection. For instance, he only selected Asian objects made from gold and silver if he had information about their origin and use. Yet he also wrote that he has allocated to his museum 'all objects of entirely uncivilized and less civilized peoples, like Negroes, Papuans, Southsea islanders, red skins, Eskimos as well as the people of the East and West Indies.'¹⁹ From his later writings it is evident that Serrurier conceived of the Museum of Ethnology as a gathering place for the material culture of primitive cultures, '[...] the museum will be, while retaining its scientific character, a school for everybody who wants to know how the wild, the barbarian and the half-civilized peoples have materialised their ways of thinking' (Serrurier 1895, 4). By contending that the population of the Dutch colonies was to be equated with the 'entirely uncivilized and less civilized', Serrurier made the winning bid.

Serrurier's prime selection criterion, the availability of information, favoured objects from the Dutch colonies. Objects in museum collections

advanced Dutch scholarship in the field of ethnology, and likewise the colonial context provided ample opportunities to gather scientific knowledge about the material culture of the colonised people, for the benefit of museums (Legêne 1998a). In turn, the growing body of object collections, and hence the associated knowledge about the colonised people, facilitated colonial government; knowledge was regarded as 'a prerequisite for colonial rule' (Schefold and Vermeulen 2002a, 5). Yet, in the end, the resulting division of objects between the museums shows that it was not scientific knowledge, but rather perceptions about the level of civilisation of cultures, that were crucial. As we will see in the following analysis, the selection of the Museum of Ethnology included objects that Serrurier and his staff had little or no knowledge about, but simply did not fit the criteria of '*kunstzin*' (artistry), as employed by the NMHA. There are also cases when the division seems to be lacking in logic; for instance, a precious *keris* dagger, inlaid with gold and diamonds, a gift of Sultan Cakra Adiningrat VIII of Madura to King Willem I, was assigned to the NMHA, while the letter accompanying the gift ended up in the Museum of Ethnology, although as a diplomatic document it had little value for ethnological studies (Fig. 36).²⁰ Indeed, cases like these demonstrate once more that the process of creating museum collections is as much arbitrary and unwieldy as it is a systematic enterprise.

The end of the story is that most of the approximately 1,100 objects from colonial Indonesia which had been present in the Royal Cabinet, i.e. 987 in total, ended up in the Museum of Ethnology.²¹ The

17 Letter C. Leemans to Minister of the Interior, 27 April 1880. NL-HaNA Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken: Afdeling Kunsten en Wetenschappen, 1875–1918, 2.04.13 no. 1952.

18 Memorandum L. Serrurier, 2 February 1882. NL-HaNA Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken: Afdeling Kunsten en Wetenschappen, 1875–1918, 2.04.13 no. 1952/320.

19 Ibid.

20 Keris, Madura, c.1835. Collection Rijksmuseum inv. no. NG-NM-7115. <http://hdl.handle.net/10934/RM0001.COLLECT.241275> Letter, Madura, 20 Shawwal 1250 (19 February 1835). Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. RV-360-8080. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/651063>.

21 This figure is not precise, because (in 1883) objects that never arrived were also assigned numbers, inflating the Museum of Ethnology figures. Many objects got lost between 1883 and the writing of this chapter. Currently,



FIGURE 36 Keris, Madura, c.1835. Collection Rijksmuseum inv. no. NG-NM-7115. Letter, Madura, 20 Shawwal 1250 (19 February 1835). Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. RV-360-8080. Notwithstanding the agreement made during the liquidation of the Royal Cabinet of Curiosities, the *keris* was allocated to the Netherlands Museum of History and Art (but later loaned to the Colonial Institute). The accompanying letter of Sultan Cakra Adiningrat VIII of Madura to King Willem I became part of the collections of the Museum of Ethnology

Rijksmuseum collection, by contrast, today only counts 10 Indonesian objects originating from the Royal Cabinet.²² Another 71 Indonesian objects arrived at the Museum of Ethnology two decades

later; they were first assigned to the Museum of Antiquities but transferred in 1903 when the museum decided to deaccession its non-European collections. In 1883 these objects were allocated to the Museum of Antiquities in Leiden, following an intervention by director Conrad Leemans, whose main goal was to get the Minister's approval to allot to his museum a number of Hindu and Buddhist Javanese bronzes, along with Greek and Roman bronzes. Leeman's argumentation centred on the distinction between 'dead' and 'living' peoples,

742 Indonesian objects that were once part of the Royal Cabinet collection are kept in the collection of the National Museum of World Cultures. Information TMS database National Museum of World Cultures. Accessed 3 July 2019.

22 Information gathered from the Rijksmuseum's Adlib database. Accessed 28 October 2016.

in which the advent of Islam played a decisive role. After a bitter fight with words, he succeeded; around 170 Greek, Roman, Egyptian, Etruscan and Javanese antiquities were transferred from the Royal Cabinet to the Museum of Antiquities.²³ The Javanese bronzes, the main objects at stake, would however be donated to the Museum of Ethnology twenty years later.

2.2 *European or Extra-European?*

In principle, all European objects were transferred to the Rijksmuseum, because they were, according to NMHA director David van der Kellen, ‘indispensable for the history of the intimate life of our ancestors’, because even if they were not produced in the Netherlands, at least they were used there.²⁴ The Museum of Ethnology in turn declared that it would exclude any object that displayed European influence, since such an object was corrupted and unfit to study the ‘pure’ core of non-western cultures. This included ‘objects copied after European models, with decorations derived from European motifs or made for Europeans.’²⁵ The slogan under which Lindor Serrurier, director of the Museum of Ethnology, ran the museum was “collect before it is too late” (Van Wengen 2002c, 37). In line with the notion of salvage ethnography that emerged in the late nineteenth century, he saw European civilisation as one of the largest threats to non-Western cultures, because ‘more than ever before the products of European influence are spread into the

entire globe and supersede the native’s weapons, his household utensils and clothing.’²⁶ In a letter he wrote in 1891, nine years later, he used even stronger words. Serrurier describes how in many places around the world European civilisation has wiped out the native culture and he even, some years ago, received the last remaining ethnographic objects of the Minahasans of Sulawesi. He concludes that ‘nothing equals contemporary European civilisation in the radical destruction of all that exists.’²⁷ Islam was also accorded a place among the forces responsible for the destruction of primitive societies: ‘who wants to collect, must hurry. With the penetration of Islam in Africa and in our East Indies possessions, idols are becoming more and more rare.’²⁸

Serrurier’s theoretical perspective was that of comparative evolutionary ethnology, which claimed that every civilisation went through similar stages of development. Evolutionism was the dominant scientific tradition at the time, and Serrurier was influenced by the museums of ethnology in Britain, such as the Pitt Rivers collection, which he had visited in 1880.²⁹ Like other ethnologists of the time, he maintained close contacts with his peers across Europe. Particularly, Ernest Hamy (1842–1908), founder and curator of the Musée d’Ethnographie du Trocadéro in Paris, the Swedish ethnologist Hjalmar Stolpe (1841–1905),

23 Today the remaining number of objects from the Royal Cabinet of Curiosities in the collection of the National Museum of Antiquities is 104. Information TMS database. Accessed 24 January 2019.

24 Memorandum D. van der Kellen, 16 August 1876. NL-HaNA Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken: Afdeling Kunsten en Wetenschappen, 1875–1918, 2.04.13 no. 1952. All European objects, but seven items of clothing and footwear from Spain and Portugal and a model of a Russian house. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. nos. RV-360-1276/81, RV-360-5433/34, RV-360-5649.

25 Memorandum L. Serrurier, 2 February 1882. NL-HaNA Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken: Afdeling Kunsten en Wetenschappen, 1875–1918, 2.04.13 no. 1952/320.

26 Letter L. Serrurier to Minister of the Interior, 5 May 1882. NL-HaNA Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken: Afdeling Kunsten en Wetenschappen, 1875–1918, 2.04.13 no. 1952/1288.

27 Letter L. Serrurier to Trustees of Leiden University, 25 March 1891. NL-HaNA Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken: Afdeling Kunsten en Wetenschappen, 1875–1918, 2.04.13 no. 1952/2220.

28 Memorandum L. Serrurier dated 1 August 1881, sent to G.F. Westerman (director N.A.M.), probably on 17 August 1881. NL-AsdSAA Koninklijk Zoölogisch Genootschap Natura Artis Magistra, 1838–1988, 395 no. 1876.

29 Serrurier was critical of the theories and methods of arrangement of the ethnology collections he had seen in London, but nevertheless found the science-based arrangement an example the Leiden museum should follow. Letter L. Serrurier to Minister of the Interior, 18 November 1880. NL-LdnRMV A1-5-338/341.

curator of an ethnographic museum department in Stockholm, and the German ethnologist Adolf Bastian (1826–1905), the first director of the Ethnological Museum of Berlin, profoundly influenced his ideas (Effert 2011, 162; Ten Kate 1902, 10). His departure point was the idea of single cultures, believing that every culture belonged to one people, and should be distinguished and remain separated from other cultures. In Serrurier's perception ethnographic museums were 'laboratories' where ethnologists could compare chains of objects in different stages of development (Van Wengen 2002b, 966). Like Bastian, he believed that through the collecting of the material culture of less advanced civilisations, Europeans could study earlier stages in their own development (Penny 2002, 23). Serrurier was an avid collector; during the sixteen years of his directorship of the museum (1880–1896), the collection grew by 45,838 objects, of which the transfer from the Royal Cabinet was a substantial part (Van Wengen 2002a, 90). According to Serrurier, such large quantities of objects were necessary to facilitate comparison between cultures, and in particular to settle the debate on monogenism versus polygenism, in favour of the latter. The comparative methodology he followed consisted of finding the links between similar phenomena in different parts of the world and determining the roots they have in common. Nevertheless, from his perspective it was important to also study each population separately, so as to determine the level of civilisation it had reached and, in this manner, to unravel the historical development of humankind and its organisation, customs and habits.³⁰ In order to be able to do this, cultural phenomena had to be studied in their purest condition. His ultimate aim was to establish 'an ethnographic museum, as comprehensive as possible, studying all of humanity as far as it had not been levelled out by the

influence of Western civilisation.'³¹ As a corollary of these ideas, he considered objects infected by European culture to be useless for comparative ethnology. Islamic objects, although not as 'pure' as objects produced by more 'primitive' societies (see chapter 7), could still be of use in the ethnology museum to study the level of civilisation of non-European societies.

3 Separating 'Europe' from 'Islam': The Museum of Antiquities

The analysis of the division of the Royal Cabinet of Curiosities demonstrated how the separation of collections according to European perceptions of belonging was fuelled by the gathering of scientific knowledge and changing perceptions of art, in the context of colonial domination. The second moment of separation occurred in 1903 when the Leiden Museum of Antiquities and the Museum of Ethnology decided to mark their respective territories. Throughout the nineteenth century, the two museums had based their demarcation on 'dead' versus 'living' cultures, while both museums collected from regions outside Europe. But now there was a shift in focus; it was decided that the Museum of Antiquity would focus on European culture only, as the outcome of a longstanding debate.

3.1 *Caspar Reuvers and Islam*

The competition between the museums of ethnology and archaeology dated back to 1820, when Caspar Reuvers (1793–1835), the first director of the newly established Museum of Antiquities, sent a request to Minister of Education Anton Falck to transfer twelve bronze sculptures from Java from the Royal Cabinet of Curiosities to his museum. An argument ensued between Reuvers and the Cabinet's first director Reinier Pieter van de Kastele (1767–1845) revolving around the

30 Letter L. Serrurier to Trustees of Leiden University, 19 December 1882. NL-HaNA Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken: Afdeling Kunsten en Wetenschappen, 1875–1918, 2.04.13 no. 2220.

31 Letter L. Serrurier to Minister of the Interior, 24 November 1880. NL-LdRMV A1-5-350/365.

question: does Hindu-Javanese sculpture belong to a living culture? (Hojtink 2012). According to Reuvs, Java's classical past and its Islamic present were separated by a distinct break. In his line of argumentation, he showed himself to be an adherent to ideas about the transformation of cultures, as would be outlined by Hegel in his *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*, the Lectures on the History of Philosophy, which Hegel would deliver after 1822 (Hojtink 2012, 109). When Van de Kastele riposted that Java's Hindu sculpture was part of a living culture, in the sense that the Javanese people still existed, and therefore it belonged in his ethnographic cabinet, Reuvs argued that the classical culture of Java had come to an end because it had been completely transformed by Islam. In his definition antiquities were 'the remains of people who either no longer exist or who have undergone a complete transformation, usually resulting from foreign domination or an overall change of religion.'³² With this last remark he clearly referred to Islam. Reuvs was determined; the borderline between what belonged to the respective domains of ethnology and archaeology should not be drawn based on the age of objects:

"It is important for scholarship that the Indian [*i.e.* Indonesian] antiquities are not separated from the Egyptian and other artefacts. Otherwise, in the near future, there will no longer be a Museum of Antiquities, because Roman and Greek objects will also be placed in a Museum of Living People, the former labelled as Italian, and the latter among the objects from the Hellenic Commonwealth. The borderline, as I may repeat, is this: the disappearance of a people, or its later civilization, by its complete transition to the Christian or the Muslim faith."³³

32 Letter C.J.C. Reuvs to Minister Falck, 25 November 1820. NL-LdnRMO 17.1.1 no. 1.

33 Ibid. Translation as in Halbertsma (2003, 55).

The bronze sculptures are said to have been transferred to the Museum of Antiquities (Hojtink 2012, 109; Halbertsma 2003, 55), where they stayed for a good eighty years before returning to an ethnographic context, this time as part of the collection of the Museum of Ethnology.³⁴

Like many of his German and Dutch contemporaries, Reuvs focused on the classical world, in particular ancient Greece, following Winckelmann's *Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums* (1764).³⁵ He had a broad vision of the classical world, including not only Greece but also the cultures it had influenced. In his view an archaeological museum should dedicate itself to classical antiquity and to those regions that were known to the Greeks and Romans and which were influenced by their civilisation, such as India (Halbertsma 2003, 53). While some of Reuvs' German contemporaries included the Near East in the category of classical antiquity as part of the biblical world of the Old Testament (Marchand 2009), Reuvs was looking further East to Java. One of his prime sources of inspiration was Thomas Stamford Raffles' publication *The History of Java* (1817), which analysed Java's Hindu and Buddhist art and architecture as evidence of a golden age brought about through colonisation by India. Through the Indian connection, Reuvs, in turn, was searching for a link to Greek civilisation (Hojtink 2012, 104). He was one of the first scholars to argue that the Buddhist art of Afghanistan and India was influenced by Hellenistic and Roman art, and therefore Indian art was part of the classical world; an idea that would become commonplace over the course of the nineteenth century. By extension this also applied to Javanese art,

34 According to Halbertsma (2003) and Hojtink (2012) the transfer took place, but I was unable to trace the bronzes in either the Leemans catalogue of the Museum of Antiquities (1842) or the inventories of the Museum of Antiquities and the National Museum of World Cultures. They are also not mentioned in the annals of the Museum of Antiquities.

35 Letter C.J.C. Reuvs to Minister Falck, 25 November 1820. NL-LdnRMO 17.1.1 no. 1.

Reuvens argued (Halbertsma 2003, 53). The early nineteenth-century publications of scholars like Raffles and Reuvens laid the groundwork for the notion of Farther or Greater India, and more specifically the idea of the Indian roots of Southeast Asian culture, that would become widespread in the twentieth century (Bloembergen 2017; Formichi 2016).

According to Mirjam Hoijsink (2012), Reuvens' simplistic views on Islam, as an iconoclastic religion, caused him to overlook the role that Hindu-Buddhist monuments and artefacts still played in contemporary Islamic practice. Indeed, Javanese Muslims owned Hindu-Buddhist bronzes as part of their family *pusaka* objects (Lunsingh Scheurleer 2007). Sculptural elements from temples were incorporated into Islamic buildings, while some of the temples were considered sacred sites, locally known as *pepunden* or *kramat* (Bloembergen and Eickhoff 2020). Javanese Muslims visited the sites and used them for Islamic ceremonies, such as vow taking and *selamatan* (religious meals). The Javanese population used the statues located at the *pepunden* actively, moving them from one spot to another, smearing yellow balsam (*boreh*) on them and, as Reuvens noted from the statues arriving in Leiden, they used chalk to restore them (Hoijsink 2012, 110; Lunsingh Scheurleer 2007, 81). Javanese Muslims burned incense in temples, like the 15th-century Hindu temple Candi Sukuh in Central Java. During his visit to the temple in 1815, Stamford Raffles observed that while the giant *lingga* (phallic) statue was lying on the ground broken in two pieces and most of the figures had been decapitated, facts he blamed on Islamic iconoclasm, peasants from the surrounding villages made offerings to the relief on the temple wall depicting a blacksmith's workshop with a dancing figure of Ganesha (Raffles 1817, 48). Likewise, Raffles and his right-hand man John Crawfurd (1783–1868) both observed how local people, including Mangkunegara II, the ruler of the princely state of Mangkunegaran, visited the Prambanan temple complex to worship the stone statue of the Goddess Durga as Lara Jonggrang,

or slender maiden (Lunsingh Scheurleer 2007). Offerings were made as the statue was 'constantly covered with turmeric, flowers, ochre, &c.' (Raffles 1817, 14 Vol. 2). Even though the evidence for the continuity of Javanese culture was all around them, Raffles and his contemporaries did not fully appreciate it because they interpreted their observations within a framework of colonial ideas about the decline of civilisations and the European obligation to save them (Murphy 2019). Reuvens and Raffles, each in their own manner, took it upon themselves to 'save' what was left of Hindu-Buddhism from an encroaching Islam, through the collecting of artefacts and the writing of history (Murphy 2019, 203; Hoijsink 2012, 110).

Reuvens' views on Islam were indeed simplistic in the sense that he did not envision that even when a religion was formally no longer practiced, like Hinduism in much of Java, it could still be 'alive' in the customs, rituals, and the iconographic motifs found in arts and crafts. Similarly, he certainly did not consider relevant any changes from 'dead' to 'living' cultures *within* a given religious tradition, i.e. that certain Islamic practices of the past were now 'dead' while others had only recently come to life. In this respect, he did not differ from his contemporaries; ideas about Islam as a dynamic religion, 'a living, breathing, malleable tradition' rather than a fixed set of precepts, were only advanced in the late nineteenth century by scholars such as Ignác Goldziher and Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje (Schulze 2010; Marchand 2009, 330).

Despite his aversion to objects from living cultures, during Reuvens' directorship several objects from the Islamic period entered the collections of the Museum of Antiquities. These included two Jewish Ottoman gravestones, made by an Arab ('Moorish') stone mason, and an Almohad gravestone, dated 572 AH (1176 AD), collected in 1823 by Lieutenant Colonel Jean Emile Humbert (1771–1839) in Tunis, and also a marble gravestone from Arab Menorca, a Jewish Ottoman one from Izmir, as well as an Ottoman commemorative plaque from Lesbos, all collected in 1825–26 by the

Flemish collector Bernard Rottiers (1771–1857).³⁶ Reuvens deeply regretted these acquisitions, particularly those originating from Rottiers, as he felt they compromised his reputation as an archaeologist:

“To place these in a Museum of Antiquities would give plenty of reason for mockery. They are indeed contemporary, and if there is no plan to establish a separate museum of Mohammedan inscriptions, coins and gems (which I would recommend, if I dared, and nobody would be more capable to rise to this call than Professor Hamaker), then I believe the two stones belong to General Ethnology. The Jewish stone would best follow the other two.”³⁷

Reuvens continued his rant by remarking that the contemporary Jewish Ottoman gravestones collected by Humbert should go the same way: ‘would those also not better go to such a *Mohammedan* cabinet?’³⁸ The case of the Jewish gravestones illustrates Reuvens’ ideas about ‘dead’ versus ‘living’ cultures. Evidently, Judaism placed him in a dilemma, because Jews were present in antiquity and, therefore, they belonged to the classical world. Yet Jewry and Judaism were also a living culture whose members were still around. In line with the idea of a dividing line, Reuvens decided it was best to separate the (imaginary) Jewish collection: ‘in my view, only the Jewish objects are suited to make a split on correct terms. That is, if one had

several of them.’³⁹ Islam, on the other hand, was only to be considered as a living culture.

3.2 *The Final Transfer*

During the long directorship of Reuvens’ successor Conrad Leemans (1809–1893), who directed the Museum of Antiquities between 1839 and 1891, the legitimacy of the presence of the Asian, American and African collections in the museum was repeatedly debated. Finally, under one of his successors, Antonie Holwerda (1845–1922), director between 1903 and 1918, the decision was made to separate the European objects from the non-European objects, and to transfer the latter to the Museum of Ethnology.

Two major developments guided this decision (cf. Hoijtink 2012, 86). The first was the development of ethnology as an academic and museological discipline in the wake of Dutch colonialism (Van Wengen 2002b; Legêne 1998a). During the second part of the nineteenth century ethnology became an established discipline in Dutch universities, with the first professorship set up at Leiden University in 1877. Material culture was at the forefront of this development, and a number of museums and collections were founded to assemble and study objects, including the Museum of Ethnology in Leiden in 1837, the ethnology collection at Amsterdam Artis Zoo in 1856, the Colonial Museum in Haarlem in 1864 and the Museum of Geography and Ethnology in Rotterdam in 1885, as well as a number of specialised collections in military museums (Bronbeek in Arnhem), missionary museums (Steyl) and training centres for civil servants (the *Indische Instelling* in Delft, later known as Museum Nusantara). The rise of museum ethnology resulted in a fierce competition with the Museum of Antiquities, which held a sizable collection of non-European artefacts, and during his time in office director Leemans had to face increasing pressure to hand over these objects to the domain of ethnology. In particular the

36 Two Jewish gravestones, Tunisia, c.1823. Collection National Museum of Antiquities inv. nos. H S 1 and H S 2. <https://hdl.handle.net/21.12126/207261> Almohad gravestone, Tunisia, 1176 AD. Gravestone, Menorca, 1273 AD. Commemorative plaque, Lesbos, 1787. Jewish gravestone, Izmir, 1805. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. nos. RV-1403-3491/3494. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/705490>.

37 Report C.J.C. Reuvens to D.J. van Ewijck, 3 April 1826. NL-LdnRMO 17.1.1 no. 2. Hendrik Arent Hamaker (1789–1835) was professor of Oriental languages at Leiden University.

38 Ibid.

39 Ibid.

aggressive demands of Lindor Serrurier, director of the Museum of Ethnology, became a major challenge towards the end of his career. The advance of ethnological knowledge, accelerated by colonialism, ultimately resulted in a situation which led the Museum of Antiquities to conclude it no longer possessed the competencies to study these collections. In 1901 a committee was formed to advise on the future of the ethnographic museum and its collections, in which both the Museum of Antiquities and the Museum of Ethnology were represented. When requesting permission to transfer the Indonesian and American antiquities to the Museum of Ethnology, Holwerda argued that only in the Museum of Ethnology would the objects get the scientific treatment they deserved, while in his museum they were only standing in the way of a proper arrangement.⁴⁰ In his view, comparative ethnology could benefit from having as many objects as possible under one roof, while the study of ethnology collections in its turn served colonial rule, as he and other members of the advisory committee remarked: 'our reign over the people of the archipelago can only be possible and be legitimate, when we really know these people' (Boeser et al. 1903, 57; 63).

The second development was rooted in the rise of nationalism and colonialism, which combined with the predominance of evolutionism in ethnology and archaeology, led to the idea of a single and superior European culture which should be separated from other cultures. When archaeology as an academic discipline during the nineteenth century, nationalist and "continentalist" approaches, aiming to define the distinctive features of European civilization and its superiority, emerged side by side (Trigger 2006). The idea of Europe as a conceptual category in archaeology emphasised the uniqueness of Europe in opposition to the Orient (Jones and Graves-Brown 2013; Larsen 1995). Yet at the same time, archaeology appropriated the ancient pasts of the Near East

and North Africa (Brusius 2021). An important influence was the theory developed in the 1880s by the Swedish archaeologist Oscar Montelius (1843–1921), claiming that early technological innovations in the Middle East had constituted the origins of European civilization (Trigger 2006). The popularity of the theory owed much to its accordance with a biblical interpretation of history. Furthermore, it tied in nicely with the imperialist aspirations of European nations, as archaeologist Bruce Trigger points out, 'a scheme of prehistory that treated the Western European nations rather than the modern Arab peoples as the true heirs of the ancient civilizations of the Middle East helped to justify European colonial interventions in that region' (Trigger 2006, 229).

In the Netherlands, the Middle East had the interest of archaeologists since the time of Caspar Reuvs and since the 1880s the Museum of Antiquities had collected from the region (Petit 2014; Hoijtink 2012). The collections assembled by Humbert and Rottiers from North Africa were considered essential museum assets. By 1900 the idea of Europe plus the Middle East as its cradle of civilisation was firmly established, hence Holwerda's remark on the other collections as 'standing in the way of a proper arrangement'.⁴¹ Therefore, as the advice voiced in the report leading up to the split stated, 'the antiquities of the peoples of North Africa, West Asia and Europe whose civilisations are considered forerunners of our civilisation, should be placed in the Museum of Antiquities, the remaining antiquities in the Museum of Ethnology' (Commissie van Advies 1903, 8).

Following this recommendation, 4,838 objects from Southeast Asia, the Americas, and Sub-Saharan Africa were transferred to the Museum of Ethnology, while the collections from Pharaonic and Coptic Egypt and the ancient Middle East could stay. Among the objects that were sent away were also some from Yemen, Turkey, Iran, Iraq or the Hijaz from the Islamic period, as well as Islamic

40 Letter A.E.J. Holwerda to Trustees of Leiden University, 24 September 1903. NL-LdnRMV A1-40-252/253.

41 Ibid.

objects from Menorca and Greece. Two arguments played a role in the decision to part with the Islamic objects. The principal reason was the notion of Islam as a living tradition, but also the idea that Islam was no 'forerunner of our civilisation' played a role, as can be seen from the discussion on the other living traditions of the Middle East and North Africa: Christianity and Judaism. In contradiction to the idea of 'dead cultures', indicated by a 'complete transition to Christianity', Coptic Egyptian artefacts were a serious part of the collection policy and, for instance, the Coptic manuscripts, textiles and pottery collected by Jan Herman Insinger in the 1880s were eagerly accepted (Raven 2018).⁴² It is indeed remarkable that none of the Coptic objects in the collection were transferred to the Museum of Ethnology, even though they stemmed from the same time period as some of the Islamic artefacts and when both Islam and Christianity were still practised in Egypt.⁴³ The division fitted taxonomic models developed across Europe as well as in colonial Egypt (Watenpaugh 2017, 1230). The few Jewish objects were divided between the two museums. In 1842 Conrad Leemans still argued to keep the Jewish and Arab objects even though they strictly speaking did not belong to Antiquity because 'they came from peoples that had long histories and were more than other peoples attached to their old ancestral customs and habits' (Leemans 1842, xii; 78). In 1903 the two Jewish Ottoman gravestones from Tunis were kept

in the Museum of Antiquities, in all likelihood because of the similarities they showed to Punic stones (Leemans 1842, 79).⁴⁴ The Jewish Ottoman stone from Izmir, however, was transferred to the Museum of Ethnology (Fig. 37).

The result of the 1903 transfer was an increasingly rigorous separation of the Islamic and pre-Islamic periods of the Middle East and North Africa in museums in the Netherlands. Take, for example, the collections assembled by three of the collectors discussed in this chapter. J.F.H. Clifford Kocq van Breugel collected Greek period antiquities in Libya, which he sent to the Museum of Antiquities, and these stayed there after the 1903 division. He also collected contemporary Bedouin objects which he donated to the Royal Cabinet of Curiosities, and these ended up in the Museum of Ethnology after the 1883 division. Whereas Van Breugel through his donations anticipated the division of collections between different academic disciplines, Jean Emile Humbert and Bernard Rottiers donated both ancient and contemporary objects to the Museum of Antiquities, where they would be separated in 1903 with the transfer. Also part of the transfer were three gravestones from the Arabian Peninsula, dating from the ninth or tenth century, acquired in 1898 under director Willem Pleyte (1836–1903).⁴⁵ Gravestones were an exceptional category for collecting because religious and funerary rituals were seen as particularly instructive for the domain of archaeology (Leemans 1842, x; xii).⁴⁶ Pleyte therefore decided to accept them because they had some value to the museum,

42 For example, Coptic pottery, Egypt, Coptic period. Collection National Museum of Antiquities inv. nos. AES 1–6. <https://hdl.handle.net/21.12126/3766> Ninety-two Coptic manuscripts, Egypt, Coptic period. Collection National Museum of Antiquities inv. no. AES 40. <https://hdl.handle.net/21.12126/776>.

Coptic textiles from the necropolis of Akhmim, Egypt, Coptic period. Collection National Museum of Antiquities inv. nos. AES 155/159 and 162/172. <https://hdl.handle.net/21.12126/19020>.

43 In contrast, Byzantine Christianity was excluded from the museum collections, although no Byzantine objects were deaccessioned to the Museum of Ethnology. Personal communication Ruurd Halbertsma, curator Museum of Antiquities, 16 December 2020.

44 Two Jewish gravestones, Tunisia, c.1823. Collection National Museum of Antiquities inv. nos. H S 1 and H S 2. <https://hdl.handle.net/21.12126/207262>.

45 Three gravestones, Mecca or Iraq, c.800–1000. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. nos. RV-1403-3495/3497. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/705492>.

46 There may also have been pragmatic reasons behind the preference for funerary objects, as they were frequently found among the excavated materials and, therefore, they were familiar material for archaeologists. Personal communication Ruurd Halbertsma, 16 December 2020.



FIGURE 37 Islamic period objects, transferred from the Museum of Antiquities to the Museum of Ethnology in 1903. Marble Jewish tombstone from the Ottoman period, Izmir, 1805. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. RV-1403-3494. Basalt tombstone, probably made in Mecca, 9th–10th century. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. RV-1403-3497

even though they were of a younger date (he reckoned they dated back to the seventh century AD) than what the Museum of Antiquities usually collected.⁴⁷

With regard to the Indonesian collections, however, the Islamic and pre-Islamic periods were not separated. Before the 1903 transfer, the Islamic and pre-Islamic periods were divided between the Museum of Ethnology and the Museum of Antiquities respectively. Now they were reunited in the Museum of Ethnology, in theory enabling historical comparison. The principle behind the reunification was that ‘the prehistorica of each

people should be placed in the museum that also houses its later civilisation’ (Commissie van Advies 1903, 9).

With the transfer a debate of more than two decades, which had started with the appointment of Serrurier as director of the Museum of Ethnology, was concluded. Between 1859 and 1880, Leemans held both the position of director of the Museum of Antiquities and the Museum of Ethnology, resigning from the latter to be replaced by the museum’s curator Serrurier. Immediately after his appointment, Serrurier started an aggressive campaign to obtain the Indonesian and other Asian collections from the Museum of Antiquities (and the Royal Cabinet of Curiosities). His main argument contended that archaeology, and hence

47 Letter W. Pleyte to J. Robinson & Co., 31 May 1895. NL-LdnRMO 17.1.1 no. 50.

the Museum of Antiquities, should be confined to European civilisation. This evidently included Egypt, because of its direct relationship to Greece and hence its influence on Aryan civilisation, as well as the Phoenician and Assyrian civilisations, for similar reasons.⁴⁸ His argumentation for the exclusive presentation of European culture in museums was informed by notions of race and European superiority, as he maintained that 'archaeology operates in the territory of history, and in particular the history that interests us most: the history of the development of the powerful race now ruling the world, the European Aryans'⁴⁹ and 'besides general ethnology dealing with the development and current state of all the non-European peoples, the ethnology of the European Aryans should be practised separately and presented in a museum exclusively devoted to it, because of the high importance of knowledge of this race, dominant in the world, to which we ourselves belong.'⁵⁰ Leemans struggled to counter the written attacks, however eloquent, of the passionate Serrurier, who was thirty-seven years his junior, defending the Reuvenian distinction between dead and living cultures. Like Reuven, he believed in the need to present the Ancient World as a whole in his museum, including the East Indies colony. Concerning Java he as well drew the line with the advent of Islam (and also, Christianity as well as foreign influence), marking the transformation from 'one state of civilisation to another.'⁵¹

Serrurier did not believe in Reuven's theory of the Greek influences on Javanese culture, nor did he subscribe to the idea of 'dead cultures'. According to him, the living proof against the idea of 'dead cultures' was the Egyptian *fellah* (peasant), who still knew many habits and customs originating in ancient Egypt, and who used objects similar to those found in ancient graves. Likewise, the Persian sun worship (Zoroastrianism) had been ousted by Islam, but it still dominated ornamentation, clothing and habits, and Persians had also remained true to their traditions. In his view, despite the fact that most Javanese were Muslims, Hinduism was still deeply rooted in Java, even if the Javanese were unaware of this.⁵² To illustrate this point, Serrurier compared Javanese culture with a woven cloth, 'Hinduism is the warp and Mohammedanism is the weft.'⁵³ Although Serrurier resigned from his position in 1896, his ideas fully resonated in the secession of the non-European collections from the Museum of Antiquities seven years later.

After the 1903 transfer was completed most of the art and material culture from Indonesia that was present in museums in the Netherlands, was part of the ethnology collections, where it was (at least in theory) separated from objects representing European civilisation, a category which had come to include the ancient Middle East and North Africa. As a result of the transfer, Islamic art objects, regardless of whether they were from Greece, Spain or Iran, were placed in the Museum of Ethnology and thus supposedly isolated from

48 Letter L. Serrurier to Minister of the Interior, 5 May 1882. NL-HaNA Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken: Afdeling Kunsten en Wetenschappen, 1875–1918, 2.04.13 no. 1952/1288.

49 Letter L. Serrurier to Trustees of Leiden University, 19 December 1882. NL-HaNA Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken: Afdeling Kunsten en Wetenschappen, 1875–1918, 2.04.13 no. 2220.

50 Letter L. Serrurier to Minister of the Interior, 5 May 1882. NL-HaNA Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken: Afdeling Kunsten en Wetenschappen, 1875–1918, 2.04.13 no. 1952/1288.

51 Letter C. Leemans to Trustees of Leiden University, 7 October 1882. NL-LdnRMV A1-7-385/386. Letter C.

Leemans to Trustees of Leiden University, 8 April 1891. NL-HaNA Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken: Afdeling Kunsten en Wetenschappen, 1875–1918, 2.04.13 no. 2220.

52 Letter L. Serrurier to Trustees of Leiden University, 19 December 1882. NL-HaNA Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken: Afdeling Kunsten en Wetenschappen, 1875–1918, 2.04.13 no. 2220.

53 Letter L. Serrurier to Minister of the Interior, 5 May 1882. NL-HaNA Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken: Afdeling Kunsten en Wetenschappen, 1875–1918, 2.04.13 no. 1952/1288.

European objects. Thus, the distinction between the Islamic and pre-Islamic periods of the Middle East and North Africa reinforced the idea of Islam as a non-European entity.

4 The Consequences of Worlds Apart

With the 1903 transfer, curators and museum directors aimed to separate objects representing European and non-European cultures by a distinct break. Likewise, the 1883 division of the Royal Cabinet of Curiosities aimed to distinguish ‘art’, a category epitomizing Western creativity and beginning to include Asian art, from ‘ethnology’, comprising objects collected as scientific evidence, ‘documents kept as guides to non-European people and natural history rather than as records of human ingenuity and artistry’ (Conley 2010, 45). Tony Bennett has argued that ethnology, as a discipline, was crucial in connecting the histories of Europeans nations to those of the rest of the world, ‘but only by separating the two in providing for an interrupted continuity in the order of peoples and races – one in which “primitive peoples” dropped out of history altogether in order to occupy a twilight zone between nature and culture’ (T. Bennett 1995, 77). In the binary set up of museum representation emerging under colonialism, Oriental civilisations (i.e. China, Japan, and eventually premodern India and the Middle East) were assigned an intermediate position ‘either as having at one time been subject to development but subsequently degenerating into stasis or as embodying achievements of civilization which, while developed by their own lights, were judged inferior to the standards set by Europe’ (T. Bennett 1995, 82).⁵⁴ Although the transfers

aimed to ‘create worlds apart’ (Legêne 2002), it is questionable whether they succeeded in doing so. Could Europe indeed be partitioned off from the rest of the world, including the Islamic world? And what did European culture mean in the context of these collections?

Let us take a closer look at some of the Islamic objects involved in the 1883 division of the Royal Cabinet of Curiosities. Among the collectables in the Royal Cabinet were, for instance, several objects from Mughal India. First, the miniature paintings: even though the Museum of Ethnology in 1883 insisted on excluding any object that displayed European influence, the twenty-six Indian paintings it inherited from the Royal Cabinet of Curiosities were made for a Dutch clientele and in a Europeanised style. In many ways, they are just as European as they are Indian. Instead of telling a story of purity, like the Museum of Ethnology imagined, they show us a world where ‘artistic permeability’ between India and Europe was increasingly common (Becherini 2018).

Indian paintings were curiosities in late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century Europe, they were exotic objects from distant lands, much like ostrich eggs or coconuts. Being rare and precious, they were worthy collectibles for princes and nobles. As Pauline Lunsingh Scheurleer (2017) has described, Amsterdam was an important hub for the trade in miniature paintings, most of them being commissioned by employees of the Dutch East India Company. The paintings for the early European collectors were not made at the Mughal court, but in market towns where the Europeans were active, like Golconda, Ahmedabad and Surat (Becherini 2018; Lunsingh Scheurleer 2017). Painters refashioned imperial Mughal images to fit European tastes, both in subject matter and style, as we can see in a painted portrait of Mughal emperor Aurangzeb (1618–1707).⁵⁵ Mughal emperors were a favourite subject for European

54 For that reason, the Royal Cabinet’s collections from Japan and China were indeed divided between the Rijksmuseum and the Museum of Ethnology, cf. Effert (2008) and Van Campen (2000). See Marchand (2009) for the intermediate position of Oriental art between art and ethnology.

55 Portrait of Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb, Deccan, c.1675–1725. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. RV-360-992. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840>

buyers, who thought they were exotic as well as awe-inspiring. The simplified style made the paintings easy to produce and at the same time appealing to a wide audience, which made them easier to sell on the open market.

European interest in the paintings continued until the late eighteenth century. By the late nineteenth century, the paintings were still seen as curiosities and mediocre works of art, perhaps mediocre due to the lack of perspective in the paintings. In any case, the appreciation of Indian painting and their re-inscription as 'Islamic fine art' arrived fairly late in the Netherlands. The seminal exhibition *Islamische kunst* ("Islamic art"), held at The Hague's Gemeentemuseum (Municipal Museum) in 1927, arguably the first exhibition in the Netherlands dedicated to the subject, did feature several Indian miniature paintings, evidencing their new status as art. Yet all of them came from private collections outside the Netherlands (Gallois 1927). When in 1932 the Museum of Asian Art opened at the premises of the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, at the initiative of the Asian Art Society ("*Vereniging van Vrienden der Aziatische Kunst*", in short VVAK), a foundation holding a large collection of Asian Art, it did not exhibit any Indian works from the Islamic period. The first seven Indian paintings to enter the collections of the VVAK were collected in the 1920s and 1930s by judge Herman Julius Hülsmann (1884–1945) and presented as a donation to VVAK by his widow in 1976 (Draak 1980).⁵⁶

A similar story of in-betweenness is attached to the Indian jewellery, which, as described above, oscillated between the museums of art and

ethnology. It consists of a group of forty-one pieces of jewellery, donated in 1754 to Stadtholder Willem v by Julius Stein van Gollenesse (1691–1755), an official in the Dutch East India Company. It was collected as an ethnographic sample, as can be seen from the accompanying note, which describes the gift as three sets of jewellery: one for a Hindu woman, one for a Muslim woman and one that could be worn by both. Moreover, the gift also contained two stone statuettes to be fitted out with the jewellery, in order to demonstrate how the jewellery was worn (they are now lost). A list of the Gujarati names of each piece, also donated, further confirms that the collection was compiled for exhibition and as evidence of ethnographic knowledge (Gommans 2018, 131; Lunsingh Scheurleer 1996).

The story that the portrait paintings and jewellery from India tell is one of 'cross-cultural exchange and cross-fertilization within the pre-modern world' (Becherini 2018, para. 4), and it was precisely this history that caused taxonomic ambiguity. The same can be said about a Mamluk basin, made in Egypt or Syria for Elisabeth of Carinthia (c.1300–c.1350), Queen of Sicily, which has an interior decorated with Arab-Islamic motifs and texts while the exterior looks distinctly European and features an inscription in Latin.⁵⁷ With the division of the collections of the Royal Cabinet of Curiosities it was assigned to the NMHA as a European work of art. Indeed, on closer inspection the Arab style of the inside shows distinctive European features, such as three coats of arms and the depicted rulers who wear crowns similar to those worn by Christian kings. It was highly likely to have been made on commission for Elisabeth of Carinthia, making the basin a fine example of the intense exchange between Southern Europe and the Islamic regions of the Mediterranean (De Hond and Mols 2011).

/604628 The Dutch connection can be seen from a Dutch note on the back: "Ourang Seeb als prins".

56 The Rijksmuseum did acquire a Mughal miniature painting in 1945. The main motivation for acquisition was to possess an example of the Indian paintings that inspired Rembrandt to 'a series of exquisite drawings' (Rijksmuseum 1945, 58–59). Portrait of a Mughal courtier, India, c.1640–1660. Collection Rijksmuseum inv. no. RP-T-1945-1. <http://hdl.handle.net/10934/RM0001.COLLECT.320409>.

57 Mamluk basin, Egypt or Syria, c.1322–1350. Collection Rijksmuseum inv. no. BK-NM-7474. <http://hdl.handle.net/10934/RM0001.COLLECT.15231>.

Unsure how to interpret the Mamluk basin, the Rijksmuseum lent it permanently to the Museum of Ethnology in 1953, along with fifteen other non-Western objects of which the majority were of Islamic origin, claiming that the objects ‘fitted in better’ with the ethnographic collections.⁵⁸ It went back in 1959 for unknown reasons.⁵⁹ Five decades later the basin was re-interpreted as a ‘unique example of the artistic exchange between the Christian and Islamic worlds’ (De Hond and Mols 2011, 29). Since the re-opening of the Rijksmuseum in 2013 it has been on display in the theme room ‘Christian art in the Netherlands’. The accompanying label identifies it as ‘an exotic vessel’ and ‘an Islamic art object that found its way to the Christian West’, thus providing an object lesson of intercultural exchange to the contemporary viewer.⁶⁰ The interpretational history of the Mamluk basin illustrates how, through museological framings like ‘Islamic art’ or ‘European art’, items in museum collections become ‘epistemic objects’: objects that are illustrative of particular codifications of knowledge or that embody such knowledge as specimens (Basu 2017; Alberti 2005). But, as Paul Basu has argued, museum objects are in themselves not constrained or determined by the ‘order of things’ imposed by the museum. Basu describes the in-betweenness of material culture, quoting Paul Gilroy, by its ‘essential connectedness’, a double consciousness born from ‘histories of borrowing, displacement, transformation and continual reinscription’ (Basu 2017, 2; Gilroy 1993, 102).

58 Letter D. Röell to Minister of Education, Arts and Science, 18 December 1952. NL-AsdRM Museum of Ethnology file, no file number.

59 Neither the Rijksmuseum nor the Museum of Ethnology kept the correspondence about the return of the loan. It was exhibited in 1969 in Cairo’s Semiramis Hotel in an exhibition entitled *Islamic art in Egypt 969–1517* organised by the Egyptian Ministry of Culture. Except for the Seljuq mortar (BK-NM-11815), the other objects are still in the Museum of Ethnology.

60 Exhibition label as seen on 20 September 2018.

4.1 *The in-betweenness of Islamic Things*

Heterogeneity was also the main reason why the Islamic objects of the Royal Cabinet of Curiosities existed in relative obscurity after the 1883 dissolution of the museum and the re-distribution of the collections. After the great division of the Royal Cabinet’s collection, objects kept moving from one collection to another. Until the late twentieth century, the deaccessioning of objects was common practice in museums, and objects from the Royal Cabinet were exchanged with other museums, for example in the case of doublets, or transferred when museum directors and curators decided that they no longer fitted the profiles of their collections. In the case of the Rijksmuseum and the Museum of Antiquities these transfers aimed to complete the removal of non-European items; on various occasions, when such objects were found, they were transferred to the Museum of Ethnology.⁶¹ When, in 1931, the Rijksmuseum deaccessioned thirty-three ‘exotic’ musical instruments, the main argument made was that they fell outside the ‘nature of our European musical instruments.’⁶² The Museum of Ethnology, in turn, transferred objects to both museums when they did not fit the right criteria, for instance in the case of archaeological material found in Europe.⁶³ Moreover, the museum occasionally

61 Between 1862 and 1982, on thirteen occasions, the National Museum of Antiquities deaccessioned objects from various regions of the world to the Museum of Ethnology. The Rijksmuseum and its predecessors transferred objects four times: in 1901, 1931, 1937 and 1953, including Islamic objects from the former Royal Cabinet of Curiosities. Information TMS database National Museum of World Cultures. Accessed 3 July 2019.

62 Letter F. Schmidt Degener to Minister of Education, Culture and Science, 24 November 1930. NHA 476.1223_016/017. Thirty-three musical instruments, China, Indonesia, West and Central Africa, 19th century. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. Nos. RV-2231-1/28.

63 Between 1964 and 2018, the Museum of Ethnology donated 56 (series of) items to the National Museum of Antiquities. Information TMS database National Museum of Antiquities. Accessed 24 January 2019.

deaccessioned to mark its boundaries with other institutions. In 1887, for instance, the Museum of Ethnology parted with six Persian, Turkish and Arabic manuscripts it had inherited from the Royal Cabinet and donated them to the Leiden University Library.⁶⁴

In fact, a large proportion of the Islamic objects of the former collections of the Royal Cabinet of Curiosities demonstrate a hybridity in style, and a distinct in-betweenness in relation to Europe and the Islamic world, regardless of whether they ended up in the collections of the Rijksmuseum or the Museum of Ethnology. A prime example is the trajectory of the paintings made in the Constantinople workshop of the Flemish-French painter Jean Baptiste Vanmour (1671–1737).⁶⁵ During the transfer in 1883, the Vanmour paintings were classified as ethnographic material and sent to the Museum of Ethnology, but eventually they were requisitioned by the Rijksmuseum. There,

the transcultural nature of the paintings was overlooked, thus favouring Eurocentric readings of Vanmour's oeuvre (Shatanawi 2022b).

The concept of in-betweenness has much in common with transculturality, as it argues for a paradigm where objects are not one thing or another but a multiplicity of things at once. Additionally, it emphasises that objects can move between different disciplinary regimes and in this way, it rejects the classificatory traditions of the European museum, which tend to categorise objects using bounded notions of period, place and purpose. Regarding this last point, it also has commonalities with the idea of boundary objects; objects that inhabit several intersecting social worlds and which are used in different ways by different (academic) communities (Star and Griesemer 1989). Surely, the difficulty in classifying the Islamic objects coming from The Hague's Royal Cabinet of Curiosities partly arose from the circumstance that they could inhabit two different worlds, that of art history and that of ethnology.

The presence of a multitude of transcultural objects in the Royal Cabinet is indicative of a collecting tradition that was less obsessed with classification and categorisation than the museums that succeeded it. Whereas heterogeneity was considered an asset in the cabinet of curiosity, it became a problem in the modern museum (Hetherington 1999). As Bennett observes:

“The artefacts – such as geological specimens, works of art, curiosities and anatomical remains – which had been displayed cheek by jowl in the museum's early precursors in testimony to the rich diversity of the chain of universal being, or which had later been laid out on a table in accordance with the principles of classification, had, by roughly the mid-nineteenth century, been wrenched from both these spaces of representation and were in the process of being ushered into the new one constituted by the relations between the evolutionary series organised by each of these knowledges.” (T. Bennett 1995, 97)

64 Among them were three Ottoman notebooks with lists in various languages, including Latin, Italian, Dutch, Arabic, Hebrew, Persian, Greek and Turkish (Witkam 2007, 4:24). Notwithstanding the mixed nature of the manuscripts, making them impure in the eyes of ethnologists, the main reason they were transferred seems to be their status as manuscripts, and in particular in Middle Eastern languages, as two printed Persian books from the Albert Hotz collection went the same way (although other manuscripts and books collected by Hotz and from the Royal Cabinet collection did remain in the Museum of Ethnology). They were possibly part of the cabinet of mainly Chinese books, prints and artefacts collected by Jean Theodore Royer (1737–1807), NL-LdnRMV A1-12-69. The manuscripts are still kept by the Leiden University Library, inv. nos. Or. 3070 to Or. 3073 (Royal Cabinet's inventory numbers 950, 952 and 953. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. nos. RV-360-950/952/953). Letter Trustees of Leiden University to acting director of the Museum of Ethnology, 26 March 1886, urging him to transfer the books and manuscripts in the museum collection to the university library as to respect the division of labour between the two institutions, NL-LdnRMV A1-11-140/141.

65 Jean Baptiste Vanmour, sixty-two oil paintings, Istanbul, 1700–1737. Collection Rijksmuseum inv. nos. SK-A-1997/2052 and SK-A-4076/77/78/81/82/84. <http://hdl.handle.net/10934/RM0001.COLLECT.5647>.

Indeed, although the first director of the Royal Cabinet, Reinier van de Kastele (1767–1845), certainly had scientific aspirations (Effert 2011), the collection was a typical example of such an ‘array of curious things’, a cabinet where objects were ‘assembled according to a more idiosyncratic, speculative logic such as might have been devised before we imagined we were “modern”’ (Basu 2017, 1). Yet this idiosyncrasy does not merely arrive from their freer arrangement; it is also embedded in the objects themselves. Like Basu (2017) has argued, these objects are expressions of processes in time and space, halted in the in-between. In fact, it is precisely the elusive nature of these objects that makes their assignment to categories like ‘art’ or ‘ethnology’, ‘Europe’ or ‘non-Europe’ look rather arbitrary in contemporary eyes.

5 Taxonomic Durabilities

In the preceding paragraphs I have outlined the separation of collections in the context of the creation of the categories of ‘art’, ‘antiquities’ and ‘ethnology’, their alliance with the categories of ‘European’ and ‘non-European’ and the classification of objects according to these categories. I also analysed the position of the Islamic world within this framework, more specifically demonstrating how colonial paradigms still inform the current structure of the Dutch museum landscape. As the analysis of the Dutch collections shows, the major schisms occurred between 1883 and 1903, but the separation of European and non-European collections continued into the twentieth century, be it on a smaller scale.

Museums in the Netherlands were not unique in separating the West from the rest; such a movement took place all over Western Europe in the context of the birth of the academic disciplines of art history, archaeology and ethnology (Whitehead 2009). Museum directors and curators, as well as scholars from different countries, shared ideas and concepts, so that patterns of representation could emerge, despite differences at

the national level (Shatanawi 2021). Furthermore, the histories of separation in the Netherlands were not limited to the museums of archaeology, ethnology, art, design and history that I studied, they extended to museums of modern and contemporary art. A number of publications by Jelle Bouwhuis vividly describe how, in the course of the twentieth century, the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam pushed the non-Western out of its museum spaces (Bouwhuis 2019; 2018; 2014). Bouwhuis raises the question: how could the museum become so exclusive in a geographical sense, after it became a truly modern and contemporary art museum, at a time it privileged freedom of artistic expression over restrained academism? Between 1915 and 1952, the Stedelijk had a space where Asian and African art from different collections was shown. In the 1950s, under the leadership of legendary director Willem Sandberg, it presented both traditional and contemporary art from Africa, Oceania and the Caribbean on a number of occasions, in collaboration with the Tropenmuseum. In 1955 Sandberg organised the exhibition *Moderne kunst – nieuw en oud* (“Modern Art – New and Old”) in the Stedelijk Museum, where he juxtaposed African and Oceanian masks and sculptures from the Museum of Ethnology collection with Cobra paintings and Cubist sculptures by French-American artist Jacques Lipchitz. Yet from the 1960s onwards, the Stedelijk became more and more specialised as a museum of Western modern art, and by the mid-1970s its sole focus was modern art, with strong Atlantic and Russian connections. Its experiments with non-Western art were soon forgotten, and as the colonial legacy came increasingly under attack, the ethnographic museums became more and more isolated.

Sociologist Tony Bennett (1995, 59) noted the interlinkage of the emergence of the art museum and other disciplinary institutions and their discursive formations. Since the 1970s, the institution of the ethnographic museum has been at the centre of postcolonial analysis and critique, while less attention has been devoted to the colonial legacy

of art institutions (Förster and Von Bose 2018). It has become commonplace to describe the ethnographic museum as a monument to colonial violence (e.g. Widok 2014). Yet as I have shown thus far, museums function as communicating vessels, and therefore 'objects from the rest of the world have not only been *appropriated* by ethnographic museums, they have also been *relegated* to these museums' (Förster and Von Bose 2018, 49). This makes the art museum a monument to colonial violence too, due to the ways in which it has removed

the non-Western from its spaces or appropriated it to serve its own ideological agenda. The histories of separation described in this chapter, and the underlying hierarchy of cultures, live on in the current museum constellation, in the Netherlands as elsewhere in Europe. Today the dichotomous model on which the institution of the museum is based is one of the deepest-rooted forms of epistemic violence (Spivak 1988) in the museological domain and, therefore, it has become a principal obstacle to decolonisation.

Making Classification: Indonesian Islam in the Museum Catalogue

Object catalogues constitute the heart of the information infrastructure in museums, and they govern the interpretation of collections after they are musealised. Museum catalogues are both historical documents and sites of negotiation in the present, and in this way, they reveal to what extent and in which ways today's museum practice in the Netherlands is influenced by colonial legacies. In this chapter, I investigate what happened after objects from colonial Indonesia entered the ethnographic collections, whether they were sourced from prior museum collections, such as the Royal Cabinet of Curiosities (1816–1883), or from individuals who obtained objects directly 'from the field'. The process of cataloguing turned objects into ethnographic specimens, and individual items into representatives of types and categories (Turner 2020). The focus of my analysis is on the position of Islam as religion and art within the information infrastructure that was – and still is – employed in the ethnographic museums of the Netherlands, and, thus, the ways in which these framings were connected to processes of classification.

My main argument holds that terminology and systems of classification imbued with colonial ideologies are still in place, despite decades of efforts to decolonize the ethnographic museum and the arrival of new technologies. Hannah Turner (2020) draws similar conclusions regarding the interpretation of the material culture of indigenous groups in North American museums. Building on the work of John Law, Ann Stoler and others, she uses the term material durability to describe how colonial thought can become stabilized in material technologies and practices of museum cataloguing. Imperial formations, Stoler (2016, 20) writes, 'prodigiously produce specialized lexicons of legal, social, and political terms, concepts, and enduring vocabularies that both innocuously and

tenaciously cling to people, places, and things.' In line with this, the aim of this chapter is to look at the lexicons and classifying principles, produced under Dutch colonialism, in order to uncover how and why the concomitant ideologies became materially durable in museums.

1 Classification and Museum Practice

Classification constituted the backbone of the modern museum when it emerged in the nineteenth century (Hetherington 1999; T. Bennett 1995). In the history of museums, the development of the modern museum and its obsessive impulse to order, classify and rank knowledge is linked to European imperialism, in the sense that the museum legitimated colonial domination and modelled culture by separating Europeanness from the 'native' cultures. The preceding chapter investigated the disciplinary formations of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and their relationships to museums. The process of assigning objects to academic disciplines and the corresponding museums was of crucial importance to the interpretation of objects once they had entered the collections. Central to this process was the creation of the categories of European and non-European, and the concomitant categories of art and ethnology. Objects were transferred from one museum to the other along these lines of separation. After the last big transfer, in 1903, most of the art and material culture from Indonesia that was present in museums in the Netherlands had become part of the ethnographic collections and, thus, was separated from the art and archaeology collections.¹

¹ In 1918, the Asian Art Society (VVAK) was founded and began to bring together private collections of Indonesian art.

Certainly, the museums had initiated the separation of collections to optimize the study of Indonesian material culture. Such a project of classification, art historian Hans Belting (2007, 164) argues, 'not only is thought to compensate for the loss which made it erstwhile possible, but even serves to transform loss into a brilliant gain.' From the perspective of ethnology, the concentration of Indonesian material culture in the ethnographic museum was indeed a 'brilliant gain'. Since the vast majority of Indonesian objects ended up in ethnology collections, the position of Indonesian Islam was largely shaped by the knowledge structures within the discipline of ethnology.

When I started to work at the Tropenmuseum (now: Wereldmuseum Amsterdam / NMVW) in 2001, I began to use the digital collection system (The Museum System, TMS) on a daily base to catalogue objects from the Middle Eastern and North African collections (and later, also objects from other Muslim-majority regions). From the outset, I struggled to make meaning using the tools provided by the system, especially the thesaurus-based structure which provides controlled vocabularies in a drop-down menu. The thesaurus options fitted in well with some Islamic practices, such as protection (indicated as 'magic') and circumcision, while objects frequently occurring in the collection, related, for instance, to veiling, sacred places, religious leadership (whether Sufi or orthodox) or theological literature were hard to accommodate. For example, the most viable option the catalogue provided for the religious 'use' of Qur'anic manuscripts (or Bibles or Torah scrolls) was as 'ritual attribute', which always seemed to me somewhat underrating the multiple meanings the Qur'an takes on for Muslims.

The literature on museum cataloguing of Islamic and Indonesian collections is scarce. Hussein Keshani (2015; 2012) has identified some of the problems of documenting Islamic art in digital museum databases. He noted a difficulty to accommodate Islamic works of art, due to the focus on European art history, obstacles to noting Arabic script and Hijri dates, and a multitude of

transliteration systems, design vocabularies and naming conventions and geographies. To some extent, this also applies to the system used by the NMVW and the other ethnographic museums, which only allows for dating according to the Gregorian calendar, only recently started to accommodate the Arabic script, and has no controlled vocabulary of Islamic terms, historical figures or events. Yet, the obstacles I encountered in daily practice indicated deeper structural issues that seem to be rooted in the genealogies of current classification practices. The affordances of any museum catalogue, the properties that define possible uses, determine its possibilities and limitations, as Keshani asserts. Rightly, he concludes that:

"Not only do the underlying political orders and cultural values of archival legacies and their orderings permeate the new digital archives and analytical tools, but so too do the assumptions of software designers and the disciplinary perspectives involved. The design of the database and its analytical tools, then, is the terrain of historiographical negotiation, where the future of many possible lines of inquiry will be delineated in broad strokes." (Keshani 2012, 22)

Museum catalogues link vocabularies to objects collected in colonial contexts and demarcate the lines of inquiry. An investigation of the information infrastructure gives insights into how silence was produced and reproduced, or, how Islamic histories were occluded (cf. Stoler 2016). The reverse side of the lexicon is a lack of vocabulary, or colonial aphasia, described by Ann Stoler (2011) as loss of access and active dissociation. Aphasia, she writes (2011, 125), is 'a dismembering, a difficulty speaking, a difficulty generating a vocabulary that associates appropriate words and concepts with appropriate things. Aphasia in its many forms describes a difficulty retrieving both conceptual and lexical vocabularies and, most important, a difficulty comprehending what is spoken.' Therefore, my interest concerns both lexicons and systems of classification, as well as the gaps and silences they produce.

As Hannah Turner (2020, 13–14; 2016) points out, not much has been written about how the epistemic allegiances of colonial collecting practices have endured in the everyday practice of cataloguing. Of these practices, systems of classification have assumed renewed importance in recent years, following the emergence of the digital domain, and hence, the urgency of studying its colonial credentials. In the twentieth century, the primary engagement of museums with the public came to be through the physical object, and the way it was interpreted in exhibitions and galleries. Today, the fast rise of online collections and exhibitions has put museum catalogues, once again, to the forefront (Turner 2016; Srinivasan et al. 2010). Internal reports on the use of the online collections of the National Museum of World Cultures show that the website has 21,000 visits per three months (Van Alphen 2020). Around 37% of users are located in Indonesia, a share almost equal to Dutch visitors (38%). More than 60,000 images from the collections have been uploaded to Wikimedia Commons, along with the catalogued information, and take up a prominent place in the Indonesian-language articles in Wikipedia (Van Alphen 2020; Navarrete and Borowiecki 2016). In November 2021 these articles had more than 4 million page views, and the English articles around 9 million, in one month (BaGLAMa 2021).

The shift to widespread online use of museum catalogues calls for renewed attention to issues of knowledge authority. Systems of classification not just arrange data, but, by the act of arrangement, they also produce knowledge, and this act of knowledge production is intrinsically linked to questions of power. In *Sorting Things Out: Classification and Its Consequences* (1999), Geoffrey Bowker and Susan Star argue that the architecture of classification schemes is simultaneously a moral and an informatic one, which makes classifications material as well as symbolic. If classification is defined as ‘a spatial, temporal, or spatio-temporal segmentation of the world’, a classification system is then ‘a set of boxes (metaphorical or literal) into which things can be put

to then do some kind of work – bureaucratic or knowledge production’ (1999, 10). In this regard, Rodney Harrison (2010, 28) speaks of classifications as memory practices, namely ‘structures for the production and maintenance of knowledge systems that shape the way in which we perceive the past and present.’ As Bowker and Star posit (1999, 41), no one classification organises reality for everyone; in any classificatory system multiple voices as well as silences are embedded. Studying knowledge infrastructure is of ethical importance, as ‘every standard and each category valorises some point of view and silences another. This is not inherently a bad thing – indeed, it is inescapable’ (Bowker and Star 1999, 5). Acts of selection are central to processes of meaning-making in museums (Pearce 1994). In the case of systematic collecting, categorising is integral to collecting and scientific principles of organisation influence the gathering of material. In their afterlives as museum objects, artefacts undergo different stages. First, when an object is added to the collection and information about it is included in the catalogue, and then, continuing with each exhibition and each additional piece of information added to the catalogue records. At each stage, new layers of meaning are added onto the object, but at the same time other layers are taken away or information is excluded. The classification systems employed by museums make collections and remake them: objects from different sources are hustled around and regrouped in categories designed by the museum. Therefore, classification is a ‘moment of fact retrieval’, when narratives are made (Trouillot 1995, 26).

My investigation begins with an overview of the development of classification systems for ethnology collections in museums in the Netherlands. These include the 1874 catalogue of the Netherlands Missionary Society (NZG), the 23-volume catalogue of the Museum of Ethnology that was published between 1909 and 1932, continuing with the Tropenmuseum’s card system (in use between 1940 and 2000), and finally the digital collection system (TMS) that is currently used in the ethnographic

museums of the Netherlands. The systems were specifically developed for the classification of Indonesian objects, and later expanded to the entire working area of the museums, including collections from other Muslim-majority countries.² The Netherlands is a special case, because principles of classification were shared, developed and implemented across museums with ethnology collections. As a result, a nation-wide taxonomic approach to the collections emerged.³ In the second part of this chapter, I look more closely at the principles of classifying Islamic objects, both as a religious and artistic practice. Islam, as an in-between category, presented a challenge to the ethnographic museum, making it hard to accommodate it within the systematic ranking of ethnic groups and cultures of its classificatory systems. This in-betweenness manifests itself in the classification systems of the ethnographic museum through a gap, a certain emptiness of knowledge. Finally, I analyse the implications of these histories for museum practice today.

The shared ethnological thesaurus is partly based on an evolutionary system – the twelve-group classification – and, as we will see, the system outlived the theoretical principles on which it was based. If evolutionism was the dominant theory in ethnology in the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, it was soon replaced by other currents in academia; during much of the twentieth century the Dutch museums were dominated by structuralism and functionalism.⁴ Even though both theoretical

approaches lost their popularity after the 1950s, museum displays continued to be based on them until the twenty-first century (see chapter 8). The paradigmatic shifts resulted in new interpretations of objects in exhibitions and publications, but they did not root out the older evolutionary model of the museum catalogue.

The endurance of the evolutionary model has much to do with the ‘practical politics’ of making classification (Bowker and Star 1999, 44). As we will see throughout this chapter, time and again the decisions to continue the evolutionary model were based on pragmatism, and the underlying reasons were logistic rather than intellectual. The story of the twelve-group model, therefore, is one of path dependence – the dependence of outcomes on the path of previous decisions. Another recurrent theme is related to the professionalisation of museum organisations in the twentieth century: decision-making on classificatory systems was transferred from the curatorial domain to collection management departments, which were ruled by quantitative targets rather than theoretical debate. In the large ethnographic museums in the Netherlands, the work of writing catalogue entries was entrusted to documentalists and registrars, while curators concentrated on (field) research, exhibitions and object collecting, whether ‘in the field’ or not.⁵ The hands-on approach to classification is reflected in the historical records, with minimal evidence of debate surrounding principles and substance. Instead, the discussion primarily centred on the advantages for museum work and the measurable results.

² Whereas the Museum of Ethnology originally used the twelve-group system for the Southeast Asian collections, from 1950 the Tropenmuseum has used it for the entire collection.

³ The more common approach seems to have been that cataloguing systems were developed on a museum-by-museum basis.

⁴ Dutch structuralism aimed to investigate whether different aspects of a culture could be traced to one or a few basic structures (P.E. de Josselin de Jong and Vermeulen 1989). Functionalism considers a culture as an interrelated whole, rather than a collection of separate attributes.

2 Histories of Classification: The Twelve-Group Model

The twelve-group model of classification – on which the cataloguing systems used today in the

⁵ Hannah Turner (2020) describes a similar development, with similar outcomes, for the ethnographic collections in the US.

Dutch ethnographic museums are based – constitutes one of the most pervasive and enduring colonial legacies. The model emerged in the late nineteenth century, and, like some other classification systems of the period, it was based on evolutionary theory and the idea of human society advancing in stages.⁶ The model organised objects by function or use and was originally developed as a tool to arrange cultures along the spectrum of primitiveness to civilisation. The main architect was Lindor Serrurier (1846–1901), director of the Museum of Ethnology between 1880 and 1896. The preceding chapters have considered in detail the accumulation of collections during his directorship, fuelled by colonial rule in Indonesia, and his academic views that were rooted in comparative evolutionary ethnology, undergirded by ideas about the superiority of the European race. In Serrurier's vision the ethnological museum was to function as a scientific laboratory, but he also had close ties to the colonial administration, and he presented the relationship as one of mutual benefit.

In the Netherlands, the first to develop a system for the classification of ethnographic objects from colonial Indonesia was Johan Christiaan Neurdenburg (1815–1895), secretary of the Protestant Netherlands Missionary Society (*Nederlandsch Zendeling Genootschap*, or NZG). In the 1874 catalogue of the NZG collections, Neurdenburg arranged the objects in twenty groups. His differentiation was roughly based on the evolutionary model, ranging from group one 'housing' and group two 'clothing' to groups eighteen to twenty 'pagan cults' (*afgodendienst*), 'antiquities' and 'weapons' (Neurdenburg 1874).

Inspired by this system, Serrurier developed a sharpened version of Neurdenburg's model

to classify the objects in his museum.⁷ Whereas Neurdenburg's system was slightly inconsistent, and, within it, groups occasionally seemed to follow a random order, Serrurier devised a clear and concise model, distinguishing twelve groups corresponding with the function of objects. The groups followed an evolutionary order, starting with basic needs, like food and shelter, and ending with religion and science as the highest fulfilment of humanity. Fully applying the logic of evolutionism, the primary goal of his system was to determine the phase of development of the ethnic groups represented in the collections (Van Wengen 2002a, 92). Underlying the twelve groups was a detailed evolutionary order, as can be seen from the following list (Van Wengen 2002a, 91–92; Serrurier 1881; 1882; 1883):

1. Food and drinks, dainties; stimulants (tobacco and opium), medicines
2. Clothing and jewellery; toiletries
3. Architecture, houses and bridges in a model form, and furniture
4. Hunting and fishing
5. Gathering of food, agriculture and horticulture, forestry; cattle breeding, animals
6. Shipping and shipbuilding; vehicles
7. Trade, shops, measures and weights
8. Manufacture of products of the mineral, vegetable and animal kingdoms
9. Weapons, military dress and decorations
10. Dignity insignia of chiefs; objects related to popular assemblies; courts of justice
11. Products of art and crafts; music; dance; plays and shows
12. Religion and education

6 The system used for the Pitt Rivers collection, now part of the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford, is a well-known example of a classification system based on evolutionary principles.

7 In an 1880 letter to the Minister of the Interior Serrurier praised the scientific qualities of Neurdenburg's catalogue. Letter L. Serrurier to Minister of the Interior, 24 November 1880. NL-LdnRMV A1-5-350/365. Serrurier first introduced his twelve-group system in August 1881 (Serrurier 1881). A similar system was first conceived in 1880 by his predecessor Conrad Leemans (1809–1893), but never implemented (Effert 2011, 162). Letter C. Leemans to Minister of the Interior, 13 November 1880. NL-LdnRMV A1-5-335/336.

In tandem with the introduction of the classification system, Serrurier also reorganised the administration of the collection. He started to index the collections on individual cards, occasionally including sketches, and recording the origin, use and scientific significance of each object (Effert 2011, 163; Van Wengen 2002c, 53). Under Serrurier's supervision, the museum displays were reorganised. Whereas before objects were placed according to size rather than function (Van Wengen 2002c, 57), Serrurier argued that a useful arrangement should provide an overview of each regional group, instead of mixing different ethnic groups.⁸ According to him, an arrangement of ethnographic collections entirely based on function did not make sense, as Serrurier thought it was of importance to study each population separately.⁹ In this manner, it would be possible to determine the level of civilisation of each group and, thus, to unravel the historical development of humankind and its organisation, customs and habits. In the exhibitions and galleries, Serrurier started to arrange the collection in eight departments representing geographic regions, and within each department a subdivision of twelve functional groups was made:¹⁰

“In each department, if it comprises various and diverse islands or districts, objects are grouped together and arranged according to twelve groups – starting with the objects used to satisfy the most basic needs, like food and everything else for internal use, then continuing with clothing

and housing, subsequently the means necessary to obtain all of that, to transport, sell and manufacture it, to be continued with all that is necessary to secure the possession and ownership of these goods, i.e. combat, the maintenance of law and order within the nation, and to conclude, finally, with the matters satisfying the most noble needs of humanity – the spirit.” (Serrurier 1883, 1)

The arrangement in twelve groups was grounded in Serrurier's conviction that ethnology was in fact a natural science. In his view, material culture was the – conscious or unconscious – expression of the human psyche, and objects were the key to knowing a people's true essence. In this sense, Serrurier followed the concept of *Völkergedanken* (folk ideas) of the German ethnologist Adolf Bastian (1826–1905). According to this theory, each people (*Volk*) has unique ethnic and cultural expressions, as a result of adaptations to the natural environment (Chevron 2007). Serrurier asserted that these traits manifested themselves through objects. According to him, the manufacture of objects was governed by fixed principles, and therefore, the appearance of objects was never coincidental but in accordance with the peculiarities of the ‘race’ to which the manufacturer belonged (Ten Kate 1902, 9).¹¹ As Serrurier put it, ‘in every object hides a complex of ideas. As a rule, then this idea and then another comes to the fore, while the other ideas are only rudimentarily visible or persist in latent condition’ (Ten Kate 1902, 10). Accordingly, the objects in group twelve, which categorised religion, would reveal what ‘occupied the spirits’ of the regional groups of the Dutch East Indies, and what constituted their ‘most noble needs’ (Serrurier 1883, 1).

One of the most elaborate attempts at classifying objects from colonial Indonesia was made at the International Colonial and Export Exhibition in Amsterdam in 1883. The section of the exhibition

8 Letter L. Serrurier to Minister of the Interior, 24 November 1880. NL-LdnRMV A1-5-350/365.

9 Serrurier was referring to the Pitt Rivers collection which he had visited in London in 1880. Augustus Henry Lane Fox Pitt Rivers (1827–1900) was an ethnologist and archaeologist who developed a novel method of arranging ethnological collections, i.e. by function and (within function) chronologically.

10 This practice continued after Serrurier's directorship. For instance, in 1907 the twelve group arrangement was used in the exhibition of the Veltman collection of Acehese objects (Fischer and Veltman 1907).

11 Letter L. Serrurier to Trustees of Leiden University, 25 March 1891. NL-HaNA Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken: Afdeling Kunsten en Wetenschappen, 1875–1918, 2.04.13 no. 2220.

about the Dutch East Indies was divided into three main groups and thirty-eight classes (Veth, Wilken, and Klinkert 1883a). Group II, devoted to the population of the colony, was an ethnographic exhibition in which the compartmentalisation was largely modelled on Serrurier's system, classifying objects first according to geographic regions and then according to the twelve groups (Bloembergen 2006, 61). The scientific classification was the responsibility of the Leiden professor of linguistics and ethnology Pieter Veth (1814–1895), who acted as the honorary chairman of the exhibition and was also put in charge of editing the catalogue (Bloembergen 2006, 59). Marieke Bloembergen (2006, 61) has noted that although the exhibition testified to 'a strong desire to be thorough and comprehensive', there was a certain arbitrariness when it came to assigning objects to groups. The exhibition was imbued with an evolutionary perspective, assessing the level of civilisation of each group within the population in comparison to the Netherlands. Thus, as with other evolutionary exhibitions, evolutionary theory not just directed the contents and design of the exhibition; it was central to its pedagogics (T. Bennett 1995, 200). As Bloembergen puts it:

“Although the desire for completeness meant that every facet and every characteristic feature of this world had to be dealt with, the variety of cultures it contained was not seen as truly relevant. What mattered was its primitive nature, its quality of “otherness” in relation to the contemporary stage of Dutch civilisation. Hence this exhibition could also provoke visitors to question their own world view and the self-image of the Dutch nation. (2006, 63)”

Indeed, the twelve-group system did not stop at the assessment of the level of development of the cultures of the Dutch East Indies. The twelfth and last group represented the highest level of civilisation, but within a model ranking the highest level as still below European civilisation and, ultimately, communicating the superior position of

Dutch culture and the white race. Consequently, the twelve-group-model was only apt to classify 'native' expressions of culture; artefacts produced by Europeans were classified outside the model. When Indonesians were perceived to have reached civilisation, they confused the system. It is at these intersections that gaps and silences occurred, as the following analysis of the implementation of the system shows.

2.1 *The Long Reach of the Twelve-Group Model*

The first continuation of the twelve-group model after the dominance of evolutionism occurred at the Museum of Ethnology. Johann Schmeltz (1839–1909), director of the Museum of Ethnology between 1896 and 1909, was the last director fully embracing evolutionary thinking (Van Wengen 2002c, 61). Under the supervision of his successor Hendrik Juynboll (1867–1945), the entire collection of Indonesian objects was made available in a full catalogue, comprising twenty-three volumes, published between 1909 and 1932 (from here on referred to as the Juynboll catalogue). The twenty-three years of Juynboll's directorship were characterised by a lack of initiatives, apart from the catalogue, and passive waiting for the government to take direction (Van Wengen 2002c, 71–74). This may explain that a paradigm shift failed to materialise. Although Juynboll was no longer a die-hard supporter of evolutionism, he continued the approach of his predecessors, and so the catalogue consistently classified the objects according to the twelve groups. Meanwhile, museum curators Jan de Josselin de Jong (appointed 1910) and Willem Rassers (appointed 1918) were outspoken structuralists (Van Wengen 2002c, 61). Yet, in 1937, the year Rassers was appointed director of the museum, the collection administration was transferred from the handwritten cards to pre-printed index cards and the group classification was among the information to be noted down on the cards (Museum Volkenkunde 1937, 10). A new design of the cards, probably implemented in the 1950s, at last omitted the group

classification.¹² However, for those objects from Indonesia that were published in the Juynboll catalogue, the published descriptions were photocopied on the index cards. With the arrival of the digital system TMS in the 1990s, these descriptions were typed up in the database, at least for parts of the collection. In this way, throughout the twentieth century, the twelve-group system remained the principal method of classification in the Museum of Ethnology, and through it the comparative evolutionist outlook on the collection kept on being reproduced.

The catalogues produced for the 1883 exhibition and the Museum of Ethnology set the standard for the classification of ethnographic collections in the Netherlands, prompting other museums to adopt Serrurier's system. When Cornelis Pleyte (1863–1917), a former volunteer in the Museum of Ethnology, was appointed curator of the ethnographic museum of Artis Zoo in 1887, he also introduced the twelve-group system to this museum (Van Wengen 2002b, 970). However, after the transfer of the Artis collection to the Colonial Institute in 1921, the classification system was abandoned because the institute arranged objects by inventory number only (this would change in 1940). Yet, over the course of time, other museums started to use the twelve-group system, such as the ethnographic museums in Breda and Kampen affiliated with the Royal Military Academy and the *Indische Instelling* in Delft.¹³

For a long time, the Colonial Museum (later: Colonial Institute), precursor of the Tropenmuseum / Wereldmuseum Amsterdam, was among the few museums with ethnology collections that did not use the twelve-group classificatory system.¹⁴ That changed in 1940, during the directorship of B.J.O. (Bep) Schrieke (1890–1945), a former advisor for Native Affairs and Minister of Education, who believed that ethnology should serve the colonial administration (Vogel 1992, 72).¹⁵ Again, the decision to start using the twelve-group model was taken on practical grounds and this time the design of the catalogue was delegated to an employee whose responsibilities were administrative rather than curatorial. Under the supervision of museum assistant Johanna Pape-van Steenacker (1901–1978) the entire administration of the collection was re-organised. She completed the index card system and arranged them according to the twelve groups. Director Schrieke was more a historian than an ethnologist and not at all taken by evolutionism (Wertheim 2002; Vogel 1992, 57), but he supported Pape-van Steenacker's logistic undertaking. The systematic overview of the collections could help to inventorise knowledge, identify gaps and retrieve information when requested by third parties (ranging from students to the government), and therefore a complete inventory of the collection was made, based on the system of the Juynboll catalogue.¹⁶ Initially, there was only

12 The new cards were most likely introduced by Pieter Pott (1918–1989), who served as the director of the Museum of Ethnology between 1955 and 1982. For instance, the cards filled out by Carel du Ry van Beest Holle (1930–2013), who was curator of the Islamic Culture Area (*islamitisch cultuurgebied*) between 1957 and 1960, did not have the option to note down the group.

13 As observed in the collection administration of the Royal Military Academy, kept in the Archives of the Wereldmuseum Leiden (NL-LdnRMV-A16), and the inventory cards of Museum Nusantara, series 7082-S (information TMS database National Museum of World Cultures). Accessed 31 October 2019.

14 Judging from the Wereldmuseum Rotterdam card catalogue, it seems that the museum began to use the twelve-group system even later: in the 1980s. More research needs to be done to verify this.

15 Schrieke's PhD thesis, *Het boek van Bonang* (The book of Bonang, 1916), considered the influences that led to the establishment of Islam in the Indonesian archipelago, and was supervised by Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje. Bep Schrieke had held various academic and administrative positions in the Dutch East Indies. He was arrested in 1943 and imprisoned in St. Michielsgestel. From prison he was able to direct the museum (Frank 2012; Vogel 1992, 51).

16 Memorandum B.J.O. Schrieke to advisory committee of the ethnographic department. September 1942. Leiden University Library/Collection Galestin, Or. 20.965/135.

one set of cards, but from the 1950s onwards the museum used two identical sets of cards, filed in separate cabinets; the first one arranged according to group and the second set filed according to place of origin. The contrast between the card catalogue and the more up-to-date sociological-historical approach of Schrieke's academic work could not be starker.

2.2 *Entering the Digital World*

In the ethnographic museums of the Netherlands, digital systems arrived in the 1990s. Digital technologies hold the potential of renewal, but it can be argued that this potential is limited because older systems, such as the card catalogue, created the conditions for digital museum databases (Turner 2020). As Haidy Geismar remarks, despite of the promise of innovation, the digital museum often replicates the analogue world of before, copying the same fallacies and idiosyncrasies:

“It seems that digital systems often become analogues of their nondigital counterparts – mapping, and replicating, older representational frameworks, overwriting the capacity of the digital for radical transformation, connectivity and multiplicity with the representation of singular, teleological, narratives. What we see in many digital representations of museum collections is in fact the opposite of digital utopian discourses – museum catalogues, Google flythroughs and websites that enshrine the same issues of classification, narration, value and perspective that are on display in the galleries, and which have been on display for decades, if not hundreds of years.” (Geismar 2018, 78)

The resilience of nineteenth-century notions of evolutionary ethnology results from the decision, made in the 1990s, to develop the ethnological thesaurus from the vocabulary systems in use in the participating museums. For much of the twentieth century, index cards remained the leading infrastructure used to catalogue the collections

of the ethnographic museums in the Netherlands. Each museum had its own system, but as shown in the previous paragraphs, the museums closely followed each other's examples. In the 1980s they started to collaborate in the OVM (*Overleg Volkenkundige Musea*), a consultative body of eight ethnographic museums.¹⁷ One of the aims of the OVM was to standardize access to the ethnographic collections. When in the early 1990s, several OVM museums began to shift from analogue systems to digitisation of the collection, the OVM initiated a pilot project to develop a shared thesaurus (Navarrete Hernández 2014, 68; Beumer 2008, 25). In 1995, the OVM museums founded the SVCN (*Stichting Volkenkundige Collectie Nederland*, or Foundation for the Ethnographic Collection in the Netherlands). One of the first decisions of the SVCN was to adopt a single common software system, The Museum System (TMS), to be implemented in each of the museums, and to develop a common thesaurus, the OVM thesaurus, with uniform terminology for geographical origin, cultural origin, function and use, and object keywords (Beumer 2008, 26). Since the early 2000s, all the SVCN museums as well as Museum Bronbeek use TMS and the OVM thesaurus to catalogue the collections.

Systems of classification are known to inherit the characteristics of the base of systems that have come before (Bowker and Star 1999, 33). The OVM thesaurus is no exception to this rule, as its section of function and use is based on the twelve-group system of classification.¹⁸ In the early 1990s, the SVCN working group decided to base the new

17 The eight museums participating in the OVM were: Afrika Museum, Museum Gerardus van der Leeuw (closed 2003), Museon, Museum Nusantara (closed 2013), Museum Volkenkunde, Nijmeegs Volkenkundig Museum (closed 2005), Tropenmuseum and Wereldmuseum Rotterdam.

18 It seems that early on other thesaurus lists were considered and rejected, e.g. the Smithsonian Institution classification and Robert Chenhall's Nomenclature for Museum Cataloging (Navarrete Hernández 2014, 68).

thesaurus on existing systems in use in the participating museums. The twelve-group system was the only classification system for function in use among the SVCN museums, and at least two museums still used it: the Tropenmuseum and Museum Nusantara. By using an older system, the project could make a timely start and consensus among the eight museums was more easily reached. Moreover, in this manner classification was grounded in historical practice and verifiable through consultation of the older sources.¹⁹ Although the procedure for decision making on the thesaurus in theory involved curatorial expertise, the coordination and implementation was delegated to collection managers.²⁰ Many of them had trained in areas such as art history or anthropology, but their duties primarily concerned administrative and technical issues. Curators habitually showed less interest in the digital system. Consequently, consultation between the SVCN museums focused on hands-on matters.²¹ A main area of prioritisation was the uniformity of terminology across the museums, which led Steven Engelsman, director of the Museum of Ethnology, to exclaim, “The ethnological thesaurus is finished, the drudgery is done, we have created a tremendous tool that allows us to speak the same language and search the ethnological collection of the Netherlands’ (Museum Volkenkunde 2006, 52). Collection managers could fully decide on the terminology for function and object key words, whereas names of geographical origins or ethnic groups were chosen by them and then passed on for curatorial review. Yet in some instances, the new uniform language was in fact a recycling of out-of-date terms and when in the late 1990s decolonisation of the museum came (again) onto the agenda

of some of the curatorial departments, it remained disconnected from catalogue development.

The result was that the twelve-group model and its evolutionary basis, without much debate, was re-introduced into the digital system. For cataloguing the function and use of objects, the OVM thesaurus distinguishes nineteen groups, many of them being the same as in Serrurier’s system. Being based on a picklist, an evolutionary order of groups is no longer extant, but in the choice of groups a developmental phasing is still implicitly present. All categories originally made up by Serrurier are present among the nineteen groups, albeit often in a more elaborate form. For instance, group ten of Serrurier’s model, relating to the social organisation of life, is divided between two groups in the OVM thesaurus. The first one, like in Serrurier’s model, is related to the judicial system and status, rank and other insignia. It is expanded with typical twenty-first-century themes like slavery, colonialism and exploration. The second group concerns the cycle of life (Serrurier: ‘objects in use for the initiation of young persons’ coming of age; objects in use at marriage ceremonies’) and expanded with death, childhood, pregnancy and aging.

By adopting the thematic arrangement of the nineteenth century, the evolutionary worldview made a surprising comeback, although it was no longer supported by any of the museum staff. It is, however, the colonial ideologies and paradigms embedded in the catalogue that concern me most. Hannah Turner (2020) draws attention to legacy data, a term used to denote data from a previous design that is considered outmoded:

“As material culture became data in the museum and was mined as a resource for scientific knowledge extraction, the legacy of past practice and epistemology was written into documentation as categories, naming conventions, incorrect tribal affiliations, and more.” (Turner 2020, 8)

The legacy data of the ethnographic museums of the Netherlands take the form of outmoded

19 Personal communication Jos Taekema, former coordinator OVM and SVCN, 18 May 2021.

20 OVM, *Blauwdruk thesaurusontwikkeling* (Blueprint thesaurus development), 1992. Courtesy Jos Taekema.

21 Minutes of meetings of the museum coordinators and registrars, January 1995 to June 2009. NL-LdnRMV, no inventory number.

terminology, including words like Mohamedans, and systems, in particularly the twelve-group model.

3 Classification and Framings of Islam

Given that colonial epistemologies endure in museum cataloguing practices, I will now focus on the implementation of the twelve-group system, and in particular, the ways in which nineteenth and early twentieth century catalogues organised material culture from Muslim regions.

In the evolutionary systems of classification on which the OVM thesaurus was based, neither Islam, nor any other specified religious tradition, constituted a separate category. Rather, religion was one of the themes or groups used to categorise objects, and within this group objects of different religious traditions were placed indiscriminately. The same applies for art, which was usually placed in a separate category together with crafts (*kunstnijverheid*), music and play. An exception are the Javanese antiquities; these objects had a separate status, being antiquities, and, in the catalogue of the Museum of Ethnology, they were catalogued under material categories (wood, metal) rather than function – in line with their gradual inscription as high art in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The contours of these framings of Islam already began to take shape in the first systematic catalogue of ethnographic objects from colonial Indonesia. In Neurdenburg's 1874 catalogue of the Netherlands Missionary Society (NZG) collections, religious objects were grouped under the heading 'objects used in pagan cults', group eighteen of the twenty groups. Although the catalogue has groups for 'musical instruments' and 'toys and folk play', there is no category for arts or crafts, but a few objects were catalogued as antiquities (denoting anything old or precious).²² Even though the NZG

had sent missionaries to Muslim areas in Java since 1848, the catalogue contains few objects related to Islamic religious practice. Today, out of the 2,076 objects collected by NZG missionaries present in the NMVW collections, around 43% come from Muslim areas, mainly in Java, but only a handful are classified as directly relating to the Islamic faith.²³ The objects currently classified as art all relate to *wayang* and other theatrical forms or music. The scarce attention paid to the Islamic religion in the collection may be explained through the main purpose of the NZG collection: the instruction of future missionaries (Neurdenburg 1874, 4). Islam only occupied a marginal role in instruction during the first period of the NZG's missionary activities in Java (Kruithof 2014, 77). In the case of the systematic collecting on behalf of the NZG, collecting interacted with classification and scientific principles of organisation. The missionaries who collected for the 1883 world exhibition sent the objects inclusive of categorised lists.²⁴ It can be argued that the creation of categories, and the (un)conscious decision to neglect the Muslim faith, already occurred as part of collecting and are extended through the catalogue.

In the Neurdenburg catalogue, religion was equated with 'infidel' or 'pagan' non-monotheistic traditions, which would be a recurrent theme in later systems of classification. In the view of the NZG, Islam was nothing more than a degraded version of Christianity, albeit more developed than the other religions of the Indonesian archipelago because of its monotheistic character. Initially, the missionary society differentiated between 'civilised pagans', i.e. Jews and Muslims, and 'infidel or uncivilised pagans'; Hindus, Buddhists, and the followers of animist religions (Kruithof 2014, 104). From the 1850s, however, the missionaries proselytizing in Java sent home detailed reports

22 But none of the 'antiquities' hailed from Muslim areas and time periods.

23 Seventeen out of the 2,076 objects are associated with the Islamic faith. Information TMS database National Museum of World Cultures. Accessed 28 July 2020.

24 NL-UtHUA, Nederlandsch Zendelinggenootschap (NZG), 1797–1951, 1102–1 no. 699.

about the state of Islam in their areas, and by 1874, NZG director Johan Neurdenburg was quite well informed about Islamic practices. Judging from his writings published in the *Reports from the Dutch Missionary Society (Mededeelingen van wege het Nederlandsch Zendeling Genootschap)*, Neurdenburg's prime concern was Islam as a rival to missionary activities, as he painstakingly recorded how many 'locals' converted to Islam and how many to Christianity. The bulk of the objects catalogued in group eighteen ('objects used in pagan cults') of the Neurenburg catalogue relate to rituals of the (non-Muslim) Minahasans in North Sulawesi. Of the four Javanese objects, two are Chinese and the other two are 'stone idols', so they are probably Hindu-Buddhist in nature (Neurdenburg 1874, 66–67). The only category in which reference to Islam was made, is the group dedicated to clothing.²⁵

In the 1880s, Neurdenburg's system was adapted for the Museum of Ethnology, keeping intact its evolutionary outlook. The twenty-three-volume catalogue of the Museum of Ethnology, published between 1909 and 1932, was the principal source of information about the museum's collection of Southeast Asian objects, and it remained so throughout the twentieth century. Moreover, the catalogue was a reference work that was frequently used in the other ethnology museums, making it by far the most influential classification system for ethnological collections in the Netherlands. Over the course of the twenty-three years during which the various volumes of the

catalogue of the Museum of Ethnology were produced, the contents of the publication became increasingly sophisticated and the arrangement of groups more detailed. The volumes followed the same arrangement as Serrurier's classification system and the 1883 world exhibition; objects were ordered by island or region of the Indonesian archipelago, and within each geographic territory a division was made according to the twelve groups. The catalogues evidently follow an evolutionary perspective, starting with the basic needs of life, such as food and clothing, and ending with objects representing 'spiritual life' (*geestelijk leven*) (Fischer 1909, xiv). This group, number twelve, goes under various headings, sometimes even within the same volume. For instance, in the volume four on the islands around Sumatra, the group twelve category about the island of Banka is called 'religion, science and funerary rites', whereas Nias, Enggano and the Mentawai islands must make do with just 'religion' and the Riau archipelago has a group 'religion and medicine' (Fischer 1909).

Art was classified just below religion, as the eleventh group, and comprised musical instruments, objects related to theatre and dance as well as, in some regions, crafts. When it came to Islam, there were subtle differences in opinion between the authors of the catalogue: curator Hendrik Fischer (1864–1918), a specialist of the Batak and Nias cultures, had a completely negative opinion of Islam, while Hendrik Juynboll showed a certain ambivalence, writing with some respect about Islam as a monotheistic religion while disqualifying its artistic and civilizational achievements. Willem Rassers (1877–1973), who as a curator was involved with the later volumes of the catalogue, was an expert on Javanese culture yet known for his blind spot concerning Islam (Trouwborst 2002).

The evolutionary line of thought is expressed in the introductory essays of the volumes, which continually attempt to compare and assess the different ethnic and cultural groups represented in each volume as well as across volumes. For instance, the islands around Sumatra are introduced with sentences like 'if we take as our measure the objects

25 Inventory number 63 in the catalogue are wooden shoes from Java, worn after 'the cleansing of the body before prayer', collected by missionary Wessel Hoezoo (1826–1896), who was stationed at Semarang since 1849; number 67 are leather slippers, worn by *sant-ris* (pupils of a Qur'anic school), and collected by his colleague Jan Willem Roskes (1842–1918), stationed at Mojowarno between 1869 and 1872 (Neurdenburg 1874, 19). Wooden shoes, Java, c.1850–1870. Collection Wereldmuseum Rotterdam inv. no. WM-88. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/1089258> The leather slippers could not be traced.

for daily life, then the Western islands are definitely much higher [developed] than the Eastern islands'; 'the examination of clothing teaches us, by comparison of the different islands, a regular and very natural development'; 'the ways in which fishing is practised is not just very different, it also demonstrates clearly a higher degree of development in the Eastern islands' (Fischer 1909). The assessment of cultures was intertwined with racial notions, to which the introductory essay about Bali testifies:

"Generally, the Balinese are a beautiful and well-shaped human race, taller, more slender and lighter of skin tone than the Javanese. Their eyes are livelier than those of most other Indonesian peoples. The men have pitch black, long and very coarse hair. Because of their immoral lifestyle, their looks decay at a very young age." (Hendrik Herman Juynboll 1912, 5)

The importance of a complete representation of the twelve groups in this comparative endeavour is explained by curator Rassers in the chapter about Simeulue island (Aceh). The collection, he writes, 'although not being very large, is assembled systematically, so all groups of the catalogue's system are more or less accorded their weight and can be regarded as giving a full picture of the state of civilisation of this island' (Fischer 1920, 5).

The twelve-group system was a tool to measure the position of the various cultural groups of the Indonesian archipelago on the scale of civilisation, and as such it was embedded in the project of European colonisation. Islam fitted uneasily in the categories of religion and art; considered to be higher stages of development these categories had the most potential to challenge the European order of things. The outcome of the ensuing ambivalence were gaps and silences in museum cataloguing, as becomes apparent in the introductory essays of the Juynboll catalogue. In the introduction to the volume about Central Sumatra, curator Hendrik Fischer summarises group twelve (religion, education, medicine) in just one remark,

'that group XII is poorly equipped, will come to no surprise in this entirely Mohammedan land' (1916, viii). Elsewhere Fischer writes about the 'equalizing breath of Islam', which has given the Malay lands 'an ethnologically less attractive culture' (1914, v). Director Hendrik Juynboll makes a similar remark about Ternate in the Maluku Islands, from where 'the museum has an almost complete collection. Only group twelve (religion) has not one single object, probably because Islam had already been introduced by the ruler (Kolano) kaicil Gapi Baguna (1456–1486);²⁶ various customs of the inhabitants of Ternate are based on animist ideas, for instance the veneration of the souls of the dead as guardian spirits' (1931, v). About neighbouring Tidore he writes, 'the same thing applies to Tidore, but from this island the museum does not own a single weapon, which is probably the result of the fact that civilisation had reached this island so early. According to Portuguese sources, Islam arrived around 1430' (1931, vi). So, when cultural groups had reached a certain stage of development (according to the twelve-group scale), the museum was at a loss, as ethnology ultimately was interested in 'primitiveness' rather than the 'civilisation' which Islam represented.

3.1 *Classifying Islam as Religion*

The ambivalent position of Islam as religion in the twelve-group system of the museum followed from several interrelated strains of thought. First, from the viewpoint of nineteenth-century evolutionary ethnology, every group of people had religious beliefs. Accordingly, diverse practices were moulded into religious beliefs and these beliefs had to match the supposedly low level of civilisation of the Indonesians, as Jochem van den Boogert (2017) points out with regard to Java. This belief was mutually dependent on the conviction that in many regions of the archipelago Islam was nothing but a 'layer of varnish'. Second, and more important however, was the focus on

²⁶ He actually ruled from 1465 AD.

'primitiveness' in ethnology, and consequently the deep-rooted interest of museum ethnologists in the non-monotheist religions. Hence, the focus on 'fetishism' and 'magic', in the examples of religious objects listed in Serrurier's English publication *Hints to Collectors* (1882, 9), which, as the title suggests, provides suggestions to third parties on what to collect for the Leiden Museum of Ethnology:

- Objects used in worshipping the dead, such as reliques [relics], skulls, preserved heads, dead-masks
- Objects used during pregnancy, at the birth of a child, at burials, and on other festive occasions and ceremonies, such as coffins, and consecrated gifts, sacrificing knives, circumcising knives
- Fetishes, idols
- Temples, altars, and holy places (models)
- Furniture of temples, sacred musical instruments
- Attributes of priests and magicians, such as garments, magic wands, magic drums, rattles, clappers, and the like
- Books of magic, forms of exorcism and enchantment, divining-sticks
- Rosaries, prayer-wheels
- Amulets

In the first volumes of the Juynboll catalogue of the Museum of Ethnology (1909–1932), Islam and other religious traditions were, without differentiation, grouped together under the heading 'religion', a category that was modelled after the *natuurvolken*, the 'wild, the barbarian and the half-civilized peoples' (Serrurier 1895, 4), that were the principal object of study in the ethnographic museum. As a result of the generic approach to religions, the Islamic objects that were classified as religious objects tended to be related to magical practices, whereas objects related to Islamic scriptural traditions were classified under the categories of 'science' and 'education'. This does not mean that the religious meaning of these objects was discarded, but rather that other aspects were deemed more important. This balance worked out differently in the case of objects related to birth,

death and funeral rites; they were seen as primarily religious in function, conforming to evolutionary ideas about the religious traditions of natural peoples. In later volumes the distinction between institutionalised religion and magic was still present, but both were categorised under the heading of religion. Thus, the difficulty to position Islam in the twelve-group system is indicative of the inherent tension in the binary *natuurvolken* (natural peoples, or those without script and hence without a written history), the presumed focus of the museum, and *cultuurvolken* (cultural peoples, those who have achieved literacy), to which Muslims were considered.

The Tropenmuseum classification, although carried out decades later (from 1940 onwards), shows a number of similarities to the classification in the Juynboll catalogue. Most striking is the high incidence of amulets, talismans and other objects used for 'magical protection'; they number 203 out of the 459 objects classified as group twelve.²⁷ This does not come as a surprise given that the category of religion in group twelve focused on funerary objects and ancestral cults (group 12.1), and objects related to offerings, amulets, temple statues, clothing and objects used by priests, head-hunting, tools for divination, prayer mats, beggar's bowls, collection plates, and incense burners (group 12.2).²⁸ An additional factor were the practical politics of classifying and standardization. As the index cards were filed by group, every object had to be assigned to one group only, even if cataloguing staff had the option of noting down a second or third group on the card.²⁹ This means that staff had to make a choice about the category they found most relevant, although in practice

²⁷ NL-AsdTM Inventory card catalogue Wereldmuseum Amsterdam (Tropenmuseum).

²⁸ Hand out explaining the twelve groups to cataloguing staff. Tropenmuseum, date unknown. NL-AsdTM, no inventory number.

²⁹ At the Tropenmuseum, cataloguing was done by curators and documentalists, the latter group consisted of academic staff hired solely for the cataloguing of the collections.

standards were agreed upon and certain object types were always classified in the same category. From the choices they made, a pattern emerges that is grounded in a conceptualization of religion as based on the practices of the *natuurvolken*, similar to the Juynboll catalogue of the Museum of Ethnology. For instance, both catalogues classify Qur'ans under education rather than religion (Tropenmuseum group 12.4 'literature and writing material, glasses, scissors, educational material').

Another reason for the difficulty to accommodate Islam as religion in the catalogue was the ethnological distinction between religion and magic. The most interesting examples of this ambivalence are present in those volumes of the Juynboll catalogue that do have a separate section of Islamic objects, i.e. South Sulawesi, part of the Celebes (Sulawesi) volume, and the volume on the Maluku Islands. The chapter on the Sula islands collection in the latter volume solves the tension between Islam and religion by creating separate sections for Islam and animism, both classified as religion (Hendrik Herman Juynboll 1930, 38–39). In reality, these two categories were hard to separate, as becomes apparent in the catalogue's dealing with a wooden talisman (*matakau*) depicting an anthropomorphic figure, surrounded by Islamic formulas and symbols, such as the *ta'awwudh* and *basmala*. The talisman, according to director Hendrik Juynboll, factually belongs to the section on animism, but is assigned to Islam because of the Arabic inscriptions (1930, vi). Another *matakau*, crocodile-shaped and without the Arabic inscription, was assigned to animism.³⁰ Group twelve of the South Sulawesi catalogue, also compiled by Juynboll, is divided into four sections: magic and sorcery (*tooverij en toovermiddelen*), objects used

by the *bissu* (ritual experts), ancestral statues, and objects related to Islam (Hendrik Herman Juynboll 1922 vol. 2). The latter section consists of such diverse objects as decoration and rice baskets used during *mawlid an-nabi* celebrations, clothing and weapons for Muslim clergy ('priests'), prayer mats and prayer beads. The ensuing division defines institutionalised Islam, to which these objects relate, as 'real' Islam and relegates other objects, notably a number of amulets with Qur'anic verses, to the section on magic.

Furthermore, the catalogue assigns a separate section for a set of seventy-three objects used by the *bissu*, one of the five genders Bugis society recognises. The *bissu* are an order of androgynous ritual experts, who in majority identify as Muslim and perform ritual blessings and healings (Davies 2011). The catalogue section describes many of their practices, but makes no mentioning of their Muslim identity or how it is intertwined with these practices. Hence, the separation of the *bissu* from Islam conforms to colonial perceptions that were concerned with institutionalised Islam rather than Muslim identity, thus occluding the relationship between the *bissu* and Islam. The principal collector of the objects, Benjamin Matthes (1818–1908), was a linguist and translator in service of the Netherlands Biblical Society (*Nederlands Bijbelgenootschap*). Matthes considered the *bissu* 'infidels', and found them 'appalling', because of their feminine clothing and manners, and even more 'because they sometimes display a kind of intimacy that we don't like to encounter among men' (Matthes 1872, 7:2). He made the following observation, preceding a 47-page long and extremely detailed description of *bissu* practice at the Muslim courts of South Sulawesi:

"The duty of the *bissu* really starts when some kind of festivity is planned. For instance, on the occasion of birth, or a prince or princess who eats or walks for the first time, on the occasion of circumcision or tooth filing, etcetera. Yet these and other festivities at the homes of the natives are all of a religious nature. Although the Bugis all stand

30 Wooden talisman (*matakau*), Sanana (Sula islands), early 20th century. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. RV-1900-61. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/722331>.

Wooden talisman (*matakau*), Sanana (Sula islands), early 20th century. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. RV-1900-152. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/722450>.

together in their embrace of Mohammedanism, the ancestral and fully infidel practices of the *bissu* are actually against their faith.” (Matthes 1872, 7:3)

The distinction Matthes sketches between Islam as a respectable religious tradition and the infidel practices of the *bissu* reflect the contradiction inherent in the ethnological framing of Islam. *Cultuurvolken* and monotheistic religions like Islam were judged by other standards than *natuurvolken*, and a different concept of religion was applied to them. Being a monotheist scriptural religion, Islam was assumed to be devoid of ‘superstitious’ practices, while religion as an ethnological category was made up of such practices.³¹ This led to a paradox in the catalogue: when Islamic practices did meet these higher standards, they did not fit the model set by group twelve; but when they did not, they were considered un-Islamic. The net result was in-betweenness, in which Islam represented a conceptual gap.

3.2 *Classifying Islam as Art*

The principles of evolutionary ethnology that laid the foundation for Lindor Serrurier’s twelve-group system, and its later manifestations, also guided the classification of art. In the eyes of comparative ethnologists, only cultures at the highest phases of development knew art as an autonomous activity. This was reflected in the twelve-group system by giving art the second-highest position. Serrurier defined decorative arts (when writing in English he used the term art-manufacture), classified under group eleven in his system, as ‘objects of daily use, which through their decoration testify to the artistry (*kunstzin*) of a people.’³² In *Hints*

to Collectors (1882, 8–9), he elaborated on the category of “production of art and art-manufacture”: ‘Patterns showing the different styles of ornamental carved work, and copies of carved work; specimens of drawing, engraving, chasing, sculpture, embroidery; tools used in printing figures on tissues, on paper & c., printed stuffs (tapa, batik); calligraphy.’ Serrurier’s conception of the arts, thus, exposes a strong focus on the visual arts, as derived from European understandings. Group eleven also comprised music, dance and play (“objects in use at plays, shows, and fights of animals”), which were grouped together as artistic expressions, although outside the definition of the arts proper.

Comparative ethnologists of the nineteenth century, including Serrurier, were particularly interested in ornamentation as an early stage of artistic development (Van Wengen 2002c, 35). The principal interest in the aesthetics of the natural peoples arose from the idea that they could offer information about the origins of European civilisation, and thus could provide insights into the origins of art. Ornamentation came to occupy an essential place in the conception of art and aesthetic experience in evolutionary ethnology. Serrurier was a proponent of the degeneration theory, which stated that ornamentation first developed in the form of naturalist images, such as human figures and animals, and that through repeated copying these images had dissolved to become geometrical shapes (Van Wengen 2002c, 35). The belief that the objects of natural peoples were always functional was shared by the next generation of curators of the Museum of Ethnology, who pioneered structuralism. Jan de Josselin de Jong (appointed 1910) spoke of ‘primitive aesthetics’ and believed that objects of the natural peoples summoned a ‘magic-animistic’ realm (J.P.B. de Josselin de Jong 1920). In De Josselin de Jong’s perception, it would be very difficult to know if purely aesthetic

31 See, for instance, the remarks of collector František Czurda (1844–1886), a Czech doctor working for the KNIL, who claimed that few people in the archipelago practised Islam. Sulawesi religious practices, especially those of the Bisu, he considered outside Islam, a ‘reiner Fetischdienst’ (a real fetish practice) of the pagan natural people (Czurda 1883, 115–18).

32 Memorandum L. Serrurier, 2 February 1882. NL-HaNA Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken: Afdeling Kunsten

en Wetenschappen, 1875–1918, 2.04.13 no. 1952/320. Serrurier was following a definition of decorative arts that was also commonly applied to European artefacts (Simon Thomas 1988, 30).

intentions had contributed to the maker's frame of mind, as objects served spiritual or ritual purposes in the first place (Effert 2015). Similarly, Willem Rassers (appointed 1918) studied Javanese *wayang* theatre as a manifestation of ancient religion, rather than as artistic practice.

These ideas find expression in the Juynboll catalogue of the Museum of Ethnology. In some volumes, including Central Sumatra, South Sumatra and the Maluku Islands, group eleven is entirely filled with musical instruments and objects related to entertainment, such as games. Again, this does not mean that the aesthetic qualities of the objects classified in other groups were overlooked, but rather that in the eyes of the curators, other functions were deemed to be more prominent. As curator Hendrik Fischer (1916, viii) explained regarding Central Sumatra, 'art products one can find everywhere in this volume. This is the natural outcome of the fact that in native society, where they make their own utensils, every item that is made to the taste of its maker can become something that we would call an art object.' Yet aesthetic appreciation did not mean that the museum designated the objects concerned as art, since the classification of objects in one group or the other was related to verdicts on the development of the people who made them. Take, for example, the sandstone panel from Kandang Mas, the cemetery in Banda Aceh, which is carved with a calligraphic inscription of the *shahada* in elegant *thuluth* script (see chapter 4).³³ The panel is definitely an 'ornamental carved work' and it features calligraphy, yet it was categorised in the rubric of religion rather than art (Fischer 1912, 197). Here, the use of the panel in funerary culture was prioritised over its aesthetic qualities as a work of art or, for that matter, the reference to the tenets of the Islamic faith.

In the ranking of cultural groups certain cultures were accorded a higher status, which found expression in the composition of group eleven.

Java had by far the highest number of objects classified under the heading 'art, decorative arts, play', reflecting its image of higher development; they make up an entire volume in the Juynboll catalogue and were also paramount in the Tropenmuseum card catalogue. Although most Javanese objects classified as art in the Juynboll catalogue were made or used by Muslims, and some explicitly refer to religious events, Islam is not mentioned once in this section. Even more so, the flourishing of the arts in Java was seen by the curators of the Museum of Ethnology as happening despite Islam. Director Hendrik Juynboll states in his introductory remarks that with the progress of civilisation the Javanese had lost their more 'natural' connection to ornament:

"One thing that should strike everyone is the simplicity of ornamentation of Javanese objects, in comparison to similar objects from, for instance, Borneo or Bali, where almost everything testifies to a highly developed artistry. Concerning the Dutch Indies, one would almost believe that the sense for art disappears with the growth of civilisation. Or should one ascribe this to the influence of Islam, which generally kills all sense for art?" (H.H. Juynboll 1914, vi)

At the Tropenmuseum, a distinction was made between 'native crafts' (*inlandse nijverheid*, group eight), including metalworking and textile crafts, such as batik, and 'arts' (*kunst*, group eleven), emphasising the performing arts.³⁴ This gives further insights into the perception of art in early twentieth-century ethnology. First, the performing arts make up a large share of group eleven. Many of the objects are related to one of the forms of *wayang*, such as puppets used in shadow puppet theatre play (e.g. *wayang kulit* and *wayang golek*) and masks or costumes for *wayang* theatrical performances (*wayang topeng* and *wayang wong*).

33 Panel from tomb, Aceh, 16th or 17th century. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. RV-179-1. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/596916>.

34 Hand out explaining the twelve groups to cataloguing staff. Tropenmuseum, date unknown. NL-AsdTM, no inventory number.

The focus on the performing arts of Central Java follows from their inscription as 'high art' in colonial scholarship, starting from the late nineteenth century, and interacted with an intricate process in which *wayang* became increasingly seen as detached from Islamic influences (Cohen 2016, 34; Sears 1996).

Secondly, the category of art was modelled after European standards, emphasising a preference for the visual arts, such as sculpture, drawing and painting. For instance, the drawings made by the Acehnese Teuku Teungoh (see chapter 3) fell into this category, as did sculptures of wedding couples from Java and Madura made in European style.³⁵ In apparent contrast with the preference for work influenced by European artistic traditions, the Tropenmuseum classification emphatically stated that arts and crafts should be 'native'. Yet, in line with the Ethical Policy, 'natives' could climb the ladder and reach a status equal to Europeans. In the late colonial legal system, Indonesians could request juridical status as Europeans, on the basis of having acquired European cultural characteristics (Luttikhuis 2013). In the application of the twelve-group model, this translates into the assessment of the oil paintings of artists such as the famous Arab-Javanese painter Raden Saleh (1811–1880), who was educated in the Netherlands, and the self-taught artist Teuku Raja Brahim, who worked in the style of *Mooi Indië* (Beautiful Indies).³⁶ Their work was categorised outside the system, as part of (European) painting.³⁷ The divi-

sion between 'native' high art and European art, thus, mirrors legal and cultural categorisations in colonial Indonesia.

3.3 *Highly Ranked, but Lowly Appreciated*

The difficulties of the staff of the ethnographic museums to locate Islam within the system they employed is indicative of the position of the twelve-group system in the broader civilisational model of ethnology. Groups eleven and twelve represented the highest levels of civilisation, but within a model ranking the highest level as still below European civilisation. The aversion to Islam expressed throughout the Juynboll catalogue was linked to Islam's image of being too advanced to be interesting for ethnological study. On the one hand curators described Islam as a 'high civilisation', on the other hand the perceived higher degree of development led to its deprecation. Indeed, the initial purpose of evolutionary ethnology, as practised in Leiden, was to better understand European cultures by studying its preceding stages. In the later colonial period, when the Colonial Institute began to deploy the twelve-group system, the hierarchisation of cultures remained equally important, with Europeanness retaining centre stage. For these reasons, it was unthinkable that the category of religion was occupied by a monotheist scriptural faith, resembling Christianity or even being on a par with it. Islam was highly ranked but lowly appreciated, thus exposing the paradoxes of the hierarchy of cultures and the ambivalence of the larger colonial project.

The analysis in this chapter demonstrates how classification turned objects into ethnographic specimens; they were grouped together to represent types of the same kind. Although the museums served different purposes, such as advancing academic ethnology (Museum of Ethnology), the promotion of colonial entrepreneurship (Colonial Institute), training of the colonial administration (*Indische Instelling*) or the military (KMA), they followed the same principles of classification. They had another thing in common; for all of these purposes, the mapping of Indonesia's population was

35 Tuff carved sculptures of a wedding couple, Madura, 19th century. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. nos. TM-A-4327ab <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/190887>.

36 Teuku Raja Brahim (active 1920–1930s), Mouth of the Krueng Raba, oil painting, 1933. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. TM-1343-1. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/52134>.

Raden Saleh (1811–1880), Portrait of Madelon Pietermaat, oil painting, 1870. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. TM-1428-1. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/54176>.

37 Information TMS database National Museum of World Cultures. Accessed 28 July 2020.

key. Objects were not considered on an individual basis, but rather on the principle of one object standing for a larger whole, usually a regional or ethnic group. In line with this, after arrival at the museum, objects were not simply described in the catalogue, but re-interpreted ‘to become “useful” specimens’ (Turner 2020, 86; see also Srinivasan et al. 2009).

In order to become useful heritage in the context of the museum, certain aspects of the object were remembered, while other aspects were better forgotten. In the process of crafting heritage, the *Indische Instelling* placed the amulets seized in 1881 from ‘Abdul Wahib during the Palembang plot affair (see chapter 5), in group twelve (religion, or rather, ‘magic’) rather than in group ten, which had to do with politics and courts of justice. Likewise, all the amulets arriving at the Colonial Institute after being confiscated at the *landraden* (courts for natives), were classified as specimens of ‘native’ magic. The 1940s classification at the museum identified the hajji outfits donated by Karel Holle in 1883 as specimens of clothing (group 2), without referring to Holle’s interpretation of the garments as a threat to the political order, nor to the affective relationships the hajjis wearing them may have had to the clothing. The *kyai antakusuma* coat of the Yogyakarta court was also placed in group two, as a specimen of ‘native’ royal dress, with a second mentioning of group 10 (official dress, or *staatsiekleding*).³⁸ The coat’s local dimensions as heritage, especially spiritual or religious heritage, were ignored and, as such, they were simply unclassifiable, because the twelve-group system did not accommodate for corresponding conceptions of heritage or religion. The confinement of objects to certain functional groups, which were

useful in the context of the museum, thus corresponds to a denial of the relationships these objects had with individuals and communities in Indonesia (cf. Turner 2020, 100). In the process of making heritage, objects were emptied from their connections to individual people and the intimate meanings as heritage they had for the individuals they were sourced from.

The inability of the twelve-group system to provide space for affective relationships between Indonesian Muslims and objects as part of religion, art and heritage, was not coincidental. Rather, I argue, it was the result of colonial aphasia, ‘the irretrievability of a vocabulary, a limited access to it, a simultaneous presence of a thing and its absence, a presence and the misrecognition of it’ (Stoler 2016, 157). In the museum catalogues here examined, aphasia manifests itself to a limitedness of vocabulary and a dissociation of affective relationships. Objects were instrumentalized to serve the mapping of Indonesia; following from this structure, they were described and classified within the confines of the colonial project. In relation to Islam, there were wavering interpretations; at times classification focused on magical practices, in other instances it emphasised Islam’s institutions. These instances of classification continually redefined the boundaries of Indonesian Islam, following the need to make Islam fit the colonial worldview of hierarchies. Such boundaries were, however, hard to draw. The unruly and elusive nature of the Islamic objects made them hard to classify, quite literally resulting in an absence of words.

4 Durabilities of Classification

Recently, increased online visibility has brought the museum catalogue to the centre of the debate on decolonisation of museums. In the Netherlands too, the revision of museum cataloguing is part of recent efforts to decolonise museum practice. In 2018, the National Museum of World Cultures

³⁸ Information on inventory cards 7082-S-121-9abcd, series TM-630, TM-864, TM-865, TM-1170, 7082-S-84, TM-H-827, RV-3600-6087, TM-H-240abc; TM-H-241abcdefg; TM-H-242abcd, TM-1595-2. Information TMS database National Museum of World Cultures. Accessed 16 January 2021.

started a project to address problematic terminology in exhibition texts as well as the (online) museum catalogue (Modest and Lelijveld 2018). The project targets not only outmoded and offensive words, but also Eurocentric perspectives voiced in object descriptions, which are largely the residue of legacy data from the colonial period. Other museums in the Netherlands, such as the Rijksmuseum, have embarked on similar undertakings (Rijksmuseum 2020). The projects, intended as correctives to earlier misrepresentation (Modest 2018), stand in a long tradition of transformation aiming at decolonisation (Kreps 2020; 1988). Yet, as this chapter shows, the durabilities of colonialism are not limited to terminology and naming conventions, but also manifest themselves in understandings of culture, and their materialisation in the structure of the museum catalogue. The legacy of the catalogue structure is equally persistent, and due to embeddedness in the heart of the system, it is conceivably harder to resolve. In the next sections I look at the implications of legacy data for the framing of Islam.

In 2022, the National Museum of World Cultures introduced a new thesaurus, with the aim of decolonising terminology.³⁹ The new thesaurus was developed by the collection management department and based on the textbooks of first-year students of anthropology, in particular Thomas Hylland Eriksen's *Small Places, Large Issues*, first published in 1995. Many new terms were introduced, and other terms were broadened or reformulated, to connect with developments in anthropology. The categorisation still employs many of the OVM categories, but there are also new categories, such as gender identity and globalisation, in line with Eriksen's aim to emphasise the interdependence of human worlds (2015, viii). For example, the category of 'religion, rituals and rites' has been transformed into 'worldview and knowledge'. Eriksen provides a rather conventional introduction to the main

themes and theories of anthropology, and therefore it is not surprising that some of the older categories are resurfacing. A major move away from evolutionism in the new OVM thesaurus is the use of polyhierarchy, which allows a single term to appear in more than one category.

4.1 *Current Classifications of Islam*

Since the introduction of the digital collections management system, The Museum System (TMS), in 2000, objects can be classified using different frames of the Islamic: the system has categories for the function of objects (including religious use as well as other uses), religious denominations and artistic styles. The first step in the process of cataloguing of any object consists of providing information about cultural affiliation, geographical origin, function, material and technique, using structured vocabularies (thesauri).⁴⁰ This information is to be entered in a thesaurus-based field, using a drop-down menu providing the different options. Curators can supplement this information in a free-text field, where a full description of the object can be entered. The thesaurus-based fields provide, however, the structure which navigates online visitors in their search. Many Indonesian visitors may want to begin their searches with a particular geographical location, after which they can narrow down by type of object, medium used, function, cultural affiliation, and religion. When visitors click on an object for further information, the categories of classification are prominently visible, identifying the object, for instance, as 'Javanese', 'Islamic' and used for 'magical protection'. For Indonesian visitors the classification is one of the main tools to access the object, since the Indonesian-language interface hides the (Dutch language) free-text description.⁴¹

Islam is incorporated in the structured vocabularies in three different ways. The first occurrence

39 Lukas Meier and Marijke Kunst, *Decolonise thesaurus?* [internal document], n.d.

40 National Museum of World Cultures, *TMS kwaliteitshandboek* [internal document], 2016.

41 ('NMVW-collectie', n.d.). Accessed 26 January 2021.

TABLE 1 Categories used in the 1880s and the present-day (Serrurier 1882; TMS database NMVW)

Group twelve – religion	Group – religion, rituals and rites
Museum of Ethnology 1880s (Serrurier 1882)	OVM thesaurus 2007–2022
Objects used in worshipping the dead, such as reliques [relics], skulls, preserved heads, dead-masks	Cult and sacred objects (e.g. maros, kendauris, objects related to head-hunting)
Objects used during pregnancy, at the birth of a child, at burials, and on other festive occasions and ceremonies, such as coffins, and consecrated gifts, sacrificing knives, circumcising knives	Sacrifices (e.g. sacrifices and sacrificing tools, collection plates)
Fetishes, idols	Representation of the supernatural (e.g. statues, symbols, ancestral veneration, paintings, masks)
Temples, altars, and holy places (models)	Altars and sacred places (e.g. furniture and objects used in sacred places)
Furniture of temples, sacred musical instruments	
Attributes of priests and magicians, such as garments, magic wands, magic drums, rattles, clappers, and the like	Ritual attributes (e.g. garments of priests, including jewellery and decoration, symbols of dignity, masks, sticks and attributes of priests, prayer mats, divination tools, incense, objects carried in processions, prayer wheels and flags, noise makers, objects used in meditation or ritual purification)
Books of magic, forms of exorcism and enchantment, divining-sticks	Religious status symbols (e.g. non-ceremonial garments of priests, beggars' bowls, taboo signs)
Rosaries, prayer-wheels	
Amulets	Magical protection (e.g. amulets and talismans, Kala-heads) Christian mission (term added in 2010) Pilgrimage (term added in 2009)

is through the category of function and use of the OVM thesaurus, which is one of the mandatory categories for basic cataloguing or registration.⁴² The category of function and use constitutes the core of the OVM thesaurus, and it was drafted by the OVM working group in the 1990s. It is important to reiterate that the category is largely based on the twelve-group system, which was still in use at the Tropenmuseum. The nineteen groups in which the category is divided reveal distinctive evolutionary traits. A comparison of Serrurier's

explanation of the category of religion and the OVM thesaurus demonstrates the similarities.⁴³

The model for this list is evidently derived from the 'primitive' ancestral religions that were the focus of the nineteenth-century museum of ethnology. Given its focus on conceptions of hierarchies, the monotheistic religions like Islam, Christianity and Judaism have a hard time to fit

42 National Museum of World Cultures, *TMS kwaliteitshandboek* [internal document], 2016.

43 Information TMS database National Museum of World Cultures. Accessed 2 August 2019. The OVM thesaurus was formally launched in 2007, but earlier versions have been used by the SVCN museums since the mid-1990s (Beumer 2008). The thesaurus exists in Dutch and English versions, here I am citing the English language version.

in. Nonetheless, the OVM thesaurus was developed in the 1990s, and for the purpose of use in Dutch ethnographic collections, in which objects from Indonesia make up a significant share, if not the majority. Therefore, it is remarkable that little effort seems to have been made to accommodate the Islamic faith. Common Islamic (as well as Christian and Jewish) aspects of the faith, such as prayer, veiling as an act of piety and sacred texts, are left uncategorised, with the exception of the category of pilgrimage, which was added in 2009.⁴⁴ If we look from the perspective of the Indonesian Islamic objects in these collections, it seems that, also from the current point of view of the thesaurus, Indonesia is perceived as a country of ancestral belief systems and, to a lesser extent, Hinduism and Buddhism.

The second occurrence of Islam in the OVM thesaurus is the category of art historical styles and periods. Here, the OVM thesaurus is sourced from the AAT (Art and Architecture Thesaurus), which is another structured vocabulary. The AAT was developed in the United States from the 1970s onwards and is now managed by the J. Paul Getty Trust, which makes the vocabularies available as linked open data to museums across the world.⁴⁵ For museums in the Netherlands, a Dutch language version (AAT-Ned) has been developed.⁴⁶ In 1999, the SVCN museums adopted the AAT for art historical styles, religion, and object genres, although prior to the introduction the Western bias was debated among the participating museums.⁴⁷

Islam is part of the AAT in two pathways. First, in the facet of art historical styles, which provides a highly detailed list of different historical styles and periods in Islamic art history,⁴⁸ and second, as part of the facet of 'Abrahamic religions', which is part of the category of religious affiliation.⁴⁹ The vocabularies are compiled from resources such as bibliographic and other documentation projects, as well as contributions from museums, libraries and other collections, and thus, supposedly reflect the state of the art of the field of art history.⁵⁰ Getty provides the sources for each term; the Islamic styles and periods are mainly drawn from English language survey books, such as David Talbot Rice's *Islamic Art* (1965), Barbara Brend's *Islamic Art* (1991) and the *Oxford Companion to Art* (1984).

Through the use of these predominantly older publications from Western academia, the AAT extends the prevailing silence about Indonesia in the field of Islamic art into the museum. The Islamic styles and periods are all geographically situated in West and Central Asia, as well as North Africa and Southern Europe. Furthermore, the timeline they follow ends in the nineteenth century, in accordance with the parameters of the field of Islamic art (see chapter 8). A related yet separate facet provides terms for Islamic styles in India. Indonesian styles, however, are limited to Hindu and Buddhist periods, such as Srivijaya, Singhasari, Majapahit, Mataram and Malayu (referring to the Buddhist kingdom of Jambi in Sumatra).⁵¹ The OVM thesaurus has adopted these style vocabularies and simply grouped them together under the heading of 'Insular Southeast Asia: classical periods' with the alternative explanation of 'periods under Indian cultural influence' (Fig. 38).⁵² No

44 This remains the case for the decolonised thesaurus that was introduced in 2022, although it did add several concepts related to the monotheist religions.

45 Linked open data are interlinked data that are provided under an open license and can be freely used and distributed.

46 The Dutch version of the AAT was developed in 1994 by the National Office for Art History Documentation (*Rijksbureau voor Kunsthistorische Documentatie*, or RKD) (Navarrete Hernández 2014, 19). See also (RKD, n.d.).

47 Letter Jos Taekema, former coordinator OVM and SVCN, to coordinators of the participating museums, 15 March 1999. NL-LdnRMV, no inventory number.

48 (Getty Research, n.d.-b). Accessed 26 January 2021.

49 (J. Paul Getty Trust, n.d.). Accessed 26 January 2021.

50 (Getty Research, n.d.-c). Accessed 26 January 2021.

51 (Getty Research, n.d.-a). Accessed 26 January 2021. The sources for these terms are mainly encyclopaedias, for instance, the Grove Dictionary of Art online (1999–2002).

52 Information TMS database National Museum of World Cultures. Accessed 26 January 2021.

The screenshot shows the 'Thesaurus Manager' window. The left sidebar displays a tree structure under 'The OVM thesaurus', with 'Insulair Zuidoost-Azië / Insulair Zuidoost-Azië: klassieke periode / Klassieke Sumatraanse Periode / Srivijaya' selected. The main area is divided into sections: 'Preferred Lexical Labels' (with columns for Display Label, Language, Local, Candidate Label, and Approved), 'Alternative Lexical Labels' (with columns for Display Label, Label Type, Language, Local, Candidate Label, and Approved), 'Col2584Scope Note', 'Col2585History Note', and 'Hierarchy'. The hierarchy path is: 'The OVM thesaurus / Culturele herkomst / Culturele herkomst naar regio / Aziatisch / Insulair Zuidoost-Azië / Insulair Zuidoost-Azië: klassieke periode / Klassieke Sumatraanse Periode / Srivijaya'.

FIGURE 38 OVM-thesaurus for Insular Southeast Asia: classical periods. Collection system National Museum of World Cultures. Accessed 26 January 2021

The screenshot shows the 'The Museum System - Collectie Stichting Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen' interface. The record is for 'Insulair Zuidoost-Azië' and 'Materiële cultuurcollectie'. The 'Date' is '16e eeuw'. The 'Object Name' is 'Grafomment'. The 'Related Records' section lists 'Archiefstuk' (NL-LdnRMV-A1-3-156, NL-LdnRMV-A1-3-290) and 'Media' (3006682, IK_179-1, IK_179-1). The 'Dimensions' are '33 x 54 x 7,5 cm'. The 'Description' is 'Paneel van een grafombe, volgens de schenker afkomstig van het "grote graf der sultans in de kraton". De Arabische tekst is tweemaal de shahada, de islamitische geloofsbelijdenis.' The 'Geography Xrefs' table is as follows:

Type	Value	Certainty	Path	Remarks
CULTUUR	Aceh	(not assign...)	Noord-Sumatraans / ...	
FUNCTIONELE C...	dood en rouw	(not assign...)	levenscyclus	
FUNCTIONELE C...	tekens	(not assign...)	schrift / communicatie	
GEOGRAFIE	Banda Aceh (stad...	(not assign...)	Aceh (provincie) / Sum...	
MATERIAAL - HOO...	zandsteen	(not assign...)	atzettingsgesteente n...	
OBJECTTREFWFO...	grafstenen	(not assign...)	grafmonumenten / fun...	
Religie	islamitisch	(not assign...)		
TECHNIEK	kalligrafie	(not assign...)	schrijven / schilder...te...	
TECHNIEK	snijden	(not assign...)	subtractieve procedés...	

The 'Related Records' section also includes a photograph of the tomb panel (RV-179-1) and a list of 'Published References' and 'Exhibition History'.

FIGURE 39 TMS record for tomb panel RV-179-1. Collection system National Museum of World Cultures. Accessed 26 January 2021

counterpart of ‘periods under Islamic (or West Asian) cultural influence’ exists. The taxonomic silence about Indonesian Islamic art has direct consequences in the catalogue. In the case of the calligraphic panel mentioned earlier, it means that I could identify it in the catalogue as a calligraphic piece, and as belonging to the Islamic faith, but not as *Islamic art* (Fig. 39).

Besides the SVCN museums and Museum Bronbeek, which all use the OVM thesaurus, the Rijksmuseum administers a large collection of Indonesian art, although predominantly from the pre-Islamic periods, as well as a smaller collection of Islamic art from West Asia, North Africa and India.⁵³ The museum developed its own thesaurus, which is also based on the AAT. It has adopted some terms from the facet for Islamic styles and periods, such as Ghurid and Mughal.⁵⁴ The use of Islamic terms is, however, inconsistent, and significant terms, such as Ottoman, are part of the thesaurus but hardly in use. This means that much of the Rijksmuseum’s Islamic holdings, such as the Seljuq mortar and the Mamluk basin (discussed in chapter 6), is not catalogued in terms of Islamic styles.⁵⁵ Indonesian Islamic styles, which are lacking from the AAT, also do not feature in the Rijksmuseum thesaurus.

The third occurrence of Islam in the OVM thesaurus is again through the AAT; this time as

part of the facet of ‘Abrahamic religions’. Islam, according to the AAT, is divided into five branches: Ahmadiyya, Bektashi, Shi’a, Sufism, Sunni. In the OVM thesaurus, the category of religious affiliation was first introduced as a subcategory of cultural affiliation, and from 2005 as a separate category. The category follows more or less the facet ‘religion’ (*godsdiesten*) of the AAT-Ned, the Dutch version of the AAT.⁵⁶ For the Islamic faith, choices include, hierarchically classified under the heading of Islamic (*islamitisch*), terms such as Sunni, Shi’ite (Isma’ili and Twelver), Sufi, Alawi, Ahmadi and (oddly enough) Druze. The Rijksmuseum also includes the facet of religion, but has allocated the term ‘Islam’ to a handful of objects only, reflecting the low interest the museum shows for religion as a category of inquiry (Shatanawi 2022b).

Museums, historically as well as in the present, rely on informal standards to conduct cataloguing practices (Turner 2017, 477). At the National Museum of World Cultures, besides the formal standards of controlled vocabularies, there are conventions of when to use a certain term. Based on informal standards, the use of the term Islamic in the facet of religious affiliation is used differently in the various SVCN museums. Museon, an educational museum in The Hague with natural science and technology as well as ethnographic collections, decided to classify all objects from the Middle East and North Africa as Islamic,⁵⁷ whereas the Tropenmuseum and Museum Nusantara used the facet only for objects with a noted religious function or with a textual reference to the Islamic faith. This standard was negotiated between two curators responsible for collections from Muslim regions: Pim Westerkamp (Museum Nusantara, curator Indonesia 1991–2005) and

53 A large part of the Indonesian objects administered by the Rijksmuseum is on permanent loan from the Asian Art Society (VVAK).

54 Trineke Kamerling, information specialist Rijksmuseum, email to author, 24 March 2021. The AAT (and AAT-Ned) distinguishes a wide variety of Mughal styles, but the Rijksmuseum uses a single term for all of them: Mughal Emperors (“*Mogol-keizers*”). Currently 70 items, mostly paintings but also two weapons, have been catalogued as belonging to the Mughal Emperor styles. Information Rijksmuseum collection website. Accessed 24 March 2021.

55 Seljuq mortar, Khurasan, c.1100–1225. Collection Rijksmuseum inv. no. BK-NM-11815. <http://hdl.handle.net/10934/RM0001.COLLECT.15229> Mamluk basin, Egypt or Syria, c.1322–1350. Collection Rijksmuseum inv. no. BK-NM-7474. <http://hdl.handle.net/10934/RM0001.COLLECT.15231>.

56 Information TMS database National Museum of World Cultures. Accessed 2 August 2019.

57 A search in the Museon online collection for ‘Islamic’ (*islamitisch*) results in all objects from the Middle East and North Africa classified as such. Remarkably, objects from Indonesia, West Africa or other Muslim majority regions are not catalogued in a similar manner. (Museon, n.d.) Accessed 2 August 2019.

myself (Tropenmuseum, curator Middle East and North Africa, 2001–2018). When, in 2005, Pim Westerkamp was appointed curator of the Southeast Asian collections at the Tropenmuseum, the facet Islamic was applied in this way to the collections from Indonesia and, after the merger in 2014, this also involved the collections of the Museum of Ethnology, where previously the facet religion was rarely used. Thus, with the introduction of the ovm thesaurus, for the first time Islam became a separate category of classification, using the frames of Islam as religion and as art. The possibility of denoting the Islamic is a step forward, so it could be argued, but also comes with several complications.

4.2 *The Enforcement of Categorical Separateness*

The predicaments of museum classification and its clashes with non-Western (and I would like to argue, non-museum) knowledge have been discussed in several publications (e.g. Turner 2020; 2017; Kahn and Gibson 2016; Srinivasan et al. 2010; 2009). Srinivasan, Boast, Furner and Becvar (2009) describe the strong position of singular expert knowledge in museum documentation and the tight control of information. Information is created by museum experts (curators, cataloguing staff) and presented as stable knowledge, ‘objects are considered meaningful when explained by a certain class of experts who communicate those meanings via interpretive labels and narrative paths that substitute for the missing cultural context that could not travel with the cultural fragment’ (Srinivasan et al. 2010, 740). In the context of ethnographic museums, these publications frequently focus on the flawed relationship of knowledge production with ‘source communities’; a term referring both to groups in the past when artefacts were collected, as well as their descendants today (Peers and Brown 2003, 2). Following the suggestion of Srinivasan et al. (2010), I prefer to replace the term source communities with expert communities; by which I mean those communities and individuals that have a lasting and

affective relationship with the object, informed by experience, without suggesting a historical continuity of knowledge.

Being firmly rooted in nineteenth-century didactic principles, object descriptions aim to present finite information about the object from a singular perspective. Outsiders’ voices, including community members, are given an increasingly prominent role in museum exhibitions, but they are rarely recorded in an enduring way in the documentation systems (Srinivasan et al. 2009, 267). In the case of the NMVW, this translates into the situation that visitors of the website, including the expert communities from Indonesia (who count for 37% of users), can retrieve information, but they cannot directly and meaningfully add to how objects are described or classified (cf. Srinivasan et al. 2009, 269). As I outlined above, the categories used in digital systems are frequently historical, and they were often developed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and are thus likely to ‘further entrench ‘Western’ and colonial ontologies and narratives that have too long muffled source communities’ worldviews’ (Kahn and Gibson 2016, 48). In this sense, museum classification solidified the relationships between the formerly colonised and colonisers and continues to do so.

Another point of scholarly critique is the linear and static nature of museum classification. Museum objects are boxed into categories, leaving little space for grey areas. As Srinivasan et al. (2009, 269) put it, ‘the problem with the systematic classificatory approach of museums is that it denies, fundamentally, the role of an object as citation. It gives primacy to the definitive account upon which all other secondary accounts are placed, while the educational, or interpretive, engages with the classificatory only as a mode of access to objects as illustrations.’ Even so, in comparison to the analogue card system, the digital system implied a significant change in affordance: now objects can have multiple identifications within the same category. For example, the digital system allowed me to classify a bronze procession

standard (*‘alam*) in Deccani style as being Sunni and Shi’i at the same time.⁵⁸

From a curatorial perspective, classification finds its use in the definition of borders. The less often and more discretely a certain term is used, the more effective its use for curatorial purposes. Yet the drawing of boundaries clashes with curatorial approaches that emphasise multi-perspectivity and fluidity. In the case of Islam, the taxonomic structure of the AAT enforces a distinction between the secular and the sacred, as it implies a separation of ‘culture’ (defined in ethnic terms) and ‘religion’. This structure, the result of European modernist perspectives on religion (Asad 2003; 1993), aligns with notions of Islam within a section of the Muslim expert communities, located in Indonesia as well as the Netherlands, to whom the Dutch museums cater. This type of discourse holds that Islam-as-religion can be, and should be, disconnected from cultural practices that are considered harmful or unlawful (Jouili 2019). Yet, there is more than one view; indeed, the expert communities of the NMVW’s Islamic collections do not speak with one voice, but rather have different, diverse, and disagreeing views (Shatanawi 2012b; 2009b).

In his seminal work *What is Islam? The Importance of Being Islamic* (2016), Shahab Ahmed dissects and criticizes conceptualisations of Islam that rely on dichotomies, including the secular/sacred binary. As he sees it, such binary notions are often based, tacitly or openly, on the privileging of a ‘legal-supremacist’ paradigm of Islam, which perceives the Islam of the *‘ulama* as the core, and other forms of Islam as local or alternative expressions (Ahmed 2016, 117–29). Defining Islam as religion then triggers a set of sub-questions aiming to separate real and authentic Islam from the inauthentic and un-Islamic. The result is ‘categorical separateness’ and a privileging of certain Muslim understandings of Islam at the expense of others, as Ahmed explains:

“The question is whether “the category ‘religion’ and its relations to a series of other categories and discursive domains” helps us to understand how (pre-modern and/or modern) Muslims divide up, arrange and come to know their worlds, how Muslims think and act their worlds into meaningfulness – or whether “religion” is an “obstacle to cross-cultural (including cross-temporal) understanding.” My point is that when we conceptualize Islam as “religion” we put on a pair of lenses that lead us to organize and valorize the object we behold in primary terms of categorical separateness through the questions: Is x religion and therefore Islam, or is x secular and therefore not-Islam? Is x sacred and therefore Islam, or is x profane and therefore not-Islam? Is x scriptural and therefore Islam, or is x non-scriptural and therefore not-Islam? Is x prescriptive/proscriptive discourse, such as creed and law, and therefore Islam, or is it non-prescriptive/proscriptive discourse such as love-poetry or wine-poetry and thus not-Islam? Is x devotional and therefore Islam, or is x not devotional and therefore not-Islam? This set of questions – which are the set of questions necessarily consequent upon the binary concept of “religion/secular” – and the taxonomical commitments embedded therein simply do not help us to conceptualize Islam. Is the poetry of Ḥāfiẓ religious or secular, is it sacred or profane, is it scriptural or non-scriptural – or is it, in each question, both; or is it, in each question, neither? Is the wine-cup of Jahāngīr a religious or a secular object – or is it both, or is it neither?” (Ahmed 2016, 196–97)

The thought process Ahmed describes exactly mirrors the procedure that the controlled vocabularies of the NMVW and Rijksmuseum force cataloguers to go through. The thesaurus-based system leaves them with only two options: either an object is catalogued as Islamic (*islamitisch*) using the religion facet or it is not, which implies that the object is not part of the religious domain. In practice, fellow curator Pim Westerkamp and I instructed cataloguers to only use the term Islamic for objects when there was little uncertainty about their link

58 ⁵⁸ ‘Alam, Hyderabad, 19th or 20th century. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. TM-6303-10. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/460757>.

to devotional practices. This effectively concerned objects that feature Qur'anic verses or textual references to Islamic figures, for example the names of the four rightly guided caliphs, or objects that are used in institutionalised religion, such as mosque furniture. Conversely, when the meaning and intention was more ambiguous or pluriform, such as, for example, the case with objects in the shape of the Hand of Fatima or inscribed with poetry by Hafez, we preferred not to use the facet religion but rather have the object catalogued in cultural terms only. Our informal standards, thus, unintentionally resulted in a definition of the Islamic which privileged prescriptive discourse and orthodoxy, just in the ways Ahmed describes. This understanding and conceptual demarcation of 'religion' has had a profound impact on the classification of Indonesian objects and may be one of the main explanations for the numerical disparity between Islamic objects from Java and Sumatra in the NMVW catalogue (see chapter 2).

The systems in use at the NMVW and the Rijksmuseum have space for free-text object description, which, in theory, allows for greater multi-perspectivity than the thesaurus-based taxonomy. Yet museum documentation standards are based on a singular, 'neutral' narrative emanating from curatorial expertise. Objects are approached as specimens, representatives of a larger body of knowledge that is considered to be stable and, to a certain extent, fixed. In the descriptive texts, 'the voices that are allowed to speak do so either about their origin, their role as specimens, or from one or two stabilized biographical narratives, but the object remains detached from its ongoing biography and continuing relevance to its community of origin' (Srinivasan et al. 2010, 744). In other words, the compartmentalized nature of

museum taxonomy, by definition, precludes particular ways of looking at the museum collection. It provides only standardized and fixed positions, eschewing complexity and multi-perspectivity. In this chapter and the previous ones, I have used the term 'in-betweenness', a concept developed by anthropologist Tim Ingold (2015), to describe the position of Islamic objects in the museum. It is the in-betweenness, the position of objects being infinitely midstream, that the catalogue fails to register.

The current epistemological underpinnings of museum documentation start from the idea that by entering the museum collection, the object has reached its ultimate destination and is ready for final interpretation. A decolonial approach to the museum catalogue foregrounds multi-perspectivity and sees interpretation as a diversified and perpetual project. To allow for Islam to be read and represented as essentially existing of difference, diversity and disagreement, and therefore as in-between, a new paradigm is needed that presents the object as 'acting within a larger, dynamic cultural, and discursive system' (Srinivasan et al. 2010, 735). Then, as Hannah Turner (2020, 191) argues, new paradigmatic shifts should not be confined to free-text narrative fields of the database; it is equally important, or even more so, to change the nomenclature and thesaurus-based structures. Moreover, given the divergence across and between Muslim audiences, not only should the opening up of the knowledge production allow for differences between the museum expert and the community member, but also for divergence among Muslim expert communities and among members of the same community.

PART 3

Narratives of Indonesian Islam



New Imaginings of Indonesian Islamic Art

One of the overarching questions of this book concerns the exclusion of Indonesia from the field of Islamic art. As discussed in the preceding chapters, there were only a limited number of occasions when Indonesian material culture was seen as Islamic art. In this chapter, I will unravel the academic relationships and historical circumstances leading to this condition. My intention is not to argue for the inclusion of Indonesia in the field of Islamic art; that would be inadequate, since the field is ridden with controversies related to its colonial credentials (see for instance Shaw 2019b; Watenpaugh 2017; Graves 2012; Necipoğlu 2012; Shaw 2012; Flood 2007). Rather, I will conclude this chapter with a thought experiment of alternative imaginings of Indonesian material culture, using the work of scholars Irfan Afifi and Shahab Ahmed, in particular the latter's ground-breaking *What is Islam? The Importance of Being Islamic* (2016), as a point of departure.

1 Framings of Muslim Things

The formulation of a canon of Indonesian art and the emergence of the field of Islamic art simultaneously took place in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. While the main centre of research on Indonesian arts and cultures in these days was the Netherlands, Islamic art was primarily studied in other European countries. Although the two academic fields were geographically separated, they shared a number of principles which framed their outlook on Islam. Furthermore, both fields were shaped by European colonialism. In the process of canon formation, Indonesia's pre-Islamic past became part of Asian art, a category well-served in the Dutch museum landscape. By contrast, Islamic art as a category of scholarly and curatorial inquiry hardly gained ground in the

Netherlands (Shatanawi 2014; De Hond 2011).¹ I contend that this condition is related to the situatedness of colonialism in Indonesia and, concomitantly, several interlinked colonial conceptions that made Indonesian Islamic art, as an academic notion that is, inviable.

Little work has been done that discusses Islamic art from a history of science approach and most of it deals with the field's emergence from philology and archaeology (e.g. Marchand 2009), with subsequent development within the discipline of art history (e.g. Troelenberg 2012; 2011). The interrelationships with the concurrently emerging discipline of ethnology have largely been left unexplored. From the literature, supplemented with my own findings, the following picture emerges. The term Islamic art gained currency post-1900 (Watenpaugh 2017; Vermoit 2000b). Previously, European scholars designated the same corpus of objects using ethnic or regional terms, such as Saracenic, Arab, Persian or Oriental, sometimes with clearly racial overtones. The late nineteenth century had seen attempts to group these categories of objects together under an overarching heading of Muslim (or synonyms like Muhammedan) art. Despite the reference to the Islamic religion, from the start the term denoted 'a purely formal

1 Islamic art was a topic in the Museum van Kunstnijverheid (1877–1926) in Haarlem. Collections of Islamic art (of relatively small size) were assembled through acquisition by the Nederlandsch Museum voor Geschiedenis en Kunst in the period 1900–1910 (Kievit 2017) and the Kunstmuseum between 1919 and 1979 (Gemeentemuseum 2018); through donation by the Rijksmuseum (De Hond 2011) and Museum Princessehof (Bosmans 2011). The ethnographic museums also actively acquired Islamic art: on a small-scale at the Museum of Ethnology (curator Carel du Ry van Beest Holle, 1957–1960) and the Tropenmuseum (curator Carel van Leeuwen, 1972–2003); quite extensively at the Wereldmuseum Rotterdam (curators Fred Ros, 1968–1995 and Charlotte Huygens, 1996–2007).

definition of art, which endowed it with a potentially universal value' (Labrusse 2017, 1208). In other words, the term Islam tied together a variety of artistic expressions, but religion was not perceived as having a dominant influence over the production of art. Rather, the overarching factor was cultural and civilisational, in line with diffusionist ideas of an Islamic culture area. Thus, religion as source of origin, a civilisational core, was favoured over religion as practice (Shaw 2012, 22). This definition of Islamic art was in line with prevalent views in philology that insisted on the central position of religion in the so-called Islamic lands, but by contrast it emphasised secularity.

Until WW II, the theorization of Islamic art was largely the domain of German scholarship, where ethnologists, orientalists and art historians developed related ideas about Islam as a culture and civilisation. Although the study of Islamic art was detached from ethnology, the field was informed by ethnological theories in its genesis, notably in relationship to geography. The grouping of a variety of ethnicities and regions under the heading of Islam was influenced by diffusionist theories, and the related notion of culture areas (*Kulturkreise*, literally 'culture circles', or in Dutch, *cultuurgebieden*) that was first developed by the German scholarship around 1840, and in the early twentieth century extended by ethnologists such as Leo Frobenius and Fritz Graebner (Van Bladel 2020).² As early as the 1840s, 'Islam' was designated as one

of the dominant cultures diffusing its influence (Schulze 2012, 680).

In the conceptualisation of Islamic art, diffusionism led to the idea that Islam in its formative years had produced cultural traits that were later diffused across other areas. Accordingly, the narrative of Islamic art held, and still holds, that Islamic art arose in the Greater Syria area from the late antique classical naturalistic tradition, supplemented by Byzantine and Sasanian influences. The newly formed artistic expressions then travelled eastward, where they met Turkic and Persian influences. During this formative period, a distinctively Islamic style emerged that later spread throughout the Muslim realm. In the early twentieth century, German art historians began to speak of an *islamische Kulturkreis* to denote the area where Islam's artistic production was dominant (e.g. Mayer 1910; Ettinghausen 1934). Even though the term was not widely used, diffusionist ideas remained dominant in understandings of the geography of Islamic art throughout the twentieth century. The study of Islamic art, as it developed in the formative period, concentrated on North Africa, and West and Central Asia in the early Islamic and medieval periods. The heartland of Islamic culture thus emerging had not only geographic but also temporal boundaries (Blair and Bloom 2003; Vernot 2000b). In the mid-twentieth century, the parameters of inquiry expanded to the early modern period, in particular the empires of the Safavids, Ottomans and Mughals. Even then, it would have been difficult to position Indonesia within this paradigm, not only because of the late arrival of Islam there, but also for the simple reason that comparatively little material dating prior to 1800 AD was then known to have survived in the tropical climate of Southeast Asia.³

2 Diffusionism posited that the world was divided up into a limited number of 'culture areas' and that each of these areas had a core element shaping its innovation (Penny 2003). From this centre, ideas diffused over large geographical areas and each culture resulted from the diffusion of traits from the centre. Specific to the theory of *Kulturkreise* was the idea that there was a limited number of culture areas. Moreover, each culture area was perceived as a single sphere, comprising various localities governed by the same or a dominant culture and with a defined border to the outside. Frobenius, however, rejected the idea of an Islamic culture area, because he believed that cultures were defined by biological characteristics, rather than acquired ones like religion (Schulze 2012, 680).

3 Radiocarbon dating of textiles, paper and wood objects in recent years has revealed that much more has survived from earlier centuries than was previously assumed (J. Bennett and Kelty 2023; Murray 2021; Bakhri, Sakamoto, and Fajri 2018). The delayed interest in dating Indonesian Islamic art is linked to its historical framing as outside

From the 1980s, a slowly developing shift towards inclusion of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has been noticeable (Graves 2012). Yet the gradually expanding boundaries left unaffected the basic premise of the heartland paradigm: the existence of a temporal and geographical centre which sets the stylistic norm for later periods and further regions. Reasoning from that perspective, Indonesia does not fit in, not only because of the relatively young age of its Islamic art, but also because it does not measure up to the stylistic norms set by the heartland. As late as 2003, eminent art historians Sheila Blair and Jonathan Bloom explained the exclusion of Indonesia from the field of Islamic art by making reference to the heartland paradigm:

“[Islamic art] therefore encompasses much, if not most, of the art produced over fourteen centuries in the “Islamic lands”, usually defined as the arid belt covering much of West Asia but stretching from the Atlantic coast of North Africa and Spain on the west to the steppes of Central Asia and the Indian Ocean on the east. These were the lands where Islam spread during the initial conquests in the seventh and eighth centuries CE. Other regions where Islam flourished in later centuries, such as tropical Africa, eastern Europe, southern Russia, western China, northern India, and south-east Asia, are marginalized by this definition and thereby treated as peripheral to the main story, even though they have huge, and some majority, Muslim populations. Indonesia, for example, now has more Muslims (almost 200 million) than all the traditional Arab countries combined. India, now considered a largely Hindu country, has almost 150 million Muslims, virtually the same number living in the neighbouring Muslim country of Pakistan. Yet rarely does the Islamic art of the Indian sub-continent, let alone that of Indonesia, play any role in traditional courses on Islamic art, principally *because it takes so long to get there if you have*

to start at the Kaaba in seventh-century Arabia.” (Blair and Bloom 2003, 152 my emphasis)

Dutch colonial scholarship on Indonesian cultures followed a perception of an Islamic centre and periphery that resembled this emerging scholarship on Islamic art. The basic premise was also an acculturation paradigm that identified an Islamic heartland where acculturation was complete, whereas the Indonesian archipelago belonged to the periphery which had only superficially absorbed Islamic influences (Tajudeen 2021; Shatanawi 2014). Only regions that had been in close contact with the Islamic heartland, such as Aceh which was nicknamed ‘the veranda of Mecca’, could be considered Muslim to some degree. Following the acculturation paradigm, two dominant theories took root (Osman 1989, 76–78). One held that each successive religion was superior to the previous one – thus, Islam had successfully replaced Hinduism. The second and more dominant theory was that at the core of each culture were indigenous animistic beliefs, which remained prominent. The religions that appeared later, such as Hinduism and Islam, were only superficial additions and had never reached full strength. The two leading movements in Dutch ethnology – evolutionism and structuralism – both adhered to the latter view, as we have seen in the previous chapters.

Colonial scholarship located purity geographically in the Arabian Peninsula and temporally in the foundational period of Islam. Although all Muslim societies, including Arabian society (a point already made by Snouck Hurgronje), adopted pre-Islamic concepts and practices, processes of adoption were assessed differently, following diffusionist lines. In other words, it mattered where Islam was located and what its cultural point of departure was. Seen from this perspective, Indonesia could only be less Muslim, ‘principally because it takes so long to get there if you have to start at the Kaaba in seventh-century Arabia’ (Blair and Bloom 2003, 152). Yet perceptions of impurity also concerned the Hindu and

Islamic art and within the confines of ethnographic material, which was often left undated.

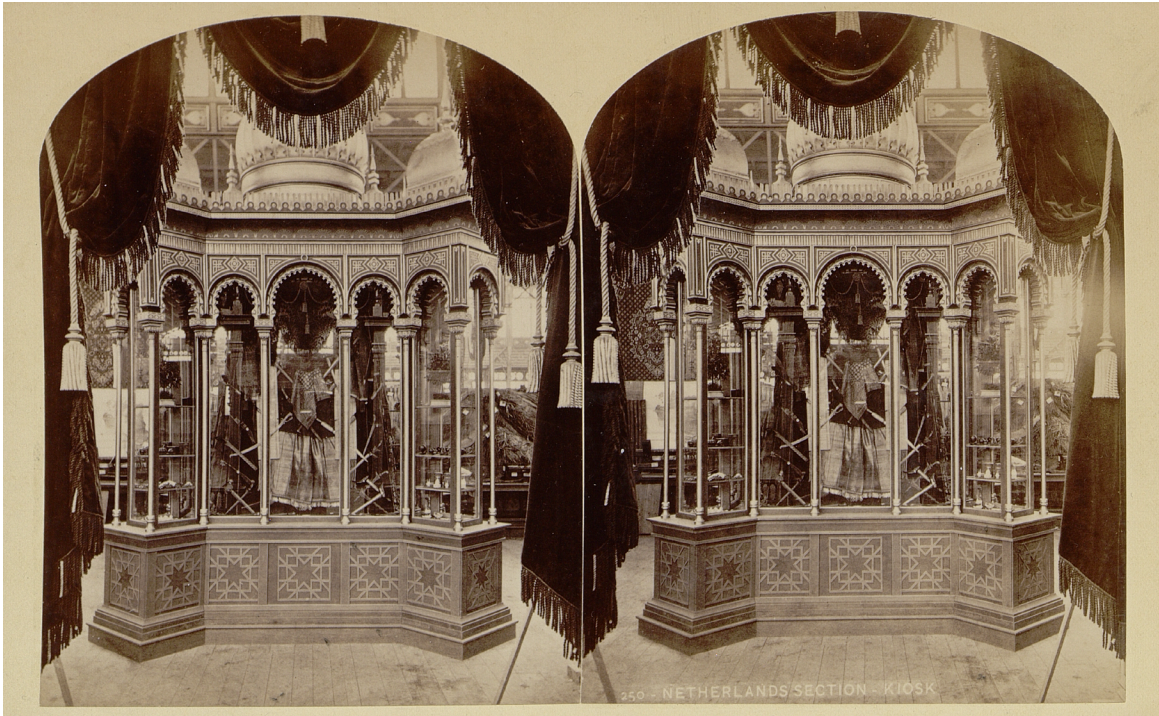


FIGURE 40 Indonesian objects displayed in a Moorish-style case in the pavilion of the Dutch colonies at the Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia, 1876. Historical Society of Pennsylvania, collection of Centennial Exhibition records
REPRODUCED WITH PERMISSION FROM THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF PENNSYLVANIA

Buddhist elements of Indonesian cultures which always remained seen as derived from somewhere else and something else. Furthermore, in the Dutch colonial perception there were two Indias – one that supplied the origin of Hindu-Buddhist art and culture, and another one wherein the origin of Indonesian Islam was located – and these two Indias were seen as entirely disconnected.

But what about Islamic art in the Netherlands? In neighbouring Germany, a scholarly movement emerged around 1900 that set out to distance Islamic art from the disciplines of ethnology and philology and pull it into art history (Troelenberg 2012). Across Western Europe, Islamic art was perceived and studied as heir to the Greco-Roman tradition and, thus, as a bridge linking the artistic achievements of classical antiquity with renaissance Europe (Suleman 2013; Troelenberg 2013; Graves 2012; Ward 2000). In the Netherlands, however, it was another development which set the tone. Here it was the centrality

of ornament in the study of decorative arts, which gave rise to the interest in what was then called Oriental art (De Hond 2008; Simon Thomas 1988). Similar to other European countries, notably Britain, France and the German-speaking countries, Islamic objects were collected to gain insight into the universal principles underlying ornament and from the idea that non-European styles could revitalise the stagnant European fine and industrial arts (Labrusse 2017; Vernoit 2000a). These ideas were behind the 'Arab room' in the Museum of Applied Arts (Museum van Kunstnijverheid) in Haarlem, which opened in 1877, and the brief period of interest in the collecting of 'Oriental art' around 1900 in the Netherlands Museum for History and Art (Nederlandsch Museum voor Geschiedenis en Kunst), or NMHA (Shatanawi 2022b; Kievit 2017; Laan 2014).⁴ Thus, interest in the diffusion of

4 The Museum of Applied Arts was established under the auspices of Frits van Eeden (1829–1901), who also founded

technique or design were the basis of the early collections of Islamic art in museums in the Netherlands. Although the term Islamic art demonstrably was known in the Netherlands, the first use in a museological context dates from 1927, when the Gemeentemuseum in The Hague organised an exhibition under this heading (Hoijtink 2018; Gallois 1927).⁵ In their approach to Islamic art, the Dutch museums looked at other European countries and they followed the usual geographical demarcations, that is, excluding Indonesia. Nonetheless, Islamic art from the central lands was occasionally seen as representative for Indonesia as well. In this respect the remark of mayor Patijn of The Hague at the opening of the Gemeentemuseum exhibition is exemplary: ‘moreover, this exhibition is of great value, because Islam is the religion of a very large share of the population of our Dutch Empire’ (*Haagsche courant* 1927). For similar reasons, the Dutch East Indies entry to the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia in 1876 was in Moorish style (Fig. 40), as was the Pavilion of the Dutch colonies at the International Colonial and Export Exhibition in Amsterdam in

1883 (Tibbe 2016; Bloembergen 2006).⁶ Pieter Veth, who acted as the honorary chairman of the latter exhibition, defended this choice by stating that ‘the natives had never produced anything independent in the domain of art’ (Veth, Wilken, and Klinkert 1883a, 1:vi). The organisers reasoned they had no choice but to resort to a non-indigenous Oriental style and chose Islamic over Hindu architecture, because it fitted contemporary Indonesian taste in building, among other reasons (Bloembergen 2006, 76–79). As these examples demonstrate, the Dutch imagination of art history accorded Islam a past greatness, located in the ‘heartland’, in which Indonesian Muslims shared by association, rather than as active producers.

1.1 *Indonesia: Asian or Islamic?*

In parallel with the notion of Islamic art, the idea of Greater India emerged in the early twentieth century. Accordingly, Indonesia was grouped among the areas that were historically influenced by Indian culture, and thus, belonged to the Indian cultural sphere (Bloembergen 2021; 2017; Formichi 2016). The Greater India paradigm was based on diffusionist principles similar to the ones underpinning the notion of Islamic art, now focusing on the transmission of Hindu-Buddhist cultural traits from India, as an exemplary centre, to the edges where they took on new and somewhat diluted forms (Bayly 2004). The notion of culture areas ascribed close connections between space and culture, but also claimed mutual exclusivity, and, consequently, Indonesian art was categorised as ‘Asian art’ rather than belonging to the Islamic culture area. The resulting ‘double bias’

the Colonial Museum (Huygen 2019; 2018). Room VI was dedicated to the ‘Arab style’, which, according to Van Eeden (1878, 136), ‘developed in the East with the teachings of Muhammad, and flourished under the Caliphs’. The room was filled with plaster casts and models of Alhambra, ‘the most beautiful masterpiece that this style has produced’. Adriaan Pit (1860–1944), director of the NMHA, understood the history of decorative arts as a linear trajectory of cultural exchange and he was especially interested to acquire objects he believed to reveal transitional moments; instances when techniques or designs were transferred from one culture to another. Many of the Islamic objects he acquired were obtained with this interest in mind. The NMHA regularly loaned Islamic objects to industrial arts academies and designers, like those of the Delftware factory De Porseleyne Flesch, to serve as a source of inspiration.

5 The term appears in the correspondence between Adriaan Pit and Friedrich Sarre, curator of the exhibition “Meisterwerke Muhammedanischer Kunst” (Munich 1910). Pit himself used the term Oriental art. NL-HlmNHA Nederlandsch Museum van Geschiedenis en Kunst, 1874–1927, 476 no. 994.

6 Unknown photographer, The colonial pavilion under construction at the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia, 1876. Collection Rijksmuseum inv. no. RP-F-1905-214. <http://hdl.handle.net/10934/RM0001.COLLECT.64220> Emrik & Binger, Pavilion of the Dutch colonies at the International Colonial and Export Exhibition in Amsterdam, 1883. Collection Rijksmuseum inv. no. RP-P-1907-3961 <http://hdl.handle.net/10934/RM0001.COLLECT.386777>. I want to thank Tom Quist for providing the information about the Philadelphia exhibition.

was problematic on two levels, as it positioned Southeast Asia as the passive recipient of a superior Indian civilization, while at the same time ignoring Islam (Bloembergen 2021, 172). Coupled with the heartland paradigm of Islamic art, which described Islam in the peripheral areas as impure and diluted, a triple bias was generated that left Southeast Asia 'in limbo' (Tajudeen 2021, 218).

From the 1910s the notion of Asian art gained ground in the Netherlands, resulting in the foundation of the Asian Art Society (*Vereniging van Vrienden der Aziatische Kunst*, VVAK) in 1918.⁷ In many ways the category of Asian art was just as vast and unwieldy as the category of Islamic art. Moreover, it was based on equally unstable conceptual foundations. Asian art developed as a concept mirroring European art and 'the very idea of "Asia" as a unified land or singular culture arises not from any physical or material reality, but rather from political, cultural, and economic relations of power, in order to sustain an idea of a unified Europe' (Brown and Hutton 2011, 5). Contrary to the teleological narrative of progress of European art, the notions of Asian and Islamic art were grounded in a theory of rise and decline. In the narrative of Islamic art, full decline coincides with the arrival of European imperialism, as Margaret Graves (2012, 2) points out, 'rather than the triumphant march towards a glorious, multifaceted and – significantly – secular modernity that underpins many survey texts of the history of art as a whole, the master-narrative of Islamic art currently ends with a whimper somewhere in the colonial period.' In chapter 6 I have shown the mechanisms of an emergent museumscape differentiating between European and non-European pasts, thus carving up the heritage of the Islamic central lands into pre-Islamic, Islamic and contemporary periods that were given progressively negative value assessments. Similarly, Dutch

archaeological and philological scholarship conceived of Java's pre-Islamic past as a classical age (Ricklefs 2007, 255). However, unlike the Middle Eastern regions which were granted a sort of second classical age after the arrival of Islam, in the Dutch imagination Indonesia was plummeted directly into its 'dark age', only to be resurrected by Dutch intervention.

Like those of Islamic art, the boundaries of Asian art have shifted over time. In 1936, the VVAK opened a museum of Asian Art, at the premises of the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, moving its collections in 1952 to the Rijksmuseum. In these early years, in the Netherlands as elsewhere in Europe, the category was dominated by pre-modern works from India, China, and Japan (Brown and Hutton 2011, 5). Not surprisingly, the VVAK's Asian art museum had a similar focus, including Hindu and Buddhist works from South Asia, but none from periods or areas under Muslim rule (*Vereniging van Vrienden der Aziatische Kunst* 1936). Apart from Hindu-Buddhist art, Indonesia was represented with a multitude of objects from the Islamic period, such as *keris* weapons and batik textiles from Java, Acehnese gold jewellery and silk weavings, as well as several objects from West Sumatra. These objects, however, were positioned as 'post-Hindu', or through ethnic markers, rather than Islamic (*Vereniging van Vrienden der Aziatische Kunst* 1936, 59; 63).

That Indonesia was denied a significant share in the production of Islamic art did not mean that objects from the region's Muslim periods and cultures were absent from museum galleries in the Netherlands. On the contrary, such objects constituted a large section of what was on display. The *schatkamers*, treasure rooms at the Colonial Institute (1926–1975) and the Museum of Ethnology (1937–1997), displayed an object selection based on aesthetic criteria and many, including Javanese weapons and silverwork from Riau, were made in a Muslim environment. In addition, as noted above, the VVAK's Asian art museum exhibited a range of objects from Muslim regions after the opening in 1936. Yet, as chapter 6 outlines,

⁷ *Vereniging van Vrienden der Aziatische Kunst* literally translates as 'Friends of Asian Art Society', but the foundation goes by the English name of Asian Art Society (see VVAK n.d.).

the dividing lines between ‘art’ and ‘ethnology’ grew stronger over the course of the twentieth century. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that after moving its collections to the Rijksmuseum in 1952, the focus of the Indonesian selection was entirely on Hindu-Buddhist art (Visser 1952).⁸ Since 2013, the VVAK collection has been housed there in an Asian pavilion where it showcases its collections of Asian Art. The VVAK’s categorising framework, and the positioning of Indonesia as part of Greater India, has persisted up until today, with few modifications (Bloembergen 2021; Loeseke 2020). Although Indonesia is well-represented, not one single object hails from the Muslim period, as if no art has been made in the region after the 15th century (Westermann 2015; Bloembergen and Eickhoff 2014). Contrary to Muslim India, the Islamic period objects from Indonesia are no longer seen as part of Asian art, thus reintroducing colonial conceptions of a region in decline.

1.2 *Appreciated as High Art, Detached from Islam*

The exclusion of Indonesian Islamic art from the Rijksmuseum galleries is related to the positioning of Indonesian collections in the Netherlands. The outcome of the separation of European and non-European collections, under corresponding notions of ‘art’ and ‘ethnology’, was the transfer of the majority of Indonesian objects to the domain of the ethnology museum. As outlined in the previous chapter, once there, most objects from Muslim periods and communities that were aesthetically appreciated were not classified as art, but rather denoted with the term industrial arts (*kunstnijverheid*) and categorised according to their functional use. These included objects made at and for the Muslim courts, such as precious *keris* daggers and batik textiles.⁹ Museum interpretations of the

industrial arts emphasised the technical execution and material used. Depending on the purpose of the museum concerned, additional themes were salvage ethnography (Museum of Ethnology) and the industrial aspects of crafts to benefit Dutch trade, and during the implementation of the Ethical Policy, as a source of income for the population (Colonial Institute).

In the Dutch analysis, the Muslim environments that produced the industrial arts did not constitute a significant element and, consequently, museum catalogues and other publications rarely mentioned them (e.g. Loebèr 1913; Jasper and Pirngadie 1912). Concerning Java, the close association with Indian civilisation gave rise to a number of related imaginings. First, Islam-as-art was invariably seen and judged in comparative weight to the preceding Hindu-Buddhist traditions and found wanting. Secondly, Islam was often described as a destructive force with a negative impact on older artistic traditions which had resulted in the – much lamented – decline of art in the Indonesian archipelago. A recurrent phrase was that Islam killed the sense for art. For example, physicist and millionaire collector Elie van Rijckevorsel (1845–1928) remarked about Bali that ‘the difference in religion is probably the reason that far more sense for art has remained here than in Java, where Islam has killed it. Everything is ornamented in traditional Indonesian [*Indisch*] style’ (Van Rijckevorsel 1878, 107).¹⁰ In particular, Islam’s alleged iconoclasm was often mentioned as having negatively impacted figuration of *wayang* traditions, painting and sculpture. Even though colonial scholars agreed on the limitations Islam posed on creativity, contrary to its predecessors, not all of them judged it in negative terms. Frederik Willem (Frits) van Eeden (1829–1901),

⁸ Most of the Islamic period objects in the 1936 gallery ended up in the ethnographic museums.

⁹ However, there was a shift in interpretation: the Juynboll catalogue still categorised batik and ivory sculpture (if not applied on functional objects) as art, but in the 1940s

Colonial Institute catalogue this was no longer the case, reflecting changing definitions of what counted as art.

¹⁰ Nonetheless, there are plenty of Islamic-period objects from Java and Sumatra among the 613 Indonesian items of the Van Rijckevorsel collection at the Wereldmuseum Rotterdam.

director of the Colonial Museum, presumed that Javanese artisans struggled against the ban in the Qur'an against depicting figures. Nonetheless, he held contemporary Javanese artistic production in high esteem, because an 'irrepressible yet curbed desire to create' eventually had found expression in floral and animal motifs of exquisite beauty, expressing the true character of the Javanese people (Van Eeden 1884, 79).

According to the twelve-group system used in the museums of ethnology (discussed in the preceding chapter), the category of art was reserved for three types of objects: those relating to the performative arts of Java and Bali, those showing similarity to the European visual arts (e.g. figurative drawing, painting and sculpture), and the material culture of Java's pre-Islamic empires. The museums initially classified the latter category as antiquities (e.g. Hendrik Herman Juynboll 1909), and later as art, after the enfolding of a movement to inscribe Hindu-Buddhist sculpture as 'high art' in the late nineteenth century (Brown and Hutton 2011, 5). The catalogue of the Hinduism gallery (1926–1938) at the Colonial Institute, for instance, no longer spoke about antiquities but about Hindu art (Krom 1927). Java's pre-Islamic antiquities had been an area of European interest since the early nineteenth century. By the turn of the century, Islamic antiquities also began to receive scholarly attention. In 1919, historians Jean Pierre Moquette and Hoesein Djajadiningrat published an overview of the results thus far. The publication gives insight into what was categorised under the heading of Islamic heritage. Islamic antiquities, they postulated, first and foremost, concerned the tombs and gravestones of the Pasai and Aceh sultanates, because that was the most researched subject. In Java, their inventory equally focuses on gravestones and tombs, although they considered many of them to have 'more hagiological than historic significance' (Moquette and Djajadiningrat 1919, 204). Furthermore, they mention architectural structures such as the *gunungan* in Banda Aceh, and in Java, for instance, the remnants of the old mosque of Demak, the mosque complex of Kudus

and the remains of the *kraton* of Banten. In terms of objects, the focus is on artefacts related to the Muslim kingdoms and sultanates: coins, seal impressions and charters, the *cakra donya* in Aceh, and the regalia of the rulers of Banten, Bangkalan, Gowa, Bone, Banjarmasin and Riau that were kept in the museum of the Batavian Society. Thus, similar to conceptions of Islamic art, court and elite cultures were given primacy. Yet unlike these, Moquette and Djajadiningrat's inventory focuses mostly on historical significance, rather than the aesthetic qualities of the antiquities concerned. This resonated with the interpretation of Islamic antiquities in museums in the Netherlands. Only a few items on the list would ever be exhibited as art, as will be discussed in the next section, and none would be classified as such in the museum cataloguing systems.

The reception of the performing arts of Java was quite a different story, as it was entwined with the prominent visibility of Hindu-Buddhist stories and images. Matthew Cohen (2016) describes a renaissance of the performing arts after the Java War (1825–1830), especially at the Central Java courts. According to him, in response to declining political power, Java's rulers turned to the arts to demonstrate their spiritual refinement and mark their cultural superiority vis-à-vis the European colonizers (see also Sears 1996, 108). Colonial scholarship began to inscribe the performative arts as 'high art' starting from the late nineteenth century (see, for example, Groneman 1888). At the same time, the performative arts underwent significant modifications as a result of the encounter with European art, both in form and appreciation. Lastly, contrary to the European assessment of the nineteenth-century arts of the Islamic central lands, Java's artistic renaissance during colonialism was acknowledged, if only when disassociated with Islam.

Under colonial influences the courts arts became increasingly seen as detached from Islam, following from the governmental system in which the Javanese elite was positioned to play a role in governing the region. The key to the divergent

interpretations of the religious character of the performative arts was the assessment of the mysticism involved; *wayang* practices, for instance, were embedded in mystical knowledge and exercises. While Javanese understandings prior to Dutch colonialism predominantly associated *wayang* with Sufi mysticism and Islamic belief systems, the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw a gradual enfoldment of 'a displacement of *wayang* mysticism and a rephrasing of it in non-Islamic terms' (Sears 1996, 135). When Dutch scholarship on Indonesian culture emerged in the nineteenth century, it emphasised the study and reconstruction of the Hindu and Buddhist monuments as well as the performative arts as part of its search for the authenticity of Javanese culture, and, concomitantly, the legitimisation of the colonial regime. The 'discovery' of Java's Hindu-Buddhist past helped the Netherlands to position itself as the national caretaker of the antiquities (Bloembergen and Eickhoff 2020, 42). By the late nineteenth century an international dimension had developed, now positioning the Dutch colonial government as 'the successor, explorer, and custodian of past high civilisations' and 'a sophisticated and modern colonial empire, guardian of an honourable civilisation to which, indirectly via India, all great European civilisations could be traced' (Bloembergen and Eickhoff 2020, 90; 91). The idea of the *priyayi* class as guardians of a high culture, an ancient civilisation that they had passed along for centuries, worked in the interests of the colonial authorities and segments of the Javanese elite. And, precisely because Hinduism and Buddhism were 'dead religions', in the sense that they were no longer practised by the Javanese elite, they posed no threat to the colonial order. Islam – in Dutch eyes as much a religion of piety as a force of resistance – became increasingly seen as incompatible with Javanese culture (Ricklefs 2007). Moreover, inside and outside *priyayi* circles, the rising tide of modernist Islam promoted the notion of a uniformity in Islamic beliefs, which had to be purified of new inventions and local traditions, and opposed the blending of traditions. Diffusionist

ideas, moreover, were not a European prerogative. The idea of Greater India was enthusiastically embraced by thinkers in India and Java and found its parallel in pan-Islamism, which sought to unite the global *ummah* in an imagined nation of Islam (Bloembergen 2021; 2017; Bayly 2004).

The dual perception of the Hindu-Buddhist past as the essence of Javanese culture and Islam as un-Javanese was the result of overlapping agendas of Dutch colonials and Javanese nationalists. By the 1870s, a number of *priyayi* intellectuals started to depict Islam as foreign to Java and the Javanese (Ricklefs 2007, 176–213). Colonial archaeology and its disclosure of Hindu-Buddhist remains here served 'as evidence of a – morally superior – past civilisation, to which they felt connected, and felt cut off by an essentially non-Javanese, foreign Islam' (Bloembergen and Eickhoff 2020, 122). By the early twentieth century, indifference towards Islam as an element in Javanese culture was widespread among the *priyayi* elite (Ricklefs 2007, 219). Several Javanese nationalists, for instance, used the Dutch discourse about the Hindu-Buddhist roots of *wayang* mysticism to advance their cause (Sears 1996). Nonetheless, a number of *priyayi* considered Islam an essential part of Javanese culture. The above-mentioned Hoesein Djajadiningrat, advisor at the Office for Native Affairs between 1916 and 1924 and an observant Muslim, showed great interest in Islamic heritage, one of the reasons the Archaeological Service sought his expertise on such matters. Meanwhile, for many performers and audiences both Islamic and Hindu-Javanese mystical interpretations could be used to explain the arts, and the lines were not always sharply drawn (Sears 1996, 168).

Museum interpretation of the performing arts was part and parcel of Dutch scholarship, which on the whole paid less and less attention to the Islamic dimension. Accordingly, *wayang* mysticism became almost exclusively seen as rooted in Hindu-Buddhism and ancient Javanese culture (cf. Sears 1996, 71–74). Protestant missionary Carel Poensen (1836–1919) of the Netherlands Missionary Society (NZG), who preached among the Muslims

of East Java and had developed an interest in *wayang*, observed in 1872 that Javanese Muslims considered *wayang* performances to be religious, or rather pious, acts (1872, 162).¹¹ Whereas Poensen saw *wayang* and Islam as intertwined, however questionable these ‘superstitious practices’ in his eyes, by the twentieth century such perceptions had largely disappeared in Dutch scholarship. To limit the analysis to two museum curators: neither Willem Rassers (1922; 1931; 1959) nor Remt Mellema (1954) made mention of the Muslim context in which *wayang* was performed. Rassers was a true structuralist and the typical armchair anthropologist; he never visited Indonesia, but based his studies entirely on the museum’s collections (as did Mellema). His PhD thesis on the Panji romance (1922), and his later collection *Panji, the Culture Hero: A Structural Study of Religion in Java* (1959), mention Islam only once, despite the subtitle. So, although Rassers studied contemporary practices, his main subject was ancient rather than twentieth-century Java (Trouwborst 2002, 680). Tropenmuseum curator Remt Mellema’s study on *wayang* puppets (1954), which significantly was published in the year of his conversion, makes no mention of Islam whatsoever.

Thus, although the Muslim courts of Java were appreciated for the ‘high arts’ they produced and the ‘industrial arts’ admired for their technical skilfulness, in museums Islam was not seen as a cultural force driving the production of these artefacts – contrary to the assessment of the Islamic heartland in European scholarship. The analysis in the preceding paragraphs uncovers the predicament of Indonesia’s material culture, ranging from Dutch colonial conceptions that divorced ‘Islam’ from culture and politics in order to limit it to a body of core beliefs and ritual obligations, to the art historical field that in relation

to Islam follows a dual paradigm of the sacred and the secular, and effectively negates the former. In this sense, the particular situatedness of Dutch colonial governance has contributed to the exclusion of Indonesia from the domain of Islamic art in European scholarship, in addition to the conceptualisations that shaped the field itself. Running throughout these processes of inclusion and exclusion is a conceptual issue around which all questions relating to the Islamic nature of Indonesian material culture revolve: can Islam be categorised in terms of ‘religion’, ‘civilisation’ and ‘culture’? And if not, how should Islam be conceptualised differently? I will return to these questions in the last paragraph of this chapter.

2 Exhibitionary Framings

As outlined in the preceding paragraphs, Islamic antiquities became a category of inquiry in the early twentieth century, but it took several decades before this development became visible in the museums in the Netherlands. Within the late colonial exhibitionary regimes, Islam, both as a religious and cultural force, was accorded a modest place in line with the aspiration to show respect to Indonesians and their progress on the road to development. It reflected a rising interest in the 1930s and 1940s to pay attention to Indonesian Islam in the wake of the growth of modernist Islamic movements. The change in focus was driven by the return to the Netherlands of colonial officials, many of them former students of Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje, who had first-hand experience of Indonesian Muslim cultures and could contribute specialist knowledge. Their areas of interest focused more on contemporary developments and the challenges they posed for maintaining colonial rule, than on studying Indonesians as abstract theoretical subjects, like the ethnologists of the evolutionary, diffusionist and structuralist schools had done before them (and some still did). Their curatorial approach precluded an age in which newer social scientific methods, in particular field research, took over

¹¹ In 1887 Poensen donated around 150 objects to the Museum of Ethnology, mostly children’s toys, but also drawings of *wayang* characters, along with his notes. 33 drawings, Kediri, c.1887. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. nos. RV-625-106-1/35. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/665455>.

from the purely theoretical ‘laboratory approach’ to objects of museum ethnology (Kreps 2020, 126; see also Penny 2002). The interest in Indonesian Islam was, however, short-lived and after 1949 it slowly faded away. In what follows, I look at several exhibitions of the late colonial period and the transitional period thereafter to find answers to the question of the rise and disappearance of Indonesian Islam in museological representation. What explained the sudden interest in Islam, and why did it disappear again? In what ways did exhibitions reflect the changing boundaries of Islam in Dutch image-making, and at the same time shape and define these boundaries?

2.1 *Exhibiting Islam as ‘Art’*

One element driving the museum presentations were changes in government policies towards Islam as heritage and art. The creation of the Archaeological Service (*Oudheidkundige Dienst in Nederlands-Indië*) in 1913, in the slipstream of the Ethical Policy, meant that Islamic sites were now part of official heritage policy (see *Staatsblad van Nederlandsch-Indië* 1913). As a governmental office, the Archaeological Service had close ties with the museums in both the Indies and the Netherlands. One of its prerogatives was decision-taking on which antiquities were to be preserved and how. This meant that it could send objects from sites to museums as gifts or loans, when they were categorised as duplicates or otherwise superfluous (Bloembergen 2021, 190).¹² However, in the case of Islamic antiquities it was not so much actual objects that the Archaeological Service dispatched, but rather its research material, such as photographs, squeezes and casts (see also chapter 4).

The most significant outcome of the exchange was the recreation of the tomb of Sultana Nahrasyiyah (r. 1406–1428) on the staircase of the Colonial Institute in 1941 (Figs. 41–43). The actual tomb, one of those originating from Khambhat, was made from marble and beautifully ornamented with calligraphic verses and vegetal patterns. It was situated at the Kuta Karang II complex that was surveyed by Jean Pierre Moquette in 1912 (Lambourn 2003; Tichelman 1940). The recreation was entirely based on squeezes and photographs sent by the Archaeological Service, which were used to create an actual-size plaster model, and during the two years of production Jan Cornelis Krijgsman, one of the service’s surveyors, was regularly consulted.¹³ Curator Gerard Tichelman (1893–1962), the driving force behind the recreation (with support of director Bep Schrieke), had joined the museum after a career in the civil administration. As a *controleur* in the Lhokseumawe region he had frequented the sultanate cemeteries and made a case for their preservation (Fig. 26).¹⁴ In the news media the latest addition to the galleries received full attention, and Tichelman made use of this opportunity to stress the utmost importance of the cemeteries, since they represented the civilisation (*cultuurbezit*) of the early Islamic period (*De Volkskrant* 1941). Tichelman’s publication (1940) on the mausoleum signalled a shift from designating the tombs as ‘antiquities’ to ‘art’. According to the curator’s lyrical description, ‘the stylish monumentality and beautiful shape and expression of the mausoleum make it an impressive example of Islamic art’ (Tichelman 1940, 207). At the museum, the replica complemented a display of eight gravestones from the Aceh Besar region from the Stammeshaus collection, which were previously exhibited in front of the Aceh

12 The Museum of Ethnology, the Colonial Institute and the Museum of Geography and Ethnology were all recipients of gifts from the Archaeological Service, amounting to 55 objects in total plus an unknown number of photographs. In addition, the service handed out several objects ‘on loan’ to the vvak collection that is currently kept at the Rijksmuseum (Bloembergen 2021, 190–91). The squeezes and casts were sent by individual members of the research staff, notably draughtsman Jan de Vink.

13 Monthly reports G.L. Tichelman, 1940–1941. NL-HaNA Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen, 1910–1995, 2.20.69 no. 4417.

14 Diary G.L. Tichelman 1932–1933. NL-HaNA G.L. Tichelman [1893–1961], 1916–1937, 2.21.097.01 no. 29.



FIGURE 41 Grave of Sultana Nahrisyah (r. 1406–1428) at the Kuta Krueng graveyard in northern Aceh, 1908 (photograph Hendrik Leydie Melville). Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. TM-60044471

Museum (Fig. 24), and represented Aceh's antiquities at the museum.¹⁵

Even though Tichelman described the mausoleum as Islamic art, he did not position Indonesia in the wider field of Islamic art (apart from the monument's Gujarati origin). The archaeologist Willem Stutterheim (1892–1942), director of the Archaeological Service between 1936 and 1942, was one of the few scholars who did so. His publication *De islam en zijn komst in de archipel* ("The advent of Islam in the archipelago", 1935) was a textbook for students of the Algemene Middelbare School (General High School, AMS) in Surakarta, where Stutterheim was director at the time. The AMS

grew out of the Ethical Policy and the aspiration to give Indonesians better access to Dutch-style education. The school mainly attracted offspring from noble families, who came from different places in Indonesia (Priyatmoko 2018). To suit the needs of this student body, the curriculum was less Europe-oriented and included lessons in Indonesian languages and cultures. Many of the teachers, and also director Stutterheim, had been students of Snouck Hurgronje in Leiden. Among them was Remt Mellema (1899–1987), who would become the first curator specialized in Islam at the Tropenmuseum and the first who was a Muslim himself (Treffers 2022; Shatanawi 2012a).¹⁶ One of

15 Aceh Gallery at the Colonial Institute, c.1931. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. TM-60054831. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/463820>.

16 After earning a degree in Indian and Indonesian languages combined with economic Indology, Mellema had a short career as a civil administrator in Java and then joined the AMS. He donated a unique album with



FIGURE 42 Moulder Johannes Jacobs working on the replica of the grave of Sultana Nahrisyah at the Colonial Institute, 1940–1941 (photograph Bert Buurman). Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. TM-10000168. © BERT BUURMAN / NEDERLANDS FOTOMUSEUM.

the subjects was Islamic art, taught by Stutterheim himself. It was the last step in a three-stage programme, after pupils had studied Hindu-Buddhist art, first in India and in Java (Bloembergen 2017, 46). According to the textbook, Stutterheim told his Indonesian students that Islam had reached the archipelago from India, as evidenced by Gujarati gravestones situated in Gresik in Java and in Aceh; hence the great role of mysticist Islam in the

archipelago. After discussing the stylistic developments of Islamic art in the so-called central lands, Stutterheim turned to Indonesia. Here Islamic art hardly had gained ground, ‘in fact, its influence is limited to the application of Arabic script on a number of gravestones’ (Stutterheim 1952 [1935], 143). A persistent idea throughout the book concerns the limitations Islam posed on artistic production, resulting in the demise of architecture, painting and sculpture and stylised forms of *wayang* puppets and reliefs (e.g. 1952 [1935], 50; 148).

Stutterheim distinguished three types of Islamic-period art. The first was art executed in foreign (*uitheems*) Islamic style, such as the Gujarati-made

photographs of the school to the Tropenmuseum. Unknown photographer, 1930. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. TM-ALB-1263. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/49452>.



FIGURE 43 Curator Gerard Tichelman of the Colonial Institute at a press meeting, 1941 (photograph Stapf Bilderdienst). National Archives/Fotocollectie Elsevier 2.24.05.02 inv. no. 023-0835

graves of Sultana Nahrasiyah in the Pasai region and Malik Ibrahim (d. 1419) in Gresik. The latter is situated in a Muslim cemetery executed in 'entirely Hindu style, exemplifying the manner in which in Indonesia the arts islamised' (Stutterheim 1952 [1935], 143 see also p. 37). The second type was art for Islamic purposes but executed in Indo-Javanese style, for instance the aforementioned cemetery and the minbar of the mosque at the *kraton* of Surakarta (1952 [1935], 147).¹⁷ In 1930, the Archaeological Service removed a number of carved stone panels in the mosque of Mantingan (Central Java) from the original sixteenth-century wall and set them into the mosque's new wall (Fig. 44), while making

squeezes for research purposes (Oudheidkundige Dienst in Nederlandsch-Indië 1931, 51–57). The reliefs were stylistically Indo-Javanese, according to Stutterheim, but adapted to foreign Islamic styles, as naturalistic depictions 'would not be permissible according to orthodox views' (1952 [1935], 145).¹⁸ Another example of a blend of both types was the grave of Sultan Hasanudin (d. 1570) in Banten, which consists of an Indo-Javanese cenotaph and foreign Islamic gravemarkers (1952 [1935], 38). About the third type, native Islamic art and architecture, Stutterheim suggested that it was mainly confined to the old-style mosques and *langgar* (prayers rooms), which can be considered 'purely native and national' (1952 [1935], 146; 148).

17 The image used in the book is: Unknown photographer, Minbar of a mosque in Surakarta, 1900–1930. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. TM-10036086. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/497330>.

18 Caption with image by J.J. de Vink, Relief in the mosque of Mantingan, 1930. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. TM-60054169. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/461073>.



FIGURE 44
Panels at the Mantingan mosque complex after restoration by the Archaeological Service, 1930 (photography Jan de Vink).
Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. nos.
TM-ALB-1986-32 / TM-ALB-1986-36 / Leiden University Library
OD 10468

At the Colonial Institute, plaster casts of the reliefs of the Mantingan mosque were on display from 1935 onward.¹⁹ Unlike Sultana Nahrasyiyah's tomb, the museum did not label the importance of the reliefs in terms of Islamic art, but following the Archaeological Service, rather emphasised the similarity to Majapahit styles (Oudheidkundige Dienst in Nederlandsch-Indië 1931, 51–57). In the museum the reliefs expressed the transition of Hindu to post-Hindu artistic traditions, which were seldom called Islamic, but rather 'Javanese'. Next to the reliefs two wooden panels were placed, which according to donor Jan Thomassen à Thuessink van der Hoop originated from the Kasepuhan *kraton* of Cirebon and represented a later phase

of transition (Koloniaal Instituut 1935, 45).²⁰ 'Transitional art' (*overgangskunst*) – art that was made in the period just after the arrival of Islam – had the interest of Dutch scholarship because it could shed light on the demise of Indo-Javanese art. F.D.K. (Frits) Bosch (1887–1967), Stutterheim's predecessor as director of the Archaeological Service, observed that the Mantingan panels with interwoven geometric shapes were based on Arab examples, and, according to him, the Javanese craftsmen who made them clearly failed to master the design (Oudheidkundige Dienst in Nederlandsch-Indië 1931, 52). The designs were

19 Java Gallery at the Colonial Institute, 1935–1950. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. TM-60009307. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/463887>.

20 Objects from the Cirebon courts were sold following the rulers' impoverishment (Ross 2016, 201). Van der Hoop bought several from a salesman in Batavia around 1935. Wooden tray and panel, Cirebon, 18th–19th century. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. nos. TM-979-1/2. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/184406>.

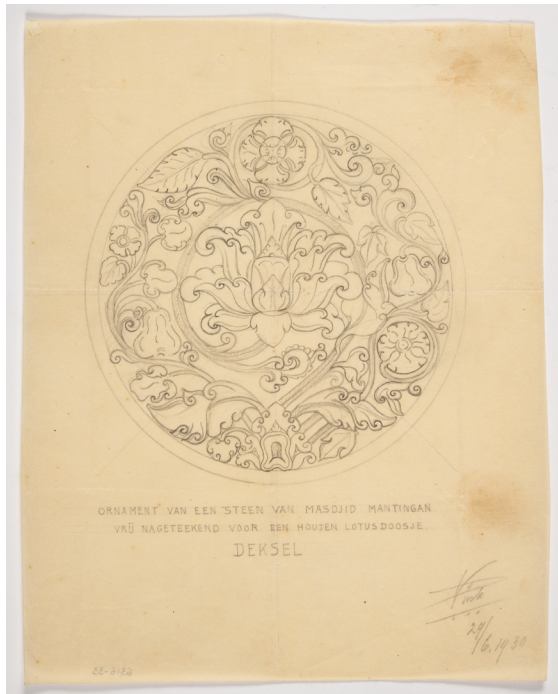


FIGURE 45 Jan de Vink, Design drawing for a wooden box, 1930. Silver box, 1930–1940, Yogyakarta. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. nos. TM-6316-33 / TM-6326-12a, courtesy of VriendenLoterij (formerly BankGiro Loterij). A comparison between the photographs and drawings shows that De Vink adjusted the compositions for the silverware, making them more symmetrical and stylised

'stiff and insignificant', and only came to life because of the lotus flower in the centre, in sharp contrast to the designs based on Indo-Javanese examples, which were 'brilliantly executed'.²¹ Bosch particularly praised the panels incorporating lotus flowers, 'it is as if the sculptor has tried to compensate the loss caused by Mohammedan law and its prohibition of depicting humans and animals. He has chosen the noblest flower to express his artistic feelings.' Bosch's analysis is a variation on the narrative of the innate nature of the Javanese, who are incapable of absorbing Arab influence, and cannot help but express themselves in purely Asian forms. At the Colonial Institute, the verdict was somewhat milder; although also here regret over the loss of figuration in the reliefs was expressed, there was praise as well for the 'stylish plainness' (*stijlvolle soberheid*) and beauty

of contemporary Javanese woodwork (Koloniaal Instituut 1935, 45). The idea of transitional art was also reflected in the so-called Yogy silver, a type of silverware which gained popularity in the beginning of the 20th century and was known for its use of ancient motifs adapted to European tastes and uses. It is renowned for its revival of Hindu-Buddhist designs (Drieënhuizen 2012a; Kal 2005). Nevertheless, Jan de Vink of the Archaeological Service made several design drawings for Yogyakarta silversmiths and woodworkers that were based on the Mantingan motifs (Fig. 45). All these interpretations of the notion of transitional art had in common that they looked at Java through the lens of ethnicity and a perceived natural fixation of Javanese to geographical location, that is, an innate Asianness that fixed Java to the Indian culture area rather than drawing it into the Islamic realm.

The museum representations of Indonesian Islam in the 1930s and 1940s separated art from

21 For contemporary interpretations of the panels, see Njoto (2017) and O'Kane (2023).

religion. A difference in treatment of the two domains also prevails in Stutterheim's textbook that, although written with the future elite of Indonesia in mind, on the surface professed admiration for Islamic art and culture, but on a deeper level is fully consistent with the idea of incomplete acculturation of earlier colonial scholarship and governance. Even though the book's introductory chapter echoes Snouck Hurgronje's ideas about Indonesian Islam as an authentic and lived faith, the conclusion recycled the idea of Indonesia as a passive recipient of foreign cultures rather than being capable of giving shape to its own art:

"It will be clear that what Hinduism brought cannot be compared easily to what Islam brought to Indonesia's inhabitants. In short it can be said that *Hinduism brought in the first place a culture, and Islam [brought] in the first place a religion*. Kingship and laws based on it, dress, habitation and art to Indian models, literature that is translated or adapted from Indian examples: that and more was the work of Hinduism. And while by no means breaking down that work, Islam has kept it and other matters, as long as it remained within the limits of its rules and regulations. *Above everything, Islam placed Allah's almightiness and His revelation through the words of His messenger*. Whereas *Islam as religion* is being confessed with full conviction, *Islam as culture* only partially penetrated." (Stutterheim 1952 [1935], 150 emphasis in original)

The Dutch art historical conceptions of Indonesian Islam inverted common paradigms in the field of Islamic art: the Islamic in art and architecture was limited to connections to ritual obligations, whereas the cultural elements of Muslim societies were placed under ethnic headings and often were traced back to pre-Islamic societies. In this respect, late colonial museum representations remained firmly grounded in earlier narratives of race and geography. Art was tied to ethnicity and ethnicity to an alleged geographical region of origin which functioned as a location of purity.

2.2 *Exhibiting Islam as 'Religion'*

The late colonial idea that Indonesian Islam was more profoundly rooted in religion than in art and culture found expression in museum presentation. Whereas the Muslim faith had no place in Dutch museums before, now several exhibitions paid attention to Islam, although the emphasis was more on Aceh than on Java and other regions. At the Colonial Institute, the Aceh Gallery, curated in 1931 by former *controleur* Willem Stammeshaus, included a dedicated display case on the Islamic religion (Fig. 46) (Shatanawi 2014, 41–42). The display brought together objects relating to ritual obligations, such as the hajj and *salat*, but also amulets and divinatory tools. The collection was assembled with the assistance and knowledge of Stammeshaus's extensive Acehnese network (see chapter 3) and as such it is an example of how experience 'in the field' resulted in a greater role for Islam. At the Museum of Ethnology, a separate Islam gallery opened in 1937 as part of a complete refurbishment of the museum. The gallery paid tribute to Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje and displayed the objects he had collected in Western Arabia in 1884–85. Outside the realm of museums, a permanent exhibition on the Islamic religion opened in 1930 at the premises of the Oriental Institute (*Oostersch Instituut*) in Leiden (Mols and Vrolijk 2016, 10; De Bruijn 1989). The institute was founded in 1927, on the occasion of Snouck Hurgronje's 70th birthday, with the purpose of stimulating the academic study of Islam in the Orient and Indonesia.

After the end of colonial rule in Indonesia, the interest and need for exhibitions based on the study of Islam through the lens of Dutch scholarly and administrative achievement dwindled. The Dutch government's recognition of Indonesian independence in 1949 precluded a new era of change in the museums of ethnology (M.E. Berger 2021; Kreps 2020; 1988). The consequences of independence were most seriously felt in the museum that based its *raison d'être* on colonialism: the Colonial Institute, where the end of colonial rule in Indonesia led to a shift in focus from the



FIGURE 46 Display dedicated to Islam at the Aceh Gallery in the Colonial Institute, c.1931. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. TM-60040071

colonies to the wider 'non-Western' world. Yet the other two general museums of ethnology, in Leiden and Rotterdam, were also affected. In their presentations and policies, the museums tried to shake off the vestiges of the colonial past.²² To reflect the new relationships with the societies that the museums represented, the museums sought to purge their displays of Western prejudice and aimed to emphasise the new egalitarian relationship with the former European colonies. With these new policies came a decline of specialised knowledge on Indonesian arts and cultures, because of a reduced staff and less direct experience in Indonesia itself. Ultimately, it would affect the museological presentation of Indonesian Islam and lead to renewed silences.

The shift in focus was part of a nation-wide trend; after Indonesian independence, in the various museums Islam was increasingly associated with the Middle East and North Africa (cf. Shatanawi 2014, 28; Trouwborst 2002, 681). In 1958, the exhibition at the Oriental Institute closed.²³ The other tribute to Snouck Hurgronje's work, the gallery at the Museum of Ethnology, was transformed in 1962 into a display focusing on the so-called central lands of Islam. In the postcolonial climate, the museum wanted to concentrate on 'the essences of foreign cultures rather than their study by particular scholars, however meritorious their work has been' (Museum Volkenkunde 1962, 202).²⁴ The Indonesia galleries at the former Colonial Institute, from 1950 called Tropenmuseum, no

longer had a separate display on the Muslim faith, but there was a dedicated Islam Gallery (1954–1975), curated by Remt Mellema, a convert to Islam who had adopted the Muslim name Riza al-Mustafa (Treffers 2022; Shatanawi 2014, 45–48; 2012a).²⁵ In the memorandum accompanying the exhibition, Mellema briefly discusses various framings of Islam and the reasons why he rejected art history and ethnography as underlying principles for the gallery: they did not fit with his main objective, which was to give an outline of Islamic doctrine.²⁶ Interestingly, he seems also to have thought of potential Muslim visitors. They were specifically invited to pray at the *mihrab* (prayer niche) in the exhibition room, whereby Mellema broke through the division separating the museum as a secular institution from the ritual function of the objects on display.²⁷ Mellema's specific vision of Islam-as-religion reflected his personal convictions as a Muslim and Freemason. In his many publications, he expressed a high regard for the rational and humanist nature of the Islamic religion (e.g. Mellema 1992; 1960; 1958).²⁸ The egalitarian ideal, whereby all Muslims were considered

22 Whether the museums succeeded is subject of debate, see Hilderling, Modest and Aztouti (2014) and, regarding Islam, my analysis of the 1950s Islamic gallery (Shatanawi 2012a).

23 The collection on display was the property of the Islamstichting (Islam Foundation, 1927–1959), an affiliate of the Oriental Institute. Since 1958 it is a loan to the Museum of Ethnology. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. nos. RV-B106-1/192.

24 Interestingly, in 2007 the Museum of Ethnology organised an exhibition celebrating Snouck Hurgronje's 150th birthday and the West Asia Gallery (opened 2011) currently has a section on his work and the Arabian collection.

25 Mellema's conversion story was published in *Islam our choice*, first published in Karachi in 1961. The book had many reprints in various Muslim countries. Excerpts, including Mellema's statement, can also be found online. He had also been a member of the La Paix lodge in Amsterdam since 1949, and the composition of the conversion story shows similarity to the greeting ceremonies of Freemasonry. I want to thank Mellema's biographer, Jan Treffers, for pointing this out.

26 Remt Mellema, *Toelichting, tevens handleiding voor museum-assistenten, bij de Islam-afdeling in het Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen* (Explanation of the Islam Gallery at the Royal Tropical Institute, also manual for museum assistants), 1954. NL-HaNA Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen, 1910–1995, 2.20.69 no. 7720.

27 As far as I know, there were no such possibilities in the galleries dedicated to other faiths.

28 Remt Mellema, *Rede uitgesproken ter gelegenheid van de opening van de Islam-afdeling in het Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen* (Speech on the occasion of the inauguration of the Islam Gallery at the Royal Tropical Institute), 9 July 1954. NL-HaNA Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen, 1910–1995, 2.20.69 no. 7720. Internal memorandum Islam-kamer Tropenmuseum, c.1954.

equal, whatever their origins, the fraternal bond of all Muslims and the direct connection between God and man were aspects that he particularly admired. In the gallery this translated into a central role for the Islamic notion of the *ummah*, the global Muslim community united by a common religious ideal, leaving no space for ethnic or cultural diversity and, hence, for any object expressing Islamic variations, other than in physical appearance. Apart from Qur'ans, the gallery therefore contained no objects from colonial Indonesia, whereas the displayed art works were all replicas or newly made and supported Mellema's views on the Islamic creed (Figs. 47–49). In his eyes, the end of the colonial era enabled the gallery's message of respect: at last, Westerners and non-Westerners could meet each other on an equal footing.

Mellema was not the only Muslim curator; Abdul Jalil Jawad (1926–2002), born into an Iraqi Shi'ite family, was curator for the Islamic Culture Area at the Museum of Ethnology between 1964 and 1968. Yet, whereas Mellema emphasised universalism, Jawad advocated diversity. His analysis of Leiden's Islam gallery, the former Snouck Hurgronje room, held that 'the objects displayed in the show-cases of the Islamic Hall [are not] inclusive or typical of the Islamic World. Like the cultures of the Middle East, the Islamic show not only unity but also diversity. The latter is manifested in the way of practicing the rituals and rites, in art and architecture.'²⁹ Moreover, in 1949, Patrick de Josselin de Jong (1922–1999) was appointed as curator for the study of Muslim peoples, with special focus on Indonesia. The position seems to have been created to give him the opportunity to prepare a PhD thesis and he left the museum after only four years. His thesis (1951) studied Minangkabau society from a structuralist perspective and, indeed, little attention was paid to the Muslim aspect (Trouwborst 2002, 680). The brief

period of interest in Indonesian Islam was not continued at the Museum of Ethnology; after De Josselin de Jong's departure, his position was filled by curators who specialized in the non-Muslim cultures of Indonesia, a situation continuing until the Nationaal Museum of Wereldculturen merger of 2014.

2.3 *Exhibiting Islam as a 'Culture Area': the Postcolonial Period*

Although diffusionism formally did not have many adherents in the museums in the Netherlands, there was one domain on which its influence was profound: the geographical arrangement of the collections. In the ethnographic museums, one of the most evasive consequences of the end of colonial rule in Indonesia was the geographical regrouping of the collections, in order to pursue their new mission to cover the so-called non-Western world. Following diffusionist principles, the museums began to cluster objects along the lines of culture areas, each with their own curator and exhibition room.³⁰ The Islamic culture area, as the Dutch museums understood it, reached from North Africa to the Western and Central Asian countries, usually including Afghanistan and Pakistan as its most Eastern border. Indonesia was considered part of the Asian or Indian culture area, but, apart from Indo-Javanese art, presented under regional or national headings.

From 1957, the Museum of Ethnology provided a curatorial position for the Islamic Culture Area (*islamitisch cultuurgebied*) and between 1947 and 1981, there was a curatorship for the Indian Culture Area (*Indisch cultuurgebied*), which was mainly occupied with South Asia, but with the occasional excursion to Indonesia (Van Wengen 2002c, 195). Pieter Pott (1918–1989), curator for the Indian Culture Area between 1947 and 1955 and, after that, director of the Museum of Ethnology, published on South Asian as well as Indonesian art

NL-HaNA Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen, 1910–1995, 2.20.69 no. 7720.

29 Quarterly report of A. Jawad, second quarter 1964. NL-LdnRMV-A17 Archives of P. Pott.

30 In a number of ethnological museums in Germany, diffusionist arrangements were made from around the turn of the century (Penny 2003).



FIGURE 47 Islam Gallery at the Tropenmuseum, visualising Remt Mellema's idea of the global ummah, 1954–1975. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. nos. TM-10030211/TM-10030227



FIGURE 48 Calligraphy of the *shahada* by Uthman, 1860–61 (1277 AH). Probably acquired by Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje during his travels to the Hijaz of 1884–85. Collection National Museum of World Cultures, on loan from the Oriental Institute, inv. no. RV-B106-161

(e.g. Pott 1980). The Museum of Geography and Ethnology and Tropenmuseum followed suit, with the creation of curatorships for the Islamic Culture Area in 1968 and 1972 respectively.³¹ Still, the principle of museum diffusionism that culture areas were mutually exclusive, rather than overlapping, stalled the study of Islamic material culture from Indonesia.³² Curators appointed for the Islamic Culture Area were not concerned with Indonesia, and conversely, Indonesia and India curators generally did not study objects through the prism of Islam. In line with the heartland paradigm, Indonesian Islam was treated as peripheral

31 Since the 19th century, objects from Western Asia and North Africa had been entering the Wereldmuseum Rotterdam, mostly through the hands of diplomats and businessmen. In 1968 these collections were isolated from the other Asian and African objects to form a new department of the Islamic Culture Area (*islamitisch cultuurgebied*) that reached from Mauritania to India (Ros 1993, 26).

32 Hence my experience with the allocation of Pakistan, as narrated in the prologue.



FIGURE 49 Remt Mellema made reproductions of the calligraphy for the Islam Gallery, for publications and for display at the Mobarak Mosque in The Hague, the first purpose-built mosque in the Netherlands, which he helped realise. Wedding of Joke Innemee and Lacin Yildiz at the Mobarak Mosque, 1966 (photograph Nico Naeff). Collection National Archives 2.24.10.02 inv. no. 119-0685. © NICO NAEFF / NEDERLANDS FOTOMUSEUM.

(Shatanawi 2014, 30–31). Nevertheless, occasionally crossings were made, such as the *Gids voor het Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde* (1961) that included Indonesian objects in both the chapters on ‘Islamic culture’ and ‘Indian culture area’.

Thus, in the late colonial period, Islam as religion and art briefly found a place in museum representations of Indonesia, but from the 1960s onward it was relegated to the backseat. Several developments diverted Islam from Indonesia to the MENA region, ranging from geopolitical events, such as the oil economy, and Muslim migration to the Netherlands, to the diffusionist principles guiding museum geography (Shatanawi 2014). The main driver, however, was

Indonesian independence and the dwindling need for colonial administrative knowledge. At the Tropenmuseum, the Islamic gallery was closed in 1975 and replaced with a broader-themed gallery on the Middle East and North Africa, following the museum's reorganisation along the lines of culture areas. This meant that Islam was delegated to the Middle Eastern regions (but never in such a radical uncompromising manner as Mellema intended). The Southeast Asia Galleries, however, remained focused on Hindu-Buddhist heritage and the non-Muslim cultures of Indonesia – with heavy reliance on aesthetics in presentation. Eventually, at the Tropenmuseum's gallery of Southeast Asia (1979–1993), out of the 1,231 objects displayed over the years, only eleven were exhibited under the heading of Islam.³³ In its discourse on Islam, the museum reverted back to notions that were common before the 1930s. For example, the catalogue of the seminal traveling exhibition *Budaya Indonesia* (1987) postulated that 'among those who study the cultural history of Southeast Asia there is strong consensus that there is no positive connection between Islam and the arts and crafts. The advent of Islam is held responsible for the disappearance of the old artistic traditions without anything new or important replacing them' (Tropenmuseum 1987, 64).

3 Deframing and Reframing Indonesian Things

Having outlined the predicament of Indonesian material culture within museological and art historical categorisations, as well as its ramifications in the present, I will continue with a decolonial re-reading of a key object in the NMVW collections: *kyai antakusuma*, a ceremonial coat previously owned by the royal house of the Yogyakarta sultanate. My work is inspired by two scholars who have recently argued for new conceptualisations of Islam: Shahab Ahmed, who is best-known for

his posthumous *What is Islam? The Importance of Being Islamic* (2016), and Irfan Afifi (2021b; 2021a; 2019) whose effort concentrates on reconstituting *Islam Nusantara*, Islam in the Southeast Asian archipelago.³⁴ Irfan Afifi was born in 1980 in Ngawi, East Java. After graduating with a degree in philosophy from Gadjah Mada University in Yogyakarta, he felt dissatisfied with the secular-oriented curriculum he had studied. He went for two years to study at a *pesantren* (Islamic school), where he filled his days with Qur'anic recitation and reading Islamic philosophy, in particular related to Sufism, such as the work of the Javanese poet Ranggawarsita (1802–1873). Shahab Ahmed (1966–2015), of Pakistani descent, was born and raised in Singapore, studied law and Arabic studies at the International Islamic University Malaysia, the American University in Cairo and Princeton University in the United States. At the time of his death, he was a lecturer in Islamic Legal Studies at Harvard University.

Although significantly differing in scope and ambition, the work of Ahmed and Afifi shares several commonalities. First, and highly relevant to this book, both authors write extensively about the relationship between culture and religion, and the boundaries drawn up between these categories in Western (post)colonial scholarship. Ahmed's focus is on cultural continuity in what he calls the Balkans-to-Bengal complex; a historical territory stretching from the Ottoman Empire to South Asia. However, many of his arguments also hold for other Muslim regions, including Southeast Asia (Hefner 2018; Ahmed 2016, 540). Afifi's work concentrates on Javanese Islam, and argues, among other things, for the re-introduction of Java's rich literary legacy into the domain of Islam. Similarly, throughout *What is Islam?* Ahmed explores the use of poetry, fiction, music, the visual arts and

33 Information TMS database National Museum of World Cultures. Accessed 22 November 2020.

34 The notion of *Islam Nusantara* commonly refers to interpretations of Islam including Sufism, tolerance of other faiths and a symbiotic relationship with local culture (Woodward 2017). The term was coined in 2015 and has been promoted since by some members of Nahdlatul Ulama, the largest Islamic organisation in Indonesia.

material culture at large as sources for understanding of what Islam historically has meant to Muslims. This focus on (in)tangible heritage and literary culture makes their work readily applicable to historical museum collections, as I will attempt to show. Finally, although neither Afifi nor Ahmed explicitly seem to be inspired by the decoloniality school of thought, their work can be linked to decolonial theory in a number of ways. This is evident from Afifi's repeated statements that he wants to break away from (post)colonial scholarship (e.g. 2021b), and Ahmed's consistent use of Muslim historical sources to ground his theory. In other words, theirs is an epistemic decolonisation, a delinking (a term borrowed from the Egyptian economist Samir Amin) from a Eurocentric episteme in order to bring to the foreground other epistemologies (Mignolo 2007).

Shahab Ahmed's ambitious study *What is Islam?* aims to rethink the study of the Islamic and to draw the contours of a new theoretical framework for its conceptualisation. His main subject is a question that many scholars before him have tried to tackle: how to account for the historical and human diversity of Islam in theory and practice? Ahmed is clearly dissatisfied with previous attempts. One of his major criticisms is that they often ended up distinguishing different types of Islam, instead of recognising diversity as an integral and coherent aspect of the Islamic. Instead of the now *de rigueur* view in scholarship that there is no singular Islam, but rather multiple Islams, Ahmed holds that Islam should be approached as a single analytical category.³⁵ To Ahmed, without the acknowledgement of categorical Islam, there cannot be a Muslim identity. Islam precedes the Muslim, for 'Muslims themselves have always insisted and continue to insist, not merely in theory but also in lived practice and experience, that there is such a thing as Islam ... even if they

disagree about what it is' (2016, 136–37). Instead of Islam in the plural, he proposes a conceptualisation that puts 'difference, diversity and disagreement' central to the definition (2016, 302). What prior scholars tried to capture in different categories and classifications, can all be accommodated in one term, Islam, as long as its conceptualisation has 'the logic of internal contradiction' at heart (2016, 302).

Ahmed's theory in essence defines Islam as a process of meaning-making, in which three elements are central (2016, 343–63).³⁶ The first is the revelation to the Prophet Muhammad and the revelatory text, that is the Qur'an and the *hadith*. Yet the revelation is not 'as is commonly and narrowly assumed, squarely delimitedly the text of the Qur'an (and the Hadith) – that is to say: it is not scripture alone, or scripture in itself' (2016, 346). Beyond and behind the text of the revelation lies an unseen reality or truth that is the source of the revelation; the larger divine reality which constitutes the second element. Finally, every Muslim who engages with the Unseen does so within the context of a large repository of previous engagements – here Ahmed draws close to Asad's definition of Islam as a discursive tradition, while letting go of the Qur'an and *hadith* as the sole foundations. The context is the 'entire accumulated *lexicon of means and meanings of Islam* that has been historically generated and recorded up to any given moment', consisting of an enormous variety of practices and discourses, in short, all the 'truth-claims and components of existential exploration and meaning-making in terms of Islam that Muslims *acting as Muslims* have produced, and to which Muslims *acting as Muslims* have attached themselves' (2016, 357 emphasis in original). In this manner, Ahmed creates space to argue for the arts, fiction or humour as constitutive of Islam, so as central acts of meaning-making rather than mere by-products of an Islamic mindset. Central to Ahmed's argumentation is that engaging with a *tafsir* text or

35 The idea of multiple Islams was, for instance, the premise of the exhibition *Urban Islam* that I curated with Deniz Ünsal in 2003.

36 Ahmed uses the terms Pre-Text, Text and Con-Text for these elements.

looking at a painting are equally meaningful Islamic acts of engagement with the Unseen. Another significant aspect of Ahmed's model is that in his vision, Islam has no fixed location, as it is fluid and without boundaries (for a critique, see Doostdar 2017; Griffel 2017). In this respect, Ahmed's conceptualisation of Islam aligns with the notion of in-betweenness, and therefore it creates an inherent tension with museum taxonomy, which sets out to draw clear boundaries around every concept it uses.

I agree with Ahmed's critics that there are a number of conceptual shortcomings to his work (e.g. Idris 2020; Doostdar 2017; Pregill 2017), notably a lack of engagement with theories of power and performance, as can be found in the work of Talal Asad and Saba Mahmood. Moreover, his model is more apt to study historical Islam and the discussion of contemporary Islam is rather disappointing. Ahmed concludes, much to his regret, that the context has become impoverished and that modern Muslims are less capable to conceptualize Islam in terms of contradiction (2016, 514–17). In his analysis he fails to come to terms with the fact that modernism and Western conceptions of Islam now are integrally part of the 'context' and that many Muslims conceive of the world as being divided into a religious and a secular realm (e.g. Jouili 2019). Despite these limitations, *What is Islam?* provides an elaborate model for engagement with phenomena that are often classified outside Islam, the material culture of Muslim Indonesia being a prime example.

Most relevantly, Ahmed takes a highly critical view of categorisations of Islam in terms of 'religion', 'culture' or 'civilisation'. Ahmed builds on the work of Talal Asad (2003) and his interlocutors in his discussion of the concept of 'religion' and its counterpart 'secularism' as modern constructs, and by questioning the usefulness of these terms to describe historical and contemporary realities. What Ahmed brings to the debate is a vast range of source material which he uses as evidence that such delineations do not hold historically. Rather, he posits:

"the vocabularies and meanings of the discourses and practices of literature, art, politics, wine-drinking, etcetera, appear anything *except* distinct and separable from the vocabularies and meanings of the revelation to Muhammad – rather, as we have seen, they are perfused with, implicated in, and constructed of the same working elements, so that it is not at all clear how "culture" is to be filtered out of "religion," or "religion" distilled out of "culture"." (Ahmed 2016, 165)

Through examples full of meticulous detail, Ahmed concludes that acts like wine-drinking and the painting of figurative images, acts that are often seen as profane and even un-Islamic activities in scholarly analysis, including museums, did not happen *despite* Islam, but they were integrally part of Islam, and even that they are an expression of what Islam *is*. One of the most cited examples in *What is Islam?* concerns a number of wine cups used by Timurid and Mughal rulers that contain inscriptions valorising wine-drinking in explicitly Islamic terms, using phrases such as *Allahu akbar*.³⁷

The debate, which takes up a substantial part of Ahmed's publication, has particular relevance for museums, because the distinction between religion and culture is a major organising principle in exhibitionary framings of Islam, as discussed in the preceding paragraphs, also in the Netherlands. This holds true for Islamic art, explained by the Rijksmuseum as a category following 'a regional and cultural definition, not a religious one' (De Hond 2011, 5). The post-independence displays at the ethnographic museums, for their part, exhibited objects under the heading of the Islamic culture area and were strongly informed by the theory of official/popular Islam, occasionally including separate displays for each type of Islam

37 An example: Wine jug, Iran, c.1450–1500. Collection Victoria & Albert Museum inv. no. 750-1889. <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O108549/wine-jug-mash-rabe-unknown/>.

(Shatanawi 2014, 55).³⁸ Fred Ros, curator of the Islamic Culture Area at the Museum of Geography and Ethnology between 1968 and 1995, outlined his position as follows:

“One can say that in all of these countries Islamic culture is characterised by unity in diversity. This unity follows from the Qur’an and its prohibitions and commandments. The diversity follows from the local cultural and historical backgrounds. The dichotomy coincides with the distinction between – what we call in this museum – formal and informal Islam. For example, formal Islam prohibits the making of figurative images. According to the Qur’an, only God can create. Still, there are many Muslims, including pious individuals, who produce images of people and animals. The belief in saints and the use of magic is similar. Formal Islam recognises the existence of angels and *jinn* (spirits), but saint veneration and magical practices are condemned. Nevertheless, across the world Islam knows an elaborate system of saint veneration and magical practices.” (J. Vermeulen 1994)

The dichotomous approach enabled Ros and his fellow curators to argue that the ‘bad Islam’ of theologians and fundamentalists, or in short Muslims insisting on dogmas and rules, had to be distinguished from the ‘good Islam’ of Sufis, artists and other Muslims focusing on spiritual and transcendent experiences, as part of the attempt to improve the public image of Islam (cf. Tamimi Arab 2021; see also Winegar 2008). Yet, Ahmed concludes, notions such as local, informal or popular Islam still privilege the *‘ulama* class as

38 The official/popular Islam division was largely based on the theory of the ‘Great’ and ‘Little’ traditions, first developed by Robert Redfield (1956), which tried to account for the diversity that could be found in any religious tradition by discerning different interpretations of religion. The local, informal and often oral expressions of religion were seen as the ‘Little traditions’, whereas the more intellectual and elite understandings of religion were labelled ‘Great traditions’.

uniquely defining the norms and values of Muslim communities. By making a legal-theological perspective the benchmark, these notions treat figurative painting, the consumption of wine or the use of amulets as aberrant and limited phenomena. According to him, the primacy of orthodoxy in Western academic conceptualisations of Islam is troubling, not only because it is historically incorrect, but because it limits our understanding of what Islam has meant to Muslims.

In chapter 7, I have demonstrated in detail how defining Islam as ‘religion’ in museum cataloguing starts a chain reaction that only recognises objects with clearly visible and easy-to-understand connections to Islam as ‘Islamic’. This finding holds particular relevance for the Indonesian collections. The constrictive definition of Islam as ‘religion’ is one of the reasons behind the low share of Indonesian objects recognised as Islamic within museum collections (see chapter 2) and also part of the explanation why Acehnese material culture receives more recognition as being Islamic than its Javanese counterpart: it conforms more to Protestant European notions of ‘religion’. Take, for instance, the more than 4,000 Javanese *wayang* puppets in the NMVW collections. *Wayang* rarely has visibly Islamic features and the performed stories are often based on the Hindu repertoire. Yet *wayang* is performed in a Muslim environment, where Muslims give it value as Muslims (in co-existence with other identities they may claim), and once drawn into the realm of Muslim valuation, Shahab Ahmed would argue, *wayang* ‘speaks Islamically’.

The work of philosopher Irfan Afifi (2021b; 2021a; 2019), despite being much smaller in scope and scale, provides a more direct engagement with Indonesian Islam, both historical and contemporary. His collection of essays *Saya, Jawa dan Islam (I, Java and Islam 2019)* is a personal search for his identity as Javanese Muslim in the face of the transformations unleashed by Dutch colonialism and Islamic modernism. Like Ahmed, he is particularly concerned with conceptualisations based on binary approaches, especially those resulting from

Dutch colonial politics. He emphasises the effects of such conceptualisations of Islam, which impede him to make, as Ahmed (2016, 452) would put it, a ‘coherent meaning for the self in terms of Islam’. It was colonialism that drove a wedge between “shariah” vs. “adat”, “teuku” vs. “teungku”, “nobles” vs. “common people”, “colonial criminal justice system” vs. “native courts”, “ki” vs. “kyai” etcetera’ (Afifi 2021a). Afifi criticizes theoretical approaches to Javanese Islam, citing Clifford Geertz and Merle Ricklefs, that distinguish between types of Muslims, such as *abangan*, *priyayi* and *santri*, or that characterise it with the pejorative term ‘syncretic’, as if the faith was only reluctantly accepted but never blended well (2019, 14). Concerning his own journey, he provides a powerful account of how the separation of his identities as a Javanese and a Muslim caused alienation, disenfranchisement and even bodily disharmony:

“My attempt at recognizing my own psyche or, in its basic sense, at knowing my life journey, its destination, eventually the *suluk* [perfection] that would lead me to ultimate reality of the Divine, was hindered by this big wall of colonial (as well as postcolonial) scholarly traditions that tried to detach Islam from Java, both of which had long been manifested in my bodily entity since I was little until recently, creating a foreign and alienating impact on myself in every breath I take.” (Afifi 2021b)

Like Ahmed, in whose work this is less openly communicated, Afifi’s project is constructive-normative (and ultimately political) in nature. His publications do not only aim to find new ways to study historical societies, but also to articulate a desire to renovate contemporary Islam and to renew the connections to pluralistic cultural and philosophical traditions that dominated Islamic practices of the past. To this end, Afifi makes a plea for a critical re-reading of the history of Islam in Java. The more varied Islam is still there, he argues: it is the Islam of his Java childhood, the Islam of the villages (Afifi 2019, 3–37). Yet, it is no longer conceived

as belonging to the Islamic sphere. In the end, reconnecting to the values of Islamic spirituality and the rediscovery of diversity, also in the face of Indonesia’s non-Muslim population, can support social justice. As Afifi (2021b) puts it, his aim is ‘to break through the great wall of colonial scholarship (as well as post-colonial) which will probably be useful in formulating the direction and starting point of a nation’s journey.’

3.1 *Kyai Antakusuma: a Decolonial Approach*

To illustrate the ways in which decolonial theory can help one to think Islam differently, I will continue with a re-reading of *kyai antakusuma* – a key object from the Tropenmuseum collections.³⁹ I will take this artefact and its historical presentation as my hermeneutical object, contrasting its contribution to colonial image-making with the possibilities of the conceptualisations offered by Ahmed and Afifi.

Kyai antakusuma is a ceremonial coat, made in patchwork technique of velvet, silk and cinde, the individual pieces being trimmed with gold thread, that belongs to the class of chief *pusaka* of the sultanate of Yogyakarta (Fig. 50). Important *pusaka* often received a personal name and the coat was named *kyai antakusuma*, ‘lord of the countless flowers’ or the ‘honourable multiflowered’.⁴⁰ The coat derives its sacred status from the association with Sunan Kalijaga (1460–1513), one of the *wali songo*, the nine holy men who brought Islam to Java. The sultans wore the coat on special occasions, for coronations and at Islamic festivals such as the *garebeg*, the celebrations of the birth of the

39 *Kyai antakusuma* was exhibited in several exhibitions and galleries, and it was the subject of at least six museum publications. *Kyai antakusuma*, 1855–1877, Yogyakarta. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. TM-1595-2. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/57842>.

40 Another name for the coat or the goatskin in which it was wrapped was *kyai gundil*, ‘the honourable hairless one’ (De Graaf and Pigeaud 1974, 30; Hooykaas 1956, 314; Galestin 1944, 113).



FIGURE 50 *Kyai antakusuma*, 1855–1877, Yogyakarta. Velvet, silk, cinde and gold thread in patchwork technique. Collection National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. TM-1595-2

Prophet Muhammad and those of Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha.

The coat came into the Colonial Institute's possession after purchase from one of the curators, Theodoor Galestin (1907–1980) in 1942. Galestin, a member of the Armenian community of the Dutch East Indies and specialist of Hindu-Javanese art and history, had acquired it four years earlier in a previous position as curator at Museum Sana Boedaja of the Java Institute (the current Museum Sonobudoyo) in Yogyakarta. The Java Institute (*Java-Instituut*), a mixed Dutch-Javanese initiative, aimed to study, promote and revivify Javanese culture. Several members had an active interest in the court arts, which they perceived as being

under threat by modern times (Cohen 2016, 107–12; Robson 2003, ix).⁴¹ Yet Galestin did not acquire the coat for the Java Institute but kept it for himself.⁴²

41 The Java Institute, a private learned society, was founded in 1919 by a group of Javanese and Dutch intellectuals. Among the members were nationalist Sastrowidjono, Frits Bosch, the director of the Archaeological Service, Mangkunegara VII, the ruler of the Mangkunegaran house of Surakarta, musicologist Jaap Kunst and Hoesein Djajadiningrat.

42 After consulting Galestin's personal archive as well as the archives of the Royal Tropical Institute and the Java Institute, it remains unclear why Galestin bought the coat for his private collection, rather than on behalf of the Java Institute (he left in Spring 1938), or what the reasons were for the sale to the Colonial Institute.

He did, quite exceptionally, some research into the provenance of his acquisition. The aristocrat (*raden*) from whom he had acquired it, told him that his family had held high-ranking positions at the sultan's court and that they had inherited it from a *pangeran*. From the account of Raden Sujuno Tirtokusumo (1931, 64), Galestin learned that this copy of the coat was made by 'a certain Mrs. Wieseman', a Dutch woman (in fact, she was Indo-European) who gave the coat as a tribute to Hamengku Buwono VI (r. 1855–1877), and that there was another older specimen, which was still kept at the court.⁴³ Two sultans wore the coat, until Sultan Hamengku Buwono VIII (1880–1939), who came to the throne in 1921, decided to replace the coat with European dress, in the style of colonial functionaries of his day.⁴⁴ Now Galestin knew the jacket belonged to the court *pusaka*, he alerted the sultan's brother, Gusti Pangeran Haryo Tejukusumo (1893–1974), to the transaction and asked him if it would be appropriate for him to acquire the jacket, after which he was granted permission (Galestin 1944, 112).

Dutch accounts of the coat were largely based on Javanese narrations, both Islamic and pre-Islamic, and contemporary observations of the court ceremonies (e.g. Groneman 1895).⁴⁵ The narrative structure of Galestin's publication (1944) on the coat, which proceeds from Islamic

interpretations to Hindu sources, is a case in point. Citing a multitude of sources, he deliberates first provenance and authenticity (affirmed by the pin holes for decorations and sweat stains on the fabric), but then moves on to the cultural origin of the coat. Javanese court chronicles from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, cited by Galestin through Dutch editions, recount the history with varying detail. According to the *Babad Demak*, it was a gift of the Prophet Muhammad to Sunan Kalijaga in gratitude for building the Great Mosque of Demak. Just after the building was completed, the fabric for the coat fell from the ceiling of the mosque, wrapped in goatskin. The *Babad Tanah Jawi* narrates that the contents of the package consisted of the Prophet Muhammad's *slendang* and prayer rug. In addition, it traces the chain of transmission from Sunan Kalijaga to the Mataram sultanate and finally the house of Paku Alam:

"One week after the erection of the mosque, the wali happened to be chanting *dhikr* recitations in the mosque. Sunan Kalijaga was sitting separately from the others, bent in concentration under the mosque drum. Then a package fell from above. It was wrapped in a goatskin and contained the prayer rug and prayer shawl of the Prophet. The wali agreed that it would be best to divide the whole package, but Sunan Bonang did not agree. He wanted the package to be thrown up in the air and whoever it fell on should have it. The package was then thrown up and fell into the lap of Sunan Kalijaga. Sunan Kalijaga was taken aback and for forty days practiced asceticism inside a burial pit, while sewing the skin and reciting the two parts of the Profession of Faith. The skin became a jacket, called Antakusuma or Kyai Gondhil. Later on, it became the dress of the kings when they ascended the throne and when they made war. Only the sultans of Demak and Pajang did not wear it." (Rommelink 2022, 18)

The symbolic and political significance, and obvious Sufi connotations, of these accounts were apparently of no interest, as Galestin makes no

43 My research revealed that Mrs. Wieseman was Geertruide Louisa (Santje) Wieseman-Dom (1833–1909), an Indo-European woman with close ties to the Yogyakarta court. Her husband Frederik Wieseman owned a sugar plantation, for which purposes he rented land from the sultan (Shatanawi 2014, 226–27; U. Bosma and Raben 2003, 115; 133).

44 This transformation was arguably part of the 'modernisation' and 'Europeanisation' of the Javanese nobility during the late colonial period. The political intentions can be deduced from the fact that after independence the change was reverted and the sultan began to wear a green coat in Javanese style (Woodward 2011, 188–89).

45 The oldest reference to the coat in Dutch sources dates from 1703; it is mentioned in a letter as one of the court *pusaka* that was handed over to Amangkurat III, Sultan of Mataram (De Graaf and Pigeaud 1974, 30). The letter is kept in the Dagregisters, 12 November 1703, Arsip Nasional, Jakarta.

effort to connect them to the ceremonies of the Yogyakarta court. Instead, he proceeds with an analysis of the connection to Hindu-Javanese traditions by referring to the occurrence of *antakusuma* clothing in old Javanese tales and the use of similar fabric by Hindu priests in Tengger, East Java, as well as for characters of the *wayang purwa* performing stories of the Mahabharata epic. Based on this evidence, Galestin (1944, 117) concludes that *antakusuma* clothing can be traced back to at least the fourteenth century, thus before the arrival of Islam.

Galestin's account is typical for colonial scholarship on material culture, in the way he searched for the true origin of culture, which in the case of Java, usually culminates in Hindu or Buddhist beginnings. It also resonated with the ideas of certain Javanese nationalists of the late colonial period. For instance, a photograph of Sultan Hamengku Buwono VII (1877–1921) wearing *kyai antakusuma* accompanied an opinion piece of

Soewardi Soerjaningrat (1889–1959), also known as Ki Hajar Dewantara (Fig. 51). Soerjaningrat, who was a *priyayi* and a leader of the nationalist movement Boeto Oetomo, characterised the sultan as 'a purely Mataram nationalist', who 'even though he bears the Islamic title of "protector of the (Mohammedan) religion", in reality confesses to the old Hindu-Javanese faith' (Soerjaningrat 1918). In similar vein, Indologist Jacoba Hooykaas (1956, 312–17) stated that *kyai antakusuma* is nothing but the magical coat that enabled serpent-king Ananta-bhoga of Hindu mythology to fly, and that 'a legend was created' to make it fit Islamic purposes. Such a type of analysis echoes colonial statements that court *pusaka* are 'an expression of fetishism transferred to Islam' and by nature 'absolutely anti-Mohammedan' (L.W.C. van den Berg 1901, 72–73).

Narratives of origin still dominate museum interpretation, as the most recent publication on the coat confirms (Van Hout and Wijs 2017, 110–12). Concerning Java, narratives often assume the form of an either-or approach, alternatingly emphasising ancient Javanese, Hindu-Buddhist or Islamic pedigrees.⁴⁶ The notion of Indonesian Islam as being syncretist or hybrid echoes a similar search for the true origin of culture. Syncretism, then, is based on the idea of the interaction between a 'pure Islam' and impure elements, resulting in a watered-down version of Islam (Afifi 2019, 150; Ahmed 2016, 451).⁴⁷ As Irfan Afifi (2019, 152) asks



FIGURE 51 Cover of the weekly *Indië: geïllustreerd weekblad voor Nederland en Koloniën* (17 April 1918) featuring an image of Sultan Hamengku Buwono VII

46 See for instance, the analysis of the *kraton's* spatial design in terms of ancient Javanese beliefs (Behrend 1989) or in exclusively Sufi terms (Woodward 2011, 137–67).

47 The conceptualisation of Javanese Islam as syncretist can be traced to the mid-19th century and, in particular, the work of Protestant missionaries (Van den Boogert 2017, 361). It was Samuel Harthoorn (1831–1883) of the Netherlands Missionary Society (NZG) who first used the word syncretism to characterise Javanese Islam. His colleague Carel Poensen explained syncretism as follows: 'It is important to mention that the religion of the Javanese is not singular and pure. The religion of the Javanese world today is the product of Buddhism, Brahmanism, Shivaism, Mohammedanism, etc. that has not been processed and united, but has been all

rhetorically, ‘Is there such ‘pure Islam’? Or rather, in which discourse such ‘purity’ of Islam is reconstructed to fit the definition of Java? And how does such purity interact with or is contested by the historical discourse?’ Many of the late colonial and postcolonial readings are characterised by small gestures suggesting the artificiality of Indonesian Islam. Such gestures can be found in the trope that Sunan Kalijaga incorporated Hindu symbols, such as the coat, to facilitate the spread of Islam in Java. Like Galestin’s account, these tropes suggest incongruity and incoherence in Indonesian culture, rather than purposeful acts of meaning-making. Moreover, the narratives-of-origin trope conflates source with meaning-making, and ascribes static and eternal meaning to the source. Yet meaning-making occurs at particular points in time and is subject to change, as occurred in the case of the coat when its significance as court *pusaka* dissolved.

My point, then, is that a decolonial reading would have to leave such notions of false consciousness and start from the idea that the elements from Hindu, Buddhist and other religions and cultures are maintained by Muslims as being in consonance with the Islamic revelation. Rather than the perception of a disjointed society made out of loose components, the occurrence of pre-Islamic elements in Muslim societies is more meaningfully conceptualized ‘as an act of making things *cohere*, that is, of making things meaningful together *on the same terms*’ (Ahmed 2016, 451 emphasis in original). In relation to Javanese Islam, Ahmed described this position as follows:

“When Javanese Muslims in their different ways (“spectrum of variants”) “blended their beliefs in, and ritual interaction and communication with,

mixed up and strangely confused’ (Poensen 1865, 178). Both saw syncretism in negative terms and blamed it on the nature of the Javanese: it was not the result of a conscious act but rather due to passivity and laziness and, ultimately, the sign of an inferior mental condition. For the ideas of Harthoorn and Poensen, see Kruithof (2014), Laffan (2011), Ricklefs (2007) and Steenbrink (2006).

ancestors, spirits, and gods with Hindu-Buddhist and Islamic concepts, doctrines and practices in a variety of complex ways,” they are all differently doing the same thing: namely, making objects and actions meaningful (“weave worlds of meaning and action”) in terms of the vocabulary of Islam – and are making the Con-Text of Islam in this process.” (Ahmed 2016, 451)

Thus, Indonesian Muslims actively make sense of seemingly contradictory elements in terms of Islam, in order for them to ‘cohere meaningfully’. Crucial is the phrase ‘on the same terms’: both Ahmed and Afifi describe the result as an inseparable blend (a ‘solution’) rather than an uneven mix of elements that can easily be separated out. To return to *kyai antakusuma*; in the coat a variety of traditions come together. The *tambal* (patchwork) pattern may be derived from the dress of Tengger Hindu priests or Sufi mendicants; this particular copy may have been made by a Christian Indo-European woman, and the powerful and regal qualities ascribed to the coat may find their origin in Hindu mythology. However, what makes the coat’s variegated roots cohere meaningfully in terms of Islam is the sultan’s act of meaning-making through the wearing of *kyai antakusuma* in his capacity of *khalifatullah* and protector of the Islamic faith. Likewise, the *babad* texts make meaning through the connection of the coat and its fabric to the historical context of Islam and, consequently, make it become part of the material vocabulary of Islam. Today, a *kyai antakusuma* is one of three *pusaka* of Sunan Kalijaga, kept near Demak, that are part of a yearly cleansing ritual on 10th Dhu al-Hijjah, the first day of Eid al-Adha, or Puasa (Muawanah 2010). Therefore, as Ahmed would say, it is an object to which Muslims acting as Muslims have attached themselves during processes of hermeneutic engagement with the revelation of Islam (2016, 357). At this point, it is important to note that making meaning of the coat in terms of Islam does not exclude other meanings, and ‘something may meaningfully be Islamic and meaningfully be something else at the same time’ (Ahmed 2016, 538). Just like *kyai*

antakusuma can be given meaning as Islamic, it can be conceived as completely un-Islamic, as meanings are always situational, positional and in flux.

Further to this, I am not arguing against emphasis on the histories of cultural circulation. On the contrary, research of this kind can give valuable insights into the dissemination of artistic and cultural forms. Recent studies have included southern Indian motifs on *plang-pleng* gravestones in Aceh and the influence of Vietnamese and Sinitic iconography on the funerary monuments of the early Muslim (foreign) elite of Java (Feener et al. 2021; Njoto 2018). Rather, it is the type of analysis that is crucial. Museum readings of the coat thus far started from imitation, implying that the Hindu connections of *kyai antakusuma* must be understood as mimicry of Hindu practices, and by consequence, a watering down of Islamic significance. Similarly, the Indo-European hands that crafted the coat were seen as rendering it less sacred.⁴⁸ I contend that the coat is more meaningfully understood as an act of translation, in its meaning of ‘a dynamic practice through which the circulation, mediation, reception and transformation of distinct cultural forms is effected’ (Flood 2009, 8).

Consequently, the focus on meaning-making shifts the discussion from what makes an object intrinsically Islamic (or Hindu, or Javanese) to the negotiation and mediation of different cultural elements. Like many of the artefacts discussed in this book, *kyai antakusuma* is a paradigmatic transcultural object in the ways in which it expresses multidirectional exchange. Mark Woodward (2011, 173–78) speaks of the Yogyakarta court *pusaka*, such as *kyai antakusuma*, as indexical symbols

of kingship linking Islamic rites with pre-Islamic concepts of authority and power. Colonial influences (conveniently left out of the equation in the narratives-of-origin trope) are an example of the ways in which these symbols are constantly adapted to changing political and cultural circumstances. They found expression in both the production of this particular *kyai antakusuma*, and the story of it having been a gift of a member of the European plantation elite to pay tribute to the sultan, as well as in the fact that Sultan Hamengku Buwono VIII replaced the sacred coat with an indexical symbol of colonialism – a coat in the style of the Dutch civil administration.

Wolfgang Welsch’s notion of transculturality (1999) emphasises networks in which culture transgresses borders, overlaps, and intermingles. The idea of networks is directly relevant to the material culture of Muslim Indonesia, as Southeast Asia is geographically positioned at an ‘archipelagic crossroads’, a term proposed by Imran bin Tajudeen (2021). This recognises the interactions of Muslim Indonesia with cultural and artistic forms on both transregional and translocal levels. Imran conceives of the pre-Islamic and the Islamic as ‘two cultural complexes’, of which the ‘material production and systems of meaning existed in parallel and interacted across space and time with different combinations’ (2021, 224). However, I suggest that when meaning-making is regarded as a contemporaneous activity, both are part of the same cultural complex. Within this complex, meanings are continually redefined and cultural forms refashioned. Consequently, the incorporation of Hindu concepts and symbols into the *garebeg* rites can be regarded as acts of translation within Javanese culture, as Afifi also seems to suggest. With changing interpretations, pre-Islamic things, monuments and stories are brought inside the Islamic realm, or withdrawn again. *Kyai antakusuma*, being an example of the mobility of concepts and material forms, thus confounds the idea of hard boundaries between the Islamic, the pre-Islamic and the non-Islamic.

48 Such readings ignored the concept of *pusaka* not being linked to a specific type of object. As Suwati Kartiwa (1992, 159), former director of Museum Nasional Indonesia, put it, ‘it is the meaning a society gives these objects, not anything innate in the objects themselves, which makes them *pusaka*.’ It is also not uncommon for *pusaka* to be European-made or duplicates (Pemberton 1994, 186–87).

Conclusion: Reorganising the Memory of Islam in the Museum

1 Islam, Memory and the Museum

In October 1949, novelist Madelon Székely-Lulofs wrote an inflammatory piece for *De Groene Amsterdammer* magazine. She had just visited the *Indisch Instituut*, the former Colonial Institute, and noticed that the famous glass case displaying items once belonging to Teuku Umar, hero of the resistance in Aceh, had gone. No doubt, she suggested, there was a connection with the Round Table Conference in The Hague, where the end of the Dutch occupation of Indonesia was negotiated.¹ The display had to go to erase the memories of conquest and subjugation, but so she argued, ‘isn’t the entire *Indisch Instituut*, and its ins and outs, a bone of contention for the Indonesians who visit it?’ She mocked the clumsy attempt to silence the past by simply disguising it, ‘if we feel we must be ashamed, let us have the bloody courage to be ashamed publicly and not secretly ... in the lumber room!’ (Székely-Lulofs 1949, 2).

In this book I have traced the silences surrounding Indonesian Islam in museums in the Netherlands, through a study of the colonial framings and the durabilities in the present that have led to the general disregard of Indonesia’s Muslim heritage. Three frames of Islam emerge as dominant during the colonial era; they are connected to expressions of the Islamic as religious, political and artistic. In the various chapters of this book, I have followed the emergence and deployment of these frames, and interrelated frames, in museums. I did so through a close examination of practices

of collecting and musealisation of Islamic objects, in the context of the colonial policies and realities on the ground, as well as the particular academic and public narratives in which these frames were rooted.

Using a biographical approach, I followed objects as they moved through different regimes of value (Appadurai 1986). These regimes of value were interlinked with framings of Muslim culture, inducing certain mechanisms of remembering and forgetting. In Part 1 of the book (chapters 2–5), I discuss object collecting in the Muslim regions of colonial Indonesia at the intersections of political and public culture. The instances in which Islam was seen and actively pursued as a subject of collecting largely coincided with the concerns of the colonial administration. In the eyes of the government and administration, the main question was where the Islamic religion ended and Islamic politics started. The answers to this question changed over time and differed in individual cases. In museums, the frame of Islam as political force was only occasionally expressed in narratives, yet it played a significant role in shaping collecting and collections. The collecting of amulets and talismans (indicated with the term *jimat*), for instance, was closely tied to the intense debate in the colonial administration about the role of amulets in crime as well as political resistance. The twin impulses of benevolence and surveillance when governing Islam in the colony led to a continuous occupation of the administration with the hajj and a great interest in the pilgrimage among a wider public. The result today is that museums in the Netherlands hold collections of hajj-related objects that find no parallel in other European countries. Furthermore, Islamic material, such as manuscripts and amulets, was regularly collected as intelligence material or to prevent anticolonial resistance in terms of Islam. They were, so I

¹ The museum’s internal response reveals that the objects had been removed two years earlier, but interestingly, director C.Tj. Bertlings suggested that all remaining Teuku Umar objects should be removed and the displays cleansed of objects of a colonial nature. NL-HaNA Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen, 1910–1995, 2.20.69 no. 4405.

argue, taken away and disabled in a similar way to weapons. In some instances, bringing objects to the museum seemed to serve the purpose of deactivating their powers and those of their original owners. This is evident in the case of the *rante bui* of Teungku di Cot Plieng, leader of the *‘ulama* resistance in Aceh, which, as a physical embodiment of the enemy, was neutralised through the act of musealisation.

Another large group of objects was not actively pursued because of their Islamic nature. They were, for example, collected as pretty things or as objects representative of local customs and manners. The silences embedded in this class of objects interact with the forgetfulness about Islam in the memory-making of Dutch citizens who were residing in the colony, as well as with the framings of the colonial administration that put greater weight on dissent than on everyday practice. Moreover, colonial framings of Islam were tied to categories of race, class and ethnicity. They took the form of the extreme images of a deeply pious Aceh versus an inherently un-Islamic Java, and all the variations in between. A visit to any of the museum displays in the Netherlands suffices to conclude that these framings still govern museum representation today.

New silences were produced with the transfer of objects from Indonesia to the Netherlands. As my analysis in Part 1 shows, the collecting of the material culture of Islam occurred within a context of intense debate in colonial circles. These debates reveal negotiations with a diversity of Indonesian actors, as well as divergent and conflicting voices of colonial players, such as administrators and the military command. Upon entry into the museum collections, memory was reorganised and the complexities of the discursive context of collecting were replaced with notions that fitted museological needs. Notwithstanding the different purposes of the museums, objects were regrouped according to the logic of museum ethnology, which was informed by the colonial project of the hierarchisation of cultures. They had one thing in common; for all of these purposes, the mapping

of Indonesia's population was key. Whether the purpose of the museum was science (Museum of Ethnology), the promotion of entrepreneurship (Colonial Institute), the training of missionaries (Netherlands Missionary Society) or the military (Royal Military Academy), museum displays and catalogues were organised on ethnic and regional bases. Hence, representations of Islam as culture and religion were interdependent on imaginations of ethnicity and race.

Not all frames were activated at the same time and with the same force; some frames were more powerfully invoked than others. The frame of Islam as art emerged in the late nineteenth century. It was primarily deployed in connection to the central lands of Islam and the emerging field of Islamic art history. Around the same time, Indonesian art became part of another emerging field of art history, Asian art, in which Islam was assigned the role of foreign invasive power. Art historians rarely considered Indonesia as a producer of Islamic art, and consequently the frame of Islam as art or aesthetic expression always remained weaker in the Netherlands than in neighbouring colonial powers, such as France and Britain, that did have colonies in the 'heartland' of Islam. Furthermore, frames of Islam overlapped with other frames and frames slid into each other. In chapter 6, I examine how the frames of 'European' and 'art' versus their counter frames 'non-European' and 'ethnology' played out in the case of the Islamic objects in Dutch museums. Contrary to neighbouring countries, in the Netherlands the vast majority of objects from Muslim regions ended up in museums of ethnology, including some that were eventually classified as Islamic art. This outcome strengthened the frame of Islam as religion, and subsequently, of Islam as culture. The situation of the Indonesian Islamic artefacts reveals a similar reciprocity in framing. Following taxonomic hierarchies of the late nineteenth century, Indonesian objects were principally allocated to museums of ethnology, thus producing and enforcing the frame of Indonesian Islam as ethnological subject. Yet this frame, in turn, influenced museum practice

in the Netherlands and kept Indonesian Islam out of the art historical domain.²

The civilisation model of museum ethnology ranked the highest level of Indonesian culture as still below European civilisation. I argue that the application of this model led to colonial aphasia (Stoler 2016; 2011), a disassociation that created an inability to conceptualise Islam in museum classification and display. There was an interplay of arguments leading to the scarce attention paid to Islam in museum ethnology. At the heart of evolutionary thinking about religions was the belief that, in the course of history, religion developed from animism to polytheism to monotheism, its most civilized stage (Marchand 2009, 229). The position of Islam in the binary *natuurvolken* (natural or 'primitive' peoples) and *cultuurvolken* (cultural or 'civilised' peoples) was ambiguous, as can be seen in my analysis in chapters 6 and 7. Generally, Dutch ethnologists of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century considered the natural peoples of Indonesia their focal point of research. Yet the neglect of Islam in ethnology can only be partially explained by the fact that Islam has a script, and hence, Muslims were classified as belonging to the cultural peoples (Schulze 2012, 671). More important was the preference of evolutionary ethnologists, also in museums, for studying the most 'isolated' and 'simple' societies, because they believed these societies to yield the best results of investigation. This is evident from the type of object that was actively pursued by museum directors and curators; some objects were clearly more desirable than others, the amulets, talismans and other 'magical' items being a prime example. Islam as a monotheistic and scriptural religion became unspeakable, and therefore ethnology predominantly conceptualised Islam in terms of magic and superstition. Yet inadvertently,

evidence of Islam as a scriptural religion entered the museum, challenging the colonial hierarchisation and leaving Islam in classificatory limbo. In chapter 7, I demonstrate that the evolutionary model of classification which was first developed in the nineteenth century, and its concomitant aphasia, has remained relatively intact and still forms the core of museum documentation today. Here the practical politics of museum work has proven to be more powerful than recurrent debate about principles and content.

The analysis reveals that despite the large numbers of objects from Muslim Indonesia in museum collections in the Netherlands, only a relatively small share are currently classified as Islamic and that, in the case of Indonesia, the terminology in use confines Islam to religion. Art history, and hence the museum systems, have not developed a vocabulary to classify Indonesian material under the heading of 'Islamic art'; another instance of colonial aphasia. Within the group of objects classified as Islamic by the National Museum of World Cultures, Sumatra takes up a disproportionately large share compared to other regions in Indonesia, in particular Java. The greater share of Islamic objects in the Sumatra collections partly results from specific circumstances of collecting, particularly in Aceh, where war and conflict stimulated the collection of Islamic material. These collecting mechanisms also interrelated with colonial imaginations of different regions; certain regions (Aceh, West Sumatra, Banten) were considered to be of peculiar Islamic fervour. An illustrative example is that in the museums that I researched I found seventy-five Qur'ans from Sumatra (mainly Aceh and West Sumatra) but only two collected in Java, and none produced there. Moreover, in chapters 7 and 8 I argue that the narrow definition of Islam as 'religion' in museum cataloguing is one of the reasons behind the low share of Indonesian objects classified as Islamic. As a result, Acehnese material culture receives more recognition as being Islamic than its Javanese counterpart, because it conforms more to the Protestant notions that inform current museum understandings of 'religion'. In these

2 It is remarkable that today most framings of Indonesian Islam as art are produced in museums outside the Netherlands and Indonesia, i.e. in countries that do not share the burden of Dutch colonial history, such as Singapore, Malaysia and Australia.

manners, cataloguing systems and practices have consolidated European imaginations, and continue to do so.

The hierarchisation of cultures and the ambivalent position of Islam have also informed museums' relationship with the other academic discipline involved with the study of material culture in Indonesia: art history. In this research, I found no instances of the collecting of Indonesian material culture under the heading of Islamic art, although some objects, notably gravestones from Aceh, were later exhibited as such. Unlike the care for Hindu-Buddhist antiquities, that were also the subject of academic interest, the colonial government initially made little effort to regulate and care for Islamic heritage. When such efforts were made, they were predominantly driven by political interests, as the example of the restoration of the Great Mosque of Demak in the 1840s shows (Bloembergen and Eickhoff 2020, 47–60). In 1913, the investigation and care for heritage, including Islamic heritage, was institutionalised through the creation of the Archaeological Service. Only a few years before, scholarly interest in Islamic cultural heritage developed, mainly through the endeavours of Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje. Yet the focus was on the historical rather than the artistic significance of Islamic monuments and sites, and as a result, Indonesian Islamic art as a field of inquiry remained in its infancy. It took until the 1930s for an interest in Indonesian Islamic art to trickle down to museums, but the effects were rather late and limited. Thus, although on a few occasions during the colonial period, art and architecture from Indonesia were described as part of the artistic legacy of Islam, these efforts were disconnected from the international field of art history and too short-lived to have lasting impact.

Nevertheless, there were many instances in which Muslim material culture from Indonesia was collected, appreciated, classified and displayed as *art*, yet in most of these cases artistic production was divorced from Islam or informed by a negative association. Scholars, collectors and curators spoke of an innate artistic desire resulting

from ethnic dispositions, which, despite Islam, manifested itself in artistic production. For example, the objects related to *wayang* performance in Java, that were made and performed by Muslims in a culturally Muslim environment, were disassociated from Islam because of their visual and narrational connections to pre-Islamic Hindu culture. Even though the perceived negative influence of Islamic iconoclasm was often mentioned, *wayang* was classified by the museums as art, and highly appreciated aesthetically. When it came to Javanese court culture, the idea of the *priyayi* (elite) class as guardians of an ancient civilisation and, by corollary, closet Hindus or Buddhists, worked in the interest of the colonial authorities as much as it contributed to the negation of Javanese heritage as Islamic in museums. A number of objects related to the courts, such as Cirebon woodwork, entered the museum under the heading of transitional art, a framing that defined Islamic art as derivative of its Hindu predecessors.

The belief that Islam was 'unnatural' to the cultures of the Indonesian archipelago, in particular Java, was rooted in interrelated ideas about race, culture and place. Evolutionism, diffusionism and structuralism, the academic theories that underpinned museum practice, were informed in different ways by the notion of an original culture (*Urkultur*). Nineteenth-century evolutionism was based on the notion that there was a natural connection between cultures and places and that cultures were naturally tied to a specific location (Gupta and Ferguson 1992). Thus, the *Urkultur* of Islam was to be found in the Arabian Peninsula, whereas Indonesia's original culture was inherently Asian. According to curatorial reasoning of the time, Islam interrupted the development of Indonesia's cultures, because they could no longer follow their 'natural' trajectory. The decline of evolutionism in the first decades of the twentieth century resulted in a lesser focus on the 'natural peoples', but not necessarily in the re-evaluation of Islam. The pioneers of structuralist anthropology in the Netherlands, Jan de Josselin de Jong (1886–1964) and Willem Rassers (1877–1973), both

worked for the Museum of Ethnology in Leiden. Dutch structuralism relied on the notion of structures which are unique to culture areas or regions (*studievelden*), but not to all humankind. Each culture area was defined by a set of common features known as its 'structural core'. As a latecomer to Indonesia, Islam could never be part of the core. Hence, Rassers was mainly interested in discovering ancient Javanese cultural elements in the *wayang* and *keris* traditions. By contrast, diffusionism postulated that the world was divided up into a limited number of 'culture areas' (*Kulturkreise*) and that cultural elements were diffused from this core – the Arabian Peninsula in the case of Islam, India in the case of Hinduism – to the periphery. In the ethnology museums in the Netherlands, diffusionism led to the geographical arrangement of the collections. From the mid-twentieth century, the three main ethnology museums set up galleries and curatorial positions for the Islamic cultural area (*islamitisch cultuurgebied*), a region extending from the central lands, all the way to Afghanistan and Pakistan, again excluding Indonesia. The influential role of diffusionist ideas in the shaping of art historical disciplines meant that Indonesia's Hindu-Buddhist heritage was included in the field of Asian art, but its Muslim heritage excluded from Islamic art, principally because its formal and aesthetic qualities were too distant from the so-called central lands. It is my understanding that, as a result of this principle, Islamic art as a category is self-affirming. Thus, Indonesian Muslim artefacts are not excluded from the field because they have not been collected, as is often claimed, but because they have not been collected, interpreted and classified in their capacity of being Islamic.

In the late colonial period, notably the 1930s and 1940s, there was a short-lived rise in the acknowledgement of Islam, both in its religious and artistic manifestations. The Colonial Institute in Amsterdam began to set up displays for Indonesian Islam, with a strong focus on Aceh, reflecting colonial imaginations. The change of focus was driven by the return of civil administrators, who had been influenced by the rise of nationalist movements in

Indonesia. The end of colonial rule in Indonesia was reflected in dwindling interest in representing Indonesian Islam in museums in the Netherlands. In the post-independence period, as chapter 8 discusses, museum memory was re-organised again and Indonesian Islam was largely forgotten. Following geopolitical events and migration from Muslim-majority countries, Islam became increasingly equated with the Middle East and North Africa. Forgetting here was not an absence of history nor sources, as the depots were overflowing with objects from Muslim Indonesia. Also in this case, forgetting was an occlusion of histories that served purposes in the present. When one of the most common tropes was the rise of Islam after Indonesian independence, museum displays disremembered Islam to create an atmosphere fit for visitors desiring *tempo doeloe*, a longing for colonial times.

In the post-independence museum a number of contradictory conceptualisations of Islam emerged. The Middle Eastern galleries at the Dutch ethnology museums were based on the notion of an Islamic culture area, in line with Marshall Hodgson's concept of an Islamicate civilisation. There were two key principles underlying the presentations: a cultural zone where Islam, defined as religion, influences all aspects of life; and Islam as a strong cultural force on the non-Muslim communities living in Muslim-majority societies.³ Yet the Indonesian galleries were based on inverted principles: here Islam was confined to religious life and perceived as barely having an effect on culture and

3 For example, the introductory text of the Western Asia and North Africa gallery (1998–2016) at the Tropenmuseum started with the following statement: 'The countries of Western Asia and North Africa have two characteristics in common: the vast majority of the inhabitants are Muslims and the area forms a cultural unit. The Middle East was the cradle of the three great world religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Muslims – the followers of Islam – form by far the majority. Their common faith means that these Muslims share a similar world view and similar rules of behaviour.' NL-AsdTM, Exhibition archive / WANA, no inventory number.

society, and certainly not on non-Muslim communities. Structuralist principles continued to inform displays and publications, in which Indonesian cultures were characterised as emerging from a historical sequence of isolated layers of culture and religion (e.g. Brinkgreve and Sulistianingsih 2009; Van Hout 2001; Tropenmuseum 1987).⁴ Rather than subject to continual dialogic exchange or transformation, these layers were presented as fixed, separable and isolatable. Arguing from that perspective, Islam could only play a subordinate role.

2 A Structural Injustice Approach to Islamic Collections

In this book, I start from the premise that the colonial entanglements in collecting and display do not constitute an end point for understanding the significance of the objects concerned. In Europe, discussions surrounding the decolonisation of museums frequently center on the topic of repatriation. However, it's likely that a significant portion of colonial collections will remain within these institutions. In light of this, we must rethink the role the artefacts discussed in this book might play. The question is then why would we need to look at these objects through the lens of the Islamic? What is there to gain?⁵ A possible answer could

be, to paraphrase the American historian Yosef Yerushalmi (2011, 117), because the antonym of 'forgetting' may not be 'remembering', but justice.

Throughout this book, traces of epistemic violence, that is, violence exerted through knowledge (Spivak 1988), are manifest. As outlined above, the relationships of museums with Islam were governed by epistemic frameworks legitimising colonial hierarchies. The manifestations of epistemic violence were manifold; a prime example is the perceived prerogative to take, export, interpret and classify objects, at will, resulting in the sheer number of Indonesian objects that were collected during the colonial period. Epistemic violence went hand in hand with other forms of violence, as a number of cases in Part 1 demonstrate. The invasion of the *dalam* in Banda Aceh wiped from memory many of the physical traces of a long-standing royal institution, notably some of the most important royal cemeteries. Other instances involved the infringement of bodily integrity, such as the desecration of graves and taking manuscripts or amulets from dead bodies. Similarly, the strip searching of suspects at the *landraden* and taking away their means of protection were acts of state violence embedded in particular epistemic framings of Islam. Once these amulets arrived at museums, their material integrity was compromised by opening them up and examining the contents, thus rendering their powers ineffective. Yet the cases discussed also reveal contestations of epistemic violence, for instance when the Javanese intellectual Soetatmo Soeriokoesoemo spoke out against targeting the *jimat* as an element of governmental oppression.

In other instances, my analysis exposes the ways in which objects talked back and resisted colonial framings. The example of the *rante bui*, a sacred relic of one of Aceh's most powerful *ulama*, shows the appropriation of the belief in its magical powers, thus blurring the boundaries of the dichotomy between European rationality and Indonesian superstition that undergirded colonial politics. In Part 2 (chapters 6 and 7), I discussed the ways in which Islamic objects, because of

4 The introductory text of the Southeast Asia gallery at the Tropenmuseum stated from 1994 to 2007: 'The cultures of Southeast Asia are multi-layered. Inside is a core of cultures and religions dating back thousands of years. Around this are the layers of the religions and philosophies that have spread throughout the region from India: Hinduism and Buddhism. The layers of more recent global religions, Islam and Christianity, have grown around these. The outer layer is the modern world of growing economies and metropolises. The old cultures are always present in the core and they are occasionally visible on the surface. These layers are reflected in objects from successive periods of history.' NL-AsdTM, Exhibition archive / ZOA, no inventory number.

5 This question was raised by Prof. Remco Raben during the debate 'Islam disregarded?' at the Tropenmuseum, 3 October 2014.

their in-between nature, continually undermined museum attempts to order, classify and draw disciplinary boundaries, and hence, challenged the colonial order of things.

Parts 2 (chapters 6 and 7) and 3 (chapters 8 and 9) of this book demonstrate that, despite continual contestations, epistemic frameworks that were constituted under colonialism still inform the position of Islam in museums in the Netherlands. The endurance of these frameworks has real consequences. Philosopher Irfan Afifi, who is cited in chapter 8, discusses the current effects of the discursive disassociation of Javanese culture from Islam, in terms of alienation and a hindrance of self-realisation. I argue that the narratives of Islamic collections in museums in the Netherlands have similar alienating effects, and constitute a structural injustice which requires reparation beyond repatriation and re-interpretation of individual objects.⁶

In making this argument, I draw on the work of the Canadian political philosopher Catherine Lu, who has applied the concept of structural injustice, developed by Iris Marion Young and others, to colonialism. In *Justice and Reconciliation in World Politics* (2017), Lu argues that colonialism was a structural historic wrong because its legal and social structures facilitated injustice. She posits that from an ethical perspective colonialism differs from other contexts, in the sense that in colonial contexts wrongful actions typically conform to, rather than deviate from, a morally defective baseline (Lu 2017, 123). Such a morally defective baseline can, for instance, be found in the colonial doctrine of fundamental difference between European and non-European cultures and the subsequent need to separate and hierarchise them in museums, which is discussed in chapter 6. It can also be found in the careless act of removing objects and the colonial belief that taking cultural heritage out of the colonies and transporting it to Europe was morally justified. What is more, this

notion was embedded in the basic premise of colonialism itself: the racial and cultural superiority of Europe which permitted Europeans to conquer and subdue others.

Political theorist Iris Marion Young (2011) describes structural injustice as when some people are privileged over other people and when the cause is not traceable to individual actions or particular policies. Instead, they are to be found in unjust social structures and processes, as embodied in institutions, discourses and practices, museums being one of them. Structural injustice typically occurs as a result of various actions combined, even if the individual actions are within the limits of accepted rules and norms (Young 2011, 52). Colonial injustices, therefore, 'involve not simply wrongful acts by individual or state perpetrators but rely on social structures and structural processes that enable and even encourage individual or state wrongdoing, and produce and reproduce unjust outcomes' (Lu 2017, 126). A similar argument can be made regarding museum objects, because underlying the individual history of collecting, presentation and interpretation of each object is a structural pattern of inequality that can be traced to a colonial worldview.

From the analysis in this book, I would like to point out two aspects of structural injustice. The first relates to the organisation of the museumscape, and the second to definitions of the Islamic, and the limitations they exercise upon systems of classification and modes of display. I argue that the museum framings of Islam, and particularly how they position contemporary Muslims, reproduce colonial inequalities and may hinder the self-realisation of Muslims. I therefore assert that the attention paid to the histories of individual objects or groups of objects should be coupled with the decolonisation of museum disciplines. Undoing the dichotomous exhibitionary frameworks that underpin the presentation of these collections, or 'undisciplining' them (Förster and Von Bose 2018), is an essential step to make museums more relevant, given the complex representational challenges they face today.

6 Caroline Drieënhuizen (2018b) shows that the debate on the restitution of Indonesian artefacts, in fact, always has been a debate on how to decolonise the collections.

2.1 *Positioning Islam in the Museumscape*

The core of my argument is that the Dutch museum narratives of the Muslim world, concerning Indonesia as well as the Middle East, constitute a structural injustice. In chapter 6, I describe the taxonomic histories of the Dutch collections, which are embedded in the disciplines of archaeology, art history and anthropology. Each of these museum disciplines developed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in the context of the perceived racial and cultural superiority of Europe. It, however, is their combined narrative that is adversarial.

In the Netherlands, like in other countries in Western Europe, the Ancient Near East as well as Egypt in the period before the arrival of Islam are part of archaeology collections, with two larger museums, the National Museum of Antiquities (Leiden) and the Allard Pierson Museum (Amsterdam), exhibiting collections from the Near East and North Africa. In both cases these are shown as forerunners to European culture. No museum has an extensive display of Islamic art, but the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam has a small collection display, and a larger collection can be found in the depots of the Kunstmuseum in The Hague. These collections came about as a result of historic relations as well as the attempt to revive Dutch decorative arts in the early twentieth century (Hoijtink 2018; De Hond 2011). Both museums follow the conventional timeline of Islamic art that stops at the nineteenth century, and they also follow its geographical boundaries: Islamic-period collections from Indonesia are not grouped under the heading of Islamic art. Hindu-Buddhist heritage is, however, displayed at the Rijksmuseum as part of Asian Art, as well as at the ethnographic museums of the National Museum of World Cultures. Visitors longing to see collections representing the Middle East or North Africa during the past two centuries, or from Islamic Indonesia, are served by this last group of museums as well. In this narrative we see a movement of inclusion and exclusion from Europe, when the ancient pre-Islamic past is taken as Europe's own,

pre-modern (or actually, pre-colonial) Islam is reluctantly and conditionally accepted, and modern Islam perceived as a full outsider. In this manner, the Dutch museum landscape continues to reproduce colonial inequalities, despite the many attempts of individual museums to decolonise their collections and exhibitions.

With respect to art history, we witness a problematic relationship with the modern past of the Muslim world. In the binary set up of museum representation emerging under colonialism, the Islamic Middle East was assigned an intermediate position as having at one time been subject to development but subsequently degenerating. Likewise, in museum classification Muslims were allotted a position in between Europe and the 'primitive' cultures or *natuurvolken*. The art historical narrative of the Islamic Middle East until recently held that almost nothing of importance was produced there after 1800. In contrast to the teleological narrative of progress of European art, the narrative of Islamic art follows a model of rise-and-fall, of medieval blossoming followed by decay in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Graves 2012). As Barry Flood (2007) has observed, the lack of (art) collections from the modern period forces museums to locate the greatness of the Muslim world in the past, showcasing a historical Islam of beauty and sophistication which mirrors current framings of contemporary Islam as a religion of terror and oppression (Winegar 2008). With regard to Indonesia, such an image of historical Islam is even absent, while greatness is located in the pre-Islamic past.

In line with this, the Rijksmuseum exhibits Hindu-Buddhist art from Indonesia, along with what are – according to the museum's website – 'the best possible examples of Asian art' (Rijksmuseum n.d.). The statement ends with the disclosure that 'the Rijksmuseum is the only museum in the Netherlands that collects Asian *art* – ethnology museums tend to concentrate more on culture' (emphasis in original), thus making a strong contrast with the ethnology museums which show *culture* not *art*, and re-invoking nineteenth-century

notions (see also Loeseke 2020).⁷ Put differently, to distinguish itself the Rijksmuseum is arguing that quality is not only to be found in the objects, but also in their curatorial interpretation, echoing the arguments made at the time of the division of the Royal Cabinet of Curiosities. Ironically, the Rijksmuseum is making this shift because the verdict on the place of these works in world art history has considerably changed since those days: originally collected as ethnographic specimens or antiquities, they are now seen as masterpieces in their own right.⁸

2.2 *Approaching the Islamic*

Since the 1960s, the debate in academia about the qualities and boundaries of the Islamic has been raging. In the field of museums and heritage the debate is defined by the relationship between religion and culture. A turning point was Marshall Hodgson's *Venture of Islam* (1974) which proposed to make a distinction between Islam, the religion proper, and Islamicate, defined as 'the social and cultural complex historically associated with Islam and the Muslims, both among Muslims themselves and even when found among non-Muslims' (1974, 59). Although the use of the term Islamicate only recently gained traction, museum representations in the Netherlands have long been grounded in the idea of an Islamicate civilisation from which Indonesia is excluded.

Museums presenting Islamic art, such as the Rijksmuseum and Kunstmuseum, follow common definitions in which art is seen through the lens of modernist European principles, privileging aesthetics over function and secularising the concept of art (Shaw 2012). Therefore, an Islamic work can be designated as such purely on stylistic criteria, regardless of its function, cultural or spiritual significance. As I have shown, such a position by default leads to the exclusion of much of Indonesian material culture.

Recently, Hodgson's proposition and the sacred/secular binary has been contested by several scholars. Shahab Ahmed (2016) and Wendy Shaw (2019b; 2012) maintain that such a binary does not hold from a position informed by Islamic discourses and propose to take Islam not as an aesthetic, temporal, or geographic category, but as central in informing meaning in material culture. This position is criticized by Gudrun Krämer (2021), who argues that separating religion from culture is a productive analytical instrument, provided that religion is understood in its broader meaning of 'a set or web of beliefs and practices guiding individual and possibly even collective life, which may or may not be tied to a community and a given clerical structure' (2021, 17). The point, however, is whether such practices include figurative painting, or, to turn to Indonesia, *wayang* performances of the Mahabharata for example, and thus, should or should not be included in the Islamic. This question is central to the representation of Indonesian Islam in museums. It can be argued that the restrictive role allotted to Islam in shaping material culture, which is the outcome of an interplay of historical processes, negates Muslim identity. In other words, the subordinate role given to Islam in interpretations of Indonesian cultures is a form of epistemic violence and it is structural because of its embeddedness in taxonomic structures and classificatory systems.

I argue that the net result of this combined museum narrative is alienation, in the sense of a hindered self-realisation, of museum audiences with Muslim backgrounds. In the current

7 A similar distancing from ethnology museums can be seen on the website of the Royal Asian Art Society: 'The generosity of affluent private donors, often collectors themselves, enabled the acquisition of a number of iconic pieces that immediately gave the collection an international appeal. In this respect, the collection of the KVVAK distinguishes itself from the collections of the various Dutch ethnographical (*sic*) museums. The collection is unique and for that reason, it is not accommodated in Leiden at the Museum of World Cultures, but in the most important art museum in the Netherlands: the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam.' (VVAK n.d.)

8 For an overview of twentieth century perceptions of South and Southeast Asian art, both at the Rijksmuseum and the Royal Asian Art Society, see Lunsingh Scheurleer (2014, 22–23).

museological infrastructure there is no place where full recognition comes about.⁹ This is most evident in relation to Indonesian Muslims, who until recently witnessed almost a complete lack of recognition of their heritage being shaped by Islam.¹⁰ Moreover, the representation of the Middle East and Indonesia through differently valued layers of history is a structural injustice because it supports patterns of discrimination. Museum representations of Islam and Muslims are happening in the context of a Europe where anti-Muslim racism and discrimination are widespread and the marginalization of Muslims is on the rise (Bayrakli and Hafez 2018). Without exception the museums discussed in this book intend that their presentations play a role in challenging prejudice and building bridges between Europe and the Muslim world. Yet in their efforts to do so, they are undermined by the concepts inherited from colonialism. As anthropologist Michael Herzfeld observes, this reflects ideological positions in our society at large:

“Moreover, the very notion of a distinction between high and low culture betrays the insidious and continuing presence of attitudes that not only stem from the colonial past but also perpetuate

9 When working as a curator at the Tropenmuseum (2001–2018), I was approached a number of times to lobby for the installation of Islamic art at the Rijksmuseum, whereas presenting Muslim cultures in non-art museums was seen as relegating them to second-class status (such pleas were also made in the newspapers, see Van Egteren 2009; Shabtay 2011 and my response, Shatanawi 2009). The reputation of the ethnographic museum as non-prestigious, as the ‘dustbin of history’, in itself a colonial echo, must have played a role here. Still the identification through Islamic art is a flawed one, as it extends only to a past and filtered Self and it is ultimately dependent on its ranking within the worldview of the national or universal museum where European culture is the benchmark.

10 There is a shift detectable, with displays dedicated to Southeast Asia in the Islamic gallery of the British Museum in London and the Museum of Islamic Art in Doha, as well as larger presentations in several museums in Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore.

its worst conceptual excesses in the guise of the class structures and global inequalities of the present. [...] A society that can cheerfully continue to build art museums and ethnological museums as separate entities has perhaps not yet broken with the prejudices attendant upon global domination.” (Herzfeld 2007, 37)

On a structural level, dichotomous conceptual frameworks – art versus ethnology, culture versus religion, Asia versus Islam versus Europe – still pervade the arrangement of collections, and worse, they translate into the hierarchisation of people today.

2.3 *Epistemic Redress*

If we look upon the hierarchisation in museums as a form of colonial injustice extending into the present, then we need to raise the question if and how repair and redress can happen. As Madelon Székely-Lulofs argued in 1949, the museum can only overcome its colonial history by directly facing up to it, with all the discomfort that entails, and aim to do better. Yet resisting colonial formations is by no means a matter of simply reversing the current situation. A starting point, I suggest, would be to look at objects in their permanent state of being in-between, being messy and unwieldy. An example is *kyai antakusuma*, the ceremonial silk coat that is the star of chapter 8. Being made by the Indo-European Santje Wieseman-Dom for Sultan Hamengku Buwono VI and used by the sultans of Yogyakarta during *garebeg* celebrations, while being a copy of a fifteenth-century coat, it defies the dichotomous categorisations of museum practice. The biography of *kyai antakusuma* is layered and multidirectional, as it testifies of the blending of Hindu, Islamic and many other influences to such an extent that it has become an inseparable solution which can no longer be broken up in separate parts and changes colour with time.

Following from that, I applied new conceptual approaches of Islam to *kyai antakusuma* and other Indonesian objects, in order to explore what

decolonial re-readings of material culture could look like. From these findings it appears that a broader, and above all, more flexible understanding of the Islamic would enable a more variegated approach. Irfan Afifi (2019) and Shahab Ahmed (2016) argue that prior to the twentieth century, Muslims in Indonesia and elsewhere conceived of Islam in broader meanings than today. Yet museums use contemporary analytical tools, such as thesauri, to describe historical realities. The challenge they face, therefore, is how to represent historical Muslim conceptions, exemplified in museum objects, which may be very different from current understandings. This task is complicated by the divergent arguments of present-day Muslim audiences about the relationship between religion and culture. On one end of the spectrum, there are Muslims who mobilise a strict religion/culture divide to be able to distance themselves from certain negatively perceived practices, while on the other end Muslims emphasise the connection to create explicitly Muslim cultural expressions (Jouili 2019). Put differently, one Indonesian Muslim would want the museum to stop displaying *wayang* performance because it is un-Islamic and sinful, while another would insist on presenting it as intrinsically linked with Islam, and a third one would fully embrace the connections to Hindu heritage. These divergent conceptualisations put conflicting demands upon the museum, especially when museums opt for a community-based approach, as I experienced during my curatorial career (Shatanawi 2012b). Pooyan Tamimi Arab (2021), who worked as assistant curator for the National Museum of World Cultures in 2015–2016, also noted a tension arising from the organisation's inability to address the diversity and divergence of the museum's Muslim audiences. He describes the museum as stuck between nationalist demands to 'integrate' Muslims into acceptable cultural behaviour and a range of Muslim opinions of which orthodox voices are the most vocal.

In answer to these questions, I propose not to replace one set of fixed notions with another, i.e. not to simply transfer Indonesian collections to

the domain of the Islamic, but rather argue for a more flexible approach. This approach, for which I use the term 'contingent taxonomies', involves an open-ended making and remaking of object interpretation, allowing for relational and polyphonic meaning-making. Janet Marstine (2011) suggests that museums ethics are inherently contingent and therefore improvisational. Likewise, contingent taxonomies emphasise the conditional and position museum documentation as adaptive and actor-centred. As contingent taxonomies are situational, they aim for the accommodation of incongruous perceptions: between past and present, Indonesia and the Netherlands, and between different actors. In the museological literature, multi-perspectivity is often connected to giving expert communities, those who have experiential knowledge of the collections, authoritative power over exhibitions and collection documentation. Yet, like any community, the expert communities of the Islamic collections are characterised by internal 'difference, diversity and disagreement' (Ahmed 2016), making it necessary to allow for conflict and dissent as much as consensus. Moreover, given the structural nature of colonial knowledge, change can only be sustainable if it follows from redress at the level of the collection and classification systems. As Srinivasan et al. (2010, 747) put it, 'no matter how much museums allow multivocality to express itself at the level of the exhibition, it is at the level of the catalog that the enduring identity of the objects exists, and it is at this level that multivocality must be incorporated.'

The notion of contingent taxonomies is just as urgent when it comes to reconsidering the walls between the various institutions and rethinking their collections. The statement on the Rijksmuseum's website reveals what is at stake for museums on the art side of the scale to undo the dichotomy between 'art' and 'ethnology'. When status and prestige is derived from the affiliation with art as the highest form of human expression and privileged over other readings of material culture, it is difficult to abandon Eurocentric histories of interpretation.

The objects discussed in this book can be approached through different lenses: Islam, ethnology, art, colonialism, biography. Yet by no means is the object confined to any of these meanings. Indeed, the in-betweenness of these objects demonstrates how knowledge and perception of material culture are continuously in flux, yet it also makes a sharp contrast with the rigid museological classifications of the past and present. When historical collecting practices dominate galleries, the idea of the museum itself prevails over other interests, as art historian Hans Belting (2007, 170) has argued. Still, there is a detectable movement towards the undisciplining of the representation of Islam in museums.¹¹

¹¹ An example is The Albukhary Foundation Gallery of the Islamic World, which opened in 2018 in the British Museum. The presentation breaks the disciplinary boundaries by showcasing medieval Islamic artefacts and contemporary art alongside objects from the ethnographic collections. The area covered stretches from West Africa to Southeast Asia, from the seventh century to the present day.

Increasingly, the traditional parameters of the field of Islamic art are being stretched through the expansion of temporal borders and the inclusion of hitherto neglected geographical regions, including Indonesia. This goes hand in hand with the study of material culture that was formerly excluded from the discipline. But, more than that, decolonisation requires objects to fluidly move between different registers of meaning-making. This involves non-linear and open-ended classification as much as cross-disciplinary curating that challenges and ultimately aims to dissolve categories such as 'art', 'archaeology' and 'ethnology'. Such boundary work is more than just an exercise to update or correct museological discourse, it is a necessary starting point to create a more inclusive narrative. Ambitions to make museums places of identification and belonging for Muslim audiences cannot simply be placed on top of older collections, when the historical categories embodying racial and cultural hierarchies are left intact. It is the idea of the museum itself that has to change.

List of Consulted Archives

ANRI	Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia, Jakarta	NL-HaNIMH	Nederlands Instituut voor Militaire Historie (Netherlands Institute for Military History), The Hague
NL-AsdIISG	Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis (International Institute of Social History), Amsterdam	NL-HlmNHA	Noord-Hollands Archief (North Holland Archives), Haarlem
NL-AsdNIOD	NIOD (Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies), Amsterdam	NL-LdnKITLV	KITLV (Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies), Leiden
NL-AsdRM	Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam	NL-LdnRMO	Rijksmuseum van Oudheden (Museum of Antiquities), Leiden
NL-AsdSAA	Stadsarchief Amsterdam (City Archives), Amsterdam	NL-LdnRMV	Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde (Museum of Ethnology), Leiden
NL-AsdTM	Tropenmuseum (Wereldmuseum Amsterdam)	NL-RtSA	Stadsarchief Rotterdam (City Archives), Rotterdam
NL-HaHGA	Haags Gemeentearchief (City Archives), The Hague	NL-RtdWMR	Wereldmuseum Rotterdam
NL-HaNA	Nationaal Archief (National Archives), The Hague	NL-UtHUA	Het Utrechts Archief, Utrecht

List of Dutch Museums and Collections

The list below includes museum and other collections created during the colonial period that are discussed in this book. The numbers come from recent publications or enquiries with the relevant collection curators. Photo collections are excluded in all cases. In many cases, it is not possible to give exact numbers because institutions register and classify collections in different ways. For example, it is not always possible to distinguish between those works that were made in Indonesia or those relating to Indonesia in depiction or style. Likewise, the scope of categories like Islamic art is established in different ways. Therefore, numbers are subject to interpretation.

Aceh Museum

Established: 1915

Location: Banda Aceh

Former names: Atjeh Museum

Collection: 1,646 in total (historic collection, now dispersed).

Literature: Klein Nagelvoort 2019.

Museum dedicated to the history and culture of Aceh. Around 1,300 objects were the property of F.W. Stammeshaus, until he sold them to the Colonial Institute (the current Wereldmuseum Amsterdam) in 1931. During w.w. II the remaining objects were plundered. After the independence of Indonesia, the museum became the property of the Regional Government of Aceh and a new collection was formed.

Atjehsch Leger Museum (Aceh Army Museum)

Established: 1937

Closed: 1942

Location: Banda Aceh

Collection: 512 in total (information 1939, historic collection, now lost).

Literature: Broos 2010; Atjehsch Leger Museum 1939.

Military museum dedicated to the KNIL (Royal Dutch East Indies Army) and the struggle for Aceh. Almost the entire collection was plundered during the Japanese occupation of Aceh, after which the museum ceased to exist.

Ethnografisch Museum van de Koninklijke Militaire Academie (Ethnology Museum of the Royal Military Academy)

Established: 1900 (Kampen) and 1905 (Breda)

Closed: 1923 (Kampen) and 1993 (Breda)

Location: Breda and Kampen

Collection: c.7,500 in total (today part of NMVW collection), of which 6,900 objects from Indonesia. Literature: Jaarboekjes; Willemsen 2011.

Two ethological museums, located at two locations of the military academy: the Hoofdcursus (Main Course) in Kampen and the Koninklijke Militaire Academie (Royal Military Academy, abbreviated KMA) in Breda. In 1923, the Kampen museum closed, and the collections were transferred to Breda. In 1956, the merged collections became part of the collection of the Museum of Ethnology in Leiden, which continued to run the museum in Breda until its closure in 1993.

Kebun Raya Bogor (Bogor Botanical Gardens)

Established: 1817

Location: Bogor

Former names: 's Lands Plantentuin (1817–1950).

Collection: 12,531 botanical specimens; unknown number of animal and fossil specimens, most of which are from Indonesia.

Botanical garden and research centre, founded by the Dutch colonial government and transferred to the Republic of Indonesia after independence. It includes a botanical laboratory and a zoology museum.

Koninklijk Kabinet van Zeldzaamheden (Royal Cabinet of Curiosities)

Established: 1816

Closed: 1883

Location: The Hague

Collection: c.15,000 in total (now dispersed), of which c.300 Islamicate objects and 1,100 objects from Indonesia (742 Indonesian objects are in the NMVW collection and 10 in the Rijksmuseum).

Literature: Shatanawi 2022; Effert 2008; 2011.

National museum or cabinet of curiosities, popularly known as the Ethnographic Cabinet. After it closed, the collections were divided between several other national museums. Most of the Indonesian objects were transferred to the Museum of Ethnology (now: Wereldmuseum) in Leiden.

The Wereldmuseum Leiden currently has 10,259 objects with a Royal Cabinet pedigree, the Rijksmuseum has 3,681, and the National Museum of Antiquities has 104. At least 27 objects are currently kept by Naturalis Biodiversity Center.

Kunstmuseum Den Haag

Established: 1866

Location: The Hague

Former names: Museum voor Moderne Kunst (Museum of Modern Art), Museum van de Dienst voor Schone Kunst (Museum of the Fine Arts Service), Haags Gemeentemuseum (Municipal Museum of The Hague, until 1998), Gemeentemuseum Den Haag (The Hague Municipal Museum, 1998–2019).

Collection: 160,000 in total, of which 654 Islamicate objects and unknown number of objects from Indonesia.

Literature: Gemeentemuseum 2018.

Museum for modern art and design. One of the first museums in the Netherlands to start a collection of Islamic decorative arts. Today, this collection is labelled 'art from the world of Islam'.

Leiden University Libraries

Established: 1575

Location: Leiden

Collection: 6,000 Islamicate manuscripts and 18,000 Indonesian manuscripts

Literature: Mols and Vrolijk 2016; Witkam 2007; 2019; Voorhoeve 1980; 1994.

The Islamic World Special Collections of Leiden University Libraries is one of the oldest of its kind in the Western world. It holds around 6,000 Islamicate manuscripts, as well as over 18,000 manuscripts, of which an unknown number come from Muslim-majority regions, but also squeezes and rubbings of inscriptions. In addition, the library has a large collection of rare printed books, prints and photographic materials. A full list of all the catalogues can be accessed at: https://collectionguides.universiteitleiden.nl/repositories/2/archival_objects/10637.

Museum Bronbeek

Established: 1863

Location: Arnhem

Collection: c.50,000 in total, of which c.14,000 objects from Indonesia.

Literature: Smits 1881.

Military museum with close connections to the (former) KNIL and a home for retired military staff. The collection consists mainly of items of military interest, such as weapons, uniforms, medals, etc., originating from Dutch army personnel and Indonesian objects collected by them.

Museum van Kunstnijverheid (Museum of Applied Arts)

Established: 1877

Closed: 1934

Location: Haarlem

Collection: 5,874 objects (1924) in total (now dispersed), unknown number of Islamicate objects and objects from Indonesia.

Literature: Huygen 2019; 2018.

The Museum of Applied Arts was established under the auspices of Frits van Eeden (1829–1901),

who also founded the Colonial Museum (now: Wereldmuseum Amsterdam). It was dedicated to design, and the exhibits included several examples of 'Arab style', whereas the collection held large quantities of Persian objects as well as Indonesian objects, in particular textiles. The collections were partly auctioned and partly transferred to various museums in the Netherlands.

Museum Nasional Indonesia

Established: 1778

Location: Jakarta

Former names: Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen (Batavian Society of Arts and Sciences, 1778–1950), Lembaga Kebudayaan Indonesia (Institute of Indonesian Culture, 1950–1962).

Collection: 140,000 in total, most of which are from Indonesia.

Literature: Groot 2009; Museum Nasional Indonesia n.d.

Founded during the VOC period as a Dutch learned society in Batavia. After Indonesian independence, the museum continued. In 1962, the collections became the property of the Republic of Indonesia.

Museum Nusantara

Established: 1864

Closed: 2013

Location: Delft

Former names: Instelling van onderwijs in de taal- land- en volkenkunde van Nederlandsch-Indië (Institution of education in the language, geography and ethnology of the Dutch East Indies, popularly named Indische Instelling, 1864–1911), Etnografisch Museum (Museum of Ethnology, 1911–1977).

Collection: 18,000 in total (now dispersed), mostly from Indonesia.

Literature: Van Beurden 2022; Van Leur 1989.

Museum of ethnology, located at the training centre for the civil administration of the Dutch East Indies. After the museum closed in 2013, the collections were divided between museums

in the Netherlands, Austria, Sweden, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and South Korea. The former collection is online accessible through <https://collectie-nusantara.nl>.

Museon

Established: 1904

Location: The Hague

Former names: Museum ten bate van het Onderwijs (Museum for the benefit of Education, 1904–1920), Museum voor het Onderwijs (Museum for Education, 1920–1985).

Collection: c.313,000 in total, of which around 2,000 objects are from North Africa and West/Central Asia and 6,800 objects from Indonesia.

Museum for science and culture, with a strong focus on education. The collections are divided in three themes: culture, nature and technology. The numbers given only concern the cultural (ethnological) collections. Since 2022 the museum also uses the name One Planet.

Natura Artis Magistra

Established: 1861

Closed: 1910

Location: Amsterdam

Collection: 13,914 in total (today part of NMVW collection), of which 328 objects from West and Central Asia and North Africa, and c.7,000 objects from Indonesia.

Collection and museum of ethnological objects, located at Amsterdam Artis Zoo. In 1921, the ethnological collection was donated to the Colonial Institute (today Wereldmuseum Amsterdam).

Naturalis Biodiversity Center

Established: 1820

Location: Leiden

Former names: Rijksmuseum van Natuurlijke Historie (National Museum of Natural History, 1820–1984), Nationaal Natuurhistorisch Museum (National Museum of Natural History, 1984–1998), Nationaal Natuurhistorisch Museum Naturalis (1998–2012).

Collection: 43 million specimens in total, of which several million from Indonesia.

National museum of natural history and a research centre on biodiversity. The current institution is a merger of several museums and collections in Leiden, Utrecht and Amsterdam, including the Rijksherbarium (National Herbarium) and the Rijksmuseum van Geologie en Mineralogie (National Museum of Geology and Mineralogy). Due to incomplete registration, the museum cannot provide an exact number of specimens from Indonesia but estimates it to be several million.

Nederlandsch Museum voor Geschiedenis en Kunst
(*Netherlands Museum for History and Art*)

Established: 1875

Closed: 1927

Location: The Hague (1875–1883) and Amsterdam (1885–1927)

Collection: unknown number of objects.

Literature: Laan 2014–2016.

Museum for the history of the Netherlands. In around 1900, the museum began assembling a collection of Islamic objects, primarily ceramics. In 1927, it merged with the Rijksmuseum, where it had been housed since 1885. The museum's collection included Islamicate objects and a small number of Indonesian artefacts, which are now incorporated into the Rijksmuseum collection.

Rijksmuseum

Established: 1798

Location: Amsterdam

Collection: one million in total, of which 750 to 1,000 Islamicate objects and a similar number of objects from Indonesia.

Literature: Stevens 2015; The Rijksmuseum Bulletin 2011; 2022.

National museum of the Netherlands dedicated to Dutch arts and history. The museum's own collection has relatively few Indonesian objects, and the given number includes a permanent loan from the Asian Art Society (Vereniging van Vrienden der Aziatische Kunst). The database structure makes it difficult to differentiate between European-made

or Indonesian-made objects related to Indonesia and numbers may fluctuate accordingly.

Rijksmuseum van Oudheden (*National Museum of Antiquities*)

Established: 1818

Location: Leiden

Former names: Archeologisch cabinet

Collection: 180,000 in total, of which 284 Islamicate objects and 38 objects from Indonesia.

National archaeological museum of the Netherlands. The focus of the collection is on ancient Egypt, the ancient Near East, the classical world of Greece, Etruria and Rome and the early (prehistoric, Roman and Medieval) Netherlands. In 1903 the museum transferred all remaining non-European collections to the Museum of Ethnology (today Wereldmuseum Leiden), including the Islamicate and Indonesian objects.

Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam (*Municipal Museum Amsterdam*)

Established: 1874

Location: Amsterdam

Collection: 100,000 in total, of which 6 works of art from Indonesia (from before 1950).

Museum for modern and contemporary art and design. At the beginning of the 20th century, the museum frequently showcased art from Africa, Asia, and Oceania. However, it subsequently shifted its focus towards art from Europe and the United States.

Vereniging van Vrienden der Aziatische Kunst
(*Asian Art Society*)

Established: 1918

Location: Amsterdam

Other names: Royal Asian Art Society, VVAK

Collection: 1,850 in total, of which several hundreds of objects from Indonesia.

Literature: Loeseke 2020; VVAK n.d.

The Asian Art Society is a foundation holding a collection of Asian Art, which is brought together by a group of private collectors. The collection is kept on permanent loan at the Rijksmuseum.

Wereldmuseum / Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen

Established: 2014

Collection: c.440,000 in total, of which 114,000 Islamicate objects and 179,601 objects from Indonesia.

Umbrella organisation that serves the collaboration of four museums in Leiden, Amsterdam, Berg and Dal and (since 2017) in Rotterdam. In 2023, the organisation changed its name to Wereldmuseum. The official name remains Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen (National Museum of World Cultures, abbreviated NMVW).

Wereldmuseum Amsterdam

Established: 1864

Location: Amsterdam

Former names: Koloniaal Museum (Colonial Museum, 1864–1910), Koloniaal Instituut (1910–1945), Indisch Instituut (1945–1950), Tropenmuseum (1950–2023).

Collection: 146,200 in total (since 2014 part of NMVW collection), of which 71,773 objects from Indonesia.

Literature: Van Hout and Wijs 2017; Shatanawi 2014; Van Dijk and Legêne 2011.

Founded as a colonial museum, transformed into an ethnographic museum in 1950, with a focus on development cooperation. Today, it is a museum of world cultures and part of the Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen.

Wereldmuseum Leiden

Established: 1837

Location: Leiden

Former names: 's Rijks Ethnographisch Museum (National Museum of Ethnography, 1837–1935), Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde (National Museum of Ethnology, 1935–2005), Museum Volkenkunde (Museum of Ethnology, 2005–2023).

Collection: 212,500 in total (since 2014 part of NMVW collection), of which 72,784 objects from Indonesia.

Literature: Van Wengen 2002.

Founded as an ethnographic museum with a focus on the academic field of ethnology. Today, it is a museum of world cultures and part of the Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen.

Wereldmuseum Rotterdam

Established: 1885

Location: Rotterdam

Former names: Museum voor Land- en Volkenkunde (Museum of Geography and Ethnology, 1885–1986), Museum voor Volkenkunde (Museum of Ethnology, 1986–2000).

Collection: 93,700 in total (since 2017 closely associated with NMVW collection), of which 31,106 objects from Indonesia.

Literature: Huygens and Ros 1993.

Founded as an ethnographic museum with close connections to the city's elite members. Today, it is a museum of world cultures and part of the Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen.

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This groundbreaking book tells the untold story of Indonesian Islam in museums. Often overshadowed by Hindu-Buddhist art, Indonesian Islamic heritage rarely receives the attention it deserves in museum collections and exhibitions. This book unravels the historical silences rooted in Dutch colonial rule that have marginalized Indonesian Islamic material culture. Delving into the colonial archives, it traces the journey of Indonesian objects in Dutch museums, exploring their original meanings and their re-appropriation during instances of collecting, classification, interpretation and public display. Through this lens, the book addresses the enduring impacts of colonialism and offers pathways for the decolonization of museums today.

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BRILL.COM/AAIW
ISSN 2213-3844

ISBN 978 9004 68841 4



9 789004 688414

