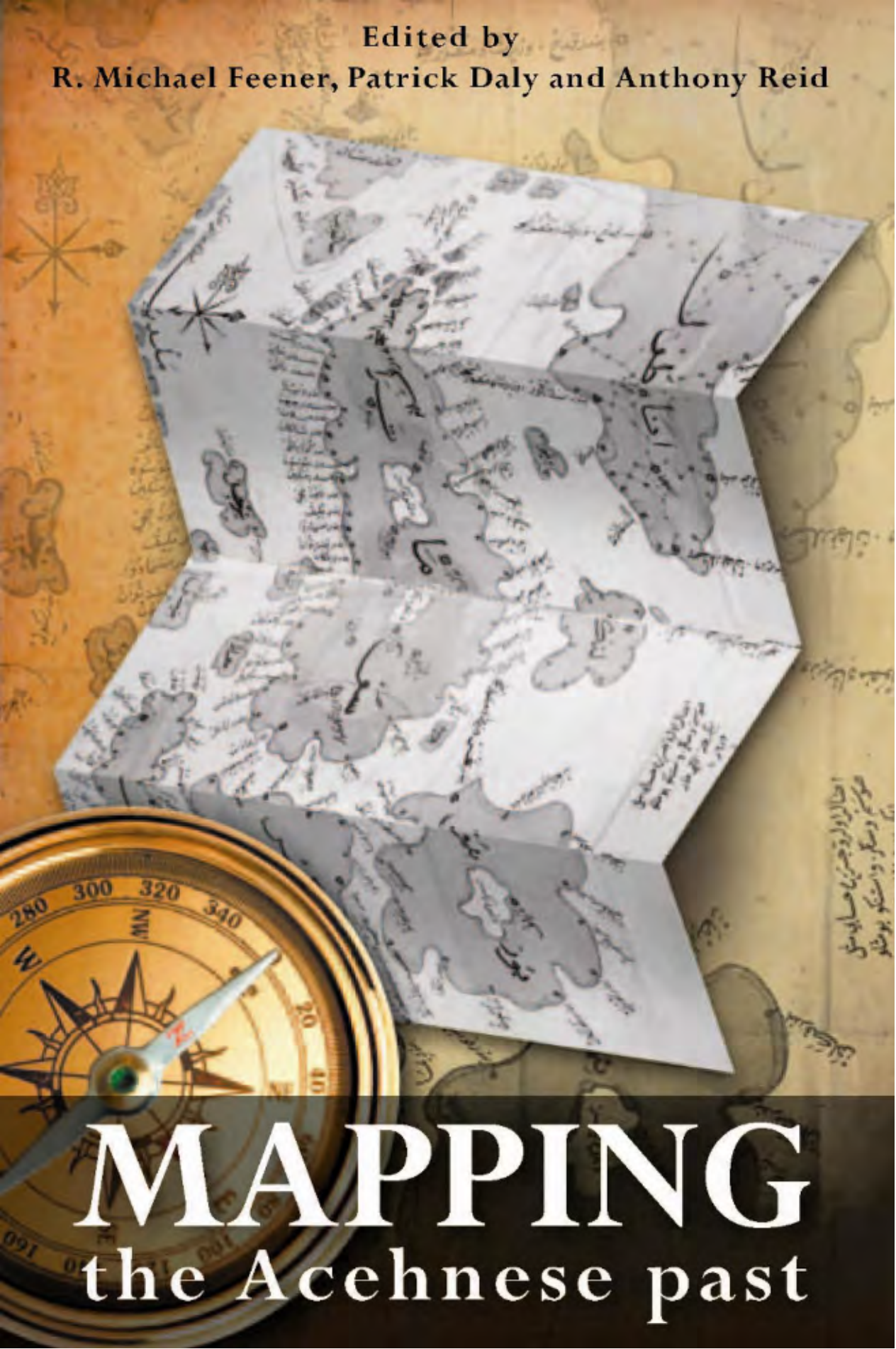
Edited by
R. Michael Feener, Patrick Daly and Anthony Reid



MAPPING
the Acehnese past

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V E R H A N D E L I N G E N
VAN HET KONINKLIJK INSTITUUT
VOOR TAAL-, LAND- EN VOLKENKUNDE

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MAPPING THE ACEHNESE PAST

Edited by

R. MICHAEL FEENER,
PATRICK DALY and ANTHONY REID

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Preface

The tsunami that swirled over Aceh's capital on 26 December 2004 was an unparalleled disaster. It killed over 160,000 people in the province, including a high percentage of its administrative and academic elite, and destroyed much of its infrastructure of roads, bridges, houses, industries, offices and records. This disaster was on such an undreamt-of scale that it shamed the human actors into overcoming their relatively puny conflicts. Both the agents of Jakarta's rule in Aceh and the pro-independence activists fighting to end that rule suffered in one day many times the losses their enemies had inflicted on them in decades of conflict.

The main jail of Banda Aceh was among the buildings destroyed by the giant waves that crashed over the city that day. Among the hundreds of prisoners killed there were a large proportion of the civilian elite of Gerakan Aceh Merdeka (GAM, Free Aceh Movement), who had been transformed from peace negotiators to criminals seven months earlier, when Jakarta launched its attempted military solution. One of only a handful to survive by getting onto the roof was Irwandi Yusuf, who in the post-tsunami chaos managed to escape to Malaysia, and later to take part in the negotiations for a lasting peace that began only a month after the tsunami. In February 2007 he became the first directly elected governor of Aceh, charged with implementing the Helsinki peace agreement of August 2005 conferring extensive self-government on the territory of Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam (the State of Aceh, Abode of Peace).

The rebirth of Aceh was long overdue. It had been more at war than at peace ever since the Netherlands, with the support of Aceh's erstwhile ally Britain, launched its assault on the independent sultanate in 1873. The long conflict with Jakarta has had ruinous effects also on the understanding of Aceh's past. Its legendary distaste for foreign rule was distorted by both sides of the conflict for their respective propaganda purposes. Serious research was made impossible by the unsafe conditions and the exclusion of foreign researchers, particularly since 1989. The 2004 tsunami wrought another crisis in this area, annihilating the Pusat Dokumentasi dan Informasi Aceh (PDIA, Aceh Documentation Centre), destroying books and manuscripts, and killing some of Aceh's leading historians and intellectuals.

This book is part of the renaissance of Aceh, specifically through the internationally cooperative recovery of an understanding of its rich past. The tsunami disaster, unlike Aceh's earlier sufferings, had the effect of tearing open doors long closed. Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono welcomed an unprecedented international relief effort which brought thousands of government and private aid workers to Aceh, transforming it from isolated backwater to international hub. Immediately following the Helsinki peace agreement hundreds of peace monitors from Europe and Southeast Asia also fanned out to safeguard the fragile peace. To manage the seven billion dollar reconstruction effort, President Yudhoyono took another exceptional step in authorizing the highly autonomous Badan Rehabilitasi dan Rekonstruksi NAD-Nias (Agency for the Rehabilitation and Reconstruction of Aceh and Nias, BRR), headed by Dr Kuntoro Mangkusubroto, former minister of mines, as a minister responsible directly to the president.

Aware that a healthy reconstruction effort needed to ensure that international engagement with Aceh did not end with the mandate of the Aceh Monitoring Mission (AMM) in December 2006, and the BRR (2009), Dr Kuntoro approached Sumatra historian Anthony Reid, then in Singapore, to recommend measures to establish an international research presence which could be ongoing. The result was an initial International Conference of Aceh and Indian Ocean Studies (ICAIOS), held at Banda Aceh from 24 to 27 February 2007, funded by the BRR but organized in conjunction with the Asia Research Institute (ARI) of the National University of Singapore (NUS), of which the editors of this volume were the most concerned members. The Indian Ocean context was intended to emphasize that Aceh's significance was not limited to Sumatra or Indonesia, but was enmeshed by the tsunami, by geography and by history with a much wider world. The tsunami had reawakened interest in Malaysia, Britain, the United States, France, Portugal, the Netherlands and, particularly, Turkey in their engagement with Aceh's past, and the contribution they could therefore make in the rebirth of the *Nanggroe* in an international context. The conference was accompanied by an exhibition of documentary materials on the region's history brought by participants from these countries, many of which were then being seen for the first time in Aceh. Since the close of the conference, these copies of valuable primary source materials have been integrated into the permanent collections of the Aceh Museum.

Most of the chapters in this book originated in one of the six conference panels devoted to histories of Aceh and the Indian Ocean world. The other five panels necessarily dealt with urgent current issues on which Aceh could offer lessons to the broader world: 1) seismology, geology and environmental issues; 2) conflict resolution, peacemaking and democratization; 3) disaster relief and reconstruction; 4) Islamic law and society; 5) language, culture and society in Aceh. A selection of revised papers from these panels are being published

in a companion volume by the same editors.[1] The bilingual discussions in Aceh generated great local interest, and group discussion sessions ensured that Acehnese academics and intellectuals could debate with colleagues from around the world to evaluate the state of knowledge and the way forward towards a more open future. The relationships begun there have deepened and improved the chapters, now held together with an introductory survey of the field.

These chapters embrace Acehnese history from the twelfth to twentieth centuries, mapping available resources around the world relevant to the study of the Acehnese past and presenting critical surveys of existing work. Together, they highlight the diversity of Aceh's global connections. Uniquely in the Indonesian Archipelago, Aceh was a free agent in dealing with other independent states up until the Dutch invasion of 1873 – in this respect more comparable to mainland Southeast Asian states like Siam and Burma than to other Indonesian polities. As the world's leading pepper producer from the sixteenth through nineteenth centuries, it also had abundant contacts around the Indian Ocean and beyond. Hence, although Aceh's own archival resources have been meagre since the war with the Dutch (though not negligible once the Islamic manuals kept in religious schools are inventoried), there are abundant resources in the archives of foreign countries. The chapters in this book make that clear.

Of these, perhaps the most novel and unexpected insights come from the archives of Istanbul, as first presented in English in two of our chapters. In the wake of the tsunami, public sympathy in Turkey was enhanced by historians who were able to point to Aceh's ancient connection with the Ottomans, and the extraordinary loyalty Aceh showed to that connection in the nineteenth century. In consequence, Turkish assistance to the reconstruction became one of the most substantial and indeed visible national efforts. The Turkish flag emblazoned on every home built by Turkish aid had a striking resemblance to the banned independence flag of GAM, in turn based on the ancient recognition of Turkish suzerainty over Aceh. İsmail Göksoy was one of the modern Turkish scholars who have been galvanized to work on Indonesia, and who presented a survey of the known Turkish data at the 2007 conference. Subsequently a British Academy project coordinated by Andrew Peacock located further crucial documents in Istanbul, including the remarkable Acehnese map which graces our cover. We are grateful to the members of that project for making a late but crucial entry into this book project.

The chapters are arranged in a roughly chronological order with regard to the sources treated in each. These sources range from archaeological to textual

[1] Patrick Daly, R. Michael Feener and Anthony Reid (eds). *From the ground up; Perspectives on post-tsunami and post-conflict Aceh*. Singapore: ISEAS, in press.

and visual materials, covering more than 800 years. Among them are sources relevant to various interconnected aspects of religion, trade and diplomacy, as Aceh negotiated its own position in relation to the wider worlds with which it was connected at various periods of its history. The ongoing dynamics of this can be glimpsed, for example, in the correspondence of Iskandar Thani, documents of missions to the court of Sultana Safiyyat al-Din, and important literary texts generated in Aceh, as examined in the contributions to this volume by Annabel Teh Gallop, Sher Banu, Teuku Iskandar and Amirul Hadi. Other contributions, such as those by Georges Alves on Portuguese-language materials, the two papers on materials from Ottoman archives, and Jean Taylor on photographic images preserved in the Dutch KITLV collections, not only provide us with specific points of new information, but also reveal the diverse ways in which Aceh has been perceived by outsiders at various points in its long history. Through the presentation of such rich material, it is hoped that the essays collected here can help to inform and inspire a new generation of historians, both Acehnese and non-Acehnese, to engage in more substantial ways with the rich array of sources available for furthering our understanding of the region's past as it looks towards a new future.

The editors would like to thank those who made the 2007 conference possible, notably Kuntoro Mangkusubroto, Teuku Kamaruzzaman, and Heru Prasetjo of BRR, and the admirable Alyson Rozells of ARI. In preparation of the book Deborah Chua did much of the copy-editing, two anonymous readers helped sharpen our arguments, and Harry Poeze was encouraging at KITLV.

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Abbreviations

ABRI	Angkatan Bersenjata Republik Indonesia; Armed Forces of the Republic of Indonesia
Ac.	Acehnese
AMM	Aceh Monitoring Mission
Ar.	Arabic
ARI	Asia Research Institute
b.	Ibn; Ar. 'son of'
BRR	Badan Rehabilitasi dan Rekonstruksi NAD-Nias; Agency for the Rehabilitation and Reconstruction of Aceh and Nias
D.	Dutch
DI	Darul Islam
GAM	Gerakan Aceh Merdeka; Free Aceh Movement
Gy.	Gayo
HPS	*Hikayat prang sabi*
ICAIOS	International Conference on Aceh and Indian Ocean Studies; The same abbreviation is also now used for the International Centre for Aceh and Indian Ocean Studies, located in Darussalam, Banda Aceh.
ISEAS	Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore

Jv.	Javanese
KITLV	Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde; Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies
KNIL	Koninklijk Nederlandsch-Indisch Leger; Royal Netherlands Indies Army
NUS	National University of Singapore
n.y.	no year
OT	Ottoman Turkish
PDIA	Pusat Dokumentasi dan Informasi Aceh; Aceh Documentation Centre
Pr.	Portuguese
PUSA	Persatuan Ulama-Ulama Seluruh Aceh; The All-Aceh Ulama Association
TBG	*Tijdschrift van het Bataviaasch Genootschap*
Tm.	Tamil
TOEM	*Tarih-i Osmani Encümeni Mecmuası; Journal of the Ottoman Historical Society*
VOC	Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie; Dutch East India Company

Chapter 1

The Acehnese past and its present state of study

R. Michael Feener

What does it mean to study the history of Aceh? What kinds of questions have been asked, and which remain to be formulated? Once posed, what sources are available to consult in answering these questions? This volume presents a series of investigations into the diverse source bases that have relevance to Aceh in various periods of its history. This introductory essay aims to provide a broader framework for these individual studies by presenting an overview of the current state of Acehnese history, while highlighting the areas where new work is needed in order to develop a better understanding of the rich heritage and experience of this region.[1]

Aceh has a long, rich and complex history, and the earliest sources we have point already to its position as a site of cultural and commercial contact with a wide range of other societies stretching from China to the Coromandel Coast of India. Maritime sites in the area such as Lamri are mentioned in the texts of Arab geographers as early as the ninth century.[2] Archaeological finds from that site reflect its position as a node in trans-regional trading networks, with considerable amounts of South Indian red-ware found alongside higher-fired ceramics from China, including Yuan blue and white porcelain, in deposits demonstrating a clear intermixture of these various trade items, rather than simply stratigraphic layering.

Some still preliminary observations on the northern and eastern coasts of Aceh also report the presence of early Muslim grave markers carved in a distinctive obelisk-like form known as *plang pleng*, that bear possible southern Indian stylistic overtones (Illustration 1). Similar markers are also found at Gampong Pande in Banda Aceh.[3] Another early Islamic site, in the vicinity

1 This work was undertaken partially with the support of the Singapore Ministry of Education's Academic Research Fund (MOE AcRF no. R-110-000-029-750).

2 For a summary of early Arabic, Chinese, Armenian, Javanese and European references to 'Lamri', see Jordaan and Colless 2009:236-7.

3 E. Edwards McKinnon, personal communication, February 2009.

Figure 1. Toppled *plang pleng* Muslim grave marker at Lamri.
Photograph by R. Michael Feener.

of Perlak, is known locally as Cot Meuligue – a name that may be derived from the Tamil *malikai* ('palace' or 'temple').[4] Despite calls for further work on this site published over two decades ago, very little has been done, and Lamri, Cot Meuligue and other heretofore understudied sites remain long overdue for a systematic archaeological survey (McKinnon 1988:121). With the openness of post-conflict Aceh, new possibilities for the exploration of Aceh's archaeological heritage now present themselves.

This volume thus begins with a state-of-the-field review of early Acehnese history by Daniel Perret. Drawing upon existing archaeological survey data, as well as early textual materials in Chinese, Javanese, Armenian and European languages, Perret presents an overview of early urban settlements in Aceh. The picture that emerges from this is one of a complex constellation of trading ports with far-flung connections across both the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea. However, much work remains to be done in order to better understand the particular patterns of exchange and relations centred on these North Sumatran nodes in broader regional commercial and cultural networks. Perret's essay points to some practical avenues for pursuing such work through his catalogue of over a score of sites in Aceh requiring more systematic archaeological investigation, as well as through his assessment of analogous work already done in the neighbouring area of Barus.

During the thirteenth century, the various settlements along the coasts of northern Sumatra appear to have been largely autonomous under the rule of various coastal 'rajas'. It appears that during this period, some of these ports, including Perlak, were being established under Muslim rule. The earliest Islamic sultanate in the region for which we have any significant surviving sources was established at Pasai (on Aceh's north coast) at the end of the thirteenth century. This area is particularly rich in early stone monuments in the form of grave markers (Illustration 2), which have attracted considerable scholarly attention. Elizabeth Lambourn, for example, has produced groundbreaking work on both the importation of South Asian models of Muslim funerary monuments and the development of local traditions of Muslim grave markers in the region (Lambourn 2003, 2004). More recently, Claude Guillot and Ludvik Kalus have produced a comprehensive catalogue of inscriptions from the major cemeteries on Aceh's north coast, dating from c. 1400 to 1523. The catalogue is complete with identifications of Qur'an, Hadith, poetry, and other texts in their inscriptions, as well as a proposed new typology of forms (Guillot and Kalus 2008). Nearly half of the book, however, is taken up by essays advancing new interpretations of this data, in which they reconstruct the genealogies of Pasai's rulers in ways that challenge established recensions

[4] I would like to thank Ronit Ricci for her help in identifying and transliterating this Tamil term.

Figure 2. Muslim funerary monuments at Pasai, North Aceh.
Photograph by R. Michael Feener.

derived from later Malay literary texts, including the *Hikayat Raja Pasai* and the *Sejarah Melayu*. Among the important points advanced by Guillot and Kalus' work for understanding the earlier history of the region is their highlighting of the significance of latter-day descendants of the Abbassid nobility in contests for religious and political legitimacy during the earliest period of Pasai's history, as well as the apparent prominence of women in positions of authority. Both of these cases demonstrate important early precursors to subsequent developments of the Acehnese sultanate in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Since the rise of Pasai, and through the subsequent development of the Sultanate of Aceh, the region has maintained a very strong sense of Muslim identity, and many of the best-surviving sources for its history over the centuries since Ibn Battuta's visit chronicle developments in evolving local interpretations of Islam and changing patterns in Aceh's relationships with other parts of the global umma. Upon his arrival at Pasai, Ibn Battuta was greeted by Amir Daulasa, a Pasai court official whom he had previously met in Delhi. Later in his account, Ibn Battuta (d. 1369) also noted that some of

the Pasai court's most impressive entertainments, including performances by dancing horses, were similar to those he had seen performed for 'the king of India' (*Ibn Battuta* n.y. :478-81). All of this points to the significant degree of interactions between Pasai and the Muslim cultures that were developing in South Asia during the post-Abbasid period.[5]

By that time, the prosperity of Pasai had helped it to become a leading centre of Muslim culture in the Indonesian Archipelago, particularly in the transmission of Islamic religious knowledge and the production of Malay literature (Roolvink 1965). The importance of Pasai as a centre for the development of Malay as a major language of Islamicate culture is attested by some of the earliest surviving texts from the region, such as the *Hikayat Muhammad Hanafiyyah*, the *Hikayat Amir Hamza* and the *Hikayat Dhu'l-Qarnayn*.[6] The centrality of Pasai as a Muslim cultural, economic and political centre was, however, eclipsed during the sixteenth century by the rise of a new sultanate situated at Banda Aceh (Andaya 2008:118). The ascendance of Aceh as a new maritime power in the Straits of Malacca was forcefully announced with the 1521 rout of a Portuguese fleet. Over the century that followed, the Sultanate of Aceh continued to clash with the Portuguese[7] as it projected its expanding influence not only eastward across the straits to the Malay Peninsula, but also southward into the Batak and Minang lands.[8]

Acehnese interactions with the Portuguese continued until the early nineteenth century and developed in complex and multifarious ways, with documents written in Portuguese remaining important sources for the early history of the Acehnese sultanate. Jorge Santos Alves' essay in this volume presents an introduction to and overview of such Portuguese-language documents, arranged thematically so as to highlight the diversity of such sources. This typology allows us to appreciate the range of perspectives presented by merchants, missionaries, cartographers and captives alongside those of royal missives and official documents composed under the auspices of the *Estado da Índia.*

Complex interactions with various parts of the Muslim world involved economic, political and even (proposed) military operations. One of the most famous episodes of this type involved the Ottomans. In his contribution to this volume, İsmail Hakkı Göksoy provides a detailed review of documents

5 For the broader context of these developments in the Indian sub-continent, see Wink 2004.

6 These texts and their place in the development of Malayo-Muslim culture are further discussed in Teuku Iskandar's contribution to this volume (Chapter III).

7 For a nuanced study of one contemporary account of this conflict framed in explicitly religious terms, see Subrahmanyam 2009.

8 The interaction of Aceh and Minangkabau in particular has resulted in complex and ongoing commercial contact and exchange in both directions over the past four centuries, for example, with pepper cultivation and the *Jame'* (West Sumatran) ulama.

from Ottoman chanceries related, in particular, to two periods of interaction between Banda Aceh and Istanbul. The first of these was in the sixteenth century, when ambassadors from both courts were sent back and forth across the Indian Ocean in response to the increasingly aggressive presence of the Portuguese in the region. The second period of intensified Acehnese-Ottoman relations came in the mid-nineteenth century, when Aceh applied (ultimately unsuccessfully) to the Sublime Porte for vassal status as a means of countering increasing Dutch incursions into Sumatra. New materials related to these revived nineteenth century Aceh-Ottoman relations, including a rare map of Sumatra, are presented in the chapter by Ismail Hakkı Kadı, Andrew Peacock and Annabel Teh Gallop and its accompanying appendices. Despite the impediments to realizing Acehnese hopes of receiving direct and significant political and military aid from the Ottoman Empire, the cultural memory of a 'special relationship with the Turks' remains a significant aspect of Aceh's long and complex relationships with Muslim societies of the Middle East.

Aceh's complex relations with the Portuguese influenced more than just the sultanate's ongoing engagement with the Ottomans. Attempts to counter further Portuguese incursion into the region were also important factors in the development of subsequent Acehnese relations with other European powers and, particularly, the English and Dutch East India Companies, as Aceh came to see these two new merchant maritime powers as important new players in the contest for control of then Portuguese-dominated Malay states along the Malacca Straits.[9] Indeed, over the first two decades of the seventeenth century, shifting Luso-Dutch relations in the region proved to be a significant factor in the vigorous assertion of Acehnese control over Pahang and Johor (Borschberg 2010:110-15).[10]

In her contribution to this volume, Annabel Teh Gallop presents detailed studies of three remarkable documents attesting to Aceh's engagements with European powers in the seventeenth century. These comprise the only three surviving originals of Acehnese royal letters from that period: a Malay letter from Sultan Perkasa Alam (Iskandar Muda) of Aceh to King James I of England, dated 1615 CE; a letter from Sultan 'Ala' al-Din Mughayat Syah (Iskandar Thani) of Aceh to Frederik Hendrik, Prince of Orange (1584-1647),

[9] In the seventeenth-century the VOC 'factory' at Aceh was located just beside that of the English East India Company. I would like to thank Peter Borschberg for first calling my attention to the coloured drawing of the VOC 'factory' at Aceh reproduced here as Illustration 3 (Nationaal Archief, the Hague, 4.VEL 1150).

[10] The Acehnese expedition against Johor and it consequences are the subject of the pre-eminent epic of Acehnese literature, the *Hikayat Malém Dagang*. The Acehnese text, together with a Dutch summary translation, can be found in Cowan 1937.

Figure 3. Seventeenth-century coloured drawing of the VOC 'factory' at Aceh. The note in the lower left corner indicates its close proximity to the English 'factory'. (Used with permission from the Nationaal Archief, the Netherlands, 4.VEL 1150.)

dating from 1639; and an illuminated letter from Sultana Taj al-'Alam, dated 12 October 1661, congratulating Charles II on his accession to the English throne, and reaffirming the cordial ties between Aceh and the English dating back to the time of Iskandar Muda. Gallop's work on explicating both the physical features of these documents and their political contexts helps us to understand some of the more nuanced aspects of Aceh's diplomatic relationships with European powers in the early modern period.

The late sixteenth through seventeenth century is one of the best-documented periods of Acehnese history, and has often been described as the 'golden age' of the sultanate. Its most famous leader, Iskandar Muda (r. 1607-1636), launched campaigns for the Islamization of the neighbouring Gayo and Minangkabau regions of Sumatra, and staged elaborate observances of Friday prayers and other Islamic religious ceremonies. He also appears to have adopted various symbols and institutions from the contemporary

Mughal and Ottoman empires to bolster his authority as a ruler of Muslims, including official state seals and insignia (Siegel 1979:24-5), and even an institution reminiscent in some ways of the high Islamic religious office of the Sehülislam (Ito 1984:259-62). Iskandar Muda and his successors devoted considerable patronage to Islamic learning and literature as well, as attested by both European visitors' accounts of Aceh and the legacy of influential seventeenth-century Muslim texts produced there that have survived to this day (Lombard 1967).

The records of the period reveal that a number of ideas and institutions rooted in the earlier history of the region were transmitted and transformed within the sultanate's Islamicized idioms of symbolic power and social order. Perhaps the most striking example of this is a structure located within the precincts of the sultan's palace known as the Gunongan (Illustration 4).This was an artificial mountain located in the royal gardens, and descriptions suggest its resemblance to replicas of Mt Meru known from other Southeast Asian courts, both Muslim and non-Muslim. The name of the garden in which this powerful Hindu-Buddhist image was situated was Taman Ghayra, through which flowed a river known as the Dar al-ishq, on the banks of which was a mosque called Ishq Mushahada (Wessing 1988). The Arabic terminology employed here is thick with Sufi valences, and points to the important role of sufism in expressions of the religious and political culture of the sultanate.

Under the Sultanate of Aceh, new forms of Islamicate art and culture that were clearly influenced by models developed at the Mughal court began to take root (Braginsky 2006). Conversely, Aceh was itself attracting the attention of Mughal writers in India at the turn of the seventeenth century, though not necessarily as a source of inspiration for higher culture (Alam and Subrahmanyam 2005). At the same time, Acehnese patronage was also drawing a number of Islamic scholars from various parts of the Middle East and South Asia (Hoesein Djajadiningrat 1911:157, 160-1).[11]

During the first half of the seventeenth century, Aceh became the leading regional centre of Islamic learning, and, in particular, a site for fervent debates over Sufi cosmology and ritual practice. One topic that has received particularly intense and sustained attention in international scholarship has been the struggles over claims to religious authority and proper understandings of Sufism at the Acehnese court. From the nineteenth century, Dutch scholars began work in this field, inspiring over a century of academic discussions.[12]

[11] International trends in various fields of the Islamic religious sciences continued to be reflected in Aceh and elsewhere in Southeast Asia through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, facilitated by the continuing circulation of scholars from across Asia and the Middle East (Azyumardi Azra 2004).

[12] For an overview of the extensive academic literature on this material published in Dutch and English, see Peter Riddell 2001.

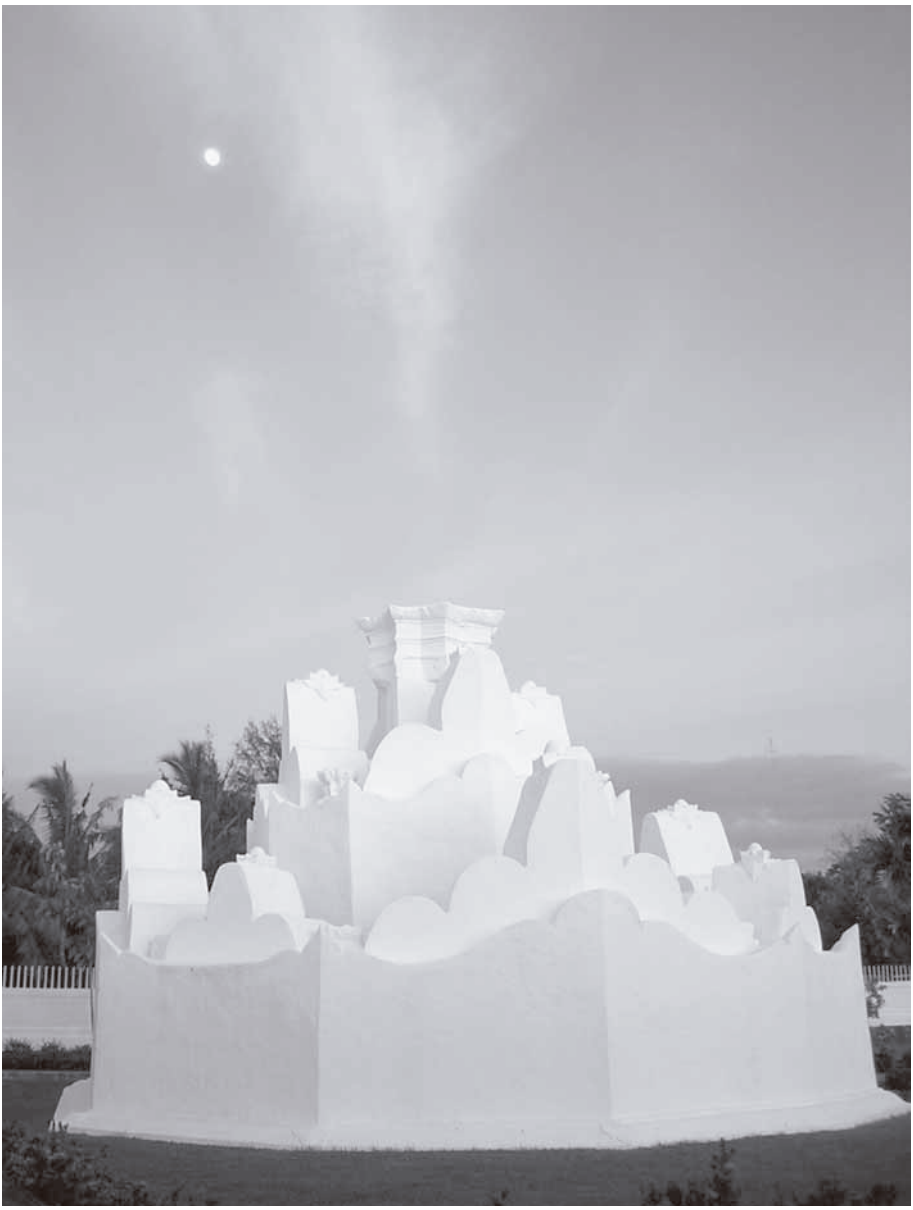

Figure 4. The Gunongan on the former grounds of the sultan's palace at Banda Aceh. Photograph by R. Michael Feener.

At present, there is an extensive literature of international scholarship on the Achenese ulama of this period, focused particularly on the works of four authors: Hamza Fansuri, Shams al-Din al-Sumatra'i, Nur al-Din al-Raniri and 'Abd al-Ra'uf al-Singkili. The general tendency has been to see these authors as linked to each other in direct succession. More recently, however, important new evidence has come to light that is particularly relevant to the life and work of the celebrated 'first teacher' of this Sumatran Sufi literature, Hamza Fansuri. Working from a rubbing made from the Bab Ma'la Cemetery in Mecca, Guillot and Kalus have proposed a revision that has the potential to significantly change our understandings of these developments (Guillot and Kalus 2000).[13] This shows clearly the ways in which the discovery of new material, however small, can have a significant impact on our understandings of the Acehnese past. It opens new areas to explore, and also gives us pause to better understand the striking differences between the respective models of Sufi cosmology in the works of Hamza, and those of another well-known scholar of the period, Shams al-Din al-Sumatra'i (d. 1630), who was heretofore often regarded as Hamza's pupil. Beyond what survives of his own writings in Malay and Arabic, we know more about Shams al-Din's role at the Acehnese court from notices recorded in the works of European visitors.

The types of Islamic learning and literature developed by Hamza and Shams al-Din were subjected to strident critiques by a scholar of the next generation, Nur al-Din al-Raniri (d. 1658). Al-Raniri was a Gujerati Muslim of South Arabian descent, who was born into a family with far-flung connections in the commercial and cultural networks across the Indian Ocean littoral (Azyumardi Azra 2004:54-5). After having established himself at the Acehnese court in 1637, al-Raniri initiated a radical campaign of religious reform that sought to discredit the mystical cosmologies popularized in the region by Hamza and Shams al-Din, and to replace them with what he considered to be a more 'orthodox' doctrine. Al-Raniri's ambitious programme of reform was carried out through the creation of a remarkable corpus of works written in Malay that strove to redefine Aceh's Malayo-Muslim tradition in the fields of jurisprudence, mysticism, theology, literature and history. While this new understanding of Islam managed to catch the attention of the ruling sultan, Iskandar Thani (d. 1641), it also suffered from subsequent vicissitudes of patronage, as other views of Sufism, promulgated by the Minangkabau Shaykh Sayf al-Rijal, rose to counter the influence of al-Raniri, who then left Aceh in apparent disgrace in 1643 (Ito 1978:489-91).

[13] This notice prompted polemics with Vladimir Braginsky, who had previously published an article on Hamza's life based on earlier data in a previous volume of the same journal (Braginsky 1999). These discussions were continued in a later number of this same journal published in 2001; see *Archipel* 62:24-38.

The next major court scholar of Islam prominently appearing in texts known to us today was 'Abd al-Ra'uf al-Singkili (d. 1693), a locally born scholar who had returned to Aceh after two decades of study in Arabia. His learning is reflected in a number of works in the Islamic religious sciences, most of which were produced under the patronage of the Acehnese court after his return from his studies in the Middle East. Notable among these compositions is the *Mir'at al-tullab*, in which he advanced a Shari'a-based argument for the legitimacy of a female to serve as the head of a Muslim state (*khalifa*) (Amirul Hadi 2004:60). For 'Abd al-Ra'uf, this was not an abstract, hypothetical ruling, but rather a concrete reference to the situation in Aceh during his day, as the sultanate was ruled by a succession of four sultanas between 1641 and 1699.

As rich as this particular body of texts is, it must be noted that there is more to seventeenth-century Aceh than internal Sufi polemic, and Islam, although undeniably important, is not in itself sufficient to explain the history of Acehnese culture and society over the centuries. There were also complex political and economic developments in the Acehnese sultanate that cannot be explained as simply reflections of its Islamic identity. One example of such developments is evocatively depicted in Sher Banu Khan's contribution to this volume. In her narration and interpretation of 'the jewel affair', she demonstrates some of the ways in which Sultana Safiyyat al-Din Taj al-'Alam Syah (r. 1641-1675) negotiated her assertion of new priorities in the allocation of royal resources, as well as the manner in which officials of the Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (VOC, Dutch East India Company) reacted to the ascendancy of a female ruler in the Acehnese sultanate during the late seventeenth century. This study provides a richly detailed view into the diplomatic tensions that arose in the period of transition to the rule of the four sultanas in the seventeenth century, as well as complex aspects of Aceh's relations with emerging European powers in the early modern period.

The interventions of the VOC at that time eventually resulted in the realignment of trade relationships that hastened Aceh's decline as both a port and a polity in the mid-seventeenth century (Ito 1984:451). With the abdication of the last sultana (Keumalat Syah, r. 1688-1699), power passed into the hands of prominent Arab migrants who had established themselves in Aceh during the seventeenth century.[14] This transition was a notably rough one, with a rapid succession of three sultans in the first four years. Relative stability was only achieved with the ascension of Jamal al-'Alam Badr al-Munir (Poteu

[14] During the early eighteenth century, other Hadrami creole migrants also established themselves at Siak, Mempawa, Matan, Kubu and Pontianak. At the same time, integration of both Bugis and Arab elements elsewhere took place, with the establishment of the 'Four Youths of Tarim', who pioneered the expansion into various parts of Sumatra, Kalimantan and the Malay Peninsula (Engseng Ho 2002).

Djeumaloj, r. 1703-1726). The following year, however, this short-lived Arab Jamal al-Layl dynasty was overturned by yet another group of powerful immigrants (Veltman 1919). In 1727, a local Bugis leader named Maharaja Léla Meulajo assumed the throne as Sultan 'Ala' al-Din Ahmad Syah.

This seizure of power prompted a dramatic reaction on the part of Poteu Djeumaloj, who attempted to retake the throne, and the struggle that ensued is chronicled in the *Hikajat Potjut Muhamat* – one of the major works of a new Acehnese-language literature that began to evolve at that time (Drewes 1979). The tussles between diverse contestants for the throne of the sultanate fostered the development of new political, economic and cultural dynamics in eighteenth-century Aceh. This included a marked shift of the locus of political power out of the coastal capital of Banda Aceh towards the agricultural lands of the interior (Reid 2005:110). These dynamics of de-centralization facilitated the development of new models of administration and authority linked to the relative ascendance of an Acehnese landed nobility (*ulèëbalang*) in the eighteenth century (Van Langen 1888).

The resultant political fragmentation proceeded alongside and mutually facilitated the rise of new and increasingly powerful economic interests in the region. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, foreign trade was generally focused at Banda Aceh and regulated by officials of the sultan. By the mid-eighteenth century, however, the ability of the sultanate to assert control over Aceh's profitable foreign commerce had all but disappeared in the face of challenges by a wide range of contenders, including private European 'country traders' and Tamil Muslim merchants from the Coromandel Coast of India. These new mercantile interests prospered by evading the dwindling reach of the central authority of the sultanate. Instead, they became increasingly engaged directly with the local rulers of smaller, independent ports. In this way, Aceh can be seen as participating in a much broader pattern of economic and political restructuring that was occurring across the Malay world in the eighteenth century (Kathirithamby-Wells 1998).

One major characteristic of these developments was the expansion of cash crop cultivation across new areas, away from the earlier centres of political power. By the turn of the nineteenth century, for example, pepper planting had expanded dramatically in the hinterlands of Aceh's west coast, from whence it was exported in great quantities in American ships from Salem, Massachusetts (Putnam 1924; Gould 1956a, 1956b, 1956c). This brusque trade declined in the mid-nineteenth century due to a combination of factors including fluctuations in US trade policy, as well as the emergence of Singapore and Penang as major regional entrepôts powerful enough to shift production across to the north coast of Aceh (Lee 1995).

This decentralization also resulted in a transformation of cultural production in eighteenth-century Aceh. In earlier centuries, the more powerful sul-

tans and sultanas had made their courts important centres of Malay-language Islamicate culture. In fact, the power and prestige of the Acehnese court in the seventeenth century enabled it not only to take up the mantle of Muslim Malay culture rooted in the earlier tradition of Malacca, but also to significantly transform it. Rather than Acehnese, the predominant language of both the royal court and Islamic religious scholarship in the Sultanate of Aceh in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was Malay, and written documentation of everything from poetry to commerce, history and religious scholarship was dominated by the Malay language, whose Islamicate forms had been extensively developed at the courts of coastal sultans since the period of Pasai (Reid 2005:149). The extent to which this was the case has been demonstrated by Leonard Andaya, in arguing that 'Aceh came to offer new standards of "Malayness" based on Islamic models in literature and in court administration and behaviour' (Andaya 2001:45, 2008:124-45).

Acehnese authors continued to produce works in Malay, particularly in various fields of the Islamic religious sciences, right through the early twentieth century; of course, they continue to write in modern Indonesian to this day.[15] The earliest surviving evidence for a tradition of Acehnese literature written in a modified Arabic script comes from the mid-seventeenth century. However, most written texts in that language were produced in the nineteenth century (Voorhoeve 1952). A considerable number of texts survive from this later period.[16] Moreover, some of this material can be identified with a number of named authors, including (but by no means limited to): Tgk. Cik Di Simpang, Abdullah al-Ashi, Tgk. Shaykh Di Seumatang, Muhammad Zayn, Jamal al-Din al-Ashi, Sharif Alwi Abi Bakr b. al-Sharif Husayn Ba Faqir, Tuan Amat, Muhammad b. Ahmad Khatib, Tgk. Khatib Langgien and Tgk. Muhammad Ali Pulo Pueb.[17]

[15] Indeed, some of this literature maintained an importance in the twentieth century, or was 're-discovered' to enter into contemporary conversations of the twenty-first century. For example, collections of works composed and/or compiled by later Acehnese ulama were repeatedly republished in Jawi at places like Cairo as late as the 1940s. Examples include Isma'il Aceh's *Taj al-Muluk* and *Jami' al-Jawami' al-Musnafat*, and the *Safinat al-Hukkam*, a manual of Islamic legal procedure and administration by the eighteenth-century jurist Jalal al-Din al-Tarusani. This manual was transliterated and published by IAIN and the Dinas Syariat Islam in 2004, in connection with contemporary efforts to implement Islamic law in the province. Unfortunately, the writings of such later scholars have yet to receive any serious academic attention, even while studies of the 'golden age' ulama continue to proliferate.

[16] For the most complete listing of such materials preserved at libraries around the world, see Voorhoeve and Iskandar 1994.

[17] Some very preliminary discussions of some of these authors can be found in works including Hasjmy 1987 and Ara 2008. However, much more work remains to be done in developing more substantial studies of their works, and in examining them as documents of cultural and social history.

The first attempt to survey Achenese literature by Snouck Hurgronje (1906:66-189) has been followed up over the past century by only a handful of studies on specific works, most of which tended to take the form of philological studies focusing on the relationship between Acehnese texts and other Asian literary traditions.[18] However, it is clear that such material also has the potential to document the social as well as literary history of Aceh in the early modern period. Indeed, calls by Takeshi Ito and, more recently, Annabel Teh Gallop, urging contemporary scholars to be more open to the use of such indigenous sources than were the Dutch founders of 'Aceh Studies', have been compelling (Ito 1984; Gallop 2009). Such work could be greatly facilitated by the spate of archive preservation projects and new manuscript catalogues that are currently being produced by Acehnese and international scholars working on various projects.[19]

The Acehnese literature of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries deals with a host of new subjects, for example depictions of the harsh life of those seeking fortunes in the new pepper plantations of the West Coast in the *Hikajat Ranto* of Leubè 'Isa (Drewes 1980:6-41). Contrasting works like this with the later genres narrating events of the Dutch wars, G.W.J. Drewes has noted that in many Acehnese literary works from the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, 'the religious element is absent' and the focus tends to be on 'the intestine (*sic.*) wars on the issue of the throne of Aceh' (Drewes 1979:9). By the end of the nineteenth century, however, we see more of a renewed trend for literary works to take on a more religious focus, and the body of Acehnese texts that has received the most substantial and sustained attention has been those related to the wars against the Dutch in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[20] Amirul Hadi's discussion of the Acehnese literary traditions of the *Hikayat prang sabi* provides a concrete illustration of the interaction between particular Acehnese texts and the broader contexts of social change in the colonial period. In doing so, he provides important insights into the dynamic nature of developments in Acehnese understandings of Islam, and their relationships to changing conceptions of cultural identity and political organization.

18 See, for example, Cowan 1937; Damsté 1916, 1928, 1939, 1942, 1948; Hoesein Djajadiningrat 1916; Iskandar 1959, 1986.

19 A joint Indonesian-Japanese team has produced two major catalogues: Fathurahman and Holil 2007; and Fathurahman 2010. Another young scholar, Fakhriati, is currently working on manuscripts from collections in Pidie and Aceh Besar. A project coordinated by Nurdin AR of the Aceh Museum and the University of Leipzig has also started work on an online catalogue: http://acehms.dl.uni-leipzig.de/content/below/team.xml;jsessionid=138A6E413FB0161EF345011362CC7720?lang=de

20 See, for example, Damsté 1928; Hasjmy 1971; Ibrahim Alfian 2006.

The period of the Dutch wars in Aceh (1873-1942) is undoubtedly the most heavily documented and discussed period of the region's history.[21] The Dutch invasion and continuing campaigns to establish control over Aceh had a profound effect on the development of Acehnese society. One of the most fundamental transformations was in the way that Dutch intervention reconfigured relations between *ulèëbalang* and ulama (Snouck Hurgronje 1906, I: 187).[22] The prolonged conflict left deep scars on both the Acehnese and the Dutch well beyond the horrendous casualties of the battlefields, and in many ways the experience was formative on the development of the respective cultural dynamics on both sides since the turn of the twentieth century (Illustration 5). For the Dutch, it made a deep impact on domestic visions of Islam and the colonial encounter that continue to inform contemporary discourses.[23] For the Acehnese, the legacies of conflict, both during and since the wars against the Dutch, have fostered popular perceptions and even self-ascriptions of Aceh's history as pre-eminently one of violence, as well as the establishment of the idea of 'resistance' as a key concept in the formation of Acehnese identity.[24]

On a more concrete level, the Dutch wars in Aceh were responsible for dramatic cultural innovations facilitated by a range of new elements introduced to the region during the conflict. These included European, Chinese and Javanese immigrants who brought with them their own cultural practices and material artefacts, while also introducing the latest technologies of both battle and bourgeois pastimes to the region. Of particular importance for historical documentation was the camera, which captured many military, public and domestic scenes around Aceh during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Jean Gelman Taylor's chapter in this volume introduces the Images Archive of the Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde (KITLV, Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies) as a resource

21 Indeed, new sources for the history of the Aceh War continue to be brought to light, most recently with the translation of edited excerpts from the account of a Czech physician in the service of the Dutch invasion force (Durdik 2009).

22 Snouck Hurgronje is often credited (or castigated) as central in making this division crucial to shaping the contours of the Dutch wars in Aceh. For Snouck's own statements on the religious and social dynamics of Aceh in this context, see Gobée and Adriaanse 1957:47-396.

23 As attested to by the sustained resonance of echoes of popular Dutch works, and their Indonesian translations, including Zentgraaf 1938, and Van't Veer 1969.

24 It is curious that other cultures in Indonesia that took to displays of dramatic violence in the face of Dutch colonial expansion at the turn of the twentieth century have elected not to foreground this as formative of their cultural identity. An example would be *puputan* in Bali, where horrific incidents of religiously-inspired wartime martyrdom and subsequent outbursts of violence, such as during the 1965 killings, are effectually 'erased' from cultural memory in creating an identity emphasizing tolerance and harmony.

Figure 5. Qur'an MS pierced by a bullet - collected from beside a fallen Acehnese at Laut Tawar (Central Aceh) in August 1905 by Dr Knud Gjellerup, a Danish physician in the service of the Dutch expedition (used with permission from the Danish Royal Library, Cod. Arab. Add. 47). Photograph by R. Michael Feener.

for materials that can serve to shed new light on our visions of Achenese history since the mid-nineteenth century. Most of the more than 1,000 images of Aceh from 1873-1939 contained in this collection are photographs, and many of these are images of war depicting various aspects of the protracted campaigns and resistance between the Acehnese and Dutch colonial forces.[25] However, Taylor's essay goes beyond this to explore the possibilities for using these valuable visual records to shed light on other, often neglected aspects of Acehnese history during this period, including the social life of civilian elites and the region's changing physical landscape, as well as developments in technology and the arts.

In addition to the intrusion of Western colonial institutions, the early twentieth century also saw the transformation of the internal dynamics of

25 A generous selection of photos and other documents focusing specifically on the war can be found in Muhamad Hasan Basry and Ibrahim Alfian 1990.

Acehnese society driven by new tensions arising from debates over differing visions of what constitutes proper Islamic belief and practice. In the early twentieth century, Acehnese Muslims returning from periods of study abroad began bringing home with them some of the modern visions of Islamic reform that were gaining ground in West Sumatra, Java, Egypt and elsewhere at that time. Such visions of Islamic reform, however, seem to have initially been more appealing to certain modernizing *ulèëbalang* than they were to many Acehnese ulama, as the first branch of reformist movements like the Muhammadiyyah were founded by the *ulèëbalang* T. Muhammad Hasan and T. Cut Hasan (Alfian 1985:84). In fact, when the largely reformist organization, Persatuan Ulama-Ulama Seluruh Aceh (PUSA; All Aceh Ulama Association), was first founded in 1939, it received significant support from the *ulèëbalang* (Piekaar 1949:13-24).

This state of things, however, did not last long, as PUSA took on an increasingly anti-Dutch and anti-*ulèëbalang* orientation and eventually became an active and, at times, even radical Muslim nationalist organization (Van Dijk 1981:270-1). Unlike the Muhammadiyyah and other Islamic reform movements, then, PUSA was successful in establishing a distinctly Acehnese movement for Islamic reform.[26] With its reformist orientation, moreover, PUSA worked to establish its own modern educational institutions, such as the Normaal Islam Instituut at Sigli that trained cadres to fill positions in a modern system of administration (Alfian 1985:85). PUSA's anti-Dutch agenda and its penchant for modern organization and mobilization also facilitated its active cooperation with the Japanese during their wartime occupation of Sumatra. At the end of the war, PUSA and its sympathizers moved swiftly against the group they saw as the last remaining allies of the Dutch colonial order, the *ulèëbalang.* In the 'Social Revolution' that raged over the region in late 1945 and early 1946, the *ulèëbalang* were all but wiped out.[27] This left the field open for a reconstitution of the class of administrative professionals in Aceh, the ranks of whom soon swelled with young professionals with allegiance to PUSA.

PUSA was led by Daud Beureu'eh, who emerged after the end of the Second World War not only as Aceh's foremost Islamic reformist leader, but also as its military governor and chief administrator. In 1953, Daud Beureu'eh launched an armed rebellion against the central Indonesian government known as the Darul Islam (DI). Contemporary reports on the composition

[26] In the 1920s, other organizations such as al-Irsyad (Java) and the Thawalib (West Sumatra) had also established Acehnese branch schools in Lhoksukon and Tapak Tuan, respectively (Alfian 1985:84).

[27] For more on these complex developments in the 1930s-1940s, see Reid 1979. A selection of declarations, proclamations, military announcements, legislative motions, letters and other documents related to the early contests for Acehnese autonomy are collected in Alibasjah Talsya (n.y.).

of the Darul Islam movement all point to a very high rate of involvement of civil servants in the rebellion, who seemed to share a combination of Islamic reformist ideology and a strong sense of Acehnese nationalist identity.[28] The Acehnese Darul Islam movement waged a long struggle to establish an independent Islamic state, but was ultimately unsuccessful. Agreements to end hostilities were reached with most of the rebel leaders in 1959, when Aceh was granted the status of a 'special' province, but Daud Beureu'eh and an inner circle of his followers continued their resistance until 1962, when he was granted a pardon.[29]

The end of the Darul Islam movement was soon followed by the end of the founding regime of the Indonesian Republic and the establishment of Suharto's New Order. The dynamics of interaction between Aceh and the Indonesian central government underwent a new evolution during this period. The discovery of natural gas in the area of Lhokseumawe in the 1970s brought Aceh once again to prominence in Indonesian politics and the New Order's vision of economic development. As competition for these valuable resources mounted, there arose a new movement for Acehnese independence, known as the GAM or Free Aceh Movement.

In 1976, GAM's leader, Hasan Muhammad Di Tiro, proclaimed Aceh's independence from Indonesia and initiated a campaign of armed resistance against Indonesian military operations in the province. In 1979, he and a number of other leaders of the movement fled into exile abroad in the face of an intense Indonesian counter-insurgency campaign. A decade later, however, GAM operations began to rise once again, resulting in the launch of massive Indonesian military operations that continued on through the end of Suharto's New Order in 1998. Under the rapid succession of presidents over the years that followed, military operations were also supplemented with other strategies aimed at resolving the conflict, including granting Aceh the right to special autonomy in fields including the application of Islamic law in the province.[30] The conflict ended, however, only in July 2005 with the signing of the Helsinki Peace Agreement.[31] By that time, the situation on the ground in Aceh had been literally transformed by the devastating Boxing Day earthquake and tsunami of 2004.

28 In 1959, many of these Darul Islam-affiliated civil servants were re-integrated into the Regional Administration of Aceh under the Indonesian Republic (Van Dijk 1981:299, 309-10, 335-6).

29 For more on these developments, see Van Dijk 1981:269-339.

30 For nuanced discussions of these complex developments, see the essays by M. Isa Sulaiman, Edward Aspinall, William Neesen, Damien Kingsbury and Lesley McCulloch, Kirsten E. Schulze, Aleksius Jemadu, Michelle Ann Miller, and Rodd McGibbon in Reid 2006:121-359, as well as Miller 2009.

31 Overviews of diverse aspects of the peace process can be found in Aguswandi and Large 2008. An Indonesian version of the same text is also available online at http://www.c-r.org/our-work/accord/aceh/index.php

The end of the conflict and subsequent efforts to maintain peace have received considerable attention elsewhere, as have the immense projects of post-disaster physical and social reconstruction.[32] What is important to note here is that the complex interactions of peace-making and post-disaster reconstruction have resulted in major social transformations that are shaping the next chapters of Aceh's history. The stories of these developments are often dramatic narratives of the experience of a society beset by multiple and massive trauma. Some organizations have already been actively collecting extensive data on the experiences of the conflict, as well as on the earthquake and tsunami, and a growing body of work is thus available to scholars pursuing in-depth investigations of the issues of trauma, resilience and cultural transformation, in addition to the processes of physical, political and economic restructuring (Damanhuri bin Abbas et al. n.y.).[33]

In their attempts to shape new futures for themselves, Acehnese are deeply engaged with interpreting the past (Mohammad Said 1961; Zainuddin 1961; Hasjmy 1983). Some of these are linked to particular projects for defining the religious and cultural identity of Acehnese society. Others, however, are less explicitly politicized attempts at recovering and reconstituting communities in the wake of the profound social changes wrought following the tremendous natural disasters and bloody armed conflicts that have hit the region over the past decade. In the current contexts of reconstruction and conflict resolution, Aceh's past has once again become a newly contested site, while simultaneously facing increasing threats of disappearance and misappropriation for various and disparate causes.

This, of course, is not necessarily something new, as battles over Acehnese identity, and thus sources of legitimate authority, have been important at various points over the past five centuries. However, the lines along which contemporary debates are drawn, and the ways in which they are conducted, do reflect new realities of peculiarly twenty-first century reconfigurations of Aceh's broader political and religious contexts on both national and international levels. These include, for example, the ongoing reinterpretation of relations between the Indonesian nation-state and its 'special regions' (*daerah istimewa*) in the post-Suharto era of de-centralization, as well as trends in global Islam with renewed emphasis on scriptures, assertive critiques of various 'traditional' practices, and increasing concern with more rigid definitions of confessional communal boundaries. These and other influences

[32] For more on these developments, and the extant literature on both reconstruction and conflict resolution, see Daly, Feener and Reid, *From the ground up*.

[33] There are also a considerable number of audio-visual records of the earthquake and tsunami and of their immediate impact at various locations around Aceh. These are now kept in the Provincial Archives (Arsip Provinsi NAD n.y.), catalogued as *Dokumen elektronik hasil kegiatan ganti rugi dan liputan arsip tahun 2006.*

from outside Aceh impact significantly upon local debates, marking a new phase in the region's long experience as a site of contact and communication between Southeast Asia, the broader Indian Ocean world and beyond.

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Chapter II

Aceh as a field for ancient history studies

Daniel Perret

Introduction[1]

Aceh has played a very important role in the history of the Indian Ocean due to its geographical situation. A relatively rich corpus of written sources enables us to reconstruct part of the history of two major sultanates in this area: first, that of Samudra-Pasai between the end of the thirteenth century and the beginning of the sixteenth century; thereafter, that of the Sultanate of Aceh itself. This corpus contains information on the links between this area and other regions along the Indian Ocean littoral. The *Hikayat Raja Pasai* – a Malay text dated to the end of the fourteenth century or the beginning of the fifteenth century (Braginsky 2004:11) – makes mention of, for example, the arrival in Pasai of trading ships from Kling, that is, southeastern India, during the reign of Sultan Malikul Saleh (Jones 1999:21), whose epitaph indicates that he died in 1297 CE. A tradition reported by the Portuguese, Tomé Pires, also suggests the presence of an influential community of people from Bengal, who settled in the area by the mid-fourteenth century (Cortesão 1990:142). Furthermore it is known that the port of Pasai was visited by Kerala traders at the beginning of the fifteenth century (Bouchon 1979:129). In addition to this we know of a link between Pasai and Gujarat because of 12 funerary monuments made of richly-carved white marble found in Pasai. These monuments were exported from Cambay, where they were carved, although additional inscriptions in some instances may have been added in Pasai. Most, if not all, of these monuments date to the fifteenth century (Cowan 1940:17; Lambourn 2003a, 2003b, 2004:217, 219; Moquette 1912). Documentary evidence regarding the presence of Indian Ocean peoples in the Aceh region increased from the sixteenth century. In addition to providing us with information about traders, foreign sources from this period sometimes contain other valuable details,

[1] I am very grateful to Wayne Bougas for his help in editing the initial English language draft of this chapter.

such as letters from Giovanni Empoli, who reported the arrival of slaves from the Maldives Archipelago during his stay at Pasai around 1516 (Alvès 1999:119).

Based on such sources, we get a picture of Pasai as a seaport connected to nearly all the coastal regions of South Asia in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. At the turn of the second millennium, most of the coastal centres in India with connections to the Malay world had quite cosmopolitan populations themselves. Among these populations, the main foreign components generally consisted of traders of Egyptian, Yemeni, Omani, Iraqi, Persian or Turkish origin, depending on the time and place. The two high-ranking Persians whom Ibn Battuta met during his stay at Samudra around 1340, during the reign of Sultan Malik al-Zahir, probably originated from one of these cosmopolitan Indian cities.[2] It is therefore clear that throughout its history, a town such as Pasai exhibited a cosmopolitan blend of peoples with a significant number of foreign merchants from the wider Indian Ocean world.

Written sources from the beginning of the sixteenth century not only commented on traders, but also on the kinds of goods traded. Both Pasai and Aceh were major emporia, where goods coming from throughout the Indonesian Archipelago, including pepper, nutmeg, tin, gold, camphor, benzoin, ivory and elephants, were traded. Unfortunately, written sources tell us almost nothing about the structure and organization of the town of Pasai itself. There are no ancient maps available, and no comprehensive archaeological excavations have ever been conducted on its site. The only monuments still visible are Muslim tombstones. This chapter presents a summary of recent research on these materials and other evidence of early trading settlements in Aceh and its environs. A review of the limited archaeological surveys conducted and published on Aceh proper over the past 20 years demonstrates that ancient settlements have been located in three areas: the Lambaro Bay northwest of Banda Aceh, the Krueng Raya Bay approximately 30 km east of Banda Aceh, and the village of Beringin close to Lhokseumawe.

E. Edwards McKinnon was the first to publish information on the Lambaro Bay sites. As early as 1988, he made mention of the presence of Chinese ceramic shards, the earliest of which dated to the thirteenth century. He also discovered mainland Southeast Asian (Thai, Burmese and Vietnamese) ceramic shards there. Pottery similar to medieval South Indian and Sri Lankan ware was also found, as well as pieces of glass, bronze and iron fragments. At the time of McKinnon's study, rectangular stone foundations were still visible, although underwater, near the Kuala Pancu site. One of them was estimated to measure approximately 50 m by 30 m.

[2] They are the Islamic-law judge (*qadi*) Amir Sayyid al-Shirazi, and the Islamic legal scholar Taj-ad-din al-Isfahani (Ibn Battuta 1995:966).

Six years later, McKinnon, Lukman Nurhakim of the Archaeological Research Centre of Indonesia (Pusat Penelitian dan Pengembangan Arkeologi Nasional), Nurdin A.R. of the Aceh Museum and Pierre-Yves Manguin of the École Française d'Extrême-Orient, identified several sites in the Krueng Raya Bay. The remains of an earthen wall, 3-4 m high, and dating to the sixteenth or the beginning of the seventeenth century, were discovered in Lhok Cut, close to the eastern tip of the bay. A layer located at the base of this structure yielded Chinese and Southeast Asian ceramic shards dating between the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, as well as shards of Indian red pottery. Moreover, many fragments of gold jewellery were reportedly discovered at this site. The remains of ancient settlements have also been found in Cut Me and Ladong (McKinnon 1988, 2006a, 2006b). On the opposite side of the northern tip of the bay, the remains of an old fortress are still visible at Kuta Lubhok. According to oral tradition, the local population associated this building with the Chola kings of South India (Montana 1997:86).

The third area for which the results of surveys have been published is Lhokseumawe. Remains related to the ancient towns of Samudra-Pasai have been found there, where they are still visible among shrimp ponds near the village of Beringin, *kecamatan* (sub-district) of Samudra. Among the finds there are Chinese, Thai and Vietnamese ceramics dating between the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth centuries.[3] Several tombstones, which we will comment on later, confirm the presence of a settlement there since the fifteenth century or before. There is also a mound there known as Cut Astana (Palace Hill). It is approximately 4 m high and covers an area of about 800m². This mound appears to shelter a brick structure (*Notulen* 1884:51). To our knowledge, the location of the older site or sites, known from various sources and settled since the second half of the thirteenth century or before, has yet to be identified.

Without comprehensive archaeological investigations, however, we have to rely on written sources and oral tradition in an attempt to map the ancient settlements of Aceh. By going back in time, starting from the account of Tomé Pires, which dates to the beginning of the sixteenth century (Cortesão 1990:135-48, 163), it is possible to identify the names of several coastal settlements whose foundation occurred in the fifteenth century or before (Illustration 6). These included Aceh itself, which is mentioned for the first time around 1520. The *Hikayat Aceh* recounts Aceh being founded by the merger of two settlements – Makota Alam and Dar ul-Kamal – located on opposite sides of a river (Iskandar 1958:72-5).

[3] We would like to thank M.F. Dupoizat for her identification of the pictures of ceramic shards collected during a brief survey conducted in Beringin in February 2006 (M.F. Dupoizat, personal communication, May 2006). These data fit with those given by McKinnon 2006b:333.

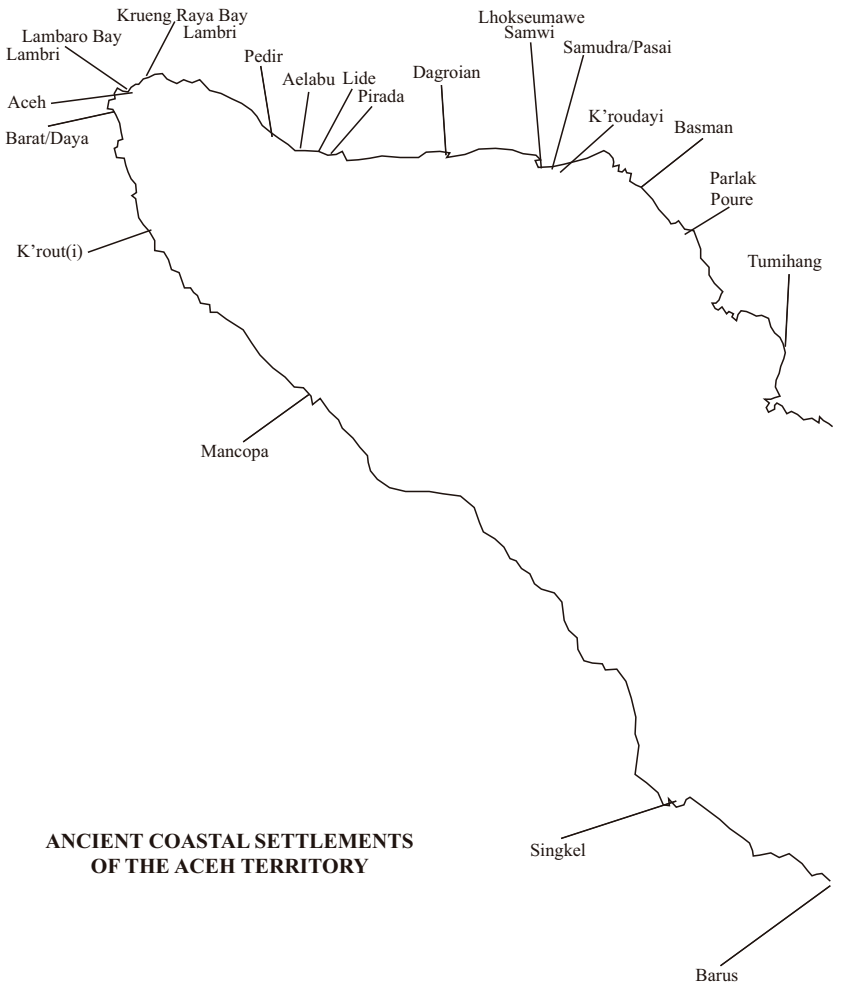

Figure 6. Map of the main coastal settlements on the northern tip of Sumatra prior to the mid-sixteenth century.

'Lambri' (Lamri) still appeared in the name of the kingdom of Aceh at the beginning of the sixteenth century. Pires noted its location in the vicinity of the town of Aceh (Cortesão 1990:138). Since the ninth century, several Arabic sources have made reference to places referred to variously as Rami, Ramni or Lamri (Tibbetts 1979:138-40). The Tamil inscription of Thanjavur, dated 1030, contains the toponym Ilāmurideśam (Coedès 1964:263). The toponym Lambrē is found in a twelfth-century Armenian text. During the following century,

Chinese sources made mention of the country of Lan-wou-Li or Lan-Li, two toponyms that may be Sinicized forms of Lamri (Kévonian 1998, 2002). Lamri again appears among the settlements mentioned by Marco Polo at the end of the thirteenth century (Polo 1955:242). During the fourteenth century, it was mentioned by Odoric de Pordenone (Bressan 1997:17), then in the Javanese text *Nāgara-kĕrtāgama*, dated 1365 (Pigeaud 1960:11). At the beginning of the fifteenth century, Ma Huan, writing on the great maritime expeditions of the Ming dynasty in Southeast Asia and in the Indian Ocean, made mention of Nan-p'o-Li (Ma Huan 1997:122-4). Thus, between the ninth century and the beginning of the sixteenth century we have a toponym, or a group of very closely related toponyms, identifiable at the tip of Aceh. It is possible that we are dealing with several contemporary and more or less connected harbours, which alternately dominated the region at various times. It is almost certain that the discoveries made in the Lambaro and Krueng Raya bays are related to this group of toponyms.[4]

These sites have thus far been little researched. Another complicated case is presented by the textual evidence for early settlements further down on the east coast. Pedir, close to the present town of Sigli, was, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, a major pepper producer visited by ships from Coromandel, Gujarat and Bengal. Barros, a Portuguese official historian, described it as the largest kingdom of the region, which was said to have been founded well before Melaka, dating back to at least the thirteenth century (Dion 1970:145). A twelfth-century Armenian text made mention of the towns of Samwi and K'roudayi, tentatively located near Lhokseumawe and Pasai, respectively (Kévonian 1998:80-6, 2002:63-7). At the end of the thirteenth century Marco Polo made mention of the trading centres of Basman, in the environs of Samudra, and Dagroian, between Samudra and Lambri (Polo 1955:242-3), and the mid-fourteenth-century Javanese text *Nāgara-kĕrtāgama* made mention of Tumihang, whose name survives today as the name of a local river and the town of Tanjung Tamiang near Langsa (Pigeaud 1960:11). Parlak, close to present-day Peureulak, was also mentioned in the *Nāgara-kĕrtāgama*, and appears to be identical with Ferlec, as noted by Marco Polo, and perhaps also the town of Pourē mentioned in the twelfth-century Armenian text (Kévonian 1998:86-8, 2002:67-70; Pigeaud 1960:11; Polo 1955:242-3). Other sites mentioned in early extant sources include Aeilabu, an independent kingdom that became a vassal of Pedir at the beginning of the sixteenth century. Pirada, comprising two neighbouring cities, was also a vassal of Pedir, but it emerged as its own kingdom at about the same time as when Pedir enjoyed close relations with the nearby kingdom of Lide (Cortesão 1990:140- 2).

The west coast of Aceh also had settlements mentioned in some of these

4 This hypothesis was first suggested by McKinnon in 1988.

early texts. The Armenian text, for example, refers to the harbour of K'rout, tentatively located in the vicinity of present-day Lhok-Kruet (Kévonian 1998:78-80, 2002:61-2), and the *Nāgara-kĕrtāgama* made mention of the settlement of Barat, which may be in the same location as the town of Daya mentioned in sixteenth-century Portuguese accounts (Cortesão 1990:163; Pigeaud 1960:11). Portuguese accounts also mention Singkel and Mancopa – a kingdom that was probably located in the vicinity of Meulaboh during that same period (Pigeaud 1960:11).

In addition to this, attempts have been made to locate some Chinese toponyms that date to before the ninth century in the vicinity of Aceh, but no clear consensus has yet been reached on these cases.[5] The presence in Aceh of settlements of significant size before this period is quite possible, but these types of sites are very difficult to identify archaeologically, particularly if the settlement was abandoned before later observers could mention it in their works. A copper Roman coin dating to Emperor Hadrian's reign in the first half of the second century CE was supposedly discovered in Aceh more than 20 years ago – perhaps the first clue of a very ancient historical settlement in Aceh (McKinnon 1988:120). For the pre-historical period, we have some significant evidence in the form of several shell-middens containing stone tools and animal bones at sites south of the Tamiang River. These sites may have been settled as early as 12,000 BP (Bellwood 1985:173; McKinnon 1975).[6]

Two isolated finds must be added to this brief review. The first is the head of a Lokesvara statue, supposedly found in Aceh but whose exact origin is unknown. It was offered to the museum of Batavia in 1880 (*Notulen* 1880:47-8). Stylistically, it is similar to tenth-century Polonaruva art in Sri Lanka (McKinnon 1988:114). The second isolated find came to light much more recently. In 1991, a Tamil inscription was discovered in a mosque of Desa Neusu in Banda Aceh. Kept today in the museum of Aceh, it is unfortunately badly eroded on one side. This inscription may be dated by palaeographic evidence to the twelfth or thirteenth century.[7] What has been deciphered so far indicates a decision made by a group of people to do something, but exactly what action was taken is not clear. The inscription seems to contain the

5 See especially Wolters 1967. For an updated review on this issue, see Ptak 1998 and its Indonesian translation Ptak 2002.

6 See also McKinnon 1990, cited in Forestier 2007:47. For a brief report on the most recent excavations, see *Kompas*, 3-4-2007 and 4-4-2007.

7 Palaeographic dating and reading were made by L. Jhyagarajan (Ariyalur) in 1995, based on a casting and pictures. The author thanks Pierre-Yves Manguin for having made this unpublished study available to him. Y. Subbarayalu, who had the opportunity to see a casting of this inscription in November 2007, suggested dating it to the very end of the thirteenth century (Y. Subbarayalu, personal communication, April 2008).

word *mandapam*, which could refer to a foundation of, or a gift to, a temple – a common practice at that time among associations of Tamil traders (Wisseman 1998:258-9).[8] In fact, this inscription could be the third one related to ancient Tamil trade associations found in the Sumatra/Thai-Malay Peninsula area. The oldest one was found in Takuapa, on the west coast of the Kra Isthmus, and dates to the ninth century. It made mention of a tank that was built and put under the protection of three trade guilds, including the Manigramam – a name which appeared very often in South Indian inscriptions dating between the ninth and the fourteenth centuries (Karashima 2002:11). From this inscription, which also mentions the presence of soldiers (Sastri 1949:29-30),[9] it may be deduced that these associations had established a trading post in Takuapa by that time.

The other inscription, found almost the same distance from Banda Aceh but in the opposite direction, was discovered in 1873 in Barus on the west coast of North Sumatra. Today, it is displayed at the National Museum in Jakarta. Dated to 1088, it clearly deals with members of a major South Indian trading guild, the Ayyavole, and lists the taxes to be paid by traders visiting Barus (Subbarayalu 1998, 2002). This inscription gives us the opportunity to present a brief outline of the results of excavations of several settlements conducted in the Barus area between 1995 and 2004. These sites are comparable with those that could be excavated in Aceh, and can provide some important context for future work.

Ancient settlements of the Barus Area

Since at least the sixth century CE, the name of Barus is associated with camphor, the product for which it was known for almost a millennium. Camphor was collected in the hinterland and traded through this port. By that time, camphor was known in China and in the Mediterranean region as a highly valued item of luxury trade. The oldest site in the Barus area is Lobu Tua, and the Tamil inscription already mentioned was found there. Located a few hundred metres inland from the ocean, at an altitude of approximately 20 m, the central part of the site covered an area estimated to be between 7.5 and 14 ha. This area was protected by earthen walls and ditches, still partially visible today, which sheltered a dense population (Guillot, Surachman and Perret 2003). Nearby surroundings show traces of sparse settlement over

[8] It can be added here that the presence of the remains of a 'Hindu' brick or stone structure in a place called Nesoeh was reported in the 1880s; see *Notulen* 1883:80.

[9] Formerly, the use of armed troops seems to have been a common practice among Indian traders overseas (Sandhu 1973:16).

approximately 200 ha. More than 1,000 m² were excavated in Lobu Tua, mostly in this central settlement area.

Chinese ceramics (nearly 17,000 shards), dating between the mid-ninth century and the end of the eleventh century, were found here. South Asia is represented by several categories of artefacts, including pottery. Indeed, based on their shapes and decorative motifs, much of this pottery could have been made in Coromandel during the Chola dynasty and in Sri Lanka, with some other pieces probably originating from northwest India. There are cooking pots of various shapes, including the *kadhai* (in Tamil) and the *kalaya* (in Sinhalese), sometimes with a honeycomb printed decoration, as well as dishes, plates, jars and pots brought by traders for their daily use. Lobu Tua also yielded artefacts made in the Middle East, including jars and pots dating between the mid-ninth century and the beginning of the eleventh century, notably from Siraf – a port located at the bottom of the Persian Gulf in present-day Iran. In addition, there are polychrome incised artefacts known as *sgraffiato*, often decorated with pseudo-inscriptions and probably made in Iran during the eleventh century.

More than 9,000 shards of blown glass dating between the ninth and eleventh centuries were also collected during the excavations. Most of these artefacts were made in the Persian Gulf region, while others came from the eastern Mediterranean, most likely Egypt or Syria. These artefacts are bowls, bottles, carafes, jars, ewers, goblets and small bottles. The finds also include a seal incised with Kufic script, which reads 'Allah. Muhammad' or 'by Allah. Muhammad', dated from the tenth or eleventh century (Kalus 2000). Among other significant finds from this site are gold coins as well as fragments of moulds for coins very similar to those which can be seen in Tamil Nadu, especially in the museum of Gangaikondacholapuram – the site of the Chola capital during the eleventh century. Based on the present state of knowledge, Barus is the first place in Sumatra to have produced a currency, perhaps as early as during the tenth century.

From the results of these excavations, it can be concluded that Lobu Tua was a foreign trading settlement, probably founded around the mid-ninth century by South Indian or Sri Lankan traders, and quickly followed by traders from the Middle East, all looking for camphor. There is no indication of the existence of strong political power, but Lobu Tua was an important link in an Indian Ocean trading network that connected the Middle East, India and the Indonesian Archipelago. Indians appear to have played a prominent role in the town's commercial activities, where they appear to have worked closely with the Javanese in trade and in the extraction of gold from the interior of the island. Lobu Tua was, however, suddenly abandoned around the turn of the twelfth century. A local Malay chronicle, written at the end of the nineteenth century, recounts that Lobu Tua was attacked by giants, but no

additional details are given. This chronicle is remarkable because certainly, without knowing about the existence of the ancient settlement of Lobu Tua, and knowing even less about the existence of the Tamil inscription, it recounts that Barus was founded by Chetti and Hindus (Drakard 2003:142). As such, the chronicle preserves in the collective memory a 1,000-year-old event now confirmed by archaeology.

The account of the successive foundations of settlements in the Barus area in the same chronicle leads us to the site of Bukit Hasang. From a physical perspective, this site is very similar to Lobu Tua. It overlooks the coast at an altitude of about 20 m, and includes a fortified central area estimated at some 15 ha, if we take into account the erosion processes that have 'eaten away' one of its sides (Perret and Surachman, 2009). Nearly 700 m² were excavated on this site. Among the artefacts found are more than 43,000 shards of imported ceramics and more than 120,000 shards of pottery exceeding a ton in weight. Although the analysis of these artefacts has yet to be completed, we can already suggest that the site was founded by the mid-twelfth century and reached its peak between the mid-thirteenth century and the turn of the fifteenth century. Deserted during most of the fifteenth century, it was re-settled again between the end of the fifteenth century and the mid-sixteenth century over a wider area, probably between 45 and 65 ha. The proportion of imported pottery seems much less significant than at Lobu Tua, suggesting a more homogeneous population.

The inscription on one of the oldest dated tombstones found on the site (1370) gives an idea of the complexity of this society. It contains Arabic words using Persian grammar, a Malay word, a name that could be Chinese, as well as a formula attested in Turkey and Yemen (Kalus 2003:305-6).

Other connections between Barus and the Middle East are documented with the recent rediscovery, by Ludvik Kalus and Claude Guillot, of the epitaph of Hamza Fansuri. This early Malay sufi poet's name, 'Fansuri', indicates a strong relation with Barus (Kalus and Guillot 2000, 2007). The inscription on his gravestone was recorded in 1934 by an Egyptian epigraphist at a cemetery in Mecca, dating the death of Shaykh Hamza b. Abd Allah al-Fansuri to 933 H/1527 CE – well before the date generally assumed. It is thus possible to suggest that Hamza Fansuri may have lived in Bukit Hasang at some point before moving to Mecca. Apart from the implications of this rediscovery for the history of the poet himself, it is now clear that he probably never lived in Aceh proper, which was just emerging as a trading centre and Muslim polity at that time. Based on this rediscovery, it can be suggested that Barus was perhaps an important centre for Malay literature during this period. Barus was certainly strongly influenced by Aceh later, as seen in the Acehnese tombstones brought there and in the Aceh-influenced monuments made there between the sixteenth century and the turn of the twentieth century. Directly

or indirectly, they are linked to cultural traditions that seem to have developed in Aceh since around the beginning of the fifteenth century.

Ancient Muslim tombstones of Aceh

Aceh is by far the richest area of the Malay world for archaeological evidence in the form of Muslim tombstones, particularly for the graves of high-ranking individuals and members of their families. At least three significant artistic traditions can be distinguished in this type of monument. The most spectacular is represented by the white marble tombstones imported from Gujarat to Pasai at the beginning of the fifteenth century.[10] Another tradition, the origin of which has yet to be identified, takes the form of pillars (Montana 1997:86). The third and best represented tradition is most likely of local origin and is known as *batu Aceh* in the neighbouring regions, especially in the Malay Peninsula. In fact, as early as the mid-fifteenth century, such tombstones, characterized by their shapes and decorations, were used in Johor. They were also later used in Pattani, in present-day southern Thailand, and as far afield as South Sulawesi. Imported or imitated until the beginning of the twentieth century, these tombstones exhibit various shapes, are often richly carved, and constitute evidence of the great cultural influence of the sultanates of Pasai and Aceh in the Malay Muslim world. Nearly 500 such monuments have been described in detail during recent surveys conducted in peninsular Malaysia (Perret 2004; Perret, Razak and Kalus 1999, 2004). To our knowledge, such a general inventory – the basis for comprehensive studies – is sorely lacking for Aceh itself. In fact, Aceh has the greatest number of these monuments, perhaps 1,500 (Perret 2007:318). Unfortunately, many of them have disappeared or were damaged during the 2004 tsunami. Approximately 350 of them carry inscriptions with historical data of prime importance for the history of the kingdoms of the northern part of Sumatra.[11] An epigraphical study of these tombstones is currently being carried out by Kalus and Guillot.

Conclusion

By combining the archaeological data published to date with local and foreign written sources, it is possible to partly reconstruct the 'urban' landscape of Aceh and the surrounding areas of northern Sumatra between the ninth and fifteenth centuries. A preliminary list exceeding 20 settlements, all of them

10 For recent studies on these monuments, see Lambourn 2003b.
11 L. Kalus, personal communication, January 2007.

requiring comprehensive archaeological research, has been drawn up here. The example of Barus shows that controlled excavations conducted at these sites could yield major contributions to the history of Aceh itself, and, more generally, to the history of the Indian Ocean world.

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Chapter III

Aceh as crucible of Muslim-Malay literature

Teuku Iskandar

Pasai and the introduction of Islam

According to his grave monument in Pasai, Sultan Malik al-Salih, considered by many historians to be the first Muslim ruler in the Malay Archipelago, died in 1297. Although the *Hikayat Raja Pasai* (*The chronicle of Pasai*) is not an historical writing in the true sense of the word, it nevertheless gives us a glimpse of the cultural life of one of the earliest Muslim countries in the Malay world.

The *Hikayat Raja Pasai* is the first piece of Malay historical writing of the Muslim period in the archipelago, but it is not the first Muslim-Malay work. A paraphrase of the prototype of this *hikayat* can be found in the *Sejarah Melayu* (*The Malay annals*), the second oldest historical writing of the Muslim period. Originally written in Malacca during the fifteenth century, it is highly likely that this paraphrase was incorporated into the Annals at this time. The account of Pasai ends with the death of Sultan Malik al-Zahir and the ascension to the throne of Sultan Amad. As Sultan Malik al-Zahir died in 1336, the composition of this version must have been completed not very much later than that year. The other version of the *Hikayat Raja Pasai* (Hill 1960) has later additions, probably written after the story of Sultan Amad's son, Tun Beraim Bapa, had become a legend. In either version, the *Hikayat Raja Pasai* became a model for such later Muslim-Malay historiographical works as the *Sejarah Melayu* and the *Hikayat Aceh*.[1]

[1] This dating is essentially based on the refutation by Amin Sweeney 1967 of the hypotheses by Roolvink 1954:3-7 and Teeuw 1964:222-34; see further Iskandar 1995:153-5. Note, however, that Brakel 1975, supported by Braginsky 2004:104-113, argued for a later fourteenth-century date on the basis of quotations in the *Hikayat Raja Pasai* from the *Hikayat Muhammad Hanafiah* and his mid-fourteenth century dating of that text.

Pasai as a commercial centre

More can be found in the description of the Moroccan traveller Ibn Battuta, who visited Pasai in 1345/1346, and presented a vivid picture of its cultural life. What he saw was a thriving Muslim-Malay society with a pious sultan as its leader, supported by able dignitaries. Ibn Battuta's account gives a glimpse of the greatness of fourteenth century Pasai as the first Muslim-Malay kingdom. Its grandeur was made possible by its position as an important trading centre on the Straits of Malacca. This vivid picture of life in Pasai can be supplemented by later Portuguese accounts, which gave a description of the capital, the commerce and the system of government. In the centre of the capital stood the citadel in which the sultan and his court resided. Within the walls of the city, and also in the suburbs, the high nobles or *mandaris* (*menteri*) had their residences (Alves 1994:125-7). The *Hikayat Raja Pasai* also made mention of *menteri* and a *perdana menteri* ('prime minister'), (Jones 1999:18). It seems likely that the Malay system of government consisting of the four, the eight, and probably the sixteen *menteri* was already in existence in Pasai.

Portuguese sources also spoke of the government hierarchy, which consisted of the *temenggung* (minister of defences), the *syahbandar* (port official) and his deputy, and the *qadi* (Islamic-law judge). Neither the *Hikayat Raja Pasai* nor the Portuguese sources made mention of a *bendahara* (vizier). Tomé Pires, who was in Malacca in 1513, spoke of *bendahara* only in relation to Malacca. However, he did observe that Pasai was a rich country with a flourishing trade, especially after Malacca was defeated by the Portuguese and Pidie had declared war on Aceh. Pasai, at that time, had more than 20,000 inhabitants, including merchant communities of Bengalis, *Rumes* (Genoese or Venetians?), Turks, Arabs, Persians, Gujaratis, South Indians, Malays, Javanese and Siamese. On the way to the interior were large towns, where great nobles and important people who were sometimes at odds with Pasai lived. The country produced pepper, silk and gum benzoin. Rice was cultivated only for domestic consumption (Pires 1944:142).

Malay becomes the language of Islam and Muslim literature

Islam was preached in the vernacular of Pasai. With its religious and other Muslim literature written in or translated into this vernacular, the Malay language became the language of Islam and was called *bahasa Jawi*. The literature of Pasai was held in such high esteem that the language it was written in was called *bahasa Pasai*. For instance, in his work entitled the *Mir'at al-Mu'min* (1601), Shams al-Din of Pasai stated that he wrote this book in

Malay, 'because as they have not mastered the the Arabic or Persian tongues, most of the distinguished people among my pious brothers read only the language of Pasai'. 'Abd al-Ra'uf al-Singkili, who was prolific during the reign of Sultana Taj al-'Alam Safiyyat al-Din (1641-1675), also referred, in his *Mir'at al-Tullab*, to the Malay language as the 'language of Pasai' (*bahasa Pasai*) (Iskandar 1995:113, 389, 424). By contrast Hamza Fansuri, the great Sumatran mystical poet of the sixteenth century, referred to the Malay language as *bahasa Jawi*, borrowed from the term for Southeast Asians in circulation in Mecca, which had a wide currency. Later, the Samudra part of the twin-name Samudra-Pasai was applied to the island of Sumatra and adapted to the Arabic pronunciation. When Islam was introduced, the country also took on the Muslim epithet 'Dar al-Salam' (Jones 1999:16), and was called Samudra Dar al-Salam. This epithet was later assumed by Aceh and several other states around the Straits of Malacca, and even beyond, as far as Brunei.

The language of Pasai's written literature can be classified as Pre-Classical Malay, as opposed to the Classical Malay of such eighteenth-century works as the *Hikayat Hang Tuah* or the *Sejarah Melayu* (Shellabear edition).[2] The Arabic script as it is used for the Malay language developed from the system of writing achieved by adapting Arabic script to the Persian language. The way Arabic script is used in rendering Persian literature into Malay shows that this script had already been transformed for Persian use. For phonemes not found in the Arabic alphabet, new letters were created by adding a dot or dots to the existing Arabic letters. This script is called the Jawi alphabet.

The oldest Malay religious treatises and stories on the life of the Prophet Muhammad and his companions are translations or adaptations from the Persian language. The Malay *Hikayat nur Muhammad* is claimed by Ismail Hamid to be an adaptation of the *Tarjuman Maulid al-Mustafa* by Sa'd ibn Mas'ud, which was translated from Arabic into Persian by his son, Afif al-Din (1331) (Ismail Hamid 1983:54-5). Other Malay texts also appear to be based on Persian prototypes. For example, as Ph.S. van Ronkel (1909:233) argued, the *Hikayat Nabi wafat* was translated from the Persian work *Wafat-Namah*. The *Hikayat bulan bebelah* is an originally Persian story about the miraculous power displayed by the Prophet in splitting the moon, which had been used in the ninth century to disseminate Islam in Malabar (Marrison 1955:65). In a manuscript containing the *Hikayat Nabi bercukur*, a story of the shaving of the Prophet's head, there is a note to the effect: 'this is the writing of a *rafidi* – don't believe it'. A *rafidi* is a heretic, a term often used in Malay literature for Shi'ites (Iskandar 1995:455),[3] which could point to the Persian origin of this

[2] Although these texts are frequently dated to the seventeenth century; see Iskandar 1964 and 1970.

[3] See also: *Sya'ir Makah dan Madinah*, Ms Leiden CodOr 3335.1, and Abdullah Ibrahim 1985.

story. The genre of stories which evolved about the associates of the Prophet also consisted of translations from Persian.

Persian influence on Sunni Islam in the Malay Archipelago

The *Hikayat Amir Hamza* and the *Hikayat Muhammad Hanafiyya*, translated into Malay from Persian (Brakel 1975; Van Ronkel 1895), were already popular in Malacca in the early sixteenth century. While waiting for the Portuguese attack in 1511, the warriors held a vigil and wanted to spend their time in an entertaining manner. They asked Sultan Amad for a reading from the *Hikayat Muhammad Hanafiyya*. The ruler feared that they would not be able to emulate his bravery, so he gave them instead the *Hikayat Amir Hamza*. Only after they appealed did he give them both *hikayat*.

Brakel, who edited the *Hikayat Muhammad Hanafiyya*, considered the Persian version to have originated in the middle of the fourteenth century and to have been translated into Malay in one of the coastal centres of North Sumatra not very much later (Brakel 1975:56). It is my belief that Samudra-Pasai is the only candidate for this Muslim-Malay cultural centre. Brakel argued that the *Hikayat Amir Hamza* must have been rendered into Malay earlier than the *Hikayat Muhammad Hanafiyya*. From internal evidence in the text of the *Hikayat Raja Pasai*, we can conclude that at the time this work was written, the *Hikayat Iskandar Dhu'l-Qarnayn* was already familiar. Brakel discovered that the way certain events are described in the *Hikayat Raja Pasai* is similar to the descriptions found in the *Hikayat Amir Hamza* and the *Hikayat Muhammad Hanafiyya,* an indication that these works are older than the chronicle of Pasai (1336).

In the first part of the *Hikayat Raja Pasai* the name Megat Iskandar occurs. The *Sejarah Melayu* mentions that the last ruler of Singapura left his country after it had been defeated by Majapahit. When Malacca embraced Islam he took the name Iskandar Syah (Pires 1944:238), which suggests that the story of *Hikayat Iskandar Dhu'l-Qarnayn* was already known in Pasai. It is thus not impossible that the Malay translation of an Arabic original was made in this place as well.

There were interactions between Pasai and Malacca in religious, literary and political fields ever since the son of the *Parameswara* of Malacca married a daughter of the sultan of Pasai and embraced Islam. Pasai was the place where problems relating to Islam were solved. The *Sejarah Melayu* was written with the *Hikayat Raja Pasai* as a model. Pasai was held in high esteem in Malacca, resulting in a paraphrase of the prototype of its chronical being incorporated in the *Sejarah Melayu*. Malay translations of Arabic and Persian literature in Pasai became popular in Malacca. On the other hand, a palace

revolution in Pasai was arbitrated by Malacca, according to the chronicle.

Aceh's close relationships with Persia and Muslim India ensured that Shi'ite traces persisted in the Sunni Islam practised in Aceh. Although Ibn Battuta had reported that Shafi'i Sunni Islam prevailed in Pasai in the fourteenth century, there were still Shi'ite elements discernible in Acehnese Islam up to the Second World War. The Persian *Ashura* (10 Muharram), which marks the death of Husayn, son of Ali and Fatima and grandson of the Prophet, was still celebrated. In Persia and Muslim India, this important date of early Muslim history is observed in a grand manner. In Aceh, the day is called *Acura* or *Asan-Usén* (after Hasan and Husayn, grandsons of the Prophet), and observed by cooking a special kind of porridge called *kanji Acura*, which consists of rice, coconut milk, sugar and pieces of chopped fruits such as pomegranates; the porridge is cooked in a large pan for the consumption of the whole village (Snouck Hurgronje 1894:214-8). This occasion is also observed in similar ways at several other places in Indonesia.

The account of Ibn Battuta testifies to the close relationship between the courts of Pasai and Delhi, of which the court language was Persian. Persian literature was predominantly translated into Malay during the heyday of Pasai. There is considerable evidence for the influence of Persian language and literature on the development of Malay as a Muslim vernacular. For example, on the epitaph of Na'ina Husam al-Din bin Na'ina Amin, who died on 9 October 1420, a poem is engraved citing certain verses of the *Tayyibat*, a work of the Persian poet Muslih al-Din Sa'di (1193-1292), in *ghazal* metre (Cowan 1940:15-21; Lambourn 2003:229-30). The library of Leiden University keeps a manuscript,[4] written on tree-bark paper, from Lam Pisang in Aceh Besar. The manuscript contains an anthology of mystical verses by famous poets in Arabic and Persian with interlinear Malay translation. The verses consist of an incomplete Arabic poem by Abu Tammam (800-845), a *ghazal* and a couplet (*mathnawi*) of Jalal al-Din Rumi (1207-1273), a *mathnawi* by Muslih al-Din Sa'di, and a quatrain (*ruba'i*) by 'Umar Khayyam (d. 1132). In my book on the history of classical Malay literature (Iskandar 1995), this anthology is attributed to the Aceh period (1500 and after) because the manuscript was found in Lam Pisang, but it could also have been a copy of a manuscript belonging to the literature of Pasai (1300-1524). The defeat of Pasai by Aceh (1524) did not mean the abrupt end of the Persian influence on Malay culture. In fact the process of decline must have been gradual and continued until the end of the sixteenth century. Shams al-Din Pasai must have followed his initial studies in Pasai, before he went to Mecca by way of Aceh, India and the Middle East. Back in Aceh, he became the Shaykh al-Islam at the court of the

4 Cod.Or. 7056.

Sultan 'Ala' al-Din Ri'ayat Syah Sayyid al-Mukammil (1578-1603) until the reign of Iskandar Muda (1606-1636).[5]

In the library of Leiden University there is a manuscript of the *Hikayat bayan budiman*[6], formerly the property of the nineteenth-century Dutch scholar H.N. van der Tuuk. Three times in the manuscript (Cod.Or. 3208:47, 54, 91) it is mentioned that the *hikayat* was composed by Qadi Hasan in the year 773 H (1371 CE). In another manuscript, formerly owned by Gerth van Wijk, the thirteenth story mentions that it was rendered into Malay by Qadi Hasan in the same year, 773 H. This collection of tales ultimately goes back to the *Sukasaptati* (*The seventy tales of a parrot*), of which there are two versions in Sanskrit. However, it was a Persian version no longer extant that was the source of at least one Malay text (Winstedt 1939:78).[7]

Winstedt rejected the idea that this kind of work could have been translated into Malay as early as the year mentioned in the two manuscripts. He suggested that a Persian version by Abu'l-Fadl (1551-1602), composed at the order of Emperor Akbar and based on Nakhshabi's work of 1329, could have been the original of this translation. However, we cannot find any manuscript dating from the seventeenth century – the Aceh period of Malay literature –containing the *Hikayat bayan budiman*. Works of this later period generally mention their authors or translators and the date of writing. Fourteenth-century Pasai should be considered a likelier option for the initial translation of the work into Malay.

Pasai and its material culture

One way to measure the rise and decline of Pasai as a Malay cultural centre is by studying its grave memorials, which reflect the prosperity of Pasai at its peak. The gravestones of Sultan Malik al-Salih (d. 1297) and Na'ina Husam al-Din (d. 1420) were commissioned in Cambay, Gujarat, western India, and transported to Pasai. By comparing the cenotaph of Sultan Malik al-Salih and that of Na'ina Husam al-Din, a picture is gained of how Pasai developed in prosperity over the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. While the gravestone of Malik al-Salih has simple engravings, that of Na'ina Husam al-Din is richly engraved. Only the wealth of the court and the trading community could make it possible to commission such beautifully carved memorials from

5 See *'Umdat al-Mutajin* by 'Abd al-Ra'uf al-Singkili, where the author at the end gives a description of his education (in Rinkes 1909), very likely similar to that of Shams al-Din.

6 Cod.Or. 3208.

7 A later Persian version entitled *Tuti-Namah* was translated and annotated by Nakshabi in 1329.

overseas. The wealth Pasai derived from its commercial activities is attested to by Chinese and Portuguese sources.

The most impressive grave memorial in Pasai is that of Sultana Bahiah Nahrisyah, a daughter of Sultan Zayn al-Abidin, who died on 27 September 1428. One of the biggest grave memorials is that of Abdullah b. Muhammad b. Abd al-Qadir b. Abd al-Aziz b. al-Mansur Abu Ja'far al-Abbasi al-Mustansir bi'llah Amir al-Mu'minin Khalifa Rabb al-'Alamin, who died in 1407 CE. Abdullah was the great-great-grandson of the Abbasid caliph al-Mustansir, who endured the attack of the Mongols and died in Baghdad in 1242. The presence of Abdullah's grave in Pasai shows the importance of this sultanate in the eyes of the Muslim world. A member of the Abbasid family had escaped Baghdad and eventually made his way to Sumatra.[8]

In spite of the boom in imported cenotaphs from Cambay, there is also a locally made gravestone at Meunjè Tujoh, in the Pasai area. It is peculiar for several reasons that the epitaph is not inscribed in Arabic but in Kawi script (Old-Sumatran writing). The language is Old Malay, in contrast to the language of the Pasai literature (*Hikayat Raja Pasai*, *Hikayat Amir Hamza*, and other works), which was Pre-Classical Malay. The princess buried there died in 1389 (Stutterheim 1936:268-79), almost a century after the death of Sultan Malik al-Salih, whose tombstone bears an epitaph in Arabic. This gravestone is an extension of the tradition of Old-Malay inscriptions of the Srivijaya period, but the technique of engraving is Muslim, as are the other epitaphs on tombstones imported from Cambay. The letters are not engraved in the stone like the inscriptions of the Srivijaya area, but cut in relief like the Cambay epitaphs, an indication that after the introduction of Cambay grave monuments craftsmen began to produce tombstones locally. It was the beginning of a tradition of producing what in Malaysia are called *batu Aceh*. In Aceh itself such grave markers are called *batèe Meuraksa*, after the place at which they were carved, near Banda Aceh.[9]

An epitaph in Old-Malay with Kawi characters is also found on a grave memorial dating from more than a century later at Pengkalan Kempas, Malaysia. This is the grave memorial of Ahmat Majanu, who died in the year 1385 Saka (1463-1464). This Kawi epitaph was of a later date (1467-1468, 'during the reign of Sultan Manşur Syah'), and has been provided with a Jawi equivalent (De Casparis 1980; Evans 1921:155-7; Kloss 1921). This evidence permits the conclusion that Old Malay with Kawi script was still in use more than one and a half centuries after the introduction of Jawi script on the

8 The catalogue of Aceh tombstones by Claude Guillot and Ludvik Kalus (2008) became available after the first draft of this chapter was written, and now documents its major argument more fully.

9 Gravestones produced in Pasai and Aceh are found in Malaysia and as far away as Brunei; see Hasan Ambary 1996 and Lambourn 2003.

Terengganu inscription (1303), and that this language was still in use as the language of the Chancellery (Iskandar 1995:11).

Three principalities united into Aceh Dar al-Salam

Towards the end the fifteenth century, the importance of Pasai declined. P.A. Hoesein Djajadiningrat suggested that this was caused by the competition posed by new upcoming principalities as trade centres along the Straits of Malacca in Aceh (P.A. Hoesein Djajadiningrat 1981:1-34). Sultan Ali Mughayat Syah defeated Samudra-Pasai in 1524 and annexed the country. Its sultan escaped to exile in Portuguese Malacca but its legacy, the Muslim-Malay culture, lived on and continued to develop further in the Sultanate of Aceh Dar al-Salam.

The manuscript of the *Adat Aceh*, edited in facsimile by Drewes and Voorhoeve (1958) and later romanized by Harun and Gani (1985), contains a genealogy of Acehnese sultans entitled: *Inilah silsilah segala raja-raja yang jadi kerajaan Aceh dalam Aceh Bandar Dar al-Salam* [This is the genealogy of all kings who have ruled in Aceh Bandar Dar al-Salam]. The genealogy tells us that on Friday, 1 Ramadan 601 H (Friday, 22 April 1205 CE), Sultan Johan Syah came from the west to convert the country of Aceh to Islam. He settled down at Kandang Aceh and begot a son named Sultan Ahmad. Johan Syah died in 631 H/1234 and was succeeded by his son who assumed the title Sultan Ri'ayat Syah. This sultan died in 665 H/1267 and was succeeded by his son, Sultan Mahmud Syah. This ruler left Kandang Aceh to build a fortified palace named Dar al-Dunya. Sultan Mahmud Syah died in 708 H/1308 and in turn was succeeded by his son, Sultan Firman Syah. This sultan died in 755 H/1354 to be succeeded by his son, Sultan Mansur Syah. He died in 811 H/1408 and was succeeded by his son, Sultan 'Ala' al-Din Johan Syah. Sultan 'Ala' al-Din died in 870 H/1466 and was again succeeded by his son, Sultan Husayn Syah. After the latter's death in 901 H/1496 he was succeeded by his son, Sultan Ali Ri'ayat Syah. After his death in 917 H/1511, he was succeeded by his son, Sultan Salah al-Din. This ruler died in 975 H/1567 to be succeeded by his son, Sultan 'Ala' al-Din Ri'ayat Syah al-Qahhar.

If the *Silsilah Kandang Aceh* is correct, and we have no other sources to verify it, this kingdom must have been converted to Islam earlier than Samudra-Pasai. This would be so even if we allowed that the first Muslim ruler of Pasai was 90 when he died in 1297, which is very unlikely, and that he was converted as a child. The names of the last two rulers of Kandang Aceh are known to us from the *Hikayat Aceh* as well as from the *Bustan al-Salatin* (hereafter *Bustan*). If we put the lists of early Acehnese sultans, based on the three writings, next to each other, we get the following picture:

Silsilah Kandang Aceh	*Hikayat Aceh*		*Bustan al-Salatin*
	Makota Alam	Dar al-Kamal	
Johan Sy.	–	–	–
Ri'ayat Sy.	–	–	–
Mahmud Sy.	–	–	–
Firman Sy.	–	–	–
Mansur Sy.	–	–	–
'Ala' al-Din. J. Sy.	Munawar Sy.	Abdullah M.al-M.	–
Husayn Sy.	Syamsu Sy.	Muzaffar Sy.+ sister	Ali Mughayat Sy.
Salah al-Din	Salah al-Din	Firman Sy. (of Daya)	Salah al-Din
'Ala' al-Din R.A. al-Qahhar	'Ala' al-Din R.A. al-Qahhar		'Ala' al-Din R.A. al-Qahhar.

From these genealogical lists we see that according to the *Bustan* Ali Mughayat Syah was the first sultan to rule Aceh and the first to embrace Islam. This work ignores the pre-Ali Mughayat Syah period. Commencing with Sultan Salah al-Din, the three lists are in concert, as they are with his successor, 'Ala' al-Din Ri'ayat Syah. Salah al-Din's predecessor is mentioned in the *Silsilah Kandang Aceh* as Ali Ri'ayat Syah, while the *Hikayat Aceh* and the *Bustan* call him Ali Mughayat Syah. Probably, Ali Ri'ayat Syah in the *Silsilah* is a mistake for Ali Mughayat Syah; such mistranscriptions are a common feature in the work of copyists of Malay manuscripts.

If we can indentify Ali Ri'ayat Syah in the *Silsilah* with Ali Mughayat Syah in the *Hikayat Aceh*, we are still left with different names in the genealogies of the pre-Ali Mughayat Syah period in the *Silsilah* and the *Hikayat Aceh* (R. Hoesein Djajadiningrat 1911:143). Two kingdoms are mentioned at the beginning of the *Hikayat Aceh*: Makota Alam and Dar al-Kamal. The genealogy of Dar al-Kamal ends with the defeat of this kingdom by Sultan Syamsu Syah of Makota Alam over Sultan 'Inayat Syah. The victory by Syamsu Syah was obtained with a ruse, in the manner of the Trojan horse. He solicited the hand of 'Inayat Syah's daughter for his son. During the wedding procession weapons were smuggled into Dar al-Kamal and the palace was taken. In spite of this catastrophe the marriage went ahead and the bridegroom, according to Acehnese matrilocal custom, lodged in his consort's home. This palace became the seat of the future Acehnese sultans until it was destroyed during the Dutch-Acehnese war (1873-1903). Only after the amalgamation of these two principalities does the name Aceh Dar al-Salam appear for the first time in the *Hikayat Aceh*.

Dar al-Kamal was situated across the Aceh River south of Makota Alam. The locality of this sultanate must have been in the region of the later Sagi XXII Mukim. This *sagi* (district of Greater Aceh) was flanked by Sagi XXVI Mukim in the north and Sagi XXV Mukim in the south, stretching out to the Indian Ocean. Kandang Aceh is situated in the VI Mukim, called Peukan Bada, of the latter *sagi*. This place must have been the capital of the first kingdom to be converted to Islam by Sultan Johan Syah. If this is correct, the XXV Mukim must have been the territory of Johan Syah's sultanate.

The *Silsilah Kandang Aceh* also mentions that it was Johan Syah's grandson, Sultan Mahmud Syah (1267-1308), who moved from Kandang Aceh and built the palace Dar al-Dunya. This palace was the same as that taken by Syamsu Syah when he defeated 'Inayat Syah. There is a missing link between the dynasty of Kandang Aceh and that of 'Inayat Syah of Dar al-Kamal. However, there is a possibility that the three *sagi* played an important role during the government of the Sultanate of Aceh Dar al-Salam.

It was not Sultana Nur al-'Alam Naqiyyat al-Din , as tradition has it, who divided the sultanate into three *sagi*; it was Sultan Ali Mughayat Syah who united the three principalities into Greater Aceh. He also conquered other principalities such as Daya, Pidie and Pasai. The three *sagi* had their own chief *qadi*, who bore the title Qadi Rabbu'l-Jalil (Rabon Jali, judge of the Almighty Lord), and their own great mosque. The XXII Mukim had the Meuseugit Indrapuri (Indrapuri Mosque). As the name and architecture suggest, it must have been built on the foundations of a Hindu temple after the introduction of Islam. The same can be said of the former mosque of Indrapurwa in the XXV Mukim. In the Sagi XXVI Mukim, we have the ruins of the mosque called Indrapatra, located close to Ladong (Iskandar 1958:28). According to tradition the building of these mosques, as well as the Meuseugit Raya, is ascribed to Sultan Iskandar Muda.[10]

It is by no means easy to set the *Silsilah Kandang Aceh* aside, although the sultans of the pre-Ali Mughayat Syah period cannot be verified with dates from gravestones, as is the case with the sultans in the *Hikayat Aceh* or the *Bustan*. The position of the *panglima* (chief) of this *sagi* was equally if not more important than those in the other two *sagi*. Towards the end of the sultanate, the three *panglima sagi* were considered as the guardians of the country of Aceh, which was regarded as an ever rejuvenated bride whom they gave in marriage to whomsoever they desired, after deliberation among themselves. The bridegroom had to pay bride wealth to each of the *panglima sagi*, and they usually chose the bridegroom from the family of his predecessor, but they

[10] This expansion of the role of remembered heroes is comparable with the tradition that ascribed the conversion of Aceh to Islam to the seventeenth-century ulama Syiah Kuala (Snouck Hurgronje 1894:83, 87, 93).

did not hesitate to choose a non-local as sultan at times (Snouck Hurgronje 1894:139).

In those days the installation of a new ruler proceeded as follows: first came the *panglima* of Sagi XXVI Mukim, followed by his retinue – Teuku Nèk Peureuba Wangsa of IX Mukim, Teuku Nèk Raja Muda Seutia, ulèëbalang (territorial chief) of Mukim Meuraksa (previously also of VI Mukim), Teuku Nèk Nanta Seutia, who in later days had taken over the VI Mukim from Teuku Nèk Meuraksa.

The chief *qadi* of Sagi XXV, Qadi Rabu'l-Jalil, pronounced the installation formula, which was repeated loudly by the Qadi Malik al-'Adil, the qadi of the sultan of Aceh, so as to be heard by the public. At the end of the installation formula, the Qadi Malik al-'Adil called the *panglima* of Sagi XXVI by his title three times in succession, and was answered by the latter and his retinue: '*Dèelat*' ('Your Majesty'). The *panglima* retreated to make way for his colleagues, the *panglima* of XXV and of XXII Mukim (Snouck Hurgronje 1894:143-5).

This was the order of precedence of the three *sagi* at state ceremonies: Sagi XXVI, XXV and XXII Mukim. The fact that the most important place was reserved for the *panglima* of Sagi XXVI Mukim is understandable, because this was the realm (the Kingdom of Lamri/Makota 'Alam) of Iskandar Muda and his four female successors. Kandang Aceh, situated in Mukim VI (Peukan Bada) of the Sagi XXV Mukim – the first principality to embrace Islam and probably older than Dar al-Kamal – was the second in rank in the order of precedence.

Aceh Dar al-Salam: Its expansion and the adoption of Pasai Muslim-Malay culture

The *Hikayat Aceh* states that Sultan 'Ala' al-Din Ri'ayat Syah was succeeded by his elder son, Salah al-Din (1530-1539). This sultan was so weak that his mother, Puteri Indera Bangsa, daughter of Sultan 'Inayat Syah of Dar al-Kamal and now given the title of Paduka Syah Alam, installed an *agha* (Persian nobleman) named Kasdin as *mangkubumi* (prime minister). He had a house built in front of the *daulat khana* (royal abode), and was granted the title Raja Bungsu. Here we observe the continuation of the Pasai tradition in which Persians occupied important posts at the court. The appointment by his mother of Agha Kasdin as *mangkubumi* greatly displeased the sultan's brother, 'Ala' al-Din, viceroy of Samudra-Pasai. Enraged, he left for the capital, killed Raja Bungsu, imprisoned his mother and brother, and ascended the throne (Iskandar 1958:79-85).

Sultan 'Ala' al-Din Ri'ayat Syah al-Qahhar (1539-1571) was the first sultan who undertook an attempt to drive the Portuguese from Malacca, but he was unsuccessful. He married the daughter of the sultan of Johor, conquered that

country and brought the sultan to Aceh as a prisoner. His governorship in Pasai and his involvement in the Malay Peninsula brought him into contact with the systems of government of Pasai and Johor. The legal digest known as the *Undang-Undang Melaka* had been compiled in Malacca as early as the reign of Sultan Muzaffar Syah (d. 1459) (Andaya and Andaya 1982:50; Winstedt 1953:31-3). The *Undang-Undang Johor* developed from the *Undang-Undang Melaka*. Most probably under the influence of his experiences with the system of government of Johor, Sultan 'Ala' al-Din Ri'ayat Syah al-Qahhar re-organized the system of government in Aceh. Furthermore, this sultan patronized the shipment of spices as far as the Red Sea, which reached its peak during the 1560s (Reid 1975).

While intellectual and spiritual life was dominated by Persian influence during the Pasai period, the situation in Aceh would later change. During the reign of Sultan 'Ala' al-Din Ri'ayat Syah al-Qahhar (1539-1571), Aceh made a vain attempt to defeat the Portuguese in Malacca. In order to be able to confront this first European nation with its superior navy and weapons in the waters of the Straits of Malacca, he ordered an envoy to go to Istanbul to secure aid. The Ottoman sultan directed a Red Sea fleet from Egypt to Aceh, but because of a rebellion in Yemen, the fleet had to be redirected to that country. Only two ships arrived in Aceh carrying military engineers, cannon-casters and shipbuilders. The upshot was that Aceh could now build forts, cast large calibre cannons and construct large ships. The story of the embassy to Istanbul inspired the author of *Hikayat Hang Tuah* to send his hero to that country as envoy of the Sultanate of Malacca (Iskandar 1970).

The *Bustan* mentions five of his sons, of whom Abdullah became viceroy of Ghori (Aru) and another, viceroy of Mughal (Pariaman),[11] which is an indication that Minangkabau was under the control of Aceh. 'Ala' al-Din's son, Husayn, succeeded him on the throne under the title Sultan Ali Ri'ayat Syah (r. 1571-1579). It was during his reign that learning began to flourish. It was then that an Egyptian scholar, Muhammad Azhari, who bore the title Shaykh Nur al-Din, came from Mecca to teach *'ilm ma'qulat* (logic). This scholar remained active in teaching until he died in Aceh.

Sultan Abdullah, viceroy of Aru, as well as Sultan Mughal, viceroy of Pariaman, were envious of the position of their brother as ruler of Aceh and conspired to dethrone him. They sailed to Banda Aceh to execute their plan. The way the *Hikayat Aceh* describes the reception of Sultan Mughal by Sultan Ali Ri'ayat Syah unequivocally shows that the latter was the younger

[11] It is not clear whether Abangta Raja Pariaman is his name or his appointed title as deputy *raja* (viceroy) of Pariaman; *abangta* = *bangta* = *banta* = deputy (of the sultan or *ulèëbalang*). See Hoesein Djajadiningrat's *Dictionary* (R. Hoesein Djajadiningrat 1934).

brother.[12] The *Hikayat Aceh* reports that when Sultan Abdullah arrived in the bay of Aceh, Sultan Ali Ri'ayat Syah sent his vizier to stop him from landing: 'Do not allow my elder brother (*du-abang*) to land.' Here we see a case, perhaps for the first time, of a younger brother on the throne of the realm and his elder brother a mere viceroy of its dependencies. By means of a ruse, the followers of Sultan Mughal were able to enter the palace grounds, but during the ensuing struggle, Sultan Mughal was killed.

After his death, Ali Ri'ayat Syah was succeeded by Sultan Muda, his four-month-old son, whom the *Bustan* reports to have died seven months later. Thereafter, Abangta Raja Pariaman ruled under the title Sultan Seri Alam. The *Bustan* says that this ruler was ruthless, but the *Hikayat Aceh* describes his lavishness towards the chiefs of Fansur (Barus, a district under the jurisdiction of Pariaman, where he had previously been viceroy). After a plot hatched between the Maharaja[13] and Malik al-Zahir,[14] Sultan Seri Alam was deposed while still in his youth.

He was succeeded by Sultan Zayn al-'Abidin (1579), son of Sultan Abdullah, viceroy of Ghori (Aru), and grandson of Sultan 'Ala' al-Din Ri'ayat Syah al-Qahhar, who had been killed at Malacca in the battle against the Portuguese (Mohammad Said 1961:115; R. Hoesein Djajadiningrat 1911:159). Zayn al-'Abidin was fond of amusements. He had a passion for elephant-fights, and he had people killed by these animals. When he sought his pleasure in the park near the palace, if any cows, buffaloes, sheep or goats should happen to come along, he would have them killed. He was also cavalier in his treatment of state officials. This was the reason he was dethroned, according to the *Hikayat Aceh*, by Syarik al-Muluk Maharaja Lela. At the Malay court, the *maharaja lela* was an official who stood at the side of the ruler to see that His Majesty's orders were executed, rather like a chamberlain at a European court. Any opposition to the ruler would be punished by the *maharaja lela*, who could even resort to execution. In this case, it was this man himself who dethroned the ruler after bringing him to a *dhikr* (praise of God through the recitation of particular texts) at the palace. Just how the presumed assassination (mentioned by the *Bustan*) was carried out has been lost by a gap in the *Hikayat Aceh*. The same gap elides the reigns of 'Ala' al-Din of Perak and of Makota Buyung, Prince of Inderapura (a sultanate in the south of Minangkabau). The *Hikayat* next reports the ascension to the throne of Sultan 'Ala' al-Din Ri'ayat Syah Sayyid al-Mukammil (r. 1589-1604).

12 This is suggested by the phrase'*mendakapi dan meciumi saudaranya*' (he embraced and kissed his brother).

13 Therefore, in the *Hikayat Aceh*, for the sake of completeness, he is called Maharaja Seri Maharaja (prime minister).

14 Previously called, in the *Hikayat Aceh*, Qadi Malik al-Zahir, forerunner of Qadi Malik al-'Adil.

After two palace revolutions, involving the assassination of two rulers of the Makota Alam dynasty, a sultan of non-Acehnese descent came to the throne for the first time. Mansur, a prince of Perak (Malaysia), became ruler under the title Sultan 'Ala' al-Din Mansur Syah (r. 1579-1586). The *Bustan* calls him Sultan 'Ala' al-Din of Perak, son of Sultan Ahmad. After the Acehnese invasion of Perak, the widow of its sultan and her children were transported to Aceh, and this elder son married an Acehnese princess.[15]

This sultan was very pious, god-fearing and just, but firm in his governance. He ordered his subjects to obey the rules of Islam and forbade them to drink arrack. His officials were obliged to don Arabic dress. He favoured learned people and many ulama arrived in Aceh during his reign. In 1582, Shaykh Abu 'l-Khayr ibn Hajar arrived from Mecca. He was the author of *al-Saif al-Qati'* (The cutting sword), which discusses *a'yan thabitah*, in the field of dogmatics and mysticism. He also taught Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*). The same year also saw the arrival of Shaykh Muhammad Yamani, an expert on *'ilm al-usul*. The two *shaykh* held a disputation on the problem of *a'yan thabitah* without reaching any conclusion, so they sailed away. Later, Shaykh Muhammad Jilani ibn Hasan ibn Muhammad Hamid, who hailed from Ranir and was an adherent of the Shafi'i school of thought, came from Gujarat. In Aceh he taught logic, rhetoric, theology and jurisprudence. However, when students asked to study Sufi doctrine and metaphysics, he declined and sailed away to Mecca.

Sultan 'Ala' al-Din Mansur Syah died before his time (*termadlum*). The *Hikayat Aceh*, which usually describes the reign and death of individual rulers in more detail, has a gap here because of a number of missing pages in the original manuscript. It resumes the story with the ascension to the throne of Sultan 'Ala' al-Din Ri'ayat Syah Sayyid al-Mukammil (r. 1588-1604).

After Sultan 'Ala' al-Din Mansur Syah, the *Bustan* takes a different tack and mentions the reign of Makota Buyung under the title Sultan Ali Ri'ayat Syah ibn Sultan Munawwar Syah. He was a son of the ruler of Inderapura, who had come to Aceh to visit his sister, Raja Dewi, who was married to a prince of Aceh (R. Hoesein Djajadiningrat 1911:164-5). This succession did not run smoothly. Another party under the leadership of 'Ala' al-Din Ri'ayat Syah was in favour of an under-age prince whose mother was a daughter of the assassinated Sultan 'Ala' al-Din, and whose father was the Sultan of Johor destined to sit on the Acehnese throne (R. Hoesein Djajadiningrat 1911:168). That is the reason why after three years on the throne, Sultan Makota Buyung was assassinated.

After the death of Makota Buyung, however, 'Ala' al-Din Ri'ayat Syah – the

15 R. Hoessein Djajadiningrat (1911) quotes here a Perak tradition, but the *Hikayat Aceh* does not mention this ruler because of its lacuna.

aging son of Firman Syah and grandson of Sultan 'Inayat Syah of the rival dynasty of Dar al-Kamal – seized the sultanate for himself, abandoning his former protégé. On the throne, he assumed the title Sultan 'Ala' al-Din Ri'ayat Syah. During his life he was addressed as Syah 'Alam, but after his death he was known as Sayyid al-Mukammil (r. 1588-1604). Although European sources depict 'Ala' al-Din Sayyid al-Mukammil as a cruel monarch, he was powerful enough to create a stable government favourable to cultural activites.

From Persian to Arabic cultural influence

Persian influence was decreasing during the time that Aceh functioned as the Muslim-Malay cultural centre. Nevertheless, an Arabic grammar was translated from a Persian original by Abd al-Jamal as late as 1582,[16] and Hamza Fansuri and Bukhari al-Jauhari continued to use Persian sources. Scholars are not certain of the time at which Hamza lived because he never mentions the date of writing in his works, as authors after him did. Syed Naguib al-Attas estimates that Hamza was prolific before and during the reign of 'Ala' al-Din Ri'ayat Syah Sayyid al-Mukammil (al-Attas 1970:11), while other scholars opt for around 1590 (Drewes and Brakel 1986:3; Drewes and Voorhoeve 1958). Until recently this was the general opinion, but an article by Claude Guillot and Ludvik Kalus, entitled 'La stèle funéraire de Hamzah Fansuri', disclosed a report of 1934 on the existence of a grave-memorial of Shaykh Hamza bin Abdullah al-Fansuri at Mecca, bearing the date of his death as 1527 (Guillot and Kalus 2000).[17] Vladimir I. Braginsky, who had previously written an article in the same journal on the biography of Hamza Fansuri (Braginsky 1999), had previously drawn the conclusion that it is possible to assume that the poet had frequented the court of 'Ala' al-Din and was still alive in 1621, during the reign of Iskandar Muda. He was unconvinced that the grave at Mecca was Hamza's, particularly since the grave itself has not been found (Braginsky 2001). Whatever the case may be, the fact is that Hamza Fansuri irrefutably belongs to the generation of authors who embodied the Pasai tradition so replete with Persian intellect and spiritual influence.

Hamza wrote a number of treatises on mysticism and a great number of mystical poems. His greatest *sya'ir* is the *Sya'ir burung pingai*, which was inspired by the *Mantiq at-Tayr* of the Persian poet Farid al-Din 'Attar (c. 1230). It was Hamza who introduced the *sya'ir*, a metre which he developed from the Malay *pantun* already found in the *Hikayat Raja Pasai*, the Persian *ghazal* carved on the tombstone Na'ina Husam al-Din of 1420, and the Arabic *syi'ir*.

16 A manuscript of Acehnese provenance (Cod.Or. 1666) is kept at Leiden University Library.
17 If this is true, Hamza must have lived during the reign of 'Ali Mughayat Syah (1516-1530).

The *sya'ir* is a quatrain ending in *-a, -a, -a, -a*. The *sya'ir* immediately had a tremendous impact in the Malay world, and is still popular in the archipelago today.

By the end of the seventeenth century this metre had been used to write the history of a war (*Hikayat perang Mengkasar* by Encik Amin). In eighteenth-century Palembang, it became a medium to render Javanese Panji stories into Malay and to write romances. In Brunei there is an epic in *sya'ir* metre. In the nineteenth century, romances with a Middle Eastern background were composed in *sya'ir* form in Riau. In twentieth-century Malaysia pamphlets carrying political protests were also circulated in *sya'ir* form.

The turn of the seventeenth century appears to have been a time of continued cultural production for Malay-Islamic texts at Aceh. In the library of Leiden University there is a manuscript containing an Arabic grammar in Persian with interlinear Malay translation written by Abdu'l-Jamal (1582). This manuscript was previously owned by D. van der Vorm (1688-1731) in Indonesia. It is impossible to imagine any origin of this manuscript other than Aceh, the intellectual and spiritual Malay-Islamic centre of that period. Eight years later, in 1590, a Malay interlinear translation, from Arabic, of the *Aqa'id* (religious treatise) of Nasafi appeared. Naguib al-Attas considers this not surprising, in view of the fact that the translation of the text coincided with Muhammad Hamid al-Raniri's second visit to Aceh (1589). He postulates that this work is a product by one of al-Raniri's pupils (al-Attas 1988:34).

During his reign, Sultan 'Ala' al-Din re-organized the court ceremonies to cope with the expanding trade that came with a widening range of new merchants active in Aceh, including the Dutch, British, French and Danish. In his quest for good governance, 'Ala' al-Din commissioned Bukhari al-Jauhari to compile the *Taj al-Salatin* in 1603. Most likely Bukhari was the last important author who made use of Persian writings for his work during the reign of 'Ala' al-Din, in addition to al-Ghazali's *Nasihat al-Muluk*, which was an unacknowledged model for most subsequent writers in this genre. In his introduction Bukhari made mention of the following Persian sources which he used: *Akhlak-i-Muhsini* by Husayn Wa'iz al-Kashifi (1494), *Tanbih al-Ghafilin* by Siraj al-Din Ali Khan (1489), *Siyar al-Muluk* by Wazir Nizam al-Mulk (1608?), *Tuhfat al-Wuzara'*, *Kitab al-Asrar* by Abu Hamid ibn Abu Bakr Ibrahim Farid 'Attar (d. 1230), *Khusraw wa Shirin* by Fakhr al-Din As'ad Izami, and two texts which could have been written by several authors: *Mahmud wa Ayaz* and *Yusuf wa Zulaykha*.[18]

The *Taj al-Salatin* consists of 24 chapters. This treatise remained popular

[18] *Mahmud wa Ayaz* may have been written by Fakhr al-Din Ali Safi (d. 1532/34), Anisi (d. 1605) or Zilali (d. 1593 or 1615), while *Yusuf wa Zulaykha* could have been the version written by Firdawsi, Abu'l-Mu'ayyad, or that by Bakhtiari from the tenth century.

among rulers in the archipelago until the twentieth century. It was reprinted three times in Java in the nineteenth century as a Malay text, and there were also Javanese translations. In Yogyakarta and Surakarta, this book was not only studied by monarchs and dignitaries, but also by common people (Hooykaas 1947:173). In Brunei the edition by P.P. Roorda van Eysinga (1845) was praised in the *Sya'ir Rakis* by Pengiran Indera Mahkota, who was ousted from Sarawak as Brunei viceroy by James Brooke (1845).[19] Abdullah bin Abd al-Qadir Munsyi read T.S. Raffles' character on the basis of the science of physiognomy as set forth in chapter 19 of this treatise (Winstedt 1939:96).

The *Hikayat Aceh* mentions Shams al-Din of Pasai as the *Shaykh al-Islam* of the sultan, and one of the most prominent scholars at Aceh during 'Ala' al-Din al-Mukammil's reign (Iskandar 1958:164-203). 'Ala' al-Din's reign ended in a coup devised by his son, Sultan Muda. He died after having reigned as sultan for only two years, and Sultan Iskandar Muda ascended the throne in 1606. Iskandar was the son of Sultan Muda's sister, Puteri Indera Bangsa, who was married to Mansur Syah. Mansur was the son of Abangta Abd al-Jalil, son of Sultan 'Ala' al-Din Ri'ayat Syah al-Qahhar. With the accession of this sultan, Aceh Dar al-Salam came once again under the Makota 'Alam dynasty, and it was under this ruler that Aceh Dar al-Salam reached the apex of its greatness.

Iskandar Muda and the Malay dependencies

Beaulieu, the French admiral who visited Aceh during his reign, witnessed the strength of Iskandar's army. On land he had the infantry reinforced by elephants, and at sea he commanded a great number of warships. Warships were moored at three places, namely the harbours of Aceh, Daya and Pidie (Mohammad Said 1961:181). The *Bustan* enumerates a series of conquests by Iskandar Muda. In 1612 he annexed Deli, and in 1613 he defeated Johor. The following year he sailed to Bintan, and in a battle near Baning he captured many ships and took captive a great number of Portuguese. Then he successively defeated Pahang (1617), Kedah (1620) and Nias (1624/25) (R. Hoesein Djajadiningrat 1911:179).

Shams al-Din of Pasai was the childhood mentor of Iskandar Muda and played an important role in his life. When this prince later became ruler of Aceh, it was not surprising that he relied on him as his counsellor. He was not the chief *qadi* or *mufti* (scholar of Islamic law) as many researchers suppose, but a learned man and religious advisor to the court, who would sometimes also comment on political matters. He was always present at court

[19] The *Sya'ir Rakis* was written by Pengiran I. Mahkota in protest against the lenient policy of Brunei towards the British; Pengiran I. Mahkota was assassinated as a result of this work.

ceremonies. This learned man was a prolific author and had already started writing during the reign of 'Ala' al-Din al-Mukammil. His *Mir'at al-mu'min* – a religious treatise – was written in 1601. Twelve works can, with certainty, be attributed to him, while there is doubt about the authorship of seven other works. Shams al-Din also has four treatises in Arabic to his name.

Although Hamza and Shams al-Din were both followers of the *wahdat al-wujud* school of Sufism, Van Nieuwehuijze has described their differences in personality. While Hamza was a wanderer in constant search of unity with God, Shams al-Din was more a teacher, a philosopher and a thinker, who felt the need to fathom the universe (Van Nieuwenhuijze 1945:30-1). This is why Van Nieuwenhuijze considerd Shams al-Din as the greatest thinker of his time in the archipelago (Van Nieuwenhuijze 1945:33).

The *Adat Aceh*, which had been amended during the reign of 'Ala' al-Din, was enlarged during Iskandar Muda's rule. He was so deeply involved in the compilation of these revised state regulations that his name is now forever inextricably linked to the *Adat Meukuta Alam,* as the *Adat Aceh* is popularly known. Marhum Makota Alam is the posthumous title of Iskandar Muda. A pious man himself, he built many mosques, including the Bait al-Rahman, and also encouraged people to be good Muslims and to obey the rules of Islam.

The system of government instituted by Iskandar was known as far as Brunei. There is a relationship between the *Adat Aceh* or *Adat Meukota Alam* and the Brunei *Kitab Risalat al-Marhum fi 'Adat al-Marhum* or *Adat Sultan Muhammad Hasan*. Certain topics and articles are similar. Iskandar's strong style of ruling was taken by the Brunei ruler as his model. In one place the *Adat al-Marhum* says, 'and it was Sultan Hasan whose reign followed the rule of Sultan Makota (Alam)'. Elsewhere it says of Sultan Hasan, 'He was the ruler of Brunei without any equal except Sultan Makota Alam' (Iskandar 1995:407-10).

The *Bustan* recounts that following the conquest of Pahang, a prince of that country, then seven years old, came to Aceh. He married Iskandar's daughter, Puteri Seri 'Alam. While his only son was still alive, the sultan declared this son-in-law, Raja Bungsu, his successor in the presence of Shaykh Shams al-Din and other dignitaries. Before he died, Iskandar had his son put to death, unable to tolerate the latter's misconduct.[20]

In the past it had been the *orang kaya* (court nobility) who had taken the initiative in choosing a foreign-born prince as the successor. Their choice was politically motivated. A foreigner would not be likely to have strong

[20] In the history of Aceh, there were precedents for a ruler executing a son for reprehensible conduct. For example, Sultan 'Ala' al-Din al-Qahhar (1539-1571) had executed his son, Abangta Ditangkap, according to the *Bustan,* because he was stronger (more cruel?) than his brothers.

indigenous supporters so that the real power would remain concentrated in the hands of the *orang kaya*. However, in making his choice, Iskandar Muda must have had other considerations. He had a great deal of Sumatra and the Malay Peninsula under his rule and wanted to sustain this. Would it not be wise to appoint as his successor a prince, preferably from the strongest of the dependencies, with a lineage stretching back to the rulers of Malacca and Iskandar Dhu'l-Qarnayn? It seems plausible to conclude then that Iskandar Muda's aim was to consolidate the territory under his rule.

The policy of consolidating Aceh with other Malay states is mirrored in Iskandar Muda's letter to King James I of England, in which he called himself 'ruler over territories with which God had blessed him.' On the east coast Lubuk, Pidir, Samarlanga, Pesangan, Pasai, Perlak, Besitang, Tamiang, Deli, Asahan, Tanjung, Panai, Batu Sawar, Perak, Pahang and Inderagiri; and on the west coast the territories of Calang, Daya, Barus, Pasaman, Tiku, Pariaman, Salida, Inderapura, Selebar, Palembang and Jambi owed him allegiance. With the exception of Palembang, and perhaps part of Jambi, all these territories, for a longer or shorter period, were under the sway of Aceh. The goal of Aceh under Iskandar Muda was not only to sustain Malayness, as Andaya argues (Andaya 2001), but rather to strive for pan-Malay hegemony, as suggested in the wording of his royal letters, and also several passages in the *Hikayat Aceh*.

The pursuit of this ideal was not always successful. Aceh's war with Malacca in 1629 ended in catastrophe, and the Acehnese army was destroyed. The *Bustan* attributes this disaster to the dispute between the two commanders, Orang Kaya Maharaja Seri Maharaja and Orang Kaya Laksamana. Shaykh Shams al-Din of Pasai died in 1630. Iskandar Muda fought his last war to subdue Pahang, which with other Malay states sided with the Portuguese, in 1635 (Iskandar 1966:27-8).

Iskandar Thani and the development of culture

After Iskandar Muda's death, Raja Bungsu came to the throne with the title of Sultan Iskandar Thani 'Ala' al-Din Mughayat Syah (r. 1636-1641). At the end of May 1637, Nur al-Din al-Raniri, who hailed from Ranir in Gujerat, arrived in Bandar Aceh Dar al-Salam. He already had three religious treatises in Malay to his name: *Sirat al-Mustaqim*, which he had started writing in 1634 but had yet to finish; the *Durrat al-fara'idh bi sharh al-'aqa'id*, which he mentions in his later work; and the *Hidayat al-habib fi'l-targhib wa'l-tarhib* (1636). Most likely he had written these books in Pahang (Malaysia) before arriving in Aceh. The first book was finished in Aceh (1644) and became a compulsory textbook at *madrasa* (Islamic schools) in the Malay world. This work is, until today, still used at certain religious schools. In this book he condemns the *Hikayat Seri*

Rama and the *Hikayat Indera Patera* as pernicious fables, and says that their manuscripts were fit only to be used as lavatory paper.

It was probably because of his links with the Pahang royal family that he was held in high esteem by Iskandar Thani, and was thus appointed successor to Shams al-Din of Pasai. He utterly opposed the *whadat al-wujud* mysticism of Hamza Fansuri and Shams al-Din, and condemned their followers to be burned at the stake (Voorhoeve 1951).

Immediately after his arrival at the Acehnese court, al-Raniri was commissioned to write the *Bustan al-Salatin* – a work which was to become the most important books in classical Malay literature. In his introduction, he mentions that he had used the following Arabic sources: *'Aja'ib al-malakut* (by al-Kisa'i, eleventh century), *Daqa'iq haqa'iq* (by Sibt al-Maridini, 1484), *Mirsad al-'ibad* (Persian introduction to mysticism by al-Razi Najm al-Din Daya, d. 1256), *Tafsir ma' alim al-tanzil* (by al-Baghawi, d. 1117), *Tafsir al-wahidi* (by Wahidi, d. 1075), *Rawdat al-rayahin* (by al-Yafi'i, d. 1367), *Uns al-munqati'in* (by al-Mawsili, d. 1233), *Rawdat al-manazir* (by Ibn al-Shihna, d. 1412), *Durrat al-farawi* (by al-Farawi, d. 1137), *Nuzhat al-akhyar fi mahasin al-akhbar* (by Al-Nawaji, d. 1455) and *Jawami' al-kalim* (by al-Muttaqi al-Hindi, d. 1569).[21]

The *Bustan* consists of seven books, of which the first two contain world history after the tradition of Muslim historians such as Abu Ja'far al-Tabari (b. 839), in his *Ta'rikh al-rusul wa'l-muluk*. Book I of al-Tabari's work recounts the story of the creation of heaven and earth. Book II then continues with world history, beginning with the patriarchs, the prophets and rulers of the earliest period, the history of the Sassanians, the era of Muhammad and the first four caliphs, the history of the Umayyads and the Abbassids. The *Bustan* adds to this the history of Hindustan with its capital in Delhi from Sultan Shihab al-Din (1316-1321) to Syah Jahan (1627-1658), and the history of Malacca and Pahang from Iskandar Dhu'l-Qarnayn to Sultan Mahmud Syah, as well as the history of Aceh Dar al-Salam from Sultan Ali Mughayat Syah (r. 1516-1531) until the accession to the throne of Sultana 'Inayat Zaqiat al-Din Syah (r. 1678-1688).

In its survey of the period of history from the patriarchs up to the Abassids, the *Bustan* mentions the sources used explicitly, but those for the history of Hindustan are omitted. For the history of Malacca and Pahang the author mentions only the *Sulalat al-salatin* (*Sejarah Melayu*) by Bendahara Paduka Raja (Tun Seri Lanang) as a reference. Again, in the chapter on the history of Aceh, there are no sources. The *Hikayat Aceh* must have already been in existence,

[21] *Bustan al-Salatin*, Ms. Raffles Mal. 42, Royal Asiatic Society, London, p.3. In addition to my edition of *Bustan*, Book II, Chapter 13 (primarily from Ms 42) on Aceh history (Iskandar 1966), Jelani Harun has now published a romanized version of the first two books from Raffles Ms 8 (Harun 2004), as well as Book III from Ms 41, University of Malaya. Because of problems with these editions, I prefer to work from the original text.

because it had been written by Shams al-Din of Pasai, who was dead by that time. Al-Raniri also ignores the *Hikayat Raja Pasai*, even though he had visited that place when he accompanied Iskandar Thani on a pilgrimage to the graves of its former saints and rulers (Iskandar 1966:48-53). Was this a deliberate oversight, comparable to al-Raniri's re-telling without attribution of Hindu myths and local legends such as contained in the *Hikayat Seri Rama*? Many Malay historical works after al-Raniri, like the *Misa Melayu* (*History of Perak*, 1756-1777) or the *Silsilah raja-raja Brunei* (*Genealogy of Brunei rulers*, 1735), are stricter in excluding the mythical origins of rulers altogether.

Raniri's description of court and other ceremonies is lively. One interesting highpoint is his account of the *Taman Ghairah* (Garden of Desire). The *Bustan* relates that it was Iskandar Thani who laid out this garden. Through the middle of the garden flowed a river, the Dar al-'Ishqi. On its left bank was a square, called Medan Khairani, with marble as gravel. In the middle of this square stood an artificial mound which bore the name Gegunungan Menara Permata.

The *Bustan* does not specifically mention that the Gegunungan Manara Permata or 'Gunongan' was built by Iskandar Thani, though that has been assumed by many commentators. It is my belief that the Gunongan already stood there before this ruler planned his garden. All in all, the garden was about 1,000 fathoms wide, and contained structures such as the Gunongan, a mosque called 'Isyqi Musyahadah and a number of pavilions (Balai Cermin Perang, Balai Rekaan Cina, Balai Keemasan, Balai Kumbang Caya). There were also carved stone structures such as the Kembang Seroja Berkerawang and the Petarana Kembang Berukir. The garden was also embellished with a fountain in the shape of two dragons. Al-Raniri mentions all kinds of trees, including fruit trees, and he notes that the garden was walled (*berdewala*). On the side leading towards the palace stood a gate called Pintu Biram Indera Bangsa.

Such a grand and spacious garden could not have likely been built in its entireity during the five-year reign of Iskandar Thani. There is also mention of a park in the vicinity of the Acehnese palace in the *Hikyat Aceh*, in conjunction with the deposing of Sultan Zayn al-Abidin (1577). This sultan was dethroned because he neglected his duties as a ruler, was exceedingly cruel and chose instead to amuse himself in the park by killing animals which happened to pass by and destroy plants.

Oral history and Acehnese texts, such as the *Hikayat Malem Dagang* (Cowan 1937) and the similarly-themed *Hikayat Meukuta Alam* (Abdullah Imran 1991), report that Sultan Iskandar Muda built the Gunongan for his consort, the princess of Pahang. The *Hikayat Malem Dagang* recounts that two princes of the Malay Peninsula, Raja Si Ujut and Raja Radén, brought this lady, Putroe Phang, to Aceh. They sought a judgement from Sultan Iskandar Muda in a

quarrel between them. Iskandar found in favour of Raja Radén, and received from him Putroe Phang. For her relaxation he built the Gunongan, because she was homesick for the mountains of her native land.

Brakel argued that the Taman Ghairah displayed many features typical of royal gardens in Java, Bali and Lombok (Brakel 1975:61). I would suggest rather that the garden described by the *Bustan* is an Islamic garden, as postulated by Christopher Thacker in his chapter on Persian and Islamic gardens (Thacker 1979). In particular, the sketch of Akbar's Mausoleum made by Peter Mundy shows a suggestive resemblance to the Gunongan.[22]

Aceh after Iskandar Thani

With the death of Iskandar Thani (1641), his widow, Safiyyat al-Din, came to the throne. When Sayf al-Rijal – an adherent of Shams al-Din Pasai – returned to Aceh after concluding his studies in the Middle East, a confrontation broke out between him and al-Raniri. In a debate between the two, Sayf al-Rijal was able to rally the crowd behind him. He was summoned by the sultana and met with an appraisal. It seems that al-Raniri was not in favour of a female ruler, as we can observe in the *Bustan*, Book II, Chapter 10, where he describes the enmity between Harun al-Rasyid and the Byzantines. In a letter to Harun al-Rasyid, Nicephorus wrote, according to al-Raniri, that he had deposed the woman ruler of Byzantine (Irene) as she had behaved like a pawn in a chess game, because 'women are weak and have less intellect'.[23]

Once al-Raniri lost favour and departed, an outstanding scholar and prolific author, 'Abd al-Ra'uf al-Singkili, became his successor at the court of Sultana Taj al-'Alam Safiyyat al-Din Syah (r. 1641-75). He remained the most influential cleric under the reign of her successor, Sultana Nur al-'Alam Naqiyyat al-Din Syah (r. 1675-78). 'Abd al-Ra'uf wrote several religious treatises and a mystical *sya'ir*. Two of his most important works are the *Mir'at al-Tulab*, a supplement to the *Sirat al-Mustaqim* by al-Raniri, and the Malay translation of the *Tafsir al-jalalain*, an Arabic work of Qur'anic exegesis.

During the reign of the four successive women rulers, whose relations with the outside world were restricted, the *orang kaya* were able again to exert their power. After the reign of the last woman ruler, a fatwa that forbade a woman ruler on the throne came from Mecca. Following this Badr al-'Alam Syarif Hasyim Jamal al-Din, the first sultan of an Arab dynasty, came to the throne in Aceh. At the death of the fourth ruler of this dynasty, in 1727, there were again dispotes over succession. For the first time the three *panglima sagi*

22 See also the painting of a Persian garden of 1396 in Temple 1905:26-7, 30.
23 *Bustan*, MS Raffles 42:172.

intervened by choosing their own candidate to be installed as sultan. This was Maharaja Lela Melayu, the first ruler of the Bugis dynasty; he received the title Sultan 'Ala' al-Din Ahmad Syah. Though from time to time there were attempts by claimants from the Arab dynasty to seize the throne, the Bugis dynasty prevailed in maintaining power until the period of the Dutch wars in Aceh (R. Hoesein Djajadiningrat 1911:198-211; Mohammad Said 1961:216-98). Nevertheless, the precedent that the three *panglima sagi* should choose the candidate ruler was never altered.

Assailed by succession disputes and other internal troubles, Aceh's power declined economically and politically. Nevertheless its literary activities in the field of Islam persisted, albeit at an unassuming level. In the eighteenth century, 11 authors whom we know by name produced 18 religious works. The most important of them, Jalal al-Din bin Muhammad bin Kamal al-Din of Tarusan, was the most prolific. Three other works neglected to mention the authors' names. From the nineteenth century, only five authors are known. The most prolific of them was Abbas ibn Muhammad al-Ashi, who has six titles to his name. An anthology of Arabic poems in Malay translation bears no author's name. Abdullah bin Isma'il al-Ashi compiled an Arabic-Turkish-Malay-Acehnese dictionary, which was printed in Mecca (1900).[24]

In other words, although Aceh's centrality in the creation of Muslim-Malay literature may be reasonably said to have peaked in the seventeenth century, it continued to play a creative role right up until the end of the nineteenth century. With its strong tradition of religious learning and its mediating role between the Indian Ocean and Malay Islamic worlds, its role in this regard was unique and indispensable.

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Chapter iv

Ottoman-Aceh relations as documented in Turkish sources

İsmail Hakkı Göksoy

Despite the distance between them, Turkey and Aceh managed to establish commercial, diplomatic and military relations, most extensively in the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries. The main aim of this chapter is to examine these relations using Ottoman sources. Most of these sources for sixteenth-century relations can be found in the *Mühimme* records issued by the Divan-ı Humayun (Ottoman Imperial Council), some of which are now available in published form. These official records document the arrival of Aceh envoys in Istanbul and their request for military aid from Turkey, as well as the preparation of a navy campaign to Sumatra in support of Aceh in 1567. As for nineteenth-century relations, Ottoman sources focus on the arrival of Aceh delegations in Istanbul in 1851 and 1873. These sources come from various government offices, and mention the renewal of Acehnese promises of loyalty from the sixteenth century and Acehnese requests for protection from the Ottoman Empire.

Connections with Southeast Asia go back as far as the twelfth century. Turkic traders, following the Arabs, Persians and Indian Muslims, began to participate in the international trade between West Asia and China after the establishment of the Seljuk rule in western Asia in the second half of the eleventh century. As demonstrated by Affan Seljuk, Turkic participation in this trade with the Indonesian Archipelago took place during the last period of the Abbasids in Baghdad (Seljuk 1980:302-3).

The presence of the Turks in the region was recorded by the famous North African Muslim traveller Ibn Battuta (d. 1369), who visited the Samudra-Pasai sultanate in northern Sumatra on his way to China in 1345 and 1346. He noted that the state traditions of this sultanate were similar to those of the (Turkic) Delhi sultanate in India. He also told the story of a queen who spoke Turkish with him on an island called Tawalisi. Her name was given in a Turkic form as Urduja (at-Tanci n.y.:454-5, 459-60).

There is other evidence of early Turkic cultural influence in North Sumatra as well. For instance, the adoption of Mamluk sultans' names and titles by

Samudra-Pasai sultans at the end of the thirteenth century, like Malik al-Salih and Malik al-Zahir, is further evidence of Sumatra's close connection with western Asia, in particular, with the shores of the Arabian Peninsula and Egypt (Di Meglio 1970:117).

The presence of Turks trading in the region was also noted by Portuguese sources. For instance, the Portuguese apothecary Tomé Pires visited the harbour city of Pasai in 1511, describing it as strong, prosperous and cosmopolitan. He mentioned the presence in Pasai of many foreign traders from India and West Asia, some of whom were labelled 'Rumi' or 'Turki'. These traders coming from Cairo, Aden and Hormuz first called at the ports of Gujerat in India, and then sailed as far as Sumatra and Malacca (Di Meglio 1970:120-2).

As the Pasai and Pidie regions of northern Sumatra continued to be important centres of pepper production and export (Abdullah Nabir 1987:137), Aceh emerged as a powerful sultanate by profiting from the international trade in pepper in the first half of the sixteenth century. C.R. Boxer gives the date for the beginning of direct trade between Aceh and the Red Sea shores as 1534 (Boxer 1969:416). From the 1530s until the 1560s, there was regular and growing trade between Aceh and Arabian ports, particularly with Aden. In the early 1550s, there was such abundance of eastern products in the Yemen that prices for commodities coming from the east declined, despite attempts by the Portuguese to capture the ships from Aceh and Gujerat in the Straits of Bab al-Mandab (Özbaran 1963:136-7).

Apart from these commercial activities, Muslim powers became active militarily in the Indian Ocean at the begining of sixteenth century. When the Portuguese began to dominate the Indian Ocean and took control of much of its maritime trade, the affected Muslim sultanates in the region sought to obtain the assistance of the Mamluk sultans in Egypt. The Mamluks built a navy in Suez to drive these Portuguese away from the Red Sea and Indian shores. A Mamluk navy went as far as the harbour of Diu in 1512 to drive the Portuguese out of the city (Bey 1911:1528-30; Özbaran 1963:78).[1]

Besides these organized expeditions, some freelance Turkish seamen were also sailing from the Red Sea shores to the Indian Ocean. These were similar to the adventurers in the western Mediterranean region – 'Levantine' seamen originating from the cities of western Anatolia. As stated by the famous Turkish historian Halil İnalcık: '[t]hose *Rumi* who sailed from the Red Sea to India between the years 1500 and 1517 are the same Anatolian *gazi* (fighters), some of whom were working in the western Mediterranean and Algiers. Among them was an artilleryman called Rumi Topchu Mustafa who entered the service of the Moghul Empire in India.'[2]

1 On the Mamluk expeditions to South Asia, see Mughul 1987:27-86.

2 Halil İnalcık's 'Preface' in Mughul 1987:3.

As a result of the eastern campaign of the Ottoman Sultan, Selim I (r. 1512-1520), in Syria and Egypt in 1517, the whole Middle Eastern area was brought under Ottoman rule. The Mamluk legacy in the Red Sea and Indian Ocean was taken over by the Ottoman sultans, who sought to control not only the holy places of Islam in Arabia, but also the surrounding areas, especially the Red Sea. This brought the Ottoman Turks into conflict with the Portuguese, who were also trying to control the international sea trade in the Indian Ocean at that time.

The military activities of the Ottomans in the Indian Ocean began during the time of Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent (r. 1520-1565). The Ottoman sultans, seeing themselves as protectors of the whole Muslim world because of the office of caliphate, were determined to keep open the Muslim hajj traffic and trade route in the east, as well as to protect the small Muslim states against Portuguese attacks. When Ibrahim Pasha – one of the viziers of Sultan Suleyman – came to Egypt in 1525, he ordered the establishment of a navy in the harbour of Suez and sent Selman Reis to Yemen to protect the coast against Portuguese attacks. In a report to Ibrahim Pasha, dated 2 June 1525, Selman Reis reported on Portuguese activities in the Indian Ocean and considered Sumatra and Malacca as important centres of pepper and spices. Before the arrival of the Portuguese on these islands, spices and pepper had been sent to Egypt, which gained an important source of income from this trade, but the situation changed entirely in favour of the Portuguese to the extent that Egypt was weakened commercially (Mughul 1987:104). The control of the Red Sea shores, the Gulf area and the Indian Ocean became a vital concern of the Ottoman Turks from the mid-1520s.

After the sudden death of Selman Reis in 1526, his cousin, Emir Mustafa bin Behram Reis, took over the initiative, sailing as far as Diu in India in 1531 to fight against the Portuguese. However, the most important Ottoman expedition in the Indian Ocean was that of Hadım Suleyman Pasha in 1537. This was sent in response to a request from the Gujerati ruler, Bahadur Syah, for military help from the Ottoman sultan against the Portuguese. When the Ottoman navy under the command of Hadım Suleyman Pasha arrived in Diu in 1538, Bahadur Syah had already been killed by the Portuguese. The Portuguese had appointed a new ruler named Mahmud Syah III to the Gujerati throne, who was then allied with the Portuguese. Suleyman Pasha, having failed to get the support of the higher Gujerati officials and hearing of the approach of a big Portuguese force, felt compelled to return to Yemen. Many of his Turkish soldiers and cannoneers dispersed to work for various Indian rulers (Mughul 1987:113-37; Uzunçarşılı 1983a:392-4).

It is presumed that after the defeat of Hadım Suleyman Pasha, some of his soldiers may have gone as far as Aceh and entered the service of Aceh sultanates. According to the Portuguese traveller Ferdinand Mendez Pinto, who

visited Sumatra in 1539, there were Turkish, Cambay and Malabar auxiliary soldiers in the Acehnese army fighting the Batak kingdom. He also mentioned that the Acehnese Sultan 'Ala' al-Din signed an agreement with the Ottoman governor of Egypt on behalf of Sultan Suleyman against the Portuguese (Reid 1969b:401-2; Seljuk 1980:307). During the 1540s, in Aceh's battles with Aru (1540) and Malacca (1547), Turkish soldiers were noted to be among the Acehnese forces (Reid 1969b:402-3). It was probably from the late 1530s that Aceh began to employ Turkish soldiers and military experts on an individual basis.

Ottoman activities in the Indian Ocean resumed more intensively a decade after Suleyman Pasha's abortive siege of Diu in 1538. Piri Reis, in 1551, and Murad Reis, in 1552, fought against the Portuguese in the Strait of Hormuz and off the coast of India. In 1553, Seydi Ali Reis launched a new expedition to end Portuguese domination in the Indian ports, but failed in his goal. A few years later, he returned to Istanbul by the land route through Central Asia, leaving the remains of the navy to Recep Han, governor of Surat for the Gujerat Sultanate (Özbaran 1963:120, 127; Reis n.y.:21-5; Uzunçarşılı 1983a:397-400). After Seydi Ali Reis, Kurtoglu Hızır Reis was appointed captain of the Suez fleet, which was responsible for the control of the Red Sea and the route to India.

Sixteenth-century Ottoman-Aceh relations

When we examine Turkish sources on the official relations between the Ottoman Empire and the Aceh sultanate, it is clear that these began during the time of Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent and continued during the time of his successor, Sultan Selim II (r. 1566-1574). The first Acehnese ambassador to Istanbul appears to have arrived in 1547, although we have no Ottoman archival record proving this. The famous Austrian historian of the Ottomans, B. J. von Hammer, basing his information on the Ottoman croniclers, Ali, Celalzade, Solakzade and Lufti, mentions that during the sojourn, in Istanbul, of Christian envoys

> there was also an envoy from Alauddin, one of the Indian rulers, in order to request military help against the Portuguese. The envoy of Alauddin presented to the [s]ultan unfamiliar animals, nice parrots with various colours, valuable spices and perfumery, taffy with balm, negroes and eunuch servants […]. The procession of the Indian envoy was very remarkable, but the Iranian one, organized for the occasion of the coming of the Iranian prince in-exile who escaped to Istanbul after his rebellion against Shah Tahmasb was the most significant one. (Von Hammer 1984:1648-9.)

The 'Indian ruler' referred to here as 'Alauddin' is most likely the Acehnese sultan, 'Ala' al-Din Ri'ayat Syah al-Qahhar, who ruled Aceh from 1537 to 1571, as the documents relating to Aceh were usually classified under 'India'. In sixteenth-century Ottoman records, Aceh is referred to as 'Ashi', 'Achi' or 'Achin'.

Von Hammer also mentioned the arrival of another Aceh envoy in Istanbul, relying on a report of the Venetian ambassador to Istanbul dated 12 June 1562. He mentions that 'it should be recorded in particular that the envoy sent by the Ashi ruler from India was requesting cannons to help against the Portuguese' (Von Hammer 1984:1741). The arrival of this envoy from Aceh is also confirmed by Portuguese sources. Jesuit letters reported that the Ottoman sultan sent an ambassador to Aceh as a response to this mission from Aceh, and that this ambassador reached Aceh in 1565 (Seljuk 1980:307). Lombard takes the year 1562 as the date for the arrival of the first Aceh ambassador to Istanbul (Lombard 1986:50), but the year 1547 is more likely given the evidence.

The exchange of envoys between the Ottoman Empire and the Aceh sultanate during the time of Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent is confirmed by the 1566 letter of Sultan 'Ala' al-Din Syah to Sultan Süleyman. This letter, dated 7 January 1566, was brought to Istanbul by the Acehnese ambassador Huseyin Efendi. It was classified as one of the letters from Indian Muslims in the archive of the Topkapı Palace Museum in Istanbul, and was first examined by Pakistani researcher Razaulhak Shah in a 1967 article, together with other documents on the Aceh envoy to Istanbul (Farooki 1989:157; Shah 1967).[3]

The sultan of Aceh stated in his letter that they had formerly sent two ambassadors, called Umar and Huseyin, to Istanbul. It is again understood from a statement in the letter, 'when your men were here and helped us in 972 (1564-1565)', that the Ottoman Empire had formerly sent an ambassador to Aceh. In the letter, the name of this Turkish ambassador sent by Sultan Suleyman to Aceh is given as Lutfi Bey, and this is what the sultan of Aceh said about him: '[s]ince we were much pleased with Lutfi Bey and his friends, we want them to be sent here again [...]. The cannoneers whom you sent safely came here and their place is very high in our estimation.'[4]

In his letter, 'Ala' al-Din Syah provides information on the political and cultural situation of the islands in the region. He states that the Portuguese tried to control important sea passages in the region, and that they captured the Muslim pilgrims and traders and made them slaves or destroyed their

[3] Naimur claims that he brought this unique document to light for the first time.

[4] Giancarlo Casale has recently examined this letter and made an English translation. He claims that Lutfi was its 'courier' and 'the real author of its contents', considering some internal evidence in the letter. See Casale (2005).

ships by cannon fire, sinking many. A Portuguese attack is mentioned in the letter:

> When an Aceh ship, loaded with black pepper, silk thread, cinnamon, cloves, camphor and other valuable products of the region, was sent to Mecca in 972 H (1564-1565), it was attacked near certain islands by the Portuguese, with three galleons and seven galleys, and the fighting lasted for 4 days and nights; in the end the Aceh ship was sunk by the Portuguese with a distant cannon-shot. Some 500 Muslims died in the Ocean and others were made slaves.

'Ala' al-Din Syah also reported on the Muslims of Calicut in Southwest India and the island of Ceylon (Sri Lanka):

> Ceylon has very valuable ores, but her ruler is an infidel. There are 14 mosques [o]n this island and the Muslims of this island read Friday sermons in the name of the Ottoman caliph. In the same way, the Muslims of Calicut have 25 mosques and they read sermons in the name of the Ottoman caliph as well. They are at war with the Portuguese; and when Lutfi Bey and his friends came there, they also sent envoys to me, declaring that if an Ottoman fleet came to this side of the Ocean, they would become Muslim with all their people. If this happened, all the present gold and silver could be possessed by your soldiers.

The Acehnese sultan requested some horses, and experts on galleys and castles in his letter. He wanted the Ottoman caliph to treat him as his servant, and to consider Aceh as an Ottoman village and her people also as his servants. He went on to say:

> Would Your Majesty please inform the Governor Generals (*Beylerbeyi*) of Egypt and of Yemen and the Beys (sub-governors) of Jeddah and Aden that we are not your enemies, but your servants […]. If you send a navy with the necessary weapons and cannons to this side, we promise that the Portuguese can be destroyed. The rulers in this part and in India wish to obtain the assistance of the Portuguese, but we request help only from you. Would Your Majesty please send some *bashlıkcha* (warheads of torpedoes) and cannons that can destroy castles. Your Majesty can give commands to the Governor Generals of Egypt and Yemen as well as the Beys of Jeddah and Aden that they should give permission to our men without any delay to enter your office, when our men come to these places. Aceh is one of your villages and I am a servant of your office. The former governor of Gujerat, Karamanoglu Abdurrahman, is a very helpful man. When you sent Lutfi Bey to this side [of the ocean], he had some difficulties when he arrived at Jeddah, because he could not find any ship to travel to this side. Then, Abdurrahman, who showed very great respect to your command, spent much money and helped Lutfi Bey and his men to find a ship and sent them to this side. He himself is a very good person. Please give him the province of Jeddah. Since we are very happy with Lutfi Bey and his men, we request from you to send them again to this side. They are very knowledgeable about our region and about India, having seen and heard the situation of these places. Would you please warn those persons whom you send to this

side that they must obey our orders. Those cannoneers who had been sent from the Ottoman capital came to this side peacefully and their place in our estimation is very great. It is requested that some talented artisans of castles and galleys as well as horses be sent to this side. The servant of this palace, Huseyin, is being sent to Istanbul to bow before your Great Palace. (Göksoy 2004:39-41, 193-8; Shah 1967:375-6, 381-8.)

When Huseyin Efendi came to Istanbul with this letter, he had to wait in the capital for some time because of a series of events. His arrival in Istanbul coincided with Sultan Süleyman's campaign to Szigetvar in Hungary, his subsequent death, and his son Sultan Selim II's accession to the throne. Almost two years elapsed between the date of 'Ala' al-Din Syah's letter (7 January 1566) and its response (20 September 1567) from the new Ottoman sultan, Selim II (Illustration 7). Having welcomed the ambassador very warmly, Selim sent a response addressed to the sultan of Aceh through the hand of Mustafa Chavush, who was appointed Turkish ambassador to Aceh by the sultan. In this letter, after summarizing the contents of the Aceh ruler's letter, Sultan

Figure 7. Letter of Ottoman Sultan Selim II (r. 1566-1574) to Acehnese Sultan 'Ala' al-Din Ri'ayat Syah al-Kahhar (r. 1537-1571), dated 16 Rabi al-Awwal 975 H/20 September 1567 CE.

Selim stated that accepting requests from Muslim rulers was a religious and traditional duty of the Ottoman sultans. It follows then that the decision had been made to send Aceh a navy of 15 galleys and two galleons, an artillery commander from the imperial cannoneers with seven cannoneers under his command, adequate soldiers from Egypt, and a fleet armed with cannons, rifles and war material to attack castles. The letter continues:

> The former admiral of İskenderiye (Alexandria), Kurtoglu Hızır Reis, has been appointed to command this navy. It is my order to him that when he arrives in Aceh, his duty is to crush your enemies and to conquer the fortresses from the infidels. I also inform you that the said admiral, canoneers and other soldiers, whether junior or senior, should obey your orders and work in your service in accordance with religious injunctions and your conduct of affairs. Those who oppose your orders shall be punished by the Admiral himself. The salaries of soldiers to be sent will be paid for a year by us. You are required to give back documents (*temessuk*) to the returning gunsmiths after the completion of their work there, and to inform us on other affairs via Mustafa Chavush. For those who continue to stay there, you are required to follow whatever commands I issue for it. When your letter came here, my father, Sultan Suleyman Han, was fighting against the infidels in the Szigetvar war in Hungary. After the conquest of this castle he died and I took over his duties. I have decided to combat the infidels on your side. We will always send soldiers to you in order to overcome the enemies of religion and to get rid of those who are attacking Muslim lands on those shores. You are required to inform us in detail on whatever affairs occur in your areas in accordance with your handling of affairs. Galleons were prepared; they will be sent after they are loaded. Your ambassador, who came here, did his duty with good manners and he is now being sent back with our highest endorsement. (*7 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri* 1996h:90-3, 124-6.)[5]

It is clear from this letter that Sultan Selim II was very determined to help Aceh and he acted promptly for this end. On the following day (21 September 1567), he issued an imperial order (*nishan-ı humayun*) to Kurtoglu Hızır Reis, appointing him as the admiral of a fleet comprised of 15 galleys, two galleons and other necessary military equipment. This order was sent with Mustafa Chavush, an imperial official who accompanied the Acehnese ambassador. Kurtoglu Hızır Reis was instructed to lead the navy and, upon arrival in Aceh, to obey the instructions of the Aceh ruler and help the ruler in seizing the infidel castles from his enemies. All the soldiers, regardless of whether they were from Istanbul or Egypt, should obey the commands of the sultan of Aceh; if anyone disobeyed the Aceh ruler, they should be punished by Kurtoglu Hızır Reis himself as a warning for others. The salaries and provisions of the navy personnel would be met for the first year by the Ottoman government, after which, if the Aceh ruler still needed these

5 See also Bey 1912; İsmail Hakkı Göksoy 2004:198-200; Razaulhak Shah 1967:388-93.

personnel, he should be responsible for their expenses (*7 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri* 1996a:86, 118-9).[6]

In addition, the necessary instructions were written to the Governor Generals of Egypt and Yemen concerning assistance to be rendered to the ambassador of Aceh, Huseyin Efendi, in returning to his country. A command sent to the Governor General of Yemen on the same date that the Aceh ambassador was sent back instructed that if the ambassador wanted to buy horses, military equipment or copper, nobody should prevent him, and that his personal belongings should not be checked at the customs office. Every assistance must be rendered to him during his entry and departure from Yemen. Copies of this command were also sent to the *beys* of Jeddah and Aden, instructing them that assistance be given to the Aceh ambassador, and that he be escorted on his return to his own country (*7 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri* 1996b:89, 121-2).[7]

As for Aceh's request for experts in destroying castles and building galleys, Selim II sent another command dated 27 September 1567 (23 Rabi al-Awwal 975) to the Governor General of Egypt, informing him that the names of the artisans, including carpenters, blacksmiths, caulkers, shield-makers, shield-painters, shield-carvers and other professional masters, were written down in a register, and that they were now sent to Egypt. These artisans were to travel with the ambassador (*7 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri* 1996c:89, 122).[8] Another command to the Governor General of Egypt specified that if any soldier in Egypt volunteered to go to Aceh with the galleys, permission should be given.[9]

A command sent to the *bey* of Rhodes Island advised that the Aceh ambassador had been sent with a galley from Istanbul to Egypt, and that when he arrived in Rhodes, the *bey* himself must, without delay, accompany the ambassador to Egypt. The galley that carried the ambassador should be sent back to Istanbul after reaching Egypt (*7 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri* 1996e:89, 122-3).[10]

A command written to the sharif of Mecca, dated 21 September 1567 (17 Rabi al-Awwal 975), informed that when the Aceh ambassador and his men arrived at Mecca, every assistance, such as providing water, food and guides, should be given without having to ask the central government for permission. If the ambassador wanted to buy horses for the sultan of Aceh, nobody should prevent him, and everyone was obliged to render necessary assistance to him (*7 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri* 1996f:90, 123).[11]

A similar command sent to the Governor General of Egypt with the same

6 See also Bey 1906:154; Göksoy 2004:200-1; Shah 1967:392-3.
7 See also Göksoy 2004:201 and Shah 1967:393.
8 See also Göksoy 2004:202-3; Shah 1967:393.
9 See *7 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri* 1996d:89, 122, and Shah 1967:393.
10 See also Shah 1967:394.
11 See also Shah 1967:394.

date stated that when the ambassador arrived at the harbour of Alexandria, neither the custom officers (*emin*) nor other persons should inspect the personal belongings of him or his men (*7 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri* 1996g:90, 123-4).[12]

Two other commands to the Governor General of Egypt and the admiral of the navy were concerned with the appointment of appropriate men as captains (*reis*) of the ships to accompany the ambassador. Their salaries would be paid by the Ottoman government, and when the captains and soldiers returned from Aceh, if they brought documents (*temessuk*) with them proving that they had done their work properly, their previous salaries would continue to be paid (*7 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri* 1996j:177, 234, 1996k:182, 241).[13]

According to a command written to the Governor General of Egypt on 30 December 1567 (28 Jumad al-Akhir 975), the admiral of Suez, Mahmud Reis, was appointed as deputy admiral to Kurtoglu Hızır Reis, former admiral of Alexandria. In this command, it was also explained that when the navy arrived in a place, Mahmud Reis would stay with the ships to look after the cannoneers and fighting forces, and watch the infidel slaves in the ships lest they rebel. Kurtoglu Hızır Reis' duty was to transport the cannons and other military equipment to the right place ashore. When Kurtoglu Hızır Reis was ashore, the command of the ships would be under Mahmud Reis (*7 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri* 1996l:211, 282-3). The copies and contents of these commands were also sent to Kurtoglu Hızır Reis and Mahmud Reis themselves (*7 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri* 1996m:213, 228-84). It is understood from these documents that the Aceh ambassador sailed from Istanbul in a galley commanded by Karabıyık Reis (*7 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri* 1996i:156-7), first to Rhodes and then to Egypt, and probably also visited Mecca.

These records show that the Ottoman sultan, Selim, attached great importance to this Acehnese embassy and was determined to meet all the requests of the Aceh ruler. However, while preparations were being made for a fleet to be sent to Aceh, a rebellion occurred in Yemen. The navy prepared for Aceh was sent instead to Yemen to suppress the rebellion (Uzunçarşılı 1983a:400, 1983b:31-2). This decision was communicated to the Aceh ambassador, Huseyin, in a command dated 22 January 1568 (22 Rajab 975) through the hand of Mustafa Chavush. It was stated that the sending of an imperial navy (*donanma-i humayun*) to the coast of India, namely Aceh, was postponed this year because of the rebellion in Yemen, but after the uprisings were suppressed and the situation normalized, 'the said navy shall be sent the next year as previously agreed upon'.[14]

12 See also Shah 1967:394.

13 See also Shah 1967:394, 395.

14 Bey 1912:680; Göksoy 2004:203; *7 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri* 1996n:3-47, 255; Shah 1967:395.

In the meantime, another command issued to the Governor General and *defterdar* (finance director) of Egypt, dated 5 May 1568 (8 Dhu'l-Qada 975), mentioned the provision of food and other necessary items by the state treasury for this Aceh delegation during their stay in Egypt. It was explained that during the stay of the ambassador and his men in Istanbul, 70 pieces of bread, three *oke* of sugar, three boxes of nectar, 1.5 kg of rice, four *oke* of butter, four *oke* of honey, three chickens and three big sheep were provided daily for them.[15] Similar amounts of food should be provided by the Egyptian treasury during their stay in Egypt (*7 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri* 1996u:88-9, 473). This implies that this Aceh delegation was very large and probably stayed for some time in Egypt. Considering the scale of the provisions, they may also have covered the needs of the artisans travelling to Aceh with the ambassador.

Sultan Selim II's seriousness about sending a navy to Aceh is shown in his instruction to the Governor General of Egypt at almost the same time, 12 January 1568 (17 Rajab 975), to investigate whether or not the opening of a canal at Suez would be possible, after explaining that the Portuguese tried to block the route of the Muslim pilgrims and traders coming from the Indian Ocean. He instructed the Governor General that architects and engineers should go to the area to survey and plan a canal between the Mediterranean and Red Sea, and to report back on the possibility of building this canal, the duration of the work and the number of ships that could be sailed through it (*7 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri* 1996o:258, 351-2). Other ambitious canal projects were under consideration at that time, one of which was to unite the rivers of Don and Volga, but none were put into effect (Uzunçarşılı 1983b:32-4).

In the meantime, four more galleys were added to the fleet of 15 galleys prepared under the command of Kurtoglu Hızır Reis, and necessary war materials from Istanbul were also sent to Egypt. A command to the captain of Alexandria on 22 January 1568 (22 Rajab 975) instructed that the equipment needed for this fleet should be carried by the captain of Alexandria to Rashid either by land or sea route, whichever was feasible. A similar command was sent to the *amin* of Rashid, ordering him to hire a ship to carry this equipment to Egypt. Both commands were sent with Mustafa Chavush, who was to go to Aceh (*7 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri* 1996p:259, 353, 1996q:261, 355-6).

According to a command sent to the Governor General of Egypt on the same dates, the preparation of the fleet now comprising 19 galleys was completed, but the military equipment sent from Istanbul was not sufficient. Any deficiencies were to be met from Egypt and Alexandria. This command specified that the fleet prepared for the 'province of Aceh' (*vilâyet-i Açi*) would

[15] An *oke* is a traditional measure of weight used in the Ottoman lands. An 'Istanbul *oke*' is equivalent to 1.283 kg, although the exact weight did vary between different locales.

be used first for the Yemen expedition (*7 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri* 1996t:63, 455).[16]

Another command to the Governor General of Egypt dated 16 February 1568 (17 Shaban 975) informs us that the galleys, as well as the carpenters, rowers, caulkers, ironsmiths and other craftsmen assigned to Aceh, were also appointed to the Yemen expedition because of the riots there and the delay of the Aceh campaign. The names of these artisans were recorded as follows: Carpenter Ahmed and his four colleagues; Master Sawyer Ahmed and his four colleagues; Carpenter Ahmed bin Abdulbasit, Mustafa Ahmed, Ahmed bin Berekat and his two colleagues; Ustaz Ibrahim and his five colleagues; Rower Memi and Rower Hasan bin Abdullah; Ironsmith Ibrahim and his two assistants; a master copper mining engineer and his two colleagues; a caulker and his four colleagues; a master gilder and his two colleagues. All these artisans had first been sent to Egypt and were assigned to the Yemen expedition as well. Since Mustafa Chavush was on the way now, this command was therefore sent through the hand of Perviz, who was assistant to Mustafa Chavush in Istanbul (*7 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri* 1996r:311, 427).

A command sent to Vizier Piyale Pasha declared that the same pay increase would be given to those assigned to Yemen as previously given to those sent to Aceh. This command also advised that the cannons of one *kıntar* (120 lbs) with a height of 7 *karısh* (inches) for the Yemen expedition were not convenient for use (*7 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri* 1996s:48, 446).

In the *Mühimme* registers, we do not have any further records on this subject. However, according to other Turkish records, the sultan of Aceh sent two more ambassadors to Istanbul in the following years. The arrival of these ambassadors is attested to in two more letters of Sultan Selim II addressed to the Aceh ruler. Although the exact dates of these letters are not clear, we can judge from their content that the first was written in 1569, and the second in 1571. Both letters focus on the reasons for the delay of the required military aid, and once more confirm that the fleet would be sent after the military activities around Yemen, Cyprus and Tunisia were completed.

It is known from this first letter that the sultan of Aceh sent some presents to Sultan Selim II with an ambassador, and again asked for help. The letter states:

> We received your letter and gifts through your man. You are asking for help in your letter. It is our traditional duty to accept the requests of rulers. In fact, when you requested help against the infidels previously, we acted in response immediately, but just when the equipment was going to be sent, an uprising occurred in Yemen. Since it has become necessary to send soldiers there, we were late to meet your requests. After the return of the forces that have been sent to fight against the

[16] In this document, Aceh is mentioned as a '*vilayet*' (province).

> enemies in those parts, it has been decided certainly on the sending of soldiers and navy. (Shah 1967:379-80.)[17]

It is understood from the second letter that the Ottomans had still not sent the planned fleet to Aceh as they had to deal with matters elsewhere. From the contents it is clear that this letter was written in 1571. It explained:

> Your ambassadors Sünbül Agha and Khamza brought your letter and presented your requests to me. In accordance with the rules of religion, your requests had been accepted before and it had been ordered to send the requested equipments and war materials. But while this equipment was on the way, rebels suddenly revolted in Yemen. Since it has become a necessity to save the people and the province of Yemen from the evil acts of those who strayed from the right path, some soldiers were sent there. Later on some soldiers also needed to be sent to Cyprus, because it became a vital duty to clean that island from the infidels who continued to harm the Muslims while they were going on pilgrimage by the sea route. Therefore, your requests have not been fulfilled. After a major war, Cyprus was cleansed of infidels and annexed to Ottoman territory. The governor of Algiers, Ali Pasha, fought against the ruler of Tunisia and conquered that place as well. The soldiers who were sent to Yemen have overcome the enemies there. When the situation is normalized in that place and soldiers are returned back, your requests shall be fulfilled. It has been decided on this definitely. (Shah 1967:380-1.)[18]

In *Mühimme* register 12, we have another record of these Acehnese ambassadors, concerned mainly with rendering assistance to them while leaving the Ottoman lands peacefully. Although the names of the ambassadors are not mentioned in this command, it can be inferred from the words with plural forms like 'Acehnese ambassadors' and 'the mentioned men', as well as from the date[19] of the command (1571), that they are most probably Sünbül Agha and Khamza. It is stated in this command written to the *bey* of Rhodes that when the Acehnese ambassadors arrive at Rhodes, the *bey* should accompany them, without delay, as far as Alexandria by whatever means – ship, galley, *kalita* or *fırkate*. This command was sent via Mustafa Chavush, who 'has been working for the Aceh ruler'. Copies were also sent to the *bey* of Alexandria, the Governor General of Egypt and the *bey* of Jeddah, ordering all assistance to these Acehnese ambassadors in returning to their country (*12 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri* 1996a:90; 1996b:370).

The first-hand Turkish official sources for sixteenth-century Ottoman-Aceh relations do not go further than this. Therefore, we do not know whether this

17 For the original of this letter, see Library of Topkapı Palace Museum n.y. 816b-7b.

18 For the original of this letter, see Library of Topkapı Palace Museum n.y. 881a-3a.

19 Although the date is not mentioned in the document, the previous record is dated 22 Shawwal 978 (19-3-1571), and the latter one 20 Dhu'l-Qada 978 (15-4-1571).

planned campaign to Aceh was carried out in the following years or not. The uprising in Yemen was suppressed by the end of 1570, but it took a few more years to normalize the situation there (Uzunçarşılı 1983a:335-42). Various speculations have been made as to whether this arranged campaign ever materialized. According to the historian İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, the planned expedition to Aceh did not take place due to the campaigns in Yemen, although the cannoneers, gunsmiths and artisans were sent to Aceh with two ships.[20] On the other hand, Saffet Bey (1912:682, 683), İsmail Hamdi Danişmend (1979:61-4) and Mehmet Ziya (1898:85-6, 157-60) claimed that the fleet was sent, and Danişmend added that the sovereignty of the Ottoman Empire extended beyond Asia, Europe and Africa to as far as the Oceans. Metin İnegöllüoğlu, who had been to Jakarta as a Turkish ambassador for a period of time, assumed that the campaign took place and that two ships stayed in Aceh (İnegöllüoğlu 1987:59). The Pakistani researcher N. Ahmet Asrar, who had seen some of the Turkish sources on the subject, stated that this campaign was never made but that some arms and military aid may have been sent (Asrar 1972:301). Similar views were expressed by Anthony Reid. As he noted, 'Kurtoglu Hızır Reis and his fleet never reached Aceh. But the importance the Acehnese give to the cannons, the flag, and gunsmiths makes it reasonably certain that these at least were sent along with some sort of imperial message. They probably reached Aceh during 1568 or 1569' (Reid 1969b:407). Thus, it can be said that the campaign was not made as planned in the letter of Sultan Selim II, but more modest military aid may have been sent to Aceh.

The death of 'Ala' al-Din, the sultan of Aceh, in 1571, with the succession of a weaker ruler on the one hand, and the succession of Murad III to the Ottoman throne with his reluctance to proceed with the sea campaigns on the other, suggests that the planned Turkish campaign to Sumatra did not materialize. However, local Acehnese sources and some Portuguese ones imply that some military assistance, probably including two ships, some big cannons and some war artisans were sent to Aceh by Sultan Selim II. According to Indonesian sources, two ships came from Turkey with many military experts, and this two-ship motif is frequently mentioned in Acehnese oral traditions. These two ships loaded with war materials and some artisans may have come to Aceh with the returning Acehnese ambassador, Huseyin.

The alliance between Turkey and Aceh was not limited to the exchange of ambassadors. Western sources confirm that many experts and craftsmen also came to Aceh with the Ottoman ambassadors. For example, as noted

[20] İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı (1983b:31-2), citing the *Münşeat* of Feridun Bey, writes that the Acehnese sultan 'Ala' al-Din, as the ruler of the land 'below the winds' (*tahter-rih*) to whom imperial letters were sent, asked the Ottoman government to send cannons stating their heights and weights, cannon founders and masters of gunsmiths. See Uzunçarşılı 1983b:252 (dipnot 1) in the second book.

by Diego do Couto, 'Aceh reinforces its power day by day [...] and as we know, it becomes friends with the Turk with whom it has relations, and from whom it obtains men, weapons, blacksmiths, sailors, and cannoneers'.[21] The Ottoman sultan was always considered by the Aceh sultan as an ally against the Portuguese. A recently-examined Portuguese source of 1582 also stated that the Aceh ruler annually sent ambassadors to the sultan of Turkey to obtain military help in return for the pepper trade to West Asia. Aceh wanted to establish a trading centre in Jeddah, which would have been extremely lucrative for Cairo as well. Each year, the Aceh ruler would send gifts of gold, gems, spices and perfumes to the sultan of Turkey via the Red Sea in order to induce the latter to dispatch metal cannons to Aceh. This way, he managed to secure royal cannons, basilisks, cannon-balls, gun-founders, ship captains, helmsmen, galley officers, fortification engineers and siege experts (Teensma 1989:315-6, 321).

At the beginning of the seventeenth century, there was even a small Turkish colony which settled in Aceh, generally known as 'Rumi', or locally as 'Turki'. For instance, in 1604, the French traveller François Martin made mention of the existence of a Turkish colony in Aceh. As he noted, '[o]ne part of the Turks, settled in Aceh, bought pepper from the farmers to sell; and a few times they tried to make a bargain with us to sell the pepper they had stored for us' (Lombard 1986:158-9, n. 4).[22]

Although Acehnese sources made mention of the coming of two Turkish officials (*chelebis*) from Istanbul to Aceh during the time of Sultan Iskander Thani (r. 1637-1641) (H.M. Zainuddin 1961:272-8; Seljuk 1980:308-9) there is no Turkish source to prove this. Nevertheless, there has long been traffic between Aceh and the Hijaz because of the pilgrimage to Mecca. Aceh has welcomed religious scholars of West Asian origin and sent her own students for higher education in the Hijaz. Also, it is generally believed that some rulers in the region obtained their titles of sultan by sending envoys to the Ottoman governors of Yemen and the Hijaz (Göksoy 2004:61-2; Schrieke 1957:250-1).

The memory of Ottoman-Aceh relations in the sixteenth century was kept alive for centuries in the form of a flag similar to the red Ottoman flag, and by keeping a cannon named *lada secupak* (a bag of pepper) in the royal citadel, Bandar Aceh. These were accepted and respected as presents from the sultan indicating the influence of the Ottoman Empire on its furthest vassal, the Aceh sultanate (Reid 1969a:3; Snouck Hurgronje 1906:208-9). Modern Aceh writers have claimed that the Turks in Aceh founded a military academy known as *askari bayt al-muqaddas* (Sacred Military Academy), and that leaders

[21] Diego do Couto, *Observaçoes sobre as principaes Causas da Decadencia dos Portugueses na Asia*, Lisbon: Academia Real das Sciencias, 1790, p.75, cited in Lombard 1986:159.

[22] For an English translation of this passage in Martin, see Anthony Reid 1995:63.

such as the first woman admiral of Aceh, Keumalahayati, were trained there (Ismail Sofyan, Muhammad Hasan Basry and Ibrahim Alfian 1997:57). Again, according to local sources, two big bronze cannons were among the weapons sent, one of which was preserved in Banda Aceh until the last century. A Turkish traveller, Abdulaziz, who went to Aceh in 1898, enquired about these cannons with the Acehnese officials, and a leader named Teungku Suleyman said that one of them was in the Aceh courthouse and the other in Java (Bey 1906:683).[23] However, these cannons were confiscated by the Dutch, and later transported to the Bronbeek military museum in Holland (Ismail Sofyan, Muhammad Hasan Basry and Ibrahim Alfian 1997:171).

In 1899 the Turkish writer Mehmet Ziya wrote, in his treatise on Aceh history, that the Ottoman caliphate had sent a star of honour to the Aceh sultan, and that Aceh ships were allowed to fly the Turkish flag. He also claimed that Süleyman the Magnificent had sent a flag to the Aceh ruler on which the holy testament of faith was written (Ziya 1898:85). Ziya further saw similarities between the clothes that the Acehnese wore at the beginning of the twentieth century and those of the Turks in Anatolia. For example, the Aceh women and girls used to wear baggy shalwar and skirts, and jewellery, like in Anatolia. The Aceh men of the aristocratic class used to wear headgear like the Ottoman fez, while lower-class men would wrap belts around their waists and put handled knives in them (Ziya 1898:99-104).

Turkish influences in Aceh were particularly seen in military matters. Seventeenth-century Turkish author Katip Chelebi (d. 1657) mentioned in his geography book *Cihannuma* (Terrace of the whole world), that the Acehnese Muslims were good fighters, and that they learned the art of war from the Turks. They could use bows and arrows, and could manufacture cannons similar to those of the Turks (Çelebi 1733:44-145).

Furthermore, according to local sources, the palace guards of Iskandar Muda (r. 1607-1636) in the seventeenth century consisted of slaves who had been captured from enemies at a young age, and who had been exposed to a military education like the Ottoman janissaries. Again, in this period, the Aceh soldiers had known and practised some of the Turkish war tactics. The military experts from Turkey also helped Iskandar Muda in the construction of the famous Aceh citadel and royal palace. They continued to use an Aceh flag resembling the Ottoman Turkish flag, consisting of a white star and crescent embroidered on a red background with a white sword below it (Seljuk 1980:120).

[23] See also Nalbandoğlu 1951:519.

Nineteenth-century Ottoman-Aceh relations

Relations between the Ottoman Empire and the Aceh sultanate began to revive again in the nineteenth century after a long hiatus. The nineteenth century was a period of colonization of the Muslim lands by the British, French and Dutch. The Dutch advance on the island of Sumatra since the second half of the eighteenth century concerned the Aceh sultanate, which, by the middle of the nineteenth century, was fully aware of the Dutch threat. Sultan Ibrahim Mansur Syah sought the renewal of the fealty established in the sixteenth century by again applying to the Ottoman Empire. He requested a declaration or *firman* from the Ottoman government accepting their vassal status, and sent an envoy to Istanbul in 1851 to seek the protection of the Ottoman Empire (Eraslan 1992:90; Reid 1969a:21).

This Aceh embassy, led by men known to Turkish sources as Shaykh Ismail Efendi and Muhammed Gus Efendi,[24] included eight men, and they stayed in the guest house of Tahir Efendi in Istanbul. Although they intended to stay two months in Istanbul, they extended their stay for another two months. During their stay in Istanbul, their expenses were met by the Ottoman treasury.[25] The Ottoman sultan, Abdülmecid, welcomed this Aceh envoy and the letter of Mansur Syah addressed to Sultan Abdülmecid with great warmth. Since the matter of protection was considered a political one, it needed further discussion.[26]

The Ottoman Council of Ministers (*Majlis-i Vukela*) discussed the matter in one of its meetings and came to the conclusion that there was no civil benefit in accepting the vassal status of Aceh. Reasons given include the remoteness of Aceh from the Ottoman lands, the non-existence of direct connections and the insufficiency of communication. On the other hand, the council, considering the position and office of the caliph as the leader of all Muslims in the world, thought that rejecting the proposal totally would be unwise. Therefore, the council decided to invite the Aceh envoy, together with the Ottoman governor of Yemen, to one of its meetings to get further information on the subject. During the council meeting of 24 November

[24] The second of these appeared in French sources as Mohammad Ghauth. His original mission was to carry letters to Paris as well as to Istanbul, in pursuit of alliances against the Dutch. Given the warm reception in Istanbul, however, he only sent the letter to Paris, and left it to his writer, Teuku Nyak Adam (Sidi Mohammad), to take up the French invitation to visit Paris in 1852-1853 (Reid 2005:172-4).

[25] Letter of permission and its appendix dated 17-12-1851 to the Ministry of Finance: BOA, A.MKT:NZD, 47/38; Letter of permission dated 20-4-1852 to the Head Director of the Finance Ministry: BOA, A.MKT.NZD, 51/51. BOA is the abbreviation of the Ottoman Prime Ministerial Archives in Istanbul.

[26] Note dated 15-2-1852: BOA, MKT.MHM, 43/13.

1851, the Aceh envoy affirmed that Aceh was self-sufficient in financial and military terms, and sent 25,000 pilgrims to Mecca each year. The Acehnese needed a declaration that they were dependent on the Ottoman Empire in order to get rid of any foreign pressure and threats. The Aceh delegation also reported that the Friday sermons in the mosques were already given in the name of the Ottoman caliph, and they requested that permission should be given to Aceh to issue its coins in the name of the caliph. They were willing to pay an annual tribute to the Ottoman government as a sign of vassal status. They also requested the sending of some instructors and experts to train the Acehnese soldiers. All this was to be written down in a *firman* that would be sent to the Aceh sultan.

However, the council viewed bestowing vassal status based only upon the ambassador's request as contrary to administrative procedures. In the end, the council decided that the governor and the envoy would go together to Yemen, and an experienced senior officer would be appointed to inspect the situation further in Aceh. If the sincerity of Aceh's vassal status was confirmed, this Ottoman officer would come back with an official of the ruler to receive the symbols and documents of vassal status. The council wanted the instructions to be sent to this officer after being seen by the sultan and requested that sufficient money be given as a present to the envoy. All this should be kept secret without revealing anything to foreign agents. The Sublime Porte (*Babıali*) presented the case to the sultan after a fortnight, on 11 December 1851, specifying that an allowance of 15,000 Turkish *gurush* (piastres) be given to this Aceh envoy as an *atıyye* (present).[27] The will of the sultan was declared on 13 December 1851, by approving the proposal.[28]

It was decreed at the council meeting on 7 January 1852, that the travel expenses of the officer who would go to Aceh, the presents and other costs would be supplied from the state treasury of Yemen, and duly recorded on a register to be sent to the central treasury. The selection of this officer would also be made by the Yemen governor, Mustafa Pasha.[29]

The letter of the Ottoman sultan sent to the Aceh ruler with the returning envoy declared that the letter of Ibrahim Mansur Syah was welcomed by the sultan with pleasure. The office of the caliphate sought to ensure that all the Muslims in the region would live in security and happiness. The sultan's letter pointed out that the choice of an envoy to discuss the vassal status was assigned to the governor of Yemen, so that they should pay attention to the

27 A *gurush* was a 1 g silver coin used in the Ottoman Empire during the nineteenth century. The amount of 15,000 *gurush* mentioned here would have been worth around £137 at that time.

28 BOA, *İrade Meclis-i Vâlâ*, 7706. See also Eraslan 1992:90-2.

29 BOA, *İrade Meclis-i Vâlâ*, 7935. See also Eraslan 1992:92.

governor's message, and correspond with the caliphate through him. All of these documents were presented for the sultan's opinion on 11 February 1852, and they received his approval the following day.[30]

The royal letter for Aceh was first prepared in Turkish and translated immediately into Arabic, as the governor of Yemen, Mustafa Pasha, was about to leave Istanbul for Yemen. Thereafter, it was given to the Aceh envoy.[31] The sum of 15,000 *gurush* was given to the envoy from the state treasury to meet his expenses on the journey. The envoy left Istanbul for Yemen together with the governor of Yemen, to whom a ship was assigned as a mark of distinction.[32] These somewhat nominal steps made it clear that the Ottoman government did not take the matter of vassal status literally, although it welcomed the envoy very warmly. Finally, it handed the case to its governor of Yemen.

The matter of vassal status was revived again after the Dutch threat to Aceh had steadily become more obvious. The Acehnese saw the Ottoman caliph as a source of hope and help to defend the sovereignty of their sultanate and to prevent Dutch expansion at its expense. Therefore, they sent an appeal of protection to Istanbul through the Turkish authorities in Yemen and Hijaz in 1868. Behind this initiative was Sayyid Habib Abdurrahman al-Zahir, a Hadrami Arab, who, after travelling in various countries, came to Aceh in 1864 and quickly assumed a prominent role. Having worked as the head of the Aceh religious court and the imam of the Aceh mosque for several years, he went to Mecca in 1868 with a request for protection signed by 65 Acehnese leaders. After his arrival in Mecca, he established close relations with the Ottoman governor of Jeddah and sent his petition to the caliph in Istanbul via the governor of Yemen. The petition claimed that from the time of Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent to the time of Sultan Abdulaziz, all the rulers of Aceh and her statesmen and people had been under the protection of the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman cannons and military equipment left from these former times remained in Aceh. The Acehnese harbours and ships carried the Turkish flags, and Friday sermons and festival prayers were read in the name of the caliph. When Acehnese officials met the representatives of a foreign state, they wore the Ottoman official dress. Aceh had no relation with foreign powers other than the Ottoman Empire. They therefore requested that the caliph renew this attachment to the Ottoman Empire, so it could be proclaimed to all. Aceh would not be a burden on the Ottomans economically; it had the necessary resources to administer itself as a vassal state. They requested that the caliph send an official to Aceh with a ship, so that Aceh would be accepted as Ottoman

30 BOA, *İrade Meclis-i Vâlâ*, 7706. See also Eraslan 1992:91-2.
31 BOA, A. MKT.NZD, 49/64.
32 BOA, A. MKT.NZD, 47/66.

territory, and its people would have the satisfaction of belonging to that empire.[33]

Another letter written in Mecca by Sayyid Abdurrahman al-Zahir himself explained in more detail how he envisaged this protection. If the Ottoman Empire sent a special officer to Aceh with a ship and gave a token honour such as a sword to the Aceh ruler, and titles and medals to other Acehnese statesmen according to their positions, no foreign power could attack Aceh, and even the neighbouring rulers would seek the protection of the Ottoman Empire. He also proposed that the Ottomans provide a monthly salary of 4,000 riyal to the Aceh ruler, 500 riyal to the viziers and 240 riyal to other chiefs, to show that Aceh was a vassal of the Ottoman Empire. There were 100,000 soldiers in Aceh, and all would feel greatly dignified to serve as soldiers of the caliph.[34]

When this petition was presented to the new sultan, Abdulaziz, on 1 December 1868, the caliph ordered that research be done on Aceh as to where it was located, whose rule it was under and whether or not it had relations with any European power.[35] This enquiry revealed that Aceh was part of the island of Sumatra, parts of which were still under the rule of Ibrahim Mansur Syah, with the remainder under Dutch sovereignty.[36] Aceh's relation with other European powers was friendly, but there was a threat of Dutch expansion in the region. The matter of vassal status had already been discussed at a meeting in Mecca between Abdurrahman al-Zahir, the sharif of Mecca and the governor of Hejaz, who agreed that the Aceh ruler and other leading Acehnese personalities jointly sought to enter under the protection of the Ottoman government. If the caliph sent an official to Aceh, he could readily rule Aceh in the name of the Ottomans. The emir could protect his boundaries from colonial expansion for a while, but would prefer working under the rule of the Ottoman caliph rather than any other European power. If an official with knowledge of international law and modern politics were sent to Aceh with 200 soldiers, he could easily gain the administration of Aceh. He should hold meetings with the Aceh ruler and his high officials to discuss the administration of Aceh under Ottoman rule, and would then act according to instructions from the central government in Istanbul. All these opinions were presented to the Sublime Porte (Office of Sadrazam) on 14 March 1869.

These proposals did not get enough support at the meeting of the Council of Ministers led by the *sadrazam* (prime minister). If the protection request of the Acehnese were accepted, the other Muslim rulers in the region would also

33 For the translated version of this petition, see BOA, A. MKT.MHM. 457/55.

34 BOA, A.MKT.MHM. 457/55.

35 BOA, *İrade Meclis-i Mahsus*, 1524. See also Eraslan 1992:97.

36 For more on Ottoman knowledge of Aceh during the nineteenth century, see Chapter VIII in this volume.

demand Ottoman protection and ask for vassal status. This would damage the friendly relations between the Ottoman Empire and the Dutch government and might create difficulties in international law. If the Dutch were to attack Aceh, the Ottoman Empire would be forced to respond to this, which in turn might cause many unexpected difficulties. In the end, it was thus decided that some gesture would be made, but not openly. Hence, Pertev Efendi, the former *kaimakam* (district governor) of Mause, was chosen as the right person to inquire further. His knowledge of Arabic and interest in international law and politics played an important role in his selection. Officially, however, his appointment was described as relating to the improvement of ties among the tribes in Yemen. This appointment was proposed by the Office of Sadrazam to the sultan on 29 April 1869, and it received his approval the following day.[37]

These discussions suggest that the Ottoman authorities in the capital did not interpret the vassal status requested by the Acehnese in the literal sense in which it was proposed, but, rather, in terms of the spiritual ties and feelings of religious brotherhood it shared with Aceh. In the end, the government chose the path of sending an official secretly to make further inquiries on the spot. The Dutch representative in Istanbul was informed that Aceh's request for protection had been rejected, because the Ottoman officials had the impression that this request was only an idea of Abdurrahman al-Zahir and a group of his close friends in Aceh, or some Acehnese pilgrims living in Mecca (Reid 1969a:82). On the other hand, the Ottoman authorities in Mecca and Yemen, who first welcomed the Acehnese envoys and pilgrims, always approached the matter positively, and they maintained their warm stance in the following years. According to Reid, in 1872 the Ottoman pasha of Jeddah and some other minor officials claimed to the Dutch consulate that Aceh was part of the Ottoman Empire. He also said that the champion of Turkish vassalage, Abdurrahman al-Zahir, returned to Aceh later with some letters obtained from the sharif of Mecca and the Ottoman pasha of Jeddah, and probably with a *Mecidi* medal (Reid 1967:275).

The last Aceh embassy to Istanbul arrived in 1873, on the eve of the Dutch attack which launched a thirty-year struggle in Aceh. The Acehnese struggle was known as a *perang sabil* (holy war) to the Acehnese, and as the Aceh War (1873-1906) internationally. This last mission was again led by Abdurrahman al-Zahir, now acting as foreign minister of the new Aceh sultan, Mahmud Syah. Mahmud's letter to Sultan Abdulaziz mentioned the old ties established by his ancestors, and requested Ottoman protection and military help against the Dutch. He reiterated that the Acehnese had been under the protection of the Ottomans since the time of Sultan Selim, that his grandfather, Alaeddin

37 BOA, *İrade Meclis-i Mahsus*, 1524. See also Eraslan 1992:97-8.

Mansur Syah, had been given a *firman* and a *Mecidi* medal by the caliph, Abdulmecid, and that they recognized only Ottoman Turkish rule as their highest administration. The Acehnese considered themselves the subjects of the Ottoman caliph, proof of which can be found, as he again specified, in the use of the Turkish flag on their harbours and ships, and the acceptance of Ottoman rules as their own law. The sultan's letter affirmed that Vizier Abdurrahman was sent to Istanbul to present their requests, and had been given full authority to discuss them. The sultan declared himself ready to work under the instructions of an Ottoman Turkish governor, and to carry out the caliph's instructions willingly.[38]

Abdurrahman al-Zahir first called at Mecca and stayed in the Hijaz for a period of time during the months of February and March 1873. He met the Ottoman authorities there and discussed the matter of protection with them, asking, among other things, that a special ship under the leadership of an Ottoman official together with some soldiers be sent. The Ottoman authorities in the Hijaz, already aware of the Aceh issue from previous missions, considered the matter very positively. They thought that Zayn al-Abidin Efendi, a Sumatran living in Mecca, was most qualified for such a post, but because he died suddenly, they proposed that another person be nominated either from Mecca or from Istanbul. Since the caliph was the leader of all Muslims, he could not refuse the request for protection and military help, but the means to do so should be determined in Istanbul together with the Acehnese envoy. The local officials also proposed that appropriate honours be given to the new Aceh ruler, 'Ala' al-Din Mahmud Syah, Abdurrahman al-Zahir and other Acehnese leaders according to rank. Sending military experts to train the Acehnese soldiers, or a ship with military equipment would require a decision from the caliph himself.[39]

With this promising endorsement Abdurrahman left for Istanbul, arriving on 27 April 1873. He stayed first at the Ozbek Tekke – a guest house for pilgrims from Bukhara and other Central Asian cities on their way to Mecca – after which he paid short visits to the government offices. During his early days in Istanbul, he also had a chance to meet with the ambassador of the Kashgar Emirate in eastern Turkistan. On 4 May, he moved to the imperial guest house and stayed there until his departure from Istanbul. With the help of the guest house's director, Shemsi Efendi, he was able to meet high-ranking authorities at their private houses in order to direct their attention to Aceh's

[38] See the letter of the Aceh sultan Mahmud Syah sent to Sultan Abdülaziz by the hand of his ambassador, Abdurrahman al-Zahir: BOA, A. MKT.MHM. 457/55. For its Indonesian version, see 'Surat Sultan Aceh Alauddin Mahmud Syah Kepada Sultan Turki Abdul Aziz', in Aboe Bakar 1982:29-30.

[39] Letter from the deputy governor of Hejaz, Mustafa, 13-3-1873 (13 Muharrem 1290), and letters sent to the Office of Sadrazam dated 11-3-1873 and 12-3-1873; see BOA, A.MKT.MHM. 457/55.

cause. On 15 May, he was received by Sadrazam Mahmud Rushdi Pasha, who presented him the letter of Sultan Mahmud. According to his own account, he was also received by the sultan for a short time (Schmidt 1992:59).

Abdurrahman al-Zahir's arrival in Istanbul coincided with the visits of various Turkic delegations from Hiwa, Buhara and Kashgar in Central Asia. These delegations were also asking for help from the Ottoman caliph as the caliph of all Muslims. Among them, the delegation of Kashgar was able to obtain, from the sultan, a letter of support as well as four Turkish training officers and some weapons (Reid 1969a:120; Türköne 1991:155). This situation gave some encouragement to Abdurrahman that his own cause might get support.

The Istanbul press also paid great attention to this Aceh delegation, articulating the delegation's aims, as well as the crimes and injustices of Dutch colonial rule in Indonesia. The majority of the Turkish press supported the Aceh cause, pressing for diplomatic and military support. The Arabic journal *al-Jawa'ib* with its pan-Islamic stance followed the doings of Abdurrahman closely, while another pan-Islamic newspaper, the Turkish-language *Basiret*, devoted several issues to news on Aceh and her old ties with Turkey, appealing for Turkish warships to be sent to Sumatra. The semi-official newspaper *La Turquie*, published both in French and in Turkish, demanded that the government take steps to protect the rights of small and weak Muslim nations. When the newspaper *Basiret* wrote on 9 July 1873 that the government had already decided to send eight warships to Sumatra, and that one of them would stay in Aceh waters permanently, European representatives in Istanbul were concerned enough to jointly protest against any such decision if it were true. This forced the government to issue an official statement that the news was entirely fabricated, and to ban *Basiret* for five days for its false and provocative news (Türköne 1991:155-6). The *Basiret* report reached Penang through the Reuters news agency, after which it was passed on to Aceh by the Acehnese migrants in Penang. The influence of the exciting initial report was immense in the region, encouraging Acehnese and others against the Dutch, while the official denial by the government was not publicized in the area (Reid 1969a:121).

The presence of the Aceh delegation caused great anxiety to the Dutch ambassador in Istanbul and some of his European colleagues. The Dutch embassy appointed one of its clerks, Antoire Scassaro, to follow every movement of Abdurrahman al-Zahir and to report on his daily activities in the capital. The Dutch government sought guarantees from the great powers not to support this Aceh initiative. In response, the French, Russian, German, Austrian, Italian and British ambassadors all urged the Ottoman Foreign Minister Saffet Bey, and then later Rashid Pasha, not to intervene in the war between the Dutch and Aceh (Schmidt 1992:58). French ambassador

De Vogue claimed that Turkey's arbitration could bring no benefit, since it would be refused by the Dutch. The Russian ambassador, General Ignatiev, was particularly vehement in opposing Turkey's involvement. He used his influence to support the Dutch arguments, explaining to his European colleagues that they should be very careful about pan-Islamic ideas, and especially of any recognition of the Ottoman sultan as the universal caliph of the whole Islamic world. If the Ottoman Empire sought to protect Muslims in Asia in the name of the caliphate, the great powers would demand the protection of Christians living in Turkey. After the question of Aceh was closed in favour of the Dutch, the Dutch ambassador, Heldevier, remarked: '[w]e owe this only to General Ignatiev' (Reid 1969a:123; Schmidt 1992:58-9).

The Aceh envoy himself claimed to have been warmly received by the Ottoman sultan, who expressed sympathy for the proposal of protection, but the government officials took a more reserved stance. For several months, the question of Aceh was an important and undecided problem in Istanbul. The Aceh cause was generally defended in Ottoman government circles by the reformist minister of justice, Mithad Pasha, who saw it as an appropriate means to criticize the Western powers. He argued that the sultan should do something about the matter, offering at least its arbitration to the Dutch, which would imply diplomatic support for the Acehnese. He also suggested giving a first class honour to the Aceh ruler, and a second class honour to Abdurrahman al-Zahir.[40] Foreign Minister Saffet Pasha preferred to defer to the views of the Western states, notably chief ally Britain. On 5 May 1873 he asked his ambassador in London, Musurus Pasha, to sound out the attitude of the British government on the subject. The British government was in favorur of a non-interventionist policy, because there was no religious element in the war. London advised Turkey to avoid taking any steps that would encourage the Acehnese to go to war; a simple protest would be sufficient (Reid 1969a:123).

Under this Western pressure, Saffet Pasha gave a guarantee to the Dutch authorities on 15 May 1873, stating that Turkey would not arbitrate in the war. Although Abdurrahman met the newly-appointed minister of foreign affairs, Rashid Pasha, he was still not able to obtain serious support. Rashid Pasha told him at the beginning of June that Aceh was too far from Ottoman lands to allow for action. The Western representatives, meanwhile, were irritated by the presence of the Aceh delegation, and wanted the Aceh delegation sent back immediately with abstruse words of sympathy (Reid 1969a:125).

In the face of these setbacks, Abdurrahman al-Zahir insisted that Aceh had already been accepted as a Turkish territory in the *firman* given to Sultan Ibrahim Mansur in 1851, renewing the protection since the time of Sultan Selim; since then, the Turkish flag had been waving on Aceh lands and waters.

40 BOA, İrade Hariciye, 15589. See also Eraslan 1992:99.

He insisted that these *firman* should be in the Ottoman archives, and that he asked only for their renewal. Upon Abdurrahman's insistence, the head registrar searched the archives and in the end, two *firman* were found. One of them was the letter of 1567 written by Sultan Selim II to the Aceh ruler, 'Ala' al-Din Ri'ayat Syah al-Qahhar; the second was a letter given by Sultan Abdulmecid to Ibrahim Mansur Syah in 1852. According to the latter, the Aceh sultanate had accepted Ottoman sovereignty through the letter sent by Ibrahim to Sultan Abdulmecid, who, in return, granted an imperial *Mecidi* honour to the then Aceh sultan.

This discovery aroused the Turkish press and pan-Islamic circles in Istanbul to support the Acehnese demands, arguing that political and military help should immediately be given. These documents were brought before the Ottoman cabinet on 13 June, but did not convince enough ministers and officials, some of whom considered them as signs of a purely religious rather than political relation, for any action to be taken. Others maintained that a statement should be issued expressing concern about the beginning of the war against Aceh, while the new Foreign Minister Rashid Pasha suggested that a protest could be made against the Dutch, and an imperial honour given again to the Aceh ruler. Yet others argued that Aceh was too far from Ottoman territory for communication and assistance to be practical, so that the responsibility of direct protection was inappropriate. On the other hand, since Aceh had already been given imperial recognition, complete rejection would be incompatible with the prestige of the caliph.[41] In the end, it was politely explained to the head of the mission that these *firman* had religious rather than political importance, and should not have been understood as granting Aceh direct protection (Reid 1969a:126).

Abdurrahman al-Zahir, disappointed with this outcome, submitted a letter to the Office of Sadrazam at the end of June 1873, reporting that according to a recent telegram the Dutch forces were besieging the Aceh capital from the sea, but the Acehnese continued to resist. Reiterating the old ties between the two countries, he complained that the constant requests for the renewal of the vassal status of Aceh to Turkey had still not been granted. If they had been, this would have brought peace to Aceh and the Dutch would not dare to attack. He urged that the caliph should again be requested to issue a *firman*, together with an honour for their ruler, as had been given to the Turkish ruler of Kashgar in East Turkistan and to other rulers.[42]

The issue reached crisis point in July 1873, when the Russian ambassador Ignatiev learnt that new documents from Aceh had just reached Istanbul. These

41 BOA, *İrade Hariciye*, 15586. See also Eraslan 1992:100.

42 Letter of Abdurrahman to the Office of Sadrazam dated 28-6-1873; see BOA, A.MKT. MHM.457/55.

documents were shown to Ignatiev in the house of Rashid Pasha in Kanlıca, and, according to his translator, were written in bad Arabic. These documents included a *pancarte roulee* signed by the Aceh sultan, and documents signed and stamped by five 'emirs' and 20 administrators in Aceh. The documents submitted Aceh to the sovereignty of the Ottoman sultan, and demanded the appointment of an Ottoman governor to administer it. Having seen the documents, the Ottoman sultan, encouraged by Mithad Pasha, ordered the writing of an official letter to the Dutch government (Woltring 1962a:591-2).

The pressure from Western powers ensured that this was only a softly-worded proposal of mediation between the Dutch and the Acehnese. It was eventually agreed that 'some warnings in friendly words' should be made, but that a problem with the Dutch had to be avoided (Eraslan 1992:100). A letter was prepared, offering mediation for the benefit of the Dutch government and appealing to its humanitarian side for the protection of peace and the esteem of the Ottoman caliphate in Aceh. The historical ties between Turkey and Aceh were spelled out, and a polite warning given to the Dutch not to take further action against Aceh.

This letter was approved by Sultan Abdulaziz on 2 September 1873,[43] and the offer of mediation was sent to The Hague the following day via Musurus Pasha, the Ottoman ambassador in London. A letter of credence was also given to the Dutch court in The Hague, giving a friendly warning and spelling out the historical ties between Turkey and Aceh, as well as the friendly relations between the Sublime Porte and the Dutch. It called upon the Dutch to show 'moderateness and greatness' in their fighting with Mahmud Syah. Since the Ottoman government wished for friendly relations with the Dutch, it would arbitrate only to the extent that the Dutch agreed, and in accordance with their interests.[44]

This arbitration proposal did nothing to change the situation. In its response, the Dutch government rejected the arbitration proposal and the intervention of the Ottoman government in Aceh affairs, claiming that Aceh sought protection not only from Turkey, but also from other countries. It maintained that the Dutch provided full freedom of religion for the Indonesian Muslims, and that the war in Aceh was not a religious one. Instead, it blamed the Acehnese authorities for breaking a Dutch-Acehnese agreement of 1857 (Woltring 1962d:623-5, 1962e:627-9).

This answer determined the fate of the Aceh delegation in Istanbul. The Sublime Porte on 7 December 1873 gave 'a second class Ottoman honour' to Abdurrahman al-Zahir, and a letter from the *sadrazam* to the Aceh ruler, Mahmud Syah, explaining the Turkish efforts to help Aceh. This letter expressed

43 BOA, *İrade Hariciye*, 15586, *Meclis-i Vukela Mazbatası*, 2-9-1873.

44 BOA, *İrade Hariciye*, 15586. See also J. Woltring 1962b:612-4, 1962c:615.

appreciation of the letter from the Aceh ruler, and of his loyalty to the caliph and requests for the renewal of old ties. The letter also stated that the visit of Abdurrahman and his delegation had brought the caliph great happiness. The decision of 3 September 1873 was also explained.[45] Abdurrahman al-Zahir left Istanbul for Mecca on 18 December (Reid 1969a:128-9). With him went his companion Abbas Efendi, an Acehnese pepper producer and trader, and his three young servants named Faradi, Abdullah and Yaver, aged 19, 14 and 12 respectively (Reid 1967:275; Schmidt 1992:61).

In the following years, according to Western sources, some Turkish officers secretly went to Aceh and helped them in their armed struggle against the Dutch. Although their number is not known, one relatively experienced Turkish officer left Aceh in 1875 after only 20 days, dismayed by the disagreements among the Acehnese leaders. In 1876, two more Turkish artillery officers on their way to Aceh were also reported in Singapore (Reid 1969a:138).

On the other hand, the aid demands of Aceh from Turkey continued in the following years. On 21 November 1893, the new sultan, Daud Syah, and Tuanku Hashim addressed a letter to the Ottoman caliph asking for help, but it fell into the hands of the Dutch in Batavia (Reid 1969a:259). In 1897, Daud Syah sent another letter to Ottoman Sultan Abdülhamid II via the Ottoman consulate of Batavia. This was delivered secretly by an Arab-Indonesian during the night, to avoid the surveillance of the Dutch, who monitored every initiative of the Acehnese to establish contact with Turkey. In this letter, Daud Syah repeated Aceh's old relations with Turkey, stating that since the time of Sultan Selim, Aceh had been under the protection of the Ottoman Empire, and that this sultan had sent to Aceh a *firman* together with some cannons, the flag and 40 Turkish soldiers; his grandfather, Ibrahim Mansur Syah, had renewed this vassal status with Sultan Abdülmecid, who sent to him a decorated sword and a *Mecidi* medal. He declared that he would not accept attachment to any infidel ruler and asked for the renewal of Aceh's previous vassal status. He appealed for help, claiming that the Dutch committed crimes against the Acehnese and destroyed their villages, and were again preparing a big army to attack the people.[46] The Ottoman consulate of Batavia reported to Istanbul that Daud Syah and his men were 'continuously sending news' to the consulate, demanding Turkey's help to stop the Dutch aggression in Aceh.[47] Although some of these appeals reached Turkey, this did not change

45 BOA, *İrade Hariciye*, 15589 lef 1. See also Eraslan 1992:99-100. After his return to Aceh, Abdurrahman al-Zahir continued his struggle against the Dutch together with the Acehnese hero Teungku Cik Di Tiro, but he went to Jeddah in 1878 and died there the following year. See Ismail Muhammad Hasan Basry Sofyan and Ibrahim Alfian 1997:80 and Jan Schmidt 1992:62.

46 Letter of Daud Syah to Abdulhamid II, dated 25 Muharram 1315/26-6-1897; BOA, Y.PRK. EŞA, 28/66.

47 Consulate report of 7-1-1898: BOA, Y.PRK:BŞK, 55/41.

the situation in Aceh. In 1903, the last Aceh ruler, Daud Syah, was captured by the Dutch and the Acehnese struggle came to an end in the following years.

To sum up, there existed close relations between Turkey and Aceh since the sixteenth century. Aceh became the farthest ally of the Ottoman Empire in that century, and the Turkish assistance to Aceh in those days mediated a lasting remembrance and friendship between the Turks and the Acehnese. Although the political circumstances of the nineteenth century did not allow Turkey to offer effective help to Aceh, the Turkish people showed great concern to its cause. The tsunami disaster of 2004 became, again, a means to remember these friendly relations between Turkey and Indonesia.

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Chapter v

Aceh through Portuguese eyes
Views of a Southeast Asian port city

Jorge Santos Alves

Portuguese documents or documentation written in Portuguese have been used extensively to study historical relations between the Sultanate of Aceh and the Portuguese. In truth, they have been used primarily for the history of relations between the *Estado da Índia* and the sultans of Aceh for the sixteenth century and the first half of the seventeenth century, and especially until the end of the reign of Sultan Iskandar Muda (1636). However, essentially, Portuguese documents have rarely been used to study the history of Aceh.

The second half of the seventeenth century has just begun to be studied and all of the eighteenth century still remains to be explored in terms of Portuguese documentation. Some initial efforts have been made for the first decades of the nineteenth century. Many of these documents deserve to be correlated with other Asian and European historical sources, not to mention Malay historiography, archaeological, epigraphic and numismatic data. The simple fact that Aceh was constantly present in Portuguese documentation, at least until the early decades of the nineteenth century, is extremely significant in itself. It implies that in the eyes of the Portuguese, keen observers of Asian realities, Aceh continued to play an important role in the context of Southeast Asia and the broader Indian Ocean world for over three centuries. Portuguese-language documents contain diverse types of information for modern scholars interested in Aceh and its position at the forefront of the commercial and maritime world from the sixteenth century until the early nineteenth century. The image of Aceh attested to in such sources is that of both a major area of economic activity and an important node in the Islamic cultural and political networks spanning the Indian Ocean during that period.

This chapter examines some of the typologies of Portuguese documentation about Aceh, which correspond to different viewpoints. To better understand the historical process that conditioned the typologies of these sources, it would be opportune to briefly recall the evolution of the pattern of Portuguese and

Luso-Asian presence in Southeast Asia, as well as the changing relationships between Portugal and the Acehnese.

Initially, relations between Aceh and the Portuguese alternated between periods of peace and war, and competition and co-operation. From this viewpoint, the sieges mounted by Aceh on Malacca (1537, 1547, 1567, 1572, 1574 and 1629), and the Portuguese project to conquer Aceh (the only substantial campaign for which was conducted in 1606), corresponded to peaks of rivalry, caused by a combination of geopolitical, commercial and religious factors. By the mid-seventeenth century, however, some major changes took place that substantially altered these earlier dynamics. For the Portuguese, the loss of Malacca in 1641 resulted in a major setback for the official presence of the *Estado da Índia* in Southeast Asia, as with it, the official Portuguese presence in the region virtually disappeared. In this new situation, with no major Portuguese territories between Ceylon and China, Portuguese policies grew more inclined towards economic diplomacy, spearheaded almost entirely by Macao and the city's municipal council. In this context, the Portuguese and Luso-Asian businessmen, who controlled the Macao Municipal Council, stepped up to assert Macao's diplomatic priorities in Southeast Asia and the South China Sea. This state of affairs continued until the 1840s, when Macao finally became a formal colony. Until that time, almost no decision with regard to Portuguese relations with Aceh was made in Lisbon, and very few were made in Goa, as almost all decisions regarding Portuguese relations with Aceh were made in Macao.

Over this period as well, the human framework of the Portuguese presence in the Indian Ocean changed substantially, especially in Southeast Asia. From the seventeenth century, there were increasingly fewer Portuguese from Portugal and increasingly more Luso-Asians active in the various nodes of 'Portuguese networks' in maritime Asia. The role of continental Portuguese was gradually supplanted by that of mixed-blood speakers of Portuguese, including Luso-Chinese and Luso-Malays, and, from the early years of the nineteenth century, by 'Brazilians'. Largely free of European racial and religious preconceptions, these Luso-Asians were often inclined to work on developing more flexible political and economic arrangements with the potentates of the Malay-Indonesian world. Such modes of interaction helped to guarantee the survival of small Luso-Asian communities over the short and medium terms in the region, facilitated, as they were, by polyglot, multi-cultural individuals moving across Asia's maritime networks. These individuals include Francisco Vieira de Figueiredo (Boxer 1967), Luís Francisco Coutinho (in Aceh and Banjarmasin) during the second half of the seventeenth century and Carlos Manuel da Silveira (in Aceh) during the early years of the nineteenth century.

The Sultanate of Aceh was the site of considerable Luso-Asian 'economic diplomacy'. The *Estado da Índia*'s loss of Malacca in 1641 was a watershed

event in the shifting dynamics of the period that followed, in which the Sultanate of Aceh went from being an adversary to being a potentially vital ally and valuable economic partner. The multi-faceted nature of these relations is reflected in the diverse Portuguese-language sources dealing with Aceh during this period. This chapter will present a survey of relevant archival materials within a typology of different external perspectives on commercial, political and social life in early modern Aceh.

The official viewpoint

These texts represent an important part of Portuguese-language documentation on the Sultanate of Aceh. Until the mid-seventeenth century, such sources dealt extensively with episodes of rivalry between the *Estado da Índia* and Aceh, including naval battles, sieges of Malacca, and unrealized plans to invade Aceh. In this context, they contain information about the political situation in the sultanate, its military potential, and its policies of alliances or conflicts within the regional politics of the Straits of Malacca and the western Indonesian Archipelago. However, also buried within these reports, one can find important materials on the political and social life of Aceh in earlier periods. Although such material must be extracted with a great deal of care and exacting effort, relevant details about, for example, the urban structure of Banda Aceh, including the main neighbourhoods, the royal palace and fortifications, as well as the human geography of the area around the sultanate's capital, can be gleaned through such work.[1] Another important area of this typology is that of the official diplomacy between the *Estado da Índia*, the kings of Portugal and the sultans of Aceh (as well as with the sultans of Samudra-Pasai and Pidie, in exile until the 1540s). For example, a collection of letters exchanged between the Portuguese authorities and the sultans of Samudra-Pasai, Pidie and Aceh contains considerable material of historical significance. However, many of these letters survive only through Portuguese translations. The sole major exception to this is a letter from Sultan Zayn al'Abidin of Pasai, dating from 1520.[2] Amongst other things, these letters could, when read alongside local texts and other foreign sources, be important for the reconstruction of the dynastic history of Aceh, Samudra-Pasai and Pidie. For the seventeenth century, another valuable collection of sources can be found in the diplomatic dossiers that exist pertaining to relations between the *Estado da Índia* and Aceh. Of particular interest is the dossier about the Portuguese

1 See, for example, Alves 1997.
2 Published in Alves 1999:228-30.

embassy to Sultan Iskandar Thani in 1638.[3] Not only does the preparatory documentation for the embassy exist, there is also a first-hand report about the mission and the documentation that resulted from the visit, allowing for revealing glimpses into various aspects of Acehnese culture and society at that time.

Merchants' perspectives

Existing documentation of this type is less abundant than official reports. Nevertheless, the existing letters, travelogues and even account books listing the revenues and expenses of Portuguese commercial voyages comprise valuable resources for historical studies. Documents of this type were often written *in loco*, and contain important first-hand information not only of a commercial nature, but also of details about everyday life in Acehnese port cities and surrounding areas of northern Sumatra. The authors of these kinds of documents were often not particularly interested in the military and political aspects of the region. However, they do occasionally provide information on such topics as well. The most significant examples of such data can be found in account books such as that of the junk São João (1512) (Thomaz 1966), and of the factor António Correia (1519) (Thomaz 1976), both relating to Samudra-Pasai. Other major sources from Portuguese merchants in the region include the *The travels of Fernão Mendes Pinto* (1537-1539), which noted conditions in the Batak country and the coastal areas of northern Sumatra (Pinto 1989). Later documents of this type containing valuable material for the economic and social histories of these regions include the seventeenth-century account of Luís Francisco Coutinho, narrated by the Italian Giovanni Francesco Gemelli Careri (1708), and the reports of Carlos Manuel da Silveira from the 1810s (Alves 1998).

Missionary perspectives

Portuguese-language documentation of this type was particularly prolific between the late sixteenth century and the first half of the seventeenth century. A large part of these texts were produced by the main Christian religious orders, particularly the Franciscans, Augustinians and Jesuits. These clerical chroniclers sought to exalt their missionary activities in Asia, especially in Southeast Asia. Quite naturally, these texts are profoundly influenced by the ideology of the Counter-Reformation and the Council of

[3] Arquivos Nacionais/Torre do Tombo (Lisbon), *Livros das Monções*, nº 43.

Trent, and are particularly inclined towards expounding propaganda about the unwavering struggle against Islam waged by Christian missionary orders. Some of these sources do so by providing elaborate accounts of the trials and deaths of missionaries who were reportedly martyred in the Sultanate of Aceh. In this regard, the differences in the contents and perspectives of the texts written by Portuguese missionaries and those written by Luso-Asians must be highlighted. The latter are more tolerant towards Islam and are more conciliatory, having worked to establish closer political and economic ties with the sultans of Aceh. Examples of this can be found in the accounts of those of Friar Amaro de Jesus and Friar Jacinto de Deus.[4] These two sources in particular provide insightful, direct descriptions of the events and conditions at Aceh. Another document worthy of mention here is that of a Luso-Malay layman, Manuel Godinho de Erédia, who was inspired by missionary accounts. His text, entitled *História de Serviços com Martírio de Luis Monteiro Coutinho* was written at Goa in 1615, and remains unpublished.[5] Despite the survival of such rich primary sources, however, researchers much recognize that most missionary accounts were primarily prepared on the basis of second-hand or even third-hand information.

Captives' perspectives

Strictly speaking, there are no texts composed directly by Portuguese prisoners in the Sultanate of Aceh. However, the transitional period between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries enabled some of these prisoners to provide information to other individuals, who then put their narratives down in writing. This was the case, for example, with the *Roteiro das cousas de Achem*, by the bishop of Malacca (1584), and even of the *História de serviços com Martírio de Luís Monteiro Coutinho* (1586). The French traveller Augustin de Beaulieu (1619-1622) obtained a great deal of information from prisoners held captive in Aceh, as did the Flemish Jacques de Coutre (1612).[6] Information from these Portuguese and Luso-Asian prisoners generally provide insights quite unlike those of other types of Portuguese-language sources. This was so only because many of the prisoners enjoyed an occasionally disconcerting freedom of movement, contrary to what one might think, and what they themselves wished to make the authorities of the *Estado da Índia* and public opinion in Portugal believe in their letters.

4 On these two missionaries, see Alves 1993 and De Sousa Pinto 1997.
5 Biblioteca Nacional (Lisbon), *Reservados*, nº 414.
6 See Jacques de Coutre 1990.

Cartographers' views

Portuguese cartography played an important role in the European technical and scientific developments of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. However, in the case of Aceh and the surrounding areas of northern Sumatra, Portuguese cartographers were not particularly prolific and apparently often simply repeated data and notations of earlier accounts. Naturally, there are obvious exceptions, such as the efforts of Fernão Vaz Dourado and, above all, those of Luso-Malay Manuel Godinho de Erédia. The latter, especially, dedicated himself to the cartographical representation of Banda Aceh with a fair amount of detail and with truly remarkable data about the sultans' palace. Further research into these materials, however, still needs to be done. A major and under-studied source for such work is the monumental collection entitled *Portugaliae monumenta cartographica*, printed in Lisbon in 1960.[7] Likewise, a comprehensive study of the Portuguese quest for the famous 'Island of Gold' (*Pulo Mas*), which stirred the Portuguese exploration of Asia in the mid-sixteenth century, has yet to be undertaken.

There clearly exists a considerable wealth of documentation on Aceh written in Portuguese between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries. This documentation reflects diverse Portuguese and Luso-Asian viewpoints about Aceh and its people. Such documentation can be invaluable for research on the history of this cosmopolitan region and its relations with the wider Indian Ocean world over a span of more than three centuries.

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7 See Cortesão and Teixeira da Mota 1960.

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Chapter VI

Gold, silver and lapis lazuli
Royal letters from Aceh in the seventeenth century[1]

Annabel Teh Gallop

Introduction

Only three original royal letters from Aceh are known to survive from the seventeenth century, but they fortuitously represent the reigns of three of the best-known rulers of Aceh. The earliest – a letter from Iskandar Muda of 1615 – has been published, but a letter from Iskandar Thani of 1639, and one from Taj al-'Alam Safiyyat al-Din Syah of 1661 have only recently surfaced. In this chapter, each of these letters is examined critically in terms of their historical context and philological, codicological and diplomatic features, in an attempt to better understand the forces that shaped the art of royal letter-writing in Aceh in the seventeenth century. Full Malay texts with English translations of all three letters are given in Appendix A to this volume.

Sultan Iskandar Muda (r. 1607-1636)

A Malay letter from Sultan Perkasa Alam, better known as Iskandar Muda, of Aceh to King James I of England, dated 1024 H (1615 CE), was presented to the Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, by Archbishop Laud in 1635.[2] It was first published by W.G. Shellabear (1898:123-30), who also discussed points of linguistic and orthographical interest, and since then, it has been reproduced several times.[3]

1 Some of the material for this paper was first presented by the author in Annabel Teh Gallop 1998.

2 Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS Laud Or. Rolls b.1.

3 Its codicological features are detailed in Greentree and Nicholson (1910:11-3), and are reproduced in Gallop and Arps (1991:34-5) and Gallop (1994:41, 94, 127).

The contents are quite simple. The sultan politely refuses the British permission to trade at Tiku and Pariaman on the west coast of Sumatra, inviting them instead to conduct their trade at Aceh itself. Yet strangely enough, the historical context of this letter and its precise date[4] have never been identified. There is no known contemporary translation, such as is available for the letters from Iskandar Muda to James I, presented to Thomas Best on 24 June 1613 (Foster 1934:167) and to William Keeling on 2 July 1616 (Strachan and Penrose 1971:140). The contents themselves appear to present a puzzle, for it is well documented that the two English ships which visited Aceh in 1615, the *Hector* and the *Thomas*, did both in fact obtain permits to trade on the west coast of Sumatra.

The answer to this mystery lies in the contrary character of the chief merchant of the *Hector*, John Oxwick, as becomes clear from a study of letters preserved in the India Office Records. When the *Hector* arrived in Aceh on 15 April 1615, Sultan Iskandar Muda was in Pedir. On 18 April, Oxwick and a fellow merchant, Samuel Juxon, set off for Pedir to present the sultan with a letter from James I and some gifts, and on 3 May he returned to Aceh together with the king's entourage (Foster 1899a:185). From then on, it was Oxwick's duty to attend the court, while the other English merchants traded in the town. To the consternation of his fellow merchants, Oxwick appeared to make no serious attempt to obtain the all-important trading permit needed to purchase pepper in the west coast ports, and refused to take the advice, which they had gathered in the town in the course of their trading activities, on the best way to secure such a permit. He seemed to have had only two concerns, namely, obtaining a formal reply from the sultan to the letter from King James, and negotiating tariff-free trade at Pariaman or Tiku. He succeeded only in the former, and the royal letter from Iskandar Muda was delivered ceremoniously on 1 June, according to the account of fees paid to the court officials who accompanied it (Foster 1899a:98); hence, we can conclude that it was written in late May 1615. However, once Oxwick had succeeded in obtaining the royal reply, his behaviour grew so rude and arrogant that he earned the wrath of Sultan Iskandar Muda, who told him that Aceh was not beholden to the English, but the English, to Aceh, and banned him from the court (Foster 1899a:115, 128). Thus, his fellow merchants found themselves stuck in Aceh, unable to leave for the west coast without a permit to trade. At an emergency council meeting held on board the ship, a decision was taken to strip Oxwick of his responsibilities until the ship reached Banten, and to appoint in his stead the ship's commander, Arthur Spaight, to continue the

[4] The letter is only dated with the year 1024 H, which is equivalent to the period 31-1-1615 to 19-1-1616; Shellabear (1898) wrongly gives the equivalent date as 1612 CE, and Ricklefs and Voorhoeve (1977:103) mentions this date as CE 1613.

negotiations at the court. This was done on 13 June, and by 27 June, Spaight had indeed managed to procure the necessary licence from the king to trade at Tiku, 'but it cost dear' (Foster 1899a:129). Oxwick himself died of 'the flux' (dysentery) around 20 June, and was buried at Aceh (Foster 1899a:128).

This sorry story explains the negative content of the letter, for Oxwick had apparently made the acquisition of the royal reply an end in itself and seemed to have little concern for its contents. Furthermore, although Oxwick only fell out of favour at court after receiving Iskandar Muda's letter, his maverick behaviour and the disapprobation of his colleagues would not have gone unnoticed beforehand; for this, he doubtlessly forfeited the respect of the court. Style over substance was what Oxwick wanted, and style over substance was what he got, in the form of this beautiful but commercially worthless letter. The lack of contemporary official interest in the letter is now understandable, for Oxwick died at Aceh in disgrace, and the contents of the letter were very soon superseded by events.

Layout and illumination

The letter measures 950 x 420 mm, and is still accompanied by its original envelope of yellow silk with a white muslin lining.[5] The letter is written on 'oriental' paper; at some stage, a damaged area at the top-right corner was repaired, and the whole letter was backed with calico and provided with a parchment tailpiece (Greentree and Nicholson 1910:11). At the very top of the sheet is the letter heading (*kepala surat*) in tiny letters: '*Huwa Allah ta'ala*' ['He is God Most High'] (Illustration 9).

The ground of the textblock at the lower-left quadrant was sprinkled with gold and red ink prior to writing, and is framed by three gold borders of progressively greater width, interspersed with thin ink frames. The decorated headpiece above the textblock comprises a rectangular panel containing three decorative cartouches – two long horizontal panels of gold, flanking a smaller diamond-shaped one of red and gold – against a blue ground decorated with polychrome floral motifs, surmounted by a petalled ogee dome of the same blue, also filled with a floral meander pattern. All around the textblock, the frame and headpiece reflect a floral and foliate meander pattern, featuring poppies in gold with red and blue highlights.

The colours and the motifs of this letter are not paralleled by any other known Indonesian example of manuscript illumination. Although traces of

[5] Reproduced in Gallop 1994:94. Illustration 8 shows this letter; a transliteration and English translation can be found in Appendix A1.

Figure 8. Letter in Malay from Sultan Iskandar Muda to King James I of England, 1615. Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS Laud Or.Rolls b.1. Reproduced courtesy of the Bodleian Library.

Figure 9. Detail of the top part of the letter from Sultan Iskandar Muda showing the heading *Huwa Allah Ta'ala*. Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS Laud Or.Rolls.b.1. Reproduced courtesy of the Bodleian Library.

Ottoman and Safavid influence can be detected, the final result is best seen as a uniquely Acehnese fusion. The accounts of the *Hector* include one fascinating item: on 27 May, Oxwick gave one *bafta neale*, that is, blue calico, to 'the gilder which did gild the King's letter to make haste in the gilding thereof' (Foster 1899a:97). This appears to have been an exceptional payment, for although all foreign merchants were routinely charged for the expense of the ceremonial delivery of the royal letter, neither the *Adat Aceh* nor any other sources mention specific charges for the decorating or gilding of the sultan's letter.

The sheer visual impact of this enormous letter never ceases to thrill. It is not only the earliest and largest illuminated Malay letter known, it is also the finest artistically. Yet, a number of other references imply that letters from Iskandar Muda were often of great splendour. Copland described the sultan's letter of 1613 as 'for painting and writing most stately' (Foster 1934:211), and the letter to the king of France given to Beaulieu in 1621 was placed 'in a red velvet bag, with gold strings; being writ in the Achen language, in letters of gold, upon very smooth paper, with several gildings and colourings round it' (Harris 1705:244). From all these comments, we can surmise that this sole surviving original letter from Iskandar Muda may in fact be a typical representative of the splendid epistles sent forth from the Acehnese court during his reign.

Compliments

The opening portion of a Malay letter before the contents proper is known as the *puji-pujian* or compliments, and serves essentially to identify the sender and recipient, and to pay respects to both. In an important structural study of the Malay letter, R.J. Wilkinson divided the compliments into nine components, that is, 'this letter / from me / may it be conveyed / by God (or man) / to / you / who live / at x / amen' (Wilkinson 1907:32). In the letter under consideration, the second component alone, that is, 'from me', which describes Iskandar Muda's titles and his greatness, occupies two-thirds (21 out of 33 lines) of the entire letter-text, the remaining part of the compliments being despatched in just two lines.

This long section of the compliments can very broadly be divided into three stages. In the first two lines, the king is named and his sovereign status emphasized. The second and most substantial part is an enumeration of the richness of the king's possessions, ranging from his palace and grounds to his treasury and gold mines, and his elephants and horses, where attention is focused on their astonishingly lavish trappings. The king's immense wealth is strikingly conveyed not so much by his precious regalia as by everyday

objects – water pipes, saddles and even his bathing-scoop[6] – fashioned out of solid gold, *suasa* (gold-copper alloy) or silver, and encrusted with precious stones. In all this, we sense a reflection of Iskandar Muda's personal tastes, for his love of rich jewels was well-known. Some items had more than a material significance, such as his *permata sembilan jenis*, which is a clear reference to the Sanskrit *nava ratna* – 'an arm-ornament composed of the nine precious stones, viz. diamond, ruby, emerald, sapphire, topaz, pearls, coral, hyacinth and carbuncle'[7] also found in the regalia of Thai kings (Van Ravenswaay 1910:17).

Thirdly comes an enumeration of the territories under his sway: on the eastern side were Lubuk, Pedir, Samarlanga, Pasangan, Pasai, Perlak, Basitang, Tamiang, Deli, Asahan, Tanjong, Panai, Rakan, Batu Sawar, that is, Johor, and all the countries subject to Batu Sawar –Perak, Pahang, Indragiri; on the west were Calang, Daya, Barus, Pasaman, Tiku, Pariaman, Salida, Inderapura, Bengkulu, Silebar, Palembang and Jambi. As Takeshi Ito (1984:16) pointed out, not all these territories were actually under Acehnese control at that time, and the list can be seen more as an indication of Iskandar Muda's grand plan for conquering the whole of the Malay Peninsula and the northern part of Sumatra than as a reflection of fact. Certainly, the sultan's burning ambition and personal voice is strongly apparent in this part of the compliments,[8] and we have evidence that he keenly scrutinized similar statements in missives from foreign monarchs. In 1621, he tackled Beaulieu about the sovereign

6 During Best's visit to Aceh, on 1-5-1613, Iskandar Muda held a water banquet, 'his nephew poureing watter upon him as he satt, with a gold buckitt, for the space of 5 or 6 houres' (Foster 1934:159).

7 Identified by William Foster (1934:211, footnote 5) from the phrase, 'lord of nine sorts of stones', in the letter presented to Best.

8 The list of territories is often found preserved in letter-texts in secondary sources, even when the rest of the compliments have been cut. The translation of Iskandar Muda's letter to James I, given to Keeling in 1616, begins as follows: '[w]ith remembrance of God the Almighty. I, mighty King Jonham ber Doulat of Acheen and other parts of Sumatra, with authority over Jore, send greeting [...]' (Foster 1900:23). In the letter of 1621 addressed to the king of France and given to Admiral Beaulieu, all that remains of the compliments is the list of dominions as follows: '[t]he Letter of the Grand Siri Sultan, subduer and conqueror, by God's assistance, of several kingdoms, King of Achen, and, by the Divine Favour, of all the countries that lie to the [e]ast and [w]est; to the [e]astward, the kingdom, territories and sovereignities of Deli; the kingdom of Joor, with its lordships and territories, the kingdom of Paham, the kingdom of Queda, and the kingdom of Pera, with their lands and seigniories: to the westward the kingdom and territory of Priaman, the kingdom and territory of Ticow, the kingdom and territory of Passuruam' (Harris 1705:244), while Francois Valentijn reported that in 1621, Iskandar Muda styled himself as 'Siri Sulthan, Koning van Atsjeh, Delli, Djohor (*dat hy wel geduurig beoorlogt; maar noit verovert heeft*), Pahang, Keidah, Peirah, Priaman, Ticoe, Baros, Passaroewan (*hoewel niet wete, dat hy dat oit veroverd heeft*), Padang, Sinkel, Labo, Daja, enz.' (Valentijn 1726:5,7,1,7). 'Seri Sultan, King of Aceh, Deli, Johor (which he continually attacked, but never conquered), Pahang, Kedah, Perak, Priaman, Tiku, Barus, Pasuruan (it is not known to what extent he actually controlled this), Padang, Singkel, Labuh, Daya, etc'.

status of the King of France, because 'he had seen a letter from the King of England, in which he assumes the title of King of France' (Harris 1705:245).

The single most striking feature of the compliments in Iskandar Muda's letter is the absence of any specifically Islamic formulae or references. Throughout the main text of the letter, God is referred to by the phrase *Tuhan seru alam sekalian*, that is, 'Lord of the whole universe', rather than *Allah*. On the contrary, there are recognizable Indic vestiges. His titles appear to have more in common with those of his contemporaries in Ayuthia[9] and Arakan[10] than those found in later Malay letters, and the enumeration of his possessions, at least partially, recalls the 'Seven Jewels of Royal Power' of a *chakravartin* or universal monarch.[11] What particularly sets these compliments apart from those in other royal Malay letters is the emphasis on the possession of material goods, even when these might only have symbolic or ritual value, and worldly success rather than on moral attributes.

This is the only known surviving original letter from Iskandar Muda. The only other letter for which a full translation, compliments and all, exists is that presented to Thomas Best in Aceh two years earlier, in 1613, as given in the account of the Rev. Patrick Copland, Best's chaplain (Foster 1934:211-3). The compliments are very similar to those of the 1615 letter, and even identical in parts, save for the list of countries under Aceh's dominion, which in 1613 is limited to Aru in the east and Priaman, Tiku and Barus in the west. A number of other letters from Iskandar Muda have survived in secondary European sources, but it is almost a contradiction in terms to attempt to use these to study the *puji-pujian*, for apart from the list of territories, the *puji-pujian* is the portion of the letter invariably abbreviated or left out altogether in translations and reports, which tend to move straight to the contents proper.[12]

9 Among the titles used by the king of Ayuthia in letters to foreign potentates, c. 1634, were the phrases, 'most powerful and highest Master of a hundred and one Golden Crowns and of kings adorned with nine kinds of precious stones [...] his house is made of gold and precious stones. He is the divine Master of the golden thrones of the towers, of the white, red and round tailed elephants [...]' (Van Ravenswaay 1910:17).

10 In a letter in Portuguese from the king of Arakan to the Governor General in Batavia, received on 8-3-1637, he is described as the 'head of the golden house with the red and white elephants' (Colenbrander 1899:72).

11 These are the *chakra* (wheel), royal chariot, jewel, queen, treasure, horse and elephant (Agrawala 1963:Appendix I). I am grateful to Jana Igunma for this reference.

12 In the earliest known letter-text from Sultan Iskandar Muda, written to Prince Maurits in 1610, only a very condensed form of the compliments can be found in the surviving Dutch translation: '*[m]et de hulpe Godes, die het alle regeert ende bewaert ende danck waerdich is, een coninck boven alle coninghen grooter ende machtiger als eenige wareltsche*' (Banck 1873:74).

The influence of Shaykh Shams al-Din

In order to understand the forces shaping the form of royal letters in Aceh, it is important to consider the role of the king's religious mentor. Previous studies of Acehnese ulama and literati have approached their subjects from an almost exclusively theological, literary or philological angle, but in his important thesis on Aceh in the seventeenth century, *The world of the Adat Aceh* (1984), Ito has supplied a political, economic, diplomatic and administrative context to their activities.[13] In particular, Ito has highlighted the pivotal role played by Shaykh Shams al-Din of Pasai (d. 1630) at the court of Aceh from the time of Sultan 'Ala' al-Din Ri'ayat Syah (r. 1589-1604) through to the reign of Iskandar Muda:

> In his capacity as chief councillor and scholar, he played a significant role in political affairs, as contemporary European sources indicate, particularly in guiding foreign policy with 'infidel' European powers, since he was one of the best informed of political developments in the various parts of the Muslim world. (Ito 1984:260-1.)

The 'schech' who conversed with De Houtman and tried to persuade him to convert to Islam in September 1599, the 'archbishop' mentioned by John Davis during the same visit, the 'Shaykh al-Islam' in the *Hikayat Aceh* who was ordered by the sultan to read a letter brought to Aceh by a Portuguese envoy (in November 1600), the 'chief bishop' who headed the trade negotiations with Sir James Lancaster in June 1602, and the 'rassedor', 'one of the Kinges chiefest subjecctts, to whom the Kinge doth referr all his chiefe and waightie matters of statte' (Foster 1934:165), and who negotiated with Best in 1613 – all these figures have been identified as probably referring to the one person of Shaykh Shams al-Din (Ito 1984:249, 281). It is thus likely that the 'Sheriffe [Sharif] or Byshoppe', who drew up the trading privileges for Keeling in 1616 (Strachan and Penrose 1971:140; Ito 1984:281), and 'the Bishop of Achin', to whom Oxwick presented one fine white bafta and a comb-case on 13 May 1615 in the course of his efforts to procure Iskandar Muda's letter (Foster 1899a:97), also refer to Shaykh Shams al-Din. These sources not only demonstrate, beyond doubt, Shaykh Shams al-Din's hands-on role in the negotiation of trading privileges with European merchants and envoys, but also provide compelling evidence of his involvement in the preparation of the attendant royal letters.[14]

Given the pivotal role of Shaykh Shams al-Din in Aceh's correspondence

[13] See especially Ito 1984, Chapter 4, part 5.

[14] That these two aspects of foreign relations are inextricably entwined is most evident in Iskandar Muda's letter to Keeling in 1616, in which the substance of the trading agreement was given in the royal letter itself, while the request for trading privileges was also addressed directly in the letter of 1615. The letter to James I, given to Best in 1613, only contained diplomatic niceties, as negotiations for trade at Tiku and Pariaman were still ongoing.

with European powers, it is clear that the presence or otherwise of Islamic elements in Acehnese royal letters of this period needs careful interpretation. It is thus suggested here that the lengthy compliments in Iskandar Muda's letters to European potentates, as best represented in his letter of 1615 to James I, were those deemed appropriate for a *kafir* (unbeliever) king. The lack of overtly Islamic or otherwise spiritual or moral elements should be seen as a deliberate omission; the focus on material goods and worldly success reflects both a relationship that was fundamentally materialistic in nature and the subject matter of the letter, namely a request for trading rights. At the same time, such an approach allowed plenty of scope for an indulgence of Iskandar Muda's personal passion for precious metals and rich jewels, and his great territorial ambitions were given voice in the lengthy enumeration of his dominions. Nonetheless, the religious allegiance of the sovereign is unmistakable in the heading situated at the very top of the letter, in tiny letters but indubitably there.

Sultan Iskandar Thani (r. 1636-1641)

Among the items consulted, on a visit to Leiden University Library in 1997 to gather material for a catalogue of Malay seals,[15] was Cod.Or.4818, a collection of miscellanea from the legacy of the Dutch scholar P.J. Veth. Besides some nineteenth-century letters from Sumenep, Riau and Palembang, the portfolio contained an unusual-looking letter folded over several times. On opening this letter, its extraordinary importance quickly became apparent: it was a letter from Sultan 'Ala' al-Din Mughayat Syah (Iskandar Thani) of Aceh to Frederik Hendrik, Prince of Orange (1584-1647), dating from 1639 (Illustration 10; see Appendix A2).[16]

The letter had in fact already been partially identified, for the portfolio contained a contents list in ballpoint pen, in the hand of Dr P. Voorhoeve,[17] which described this item as a letter from Sultan 'Ala' al-Din Mughayat Syah from Aceh to G. G. Anton van Diemen. It is puzzling that Voorhoeve never published the existence of this letter, which is the oldest known Malay letter in Leiden University Library, especially since his catalogue of Acehnese manuscripts included an appendix of non-Acehnese texts relating to Aceh, such as royal edicts (*sarakata*) in Malay (Voorhoeve 1994:261). The reason may lie in his evidently low estimation of its worth, for his description of the letter

15 I would like to express my gratitude to Prof. Jan Just Witkam for all his assistance during my visit to Leiden in September 1997, and to Hans van der Velde for his patience in meeting my endless requests for manuscripts.

16 Leiden University Library, Cod.Or.4818.a.I.3.

17 Identified by Jan Just Witkam.

Figure 10. Letter in Malay from Sultan Iskandar Thani to Prince Fredrik Hendrik of Orange, 1639. Leiden University Library, Cod. Or.4818a.I.3. Reproduced courtesy of Leiden University Library.

continues as '*op behang, afschrift*', meaning 'on wallpaper, a copy?'. However, this was no copy on wallpaper; it was an original illuminated Malay letter, and the only known surviving letter from the reign of Sultan Iskandar Thani.

Historical background

The balance of power in the the western Indonesian Archipelago in the late 1630s rested on four major players: Aceh, Johor, the Portuguese in Melaka and the Dutch in Batavia. As the Dutch began to plan their attack on Melaka, although Johor had indicated a willingness to assist them, their preferred choice of ally was Aceh; a valuable trading partner with long-standing anti-

Portuguese credentials (Bassett 1969:432-6). Soon after Iskandar Thani's succession to the throne on the death of Iskandar Muda, a steady stream of envoys from Batavia attempted to secure an Acehnese commitment to a joint attack.[18] On 22 April 1638, J. R. van Deutecom arrived in Aceh. By his return to Batavia on 26 August, he had secured valuable trading privileges for the Dutch, as well as assurances of the sultan's intention to attack Melaka with Dutch assistance. However, shortly after Deutecom's departure, news was received in Aceh of the invasion of Pahang by Johor. This blow was felt keenly by Sultan Iskandar Thani, a prince from Pahang, and on 18 October 1638, an Acehnese embassy arrived in Batavia to suggest that the proposed attack on Melaka be postponed until the return of the sultan's retaliatory expedition to Pahang and Johor. When this Acehnese embassy left Batavia on 21 May 1639 to return to Aceh, where they arrived on 27 June, they were accompanied by a Dutch mission led by Paulus Croocq. On raising the question of the invasion of Melaka, he received only prevarications from Iskandar Thani, who first wanted to settle the Pahang matter. Croocq left Aceh on 5 September and arrived back in Batavia on 11 November. Finally, on 10 April 1640, Jean de Meere was sent to Aceh. This time, Iskandar Thani flatly refused to help the Dutch unless they cut off all connections with Johor. Instead, the Dutch formed an alliance with Johor, and thus, on 14 January 1641, Portuguese Melaka fell to the Dutch-Johor forces without any Acehnese involvement.

The letter under consideration from Sultan Iskandar Thani to Prince Frederik Hendrik was brought to Batavia by Acehnese envoys accompanying Croocq at the end of his mission, and was thus probably written in late August or early September 1639. It was conveyed to Holland, in December 1639, in the personal charge of the commander of the then departing fleet, Nicolaes Leendersz. Cockeb. Croocq's mission was not viewed as a success by Batavia, as not only did Croocq not secure positive responses to his requests for aid and trade, but the sultan's presents were deemed sub-standard. Croocq had presented the sultan with a *keris* valued at 20,000 reals. On his departure, he received for the Governor General a *keris* valued (by Batavia) at 200 reals and, for himself and others, a number of *keris* of 'relatively trifling' value. Amongst the sultan's gifts to Prince Frederik Hendrik, one very large bezoar stone was suspected not to be genuine (Coolhaas 1964:57; MacLeod 1903:1920).

[18] This account is based on the following sources: DasGupta 1962:184-6; Bassett 1969:434; Kathirithamby-Wells 1969:465; MacLeod 1903:1919-22; Tiele 1980:357, 389-90.

Contents of the letter

The letter opens with a long and elaborate enumeration of Sultan Iskandar Thani's titles and attributes, after which the sultan pays compliments to the prince and his military might, and alludes to the friendship that has existed between their two nations since the time of the late Makota Alam. He then states that he is sending his envoys to Batavia, to Governor General Anton van Diemen, reiterating his desire to attack Melaka but explaining his need to wait until the return of his fleet under Orang Kaya-Kaya Maharaja Seri Maharaja.[19] He attempts to whip up antagonism towards Johor by reviving memories of Johor's alliance with the Portuguese, and warns that unless Johor is dealt with first, trouble is in store, as Johor is drumming up support for Melaka from Siam and Patani and from other neighbouring countries. Turning to matters of trade, he reminds the Dutch that he has forfeited an annual income of an estimated one *bahar* of gold in granting them exclusive trade on the west coast, and also requests them to desist from harassing Indian traders in Aceh. In response to Van Diemen's request for trade in Pahang, he grants them a part of the trade whilst stressing that this was not an exclusive right. As a present, he sends two pieces of rock-gold and four bezoar stones.

As with so many royal Malay epistles, this is a carefully crafted and extremely diplomatic letter, deploying both bombast and subtlety as judged appropriate to convey what is essentially a negative message. While the sultan declines to pledge himself to an immediate attack on Melaka – the main objective of the Dutch – because of his fixation with the crisis in Pahang, all his current actions and plans are expressed within the broader context of the invasion of Melaka, in an attempt to win Dutch support for his position. Thus, the letter proper opens with a bang, that is, 'we're really going to make that Melaka suffer', and his current military expedition (to oust Johor from Pahang) is described solely in terms of an attack on Melaka's supply lines. He then proposes a more long-term strategy of concentrating on gradually cutting off Melaka's supply routes, thus eventually enabling it to be taken more easily. He justifies this strategy by citing a ruler's responsibility to minimize losses on his own side, a clear reference to the decimation of Iskandar Muda's fleet in the attack on Melaka in 1629. Only in the next few lines does the sultan try hard to convince the Dutch to support him against Johor, which is presented as a prerequisite to a successful campaign against Melaka.

[19] The Orang Kaya Maharaja Seri Maharaja was an illegitimate son of Iskandar Muda. He was dismissed from his post in March 1640, but under Taj al-'Alam, he became Qadi Malik al-'Adil (Ito 1984:71).

A contemporary Dutch translation

The text of this letter is not completely unknown, for a contemporary Dutch translation was published (Banck 1873:76-8),[20] and is reproduced in Appendix A2-c). The emergence of the original letter affords an interesting opportunity to compare the two. Although the general gist of the translation is reasonably accurate, there are some significant differences, which fall into three broad categories. Firstly, linguistic limitations combined with a cavalier attitude to Indonesian titles have rendered the sultan's name almost unintelligible.[21] The flowery language of Malay compliments, with an abundance of Arabic words, is notoriously difficult to translate, but there seems to be no grounds at all for the phrase '*Coninck van de gantsche werelt, die gelyck eenen Godt daer over is*', or 'King of the whole world, who is like a God over it', and the translator appears to have been so thrown by '*yang gunawan pengasih lagi dermawan*' that he left it untranslated. Only carelessness can account for the confused rendering of the envoys' names, for while there are three *dan* ('and') in the original, there are only two *ende* in the translation, giving the impression that only three envoys, instead of four, were listed by name.[22] Secondly, protocols have led the Dutch translator to enhance the titles and honour paid to Prince Frederik Hendrik. The description of the gift fills only one line in the Malay letter but five in the Dutch letter,[23] including statements of friendship not found in the original. Thirdly, there are some small but non-negligible changes in the contents proper; in discussing the attack on Melaka, Iskandar Thani spoke alone, but the phrase, 'with the help of the Dutch', was added in the translation.

[20] I am grateful to Dr Ben Slot of the Algemeen Rijksarchief (B.Slot, personal fax communication, 18-2-1998) for confirming that Banck's source is today numbered VOC 11264, which is described in the published catalogue as 'Kopie-missive van de Sultan van Atjeh Iskander Thani (sultan Moghal) bij zijn troonsbestijging, aan prins Frederik Hendrik, 1636 [sic]. 1 stuk. NB Het betreft hier een vertaling' (Meilink-Roelofsz 1992:373). Another copy of this translation is found in VOC 1131, pp. 1433-6.

[21] A similarly obscure rendering of Sultana Taj al-'Alam's title as 'Sultan Nulma Alam', in a letter of 1661 given in the Daghregister, led one historian to speculate that this referred not to Taj al-'Alam at all, but to her successor, Nurul Alam (Kathirithamby-Wells 1969:472, footnote 116). In fact, as can be seen from our letter, what was intended by this form of wording was 'Sultan al-Muazzam'.

[22] According to MacLeod (1903:1920), two envoys accompanied Croocq to Batavia; Tiele mentioned 'three envoys and a suite of 50 people' (Tiele 1980:390). There were often differences of opinion between Indonesians and the Dutch as to which of the accompanying suite ranked as envoys.

[23] While the original Malay simply stated 'two pieces of rock-gold and four bezoar stones', it was presumably the aforementioned doubts about the authenticity of one of the bezoar stones that led to the addition of the qualifying phrase, 'one of which is very large', in the Dutch translation, perhaps to pre-empt any difficult questions from the court. An inventory made in 1673 of the possessions of Amalia van Solms – widow of Prince Frederik Hendrik – included 'one very large bezoar stone' (Wassing-Visser 1995:40).

There is no denying the great importance of European translations of early Malay letters, especially when they are the only surviving record of the correspondence, but the above examples are a salutary reminder that contemporary translations are rarely a truly faithful record of what was written.

The meaning of mas kudrati

However, in one instance, the Dutch translation does throw light on the meaning of a Malay phrase, which might otherwise have been misunderstood, namely, *mas kudrati*. In the opening compliments, the sultan referred to his '*kelian mas kudrati yang cemerlang cahayanya*', and he sends, to Prince Frederik Hendrik, '*bata mas kudrati dua buah*'. The word *kudrati* (q.d.r.t.y) is not found in any of the main historical dictionaries of Malay by Marsden, Klinkert or Wilkinson, where only the form *kudrat* from the Arabic *qudrat*, meaning 'power', is given (Wilkinson 1985:489). The word *kudrati* probably reached the Malay world from the Persian *qudrat* , which has the sense of 'divine; not produced by man; natural' (Steingass 1996:957) *Kudrati* is found in *Kamus Dewan* as *murni, tulen, jati*; this dictionary specifically gives *mas kudrati* as *mas tulen* (*Kamus Dewan* 1994:721) or 'pure gold'.

The word is also used in one of the stock phrases in the formulaic openings of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century royal letters and edicts written in Malay, to describe the sultan's sovereign power, in the context *duduk di atas tahta singgahsana mas kudrati sepuluh mutu*. The phrase *mas kudrati* also occurs in the description of Iskandar Thani's throne in the *Bustan al-Salatin*, in the phrase '*singgahsana emas kudrati yang bertatahkan ratna mutu manikam*', or 'a throne of *kudrati* gold studded with precious stones' (Siti Hawa Haji Salleh 1992:33), and '*singgahsana emas kudrati sepuluh mutu yang bertatahkan ratna mutu manikam*', for that of Sultan Taj al-'Alam (Siti Hawa Haji Salleh 1992:46).

Three other instances have been documented of the use of the word *kudrati* in a Malay text. The oldest such occurrence is in the *Syair Bahr an-Nisa*, said to have been composed in the reign of Sultan 'Ala' al-Din Ri'ayat Syah (r. 1588-1604), in the allegorical place name *Kota Kudrati* (Braginsky 1993:78, 257). In the *Hikayat Aceh*, the word *kudrati* occured twice in the sense of 'natural', but not directly in the form *mas kudrati*.[24] The word *kudrati* is also found in the *Hikayat Hang Tuah*, where the Raja of Rum enjoyed a '*singgahsana emas kudrati sepuluh mutu yang bertatahkan ratna mutu manikam*' (Kassim Ahmad 1994:562);

[24] After a lacuna in the manuscript, the text continues '*galian mas yang merah yang sepuluh mutu dan tanah cempaga kudrati yang netiasa mengalir di atas bukit galian itu dan beberapa daripada kolam minyak tanah kudrati*' (Teuku Iskandar 1958:164); *kudrati* is interpreted here as *D. 'natuurlijk'* (Teuku Iskandar 1958:198).

however this, like his pleasure-garden, can be shown to be a direct borrowing from the *Bustan*, thus confirming the (so far as is known) exclusively Acehnese usage of the word.[25]

These references would naturally lead to the conclusion that the '*bata mas kudrati dua buah*' mentioned in the letter were two ingots of pure gold, which was, after all, a not unlikely gift from the sultan of Aceh, famed for his treasuries of gold. However, that this is not the case is apparent from the Dutch translation, where the gift was referred to as '*twee minerael steenen uyt myn goutmynen*', or 'two mineral stones from my goldmine'. Furthermore Van Diemen, who would have seen them with his own eyes, described them rather dismissively as '*twee berghsteenen uyt d'Atchinese goudtmine*' (Coolhaas 1964:57), or 'two mountain stones from an Acehnese goldmine'. The probable solution is supplied by Marsden, who distinguished between two types of gold mined in the hinterlands of Padang: *amas sungei-abu*, or alluvial gold, and *amas supayang*, of which he wrote:

> [This] is what we usually call rock-gold, consisting of pieces of quartz more or less intermixed with veins of gold, generally of fine quality, running through it in all directions, and forming beautiful masses, which, being admired by Europeans, are sometimes sold by weight as if the whole were solid metal. The mines yielding this sort are commonly situated at the foot of a mountain, and the shafts are driven horizontally, to the extent of from eight to twenty fathoms. (Marsden 1986:166.)

Van Diemen's evident lack of admiration notwithstanding, in every other respect this description seems to explain the two pieces of *mas kudrati* which Iskandar Thani sent to Frederik Hendrik. Thus, it appears that in mid-seventeenth century Aceh, the term *mas kudrati* referred variously to a) the natural state in which the gold was found, hence *kelian mas kudrati*; b) pieces of gold in this natural, unprocessed state, as in *bata mas kudrati* or rock gold; and c) the fine-quality gold extracted from this rock-gold, which was then used for various purposes, such as the royal throne.

Layout and illumination

The letter measures 720 x 300 mm, and comprises two pieces of paper pasted together. Any watermark or other look-through characteristics the paper might have had, have been obscured by the illumination, for the whole sheet has been painted with a thick layer of powder-blue pigment, with a very

[25] The word *kudrati* was searched for in the Malay Concordance Project, http://online.anu.edu.au/asianstudies/ahcen/proudfoot/mcp/ (accessed 1-10-2007); Of 87 texts searched, the word *kudrati* was found in only three: *Hikayat Aceh*, *Bustan al-Salatin* and *Hikayat Hang Tuah*.

powdery, chalky texture. Over this is a repeating pattern, in silver-white, of a diamond-shaped trellis, each aperture (measuring 83 x 60 mm) containing a flower. The regularity of the pattern, the fact that it stops a few millimetres short of the right-hand edge of the paper, and the appearance of the flowers all indicate that the pattern was stencilled or stamped.

Both the pattern and the colours of this letter are extremely unusual in the context of other Malay illuminated letters. Blue is rarely found in Malay manuscript art in books and, even more rarely, in illuminated letters, especially not the powder-blue of this letter. On scientific analysis,[26] this blue colour was found to have derived from lapis lazuli; the blue pigment consisted of small amounts of finely-crushed lazurite, obtained from lapis lazuli, mixed with a larger quantity of silica (Si02),[27] and the white of the silica crystals thus diluted the intense blue of lazurite to give the resulting light-blue colour found here. Lapis lazuli was highly valued at the Acehnese court, and was used in the rich caparisons of Iskandar Thani's elephants and horses, as stated in the compliments of this letter, and its use in ceremonial court accoutrements is well-documented in the *Hikayat Aceh* and the *Bustan al-Salatin*.

At the top of the sheet, in tiny letters in the middle, is the heading *Huwa Allah ta'ala* (Illustration 11). The seal of the sultan is imprinted in the right hand margin, above the textblock. Although the shape of two concentric circles is still visible, the illuminated surface of the paper has proved inimical to the (lampblack?) seal impression, which is now almost completely illegible. The inscription in the inner circle appears to begin with the name of the ruler, Paduka Seri Sultan 'Ala' al-Din Mughayat Syah. The inscription in the outer circle is oriented outwards.

The textblock of 46 lines occupies the bottom-left quadrant of the sheet, with the text written in a strong black ink. The letter was originally rolled from the bottom up, with folds starting at 35 mm across at the bottom and growing to 40 mm by the middle, and 45 mm at the top of the sheet. Unfortunately, the blue pigment has flaked badly along the folds of the letter, obscuring many parts of words and sometimes even damaging whole lines of text.

[26] With the kind permission of Dr Witkam, some tiny detached fragments of pigment found in the letter-folder were brought back to London in March 1998. With the assistance of M. Barnard and D. Jacobs of the British Library's Oriental Conservation Studio, the fragments were sent to Dr Peter Gibbs of the School of Chemistry, University College, London, for analysis by Raman Microscopy.

[27] E-mail communication from P. Gibbs to D. Jacobs, 21-4-1998.

Figure 11. Detail of the top part of the letter from Sultan Iskandar Thani showing the heading *Huwa Allah Ta'ala*. Leiden University Library, Cod. Or.4818a.I.3. Reproduced courtesy of Leiden University Library.

Compliments

Iskandar Thani's self-description in the opening compliments, parts of which are now unfortunately illegible, fills 19 of the 46 lines of the letter. He was heralded as the '*sultan al-muazzam wa'l-khaqan al-mukarram*', or 'the great sultan and illustrious king', and his name and title proper were followed by classic Muslim epithets of kingship, '*zill Allah fi'l-'alam*', or 'the shadow of God on earth', and '*khalifat Allah*', or 'the vicegerent of God'. His moral and intellectual attributes were praised in terms of the sun, moon and stars, and the round globe and the deep sea. His lineage was traced back to Alexander the Great in his own right, for as a prince of Pahang, he was a direct descendant of the kings of Melaka, and thence, of the progeny of Alexander, who appeared on Bukit Siguntang. His great possessions included his gold-mines and his mosque.[28] He was likened to Nusyirwan 'Adil (Nusyirwan the Just) and Hatim Tai, two exemplary men whose deeds were narrated in the *Taj al-Salatin*, *Sejarah Melayu* and the *Bustan al-Salatin*.[29] His elephants and horses and their rich trappings were described in loving detail, with the emphasis on the rarity of the beasts themselves, including his hermaphrodite elephants, elephants with four tusks[30] and the variety and nobility of the stock of his

[28] This is probably a reference to the Bait al-Musyahadah mosque built by Iskandar Thani mentioned in Siti Hawa Haji Salleh 1992:21.

[29] Nusyirwan Adil is mentioned in all three texts; Hatim Tai is described in *Pasal* 22 of Hussain 1992, and in *Bab* 6, *Pasal* 1 of the *Bustan* (Jelani Harun 2009:320 – with thanks to V. Braginsky for the last reference).

[30] An elephant with four tusks named Biram Empat Gading was mentioned in the *Bustan*. It was one of eight elephants presented by Sultana Taj al-'Alam to the Gujerati ambassador, shortly after the death of Sultan Iskandar Thani, as a sign of good faith, and of her intention to honour Aceh's obligations (Siti Hawa Haji Salleh 1992:44).

horses. His dominions get only a passing mention in the conventional form, 'territories in the east and the west', and he was praised for the way he bore witness to the greatness of God through his deeds and government. There is a loose rhythmic structure and many examples of assonance in this long passage, with some of the attributes and titles arranged in complementary pairs, in the form, '*ialah raja yang* [...], *lagi raja yang* [...]'.

It is interesting to note that Prince Frederik Hendrik is addressed only as *kapten*, not *raja*, and while his military prowess and capability was given praise, no mention was made of his sovereignty. This is in fact a faithful reflection of the constitutional reality of his status as stadholder and military commander, and yet, in the early years of the seventeenth century, the Dutch merchants quickly began referring to the Prince of Orange as their sovereign, or even 'Coninck' or 'King', within the context of correspondence with Indonesian rulers (Wassing-Visser 1995:30). This letter shows that after several decades of contact with the Dutch, the Acehnese court had a clear comprehension of the system of government in the Netherlands.[31]

As mentioned above, this is the only surviving original letter from Iskandar Thani's reign. However, a full translation of a long letter to Governor General Van Diemen, received on 11 September 1640, is given in the Dagh-register.[32] It comes as a great surprise to find that the translation of the opening compliments of this letter are a word-for-word match of the compliments in the letter to Prince Frederik Hendrik a year previously! Even if the compliments had been similar, it is wellnigh impossible to believe that two translators, or even the same translator a year later, would have arrived at identical translations. Yet, here, we find exactly the same convoluted rendering of Iskandar Thani's name, and even the same phrase, '*yang gunawan pengasih lagi dermawan*', left untranslated in the middle. The implication is that this part of the compliments was copied verbatim from the earlier translation of the Prince Frederik Hendrik letter, and we have no way of telling how much of it actually relates to the letter to Van Diemen.

The influence of Nur al-Din al-Raniri

In view of the abundance of sources attesting to Shaykh Shams al-Din's involvement in the diplomatic correspondence of Iskandar Muda, the question naturally arises as to whether Iskandar Thani's spiritual mentor Nur al-Din

[31] A similar acknowledgement of the republican status of the Netherlands is reflected in the avoidance of imperial terms in the preliminaries of a letter, in Persian, from the Safavid chancellery to the Dutch Estates General in 1629 (Mitchell 1997:199).

[32] No earlier letters from any sultan of Aceh had been fully translated in the extant Dagh-registers; in most instances, only a synopsis of the contents is given (Van der Chijs 1887:6-8).

al-Raniri exercised a similar role. During the reign of Iskandar Thani, there is less documentary evidence in contemporary records on the involvement of al-Raniri in negotiations with foreigners,[33] but the presence of his hand in the letter to Prince Frederik Hendrik is supported by the internal evidence. It is well known that al-Raniri was strongly influenced by both the *Sejarah Melayu* and the *Taj al-Salatin* and, as shown above, the compliments in this letter do reveal a close familiarity with both these texts. Although the *Bustan al-Salatin* was not completed when this letter was written,[34] the extolling of Iskandar Thani's virtues is stylistically very similar to those found in the account of his accession in the *Bustan*, where his descent from Iskandar Zulkarnain was also specifically mentioned (Siti Hawa Haji Salleh 1992:20-1).

In this letter, addressed to a politically and commercially important but potentially dangerous ally, we get the impression of the compliments being carefully composed according to the specific needs of the situation. Like the letter from Iskandar Muda this, too, is a letter to a non-Muslim ruler, but quite a different approach is taken here. Instead of all but shielding the Islamic element from the uninitiated and meeting materialism with materialism, we find a more didactic and literary approach in the introduction of suitable (non-Muslim) exemplars, including Nusyirwan the Just, who, despite being a *kafir*, was renowned for his goodness and justice, and Hatim Tai, a pre-Islamic poet.[35] In the *Taj al-Salatin*, Hatim Tai was so famed for his generosity that he incurred the wrath and jealousy of the kings of Rum (Byzantium), Sham (Syria) and Yemen. Each made extortionate demands upon him, in the hope of ruining his reputation, but all their requests were gladly met in full, deeply shaming the requester. This reference to Hatim Tai might have been intended to presage the part of the letter in which the sultan reminded the Dutch of just how many trade concessions he had already made to their incessant and rapacious requests. Most likely, however, its subtle, possible allusion was lost on them.

Recent research has highlighted Iskandar Thani's extravagant love of jewellery, especially rare-cut diamonds and yet, these preoccupations are not hinted at in the compliments.[36] Apart from the mention of his goldmines and the variety of elephants and horses in his stables, the overall impression in these compliments is one of pious humility, and we note how it was usually

[33] In early 1642, al-Raniri did manage to secure royal permission for a Gujerati ship to trade directly on the west coast (Ito 1984:301).

[34] al-Raniri was commissioned to write the *Bustan al-Salatin* in 1638, and only completed it after the death of Iskandar Thani, probably some time in 1641 or 1642 (Jelani Harun 2004:38).

[35] Hatim al-Tai bin 'Abd Allah bin Sad was a poet who lived in the second half of the sixth century CE. Proverbial for his liberality and hospitality, the figure of Hatim quickly became very popular in *adab* literature (Van Arendonk 1971).

[36] Khan 2007; see also Chapter VII in this book.

his attributes, rather than the person of the king himself, that were given praise. There is less of the king's personal tastes in the compliments of this letter than in that of his father-in-law's.

Taj al-'Alam Safiyyat al-Din Syah (r. 1641-1675): Contents and historical context

The death of Oliver Cromwell was soon followed by the demise of the English Commonwealth, and on 8 May 1660, Charles II was proclaimed King of England. On 12 October 1661, Sultana Taj al-'Alam of Aceh sent an impressive illuminated letter[37] via the English East India Company to congratulate Charles on his accession to the throne, and to reaffirm the cordial ties between Aceh and the English dating back to the time of Iskandar Muda (Illustration 12); see Appendix A3). She confirmed the authority given to Henry Gary to establish a factory in the port, and the permission for three English ships to visit the west coast pepper ports annually, but stressed that English interests were threatened by the 'wretched' Dutch and begged the English to take action. Along with the letter she sent various gifts of forest produce, including camphor, agila, ambergris and a bezoar stone from a porcupine.

The queen's letter had little effect on the directors of the East India Company in Surat, in view of the much broader problem of hostitilies with the Dutch, and the prospects for trade in Aceh were neither appealing nor were the queen's gifts appreciated. When the directors sent a letter to the remaining factors in Aceh at the beginning of May 1662, it was not accompanied by stock for trade or anything for presentation to the queen:

> The present sent (as said) by the Queen unto our soverigne lord the Kinge is soe dispicable that it deserves not the name nor title of one, and the ellephant given the President is of the same esteeme: one being unworthy soe royall a person, and the other being unprofitable. [So] that wee have noe reson to returne acknowledgment for either, but shall send it [i.e. the present] unto the Honourable Company and shall leave it unto them to dispose of. (Foster 1923:83.)

[37] In 1999, Dr Ulrich Kratz of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, was contacted by a prominent collector of Islamic art and asked to identify a document from a photocopy. The A3-sized photocopy appeared to contain the textblock of a large illuminated Malay letter, which Kratz identified as a missive from Sultana Taj al-'Alam Safiyyat al-Din Syah of Aceh to King Charles II of England (Kratz 1999). Kratz 1999 was also able to identify references to the letter in the records of the East India Company in ca.1661/2 (Foster 1923:83, 316, 322-3); see also Sainsbury (1922), with an introduction and notes by Foster (Sainsbury 1922:71). A year later, the present writer was shown the original letter briefly by a consultant on Islamic art responsible for its conservation, and in May 2005, was given a colour photograph of the letter. This discussion is based on that photograph, and a photocopy of the letter text kindly provided by Prof. Kratz, to whom I am indebted for first alerting me to the existence of this letter.

Figure 12. Letter from Sultana Taj al-'Alam to King Charles II of England, 1661. Photograph courtesy of the late Yasin Hamid Safadi.

Sultana Taj al-'Alam was left to wait a long time for a reply; in a letter to the Company in London, from the president and council in Surat on 28 January 1664, it was mentioned that some years previously, the Queen of Aceh had sent a letter and present to King Charles, 'whose answer shee is very inquisitive after; please to order an enquiry after it' (Foster 1923:316).

Layout and illumination

The original letter is currently mounted within a cardboard frame and its exact dimensions are not known, but on the basis of the copies available, the letter measures at least 620 x 330 mm; the textblock is exactly 290 x 240 mm.

The whole sheet of paper is sprinkled with droplets of gold and silver, the silver since having tarnished to dark grey, and the entire surface is also

dotted with irregularly shaped pieces of gold leaf. Superimposed upon this impressionistic, even frenzied, decorative scheme is a text frame of ruled red, gold and blue lines, topped by an ogival arched headpiece containing a bold floral meander pattern set against a deep blue ground. The base sheet is probably a type of ready-gilded writing paper imported from Surat,[38] while the text frame was probably added locally.

Compliments

The opening compliments giving the name of the sender and listing her attributes occupy 15 of the 33 lines of text, but are so densely-written that they actually account for over half the total number of words in the letter. There is a remarkable degree of correspondence with the *puji-pujian* in Iskandar Thani's letter written over 20 years previously. Of the 26 distinct sets of attributes in Iskandar Thani's letter, all but five[39] are repeated in Taj al-'Alam's, which also includes several new formulations, giving a total of 32 sets of attributes. In some cases the correspondence is word-for-word, while in other cases there are potentially significant differences in phrasing.

Thus, one of the few clauses found in Iskandar Thani's letter, but not in Tajul Alam's, is '*lagi raja yang ngurniai kesukaan akan yang dikasihinya dan kedukaan akan yang dimarahinya*', or 'and a king who dispenses good fortune to those he favours and misfortune to those who have incurred his wrath', suggesting an appreciation of *realpolitik* in the reduced military might of the kingdom in the intervening period. In a more subtle change, Iskandar Thani's sense of justice is likened to that of Nusyirwan Adil and his liberality to Hatim Tai, while these names are ommitted from Taj al-'Alam's letter. Instead, her sense of justice is compared with that of 'Sultan' Ibn Abd al-Aziz – a reference to Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz, the fifth Umayyad caliph (r. 717-720), traditionally viewed as 'an exemplar of the Muslim virtues of piety, equity and humility' (Cobb 1960:821-2) and who features prominently as such in both the *Taj al-Salatin*[40] and the *Bustan al-Salatin*.[41]

[38] For a discussion of the use of the gilded *surat* paper in Indonesia, see Gallop and Akbar 2006:122-4.

[39] As almost one whole line of compliments in Iskandar Thani's letter is now illegible, this may well have included some of the attributes found in Tajul Alam's letter.

[40] In the *Taj al-Salatin*, there are three anecdotes about Umar ibn Abdul Aziz (Hussain 1992:55-6, 75-9, 87), identified through a Malay Concordance Project search: http://online.anu.edu.au/asianstudies/ahcen/proudfoot/mcp/ (accessed 6-2-2007) on Abdul Aziz.

[41] According to V. Braginsky (e-mail correspondence, 6-2-2007), references to Umar ibn 'Abd al-Aziz occur in Book 3 of the *Bustan al-Salatin*, with 17 stories in Book 3, Chapter 2, 'On the conduct of caliphs and kings of former times', and one story in Book 3, Chapter 3, 'On the appointment of viziers'. This information is taken from Jelani Harun 1999:333, 340.

The compliments in Iskandar Thani's letter emphasize virtues appropriate for a king who is the shadow of God on earth. This epistolary style was adopted by Taj al-'Alam with no significant changes, suggesting that the ideal of kingship carefully painted in these compliments was fully subscribed to during the queen's reign. Critically, no gendered changes are made. While Malay is a gender-neutral language, with *raja* embracing the sense of king or queen,[42] Arabic is most certainly not. Yet we find the indubitably male sovereign epithets, '*sultan al-muazzam wa-al-khaqan al-mukarram*', or 'the great sultan and illustrious king' applied to Taj al-'Alam in the first line of the letter. In fact, the only contextually-gendered epithet is *Berdaulat*, or 'the Sovereign one', accorded to all queens of Aceh, while all kings of Aceh from the time of Iskandar Muda onwards bore the title *Johan Berdaulat*, or 'the Sovereign Champion' (Gallop 2002:89).

It is well known that al-Raniri was forced to leave Aceh in 1643 by theological opponents, and was replaced as the queen's spiritual advisor by Sayf al-Rijal, who was of Minangkabau origin (Ito 1978). However, no works of Sayf al-Rijal are known to have survived; their survival would have allowed an evaluation of whether he exercised any influence over the form of Taj al-'Alam's diplomatic correspondence. Instead, the evidence above appears to indicate that al-Raniri's influence on royal letter-writing in Aceh long outlasted his departure.

The correspondence between the compliments in Iskandar Thani's letter and Taj al-'Alam's, written 21 years later, can also be taken as evidence of the use of a *kitab terasul* – a Malay guide to letter-writing containing selections of suitable opening compliments – in the royal chancery of Aceh at this time.[43] Finally, it should be noted that while both Iskandar Muda's and Iskandar Thani's letters described themselves as *surat*, Taj al-'Alam's letter is called *sitemi* and also the Arabic *kitabat*, or 'writing'. The word *sitemi* all but disappeared from Malay writing from Aceh by the eighteenth century, although its Acehnese source, *eseuteumi*, continued in use (Gallop 2003).

A contemporary English translation

Three copies of a contemporary translation of this letter are held in The National Archives (formerly known as the Public Record Office) of the United

[42] In her study of the queens of Aceh, Mulaika Hijjas (2001:59) has made the point that Malay royal titulature is not gender specific, and in the *Bustan*, all the queens are referred to as 'sultan'. On Tajul Alam's royal seal, however, her title is given as 'sultana' (Gallop 2002:112).

[43] Twenty-eight *kitab terasul* manuscripts have been traced, including some from Aceh, but none contain sample compliments of the kind used here.

Kingdom.[44] The first has the appearance of a draft, while the second two appear to be identical corrected fair copies; one of these copies is presented in Appendix A-3c.

This translation is a perfect example of both the uses and limitations of contemporary European translations of royal Malay letters as historical sources. The gist of the contents is quite accurate, that is, proferring congratulations to King Charles on his accession to the throne, followed by urging the English to continue trading in Aceh, granting permission to Henry Gary for a factory and complaining against the Dutch. However all nuance and sense of balance is lost, and many of the compliments for the king and the English in the translation are not found in the original Malay.

The most extraordinary and most potentially misleading elements are the compliments, which bear no relation whatsoever to the actual *puji-pujian* in the original Malay letter. Some of the phrases are immediately reminiscent of Iskandar Muda's letter, but the actual English terminology is strangely familiar, or so it proves. It transpires that this translation is based on Copland's report of the letter from Iskandar Muda to James I presented to Thomas Best in 1613, which was published in *Purchas, his pilgrimes* in 1624. The first part of those compliments reads:

> Peducka Sirie Sultan, King of Kings, renowmed for his warres, and sole king of Sumatra, and a king more famous then his predecessors, feared in his kingdome and honoured of all bordering nations: in whom there is the true image of a king: in whome raignes the true methode of government: formed (as it were) of the most pure metall and adorned with the most finest colours: whose seat is high and most compleat, like to a christall river, pure and cleare as the christall glasse: from whom floweth the pure streame of bountie and justice: whose presence is as the finest gold: King of Priaman and of the mountaine of gold, viz. Salida, and lord of nine sorts of stones [...] his vessels for bathing of pure gold, his sepulchre of gold [...]. (Foster 1934:211-1.)

As can be seen, these have been copied more or less verbatim by the translator of Sultana Taj al-'Alam's letter, pausing only to modify the gender, for example, 'sole mistress of Sumatra' and 'lady of nine sorts of precious stones'. This suggests that at least in later years, the East India Company, and perhaps the Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (VOC, Dutch East India Company) as well, simply kept in hand one translated example of the compliments of a royal Aceh letter and reproduced this as and when necessary for a combination of

[44] Foster (1923:83) gives the reference to the Public Record Office series C.O.77, vol. viii, pp. 192, 194, 196. A complete photographic copy of the series C.O.77 is held in the India Office Records at the British Library, with the shelfmark MSS.Photo.Eur.149. It is clear that the original volumes have been refoliated since Foster inspected them. The translations of the letter are found in MSS.Photo.Eur.149/8, ff. 152-3, 154, 156; the translation found in Appendix A-3c is ff. 156.

reasons, perhaps believing these to be unchanging, regarding any differences as merely cosmetic, or 'playing safe' with a form of compliments reckoned to be diplomatically acceptable to their own sovereign.

And yet, the English translation does proffer some valuable information not found in the Malay original, notably the date 28 Safar 1072, or 12 October 1661 in the Julian calendar, but 23 October 1661 in the current Gregorian calendar. This fact and a few other details deriving from Malay phrases that are not found in the original Malay letter – for example, the reference to the 'prophett Issah' and the title 'Orang Kaya Putih' awarded to Gary – suggest that the English translation of the contents, if not the compliments, may be the result of an oral working session between an Acehnese court official and an East India Company linguist.

Royal letter-writing in Aceh in the seventeenth century

Until recently, the letter from Sultan Iskandar Muda of 1615 was the only known original royal letter from seventeenth-century Aceh. It is both an icon of Malay epistolography and its greatest enigma. It is by far the earliest known illuminated Malay letter, yet also, turning evolutionary theory on its head, the largest, most impressive and most sophisticated artistically. It bears no seal, a seal being normally an essential mark of authority on a formal royal letter. The heading, usually accorded a prominent position in most Malay letters, is written in such tiny letters and placed so far at the top of the sheet as almost to escape notice. The part of the compliments glorifying the sender is longer than that in any other Malay letter seen. It is also remarkable for being unique in its wording and for being without accompanying gift. In short, although this epistle broadly conforms to the standard format of a Malay letter, each of its constituent parts is quite different from any other Malay epistle, whether from elsewhere in the archipelago or from a later century in Aceh's history.

It might have been expected that the recent discovery of two further royal Malay letters from seventeenth-century Aceh would throw light on Iskandar Muda's letter and help in the interpretation of some of its most enigmatic features, yet an initial comparison raises more questions than it answers, for there are as many differences as there are similarities between the three letters. In this section, formal aspects of the three letters, that is, illumination, letter heading and compliments, will be compared with each other, with contemporary epistolary practice in the broader Islamic world and other Malay kingdoms, as well as with other royal letters from Aceh, in an attempt to better understand the forces that have shaped royal letter-writing in Aceh in the seventeenth century.

Layout and illumination

It is probably true to say that despite the extraordinarily rich tradition of Islamic book illumination from the medieval period, the elaborate decoration of Islamic documents only became widespread in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, although the use of illumination in specific contexts in royal documents can certainly be found earlier. Most prominent was the selective use of chrysography, that is, writing in gold ink, as a mark of honour for the names of God and certain royal titles.[45] In imperial Ottoman *firman*, any additional illumination was focused on the royal monogram (*tughra*) at the head of the letter from at least the early sixteenth century onwards, becoming larger and ever more elaborate by the end of the century (Nadir 1987:15-6), but examples of Ottoman documents with decoration covering the whole sheet are only known from the nineteenth century. In both Persia and Mughal India, only a few finely decorated documents are known from the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries,[46] compared to the profusion of later years.

In the Muslim courts of Southeast Asia, a distinction must be made between royal letters illuminated within the palaces of the archipelago and letters written on gilded *surat* paper imported from India, as described above. Apart from the Aceh letters, there are no other known examples of 'locally' illuminated royal letters from the Malay world until the late eighteenth century. Even from Aceh itself in later years, only one other illuminated letter is known. The Danish National Archives in Copenhagen hold an important collection of over 40 original documents from Aceh dating from the first half of the eighteenth century, including 21 royal letters, written in Malay, Arabic and Persian.[47] The only illuminated document in this collection is a badly-damaged letter in Persian from Sultan 'Ala' al-Din Ahmad Syah, dated 1733. The style of illumination is quite unusual, with a stencilled pattern of tulips outlined in gold against a background of splattered blue droplets, and it is possible that this, too, is an example of ready-decorated Indian paper.

This broad survey serves to confirm Iskandar Muda's letter of 1615 as a landmark not just of Malay illumination, but also of Islamic art, and it is also clear that despite the lesser artistic quality of Iskandar Thani's and Taj al-'Alam's letters, their very scale and lavishness would still have set them apart from other diplomatic missives of their time.

45 For example, a letter from Ulugh Muhammad of the Golden Horde of South Russia to Ottoman Sultan Murad II in 1428 had the first lines, with the names of God and the Prophet, elaborately written in gold ink (Ménage 1985:299).

46 Only one illuminated *firman* of the Mughal emperor, Akbar, is known, dating from the very late sixteenth century. This has been reproduced in Brand and Lowry 1985:120.

47 On this collection see Kratz 1998, and Anderson 1995:188, 2001:10-2.

Letter headings

It is unfortunate that the limited opportunity to inspect the original letter from Taj al-'Alam did not confirm whether or not there was a letter heading (*kepala surat*) at the top, for the most distinctive formal feature shared by the otherwise very different letters of Iskandar Muda and Iskandar Thani is the heading. In both letters, '*Huwa Allah ta'ala*', or 'He [is] God the Exalted', is written in identical tiny letters in the middle at the very top edge of the sheet. In a similar vein, in an exit permit written in Arabic granted by Sultan 'Ala' al-Din Ri'ayat Syah to a Dutch captain in 1603, the heading, '*Huwa*', or 'He', that is, 'God', is written at the very top, and also in comparatively minuscule letters (Wassing-Visser 1995:35). Yet *Huwa* is very rarely found in the headings of letters from other Malay states, where by far the most common heading is '*Qawluhu al-Haqq*', or 'His word is the Truth' (Gallop 1994:60). Even the size and location of the heading on the seventeenth-century Aceh letters are unusual in the context of other Malay letters, where headings tend to be larger in size and placed more centrally on the sheet of paper.

If, however, we turn to the broader Muslim world, we find *Huwa* to be a common constituent of the *invocatio* (heading) in Ottoman documents of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, where, as in our two Acehnese letters, it was placed at the very top edge of the sheet of paper, separated from the main textblock by a wide space, and thus, often cut off or lost (Heywood 1998:250; Ménage 1985:285, 300). In Safavid Iran, letters sent to European heads of state during and after the reign of Abbas I (r. 1588-1629) mostly bore headings commencing with *Huwa* (Mitchell 1997:184, 194), while *Huwa*, by itself, was the heading of choice on Sufi letters (Rajabzadeh 1992:293-8). In Mughal India, *Huwa*, conjoined 'with such epithets describing the divine attributes of God as may be in keeping with the subject of the text' was a favourite choice for the *sarnama* at the top of a Mughal firman (Mohiuddin 1971:63).

Thus, this use of *Huwa* appears to clearly demonstrate Aceh's awareness of contemporary pan-Islamic trends, although it should also be stressed that elements of Turkish, Persian and Mughal epistolary practice were only adopted selectively in Aceh. Another factor influencing the choice of *Huwa* as a letter heading in Aceh may have been the importance accorded to this word by prominent ulama in their writings; Hamza Fansuri is said to have regarded *Huwa* as 'the Name above all other Beautiful Names', and Shaykh Shams al-Din especially favoured *Huwa* and *Allah* (Van Nieuwenhuijze 1945:95-6).

Compliments

As has already been mentioned, the length of the 'from me' element of the opening compliments in all three Aceh letters is without parallel in any other known Malay letters from other parts of the archipelago. In many Malay letters, the full compliments naming both sender and addressee can be quite brief, but when elaborated, almost invariably more words are devoted to the qualities of the recipient. Even royal letters from Aceh in the first half of the eighteenth century, addressed to the Danish East India Company, all conform to the broader Malay pattern of honouring the recipient rather than the sender.[48]

In the Muslim world beyond Southeast Asia, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, royal letters were normally written in Arabic or Persian. After the *invocatio* praising God, the letter-text commenced with a string of honorifics preceding the name of the addressee. This was followed by greetings and blessings before proceeding to the business at hand. In other words, these 'compliments' only comprised a 'to you' component accompanied by benedictions; the sender himself was neither named nor accorded titles or attributes (Ménage 1985:289). At the Safavid courts in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, this same basic format was also used for correspondence with Christian rulers (Mitchell 1997:195-200). At the Mughal court, the format for royal letters was similar, but with provision for the (optional) mention of the sender only after the eulogy to the addressee as set out above (Islam 1979:11-2). Indeed, during the first English embassy to the court of the Mughal emperor Jahangir, Sir Thomas Roe reported back to the East India Company that the letter from King James, which began in the conventional way, 'James, by the Grace of Almightie God, etc. [...] To the high and mightie Monarch the Great Mogor, etc., Greeting' (Foster 1899b:553), had caused offence at the Mughal court because the king's name had been written before that of the emperor (Foster 1899b:347). Jahangir's reply to James opens, according to the English translation, only with benedictions for the recipient (Foster 1899b: 557-60).

In an interesting development at the Ottoman court, a few openly hostile letters between Ottoman and other Muslim rulers in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries flouted diplomatic niceties by placing the sender's name with attendant attributes before that of the addressee, and according the addressee fewer honorifics than might have been expected; two such letters were also in the vernacular Turkish rather than the customary Persian. This deliberately discourteous format has been identified by V.L. Ménage (1985:285-90) as

[48] See, for example, a letter from Sultan Jamalul Alam Badrul Munir of Aceh (r. 1703-1726) to the Dutch governor of Tranquebar (Gallop 2007:42).

the likely inspiration behind elements of a new Ottoman epistolary style developed early in the reign of Süleyman the Magnificent (r. 1520-1566) specifically for correspondence with the heads of Christian states, using the vernacular Turkish, and with the description of the sender (commencing with '*ben ki*', or 'I who am') preceding the element naming the recipient (beginning with '*sen ki*', 'thou who art'). A notable feature of the *ben ki* element is the long list of territorial titles claimed by Sultan Sulayman; this practice appears to have had its beginnings in dealings between the sultan and the kingdom of Hungary, but escalated during the course of diplomatic exchanges with the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V (Ménage 1985:289).

Relations between Aceh and the Ottomans date back to at least 1547, when an Acehnese ambassador visited Istanbul (Göksoy 2007:4). The earliest surviving diplomatic correspondence is a letter to Sultan Sulayman from Sultan 'Ala' al-Din Ri'ayat Syah al-Qahhar of Aceh, dated 7 January 1566; unfortunately, the letter is only known from an official Ottoman Turkish translation held in the Topkapı Palace Museum Archives, in which the opening compliments are omitted, and which does not even identify the original language in which the letter was written (Göksoy 2004:193). Due to the death of Sulayman following the Hungarian campaign in 1566, the official reply from the new sultan, Selim II, to the Acehnese ruler was only written on 20 September 1567 (Casale 2005; Göksoy 2004:198, 2007:6).[49] This, too, is only known from an archival copy in Ottoman Turkish, but the formulaic opening section conforms to the 'polite' general Islamic style, comprising only a 'to you' element accompanied by benedictions.

The earliest royal Acehnese diplomatic letter in which the compliments have been preserved, albeit in imperfect translation, is the letter in Arabic from Sultan 'Ala' al-Din Ri'ayat Syah to Queen Elizabeth I in 1602.[50] Despite all the reservations mentioned above about the authenticity of European translations, we can at least be sure that the translator did not simply 'adopt' elements from an earlier letter, as this is the first royal Acehnese missive to England. And despite the evident linguistic difficulties faced by the translator, it is clear that the letter began in what has been described above as the standard international Muslim epistolary style, with prayers followed by praise for the addressee, and then a brief mention of the sender.

What this survey confirms is that by any contemporary epistolary standard, whether from within the Malay Archipelago or beyond, the extraordinary length of the self-description in the compliments of Iskandar Muda's

[49] I am most grateful to Jane Drakard for alerting me to this reference (Drakard n.y.).

[50] An English translation of the complete letter by Rev. William Bedwell, first published in *Purchas* in 1624, is given in Foster 1940. A copy of the Arabic text of the second half of the letter – unfortunately lacking the initial compliments – is found in Bodleian MS Douce Or.e.5, f.1r.

letter represented a new development, which could only have had its origins in what would be regarded in Islamic diplomatic circles as deliberate discourtesy. This is in spite of the fact that this style may have subsequently evolved into a standard format for royal Acehnese correspondence, at least with Christian rulers, throughout much of the seventeenth century. In view of the epistolary innovations of Süleyman the Magnificent mentioned above, and the relatively close diplomatic contact between Aceh and the Ottoman court, it is possible that the Acehnese development may have been inspired by the Ottoman example. As the emphasis in the letter on ostentatious wealth and territorial claims resonates so closely with what is known of Iskandar Muda's personal tastes, the main impetus for the new style may well have come from the sultan himself.

During the reign of Iskandar Thani, one of the basic precepts of this 'new style' was retained, namely, the length of compliments devoted to the sender, the king, compared to those reserved for the recipient. However, the tenor had shifted radically, towards a more orthodox and more spiritual depiction of the king as a devout Muslim ruler, and this style was embraced enthusiastically by Sultana Taj al-'Alam.

Conclusion

The three surviving royal Malay letters from seventeenth-century Aceh, from Iskandar Muda, Iskandar Thani and Taj al-'Alam, excel all other known Malay letters, both in terms of artistry and opulence and in the length and unique composition of their compliments. A new epistolary style, remarkable for its emphasis on material and territorial riches, and a corresponding absence of overtly Islamic references, appears to have been initiated by Iskandar Muda. Since it is known that the king's spiritual mentor, Shaykh Shams al-Din, played a critical role in Aceh's relations with foreign powers, the lack of Islamic formulations should be interpreted as a deliberate omission, designed for correspondence with non-Muslim powers. The letter from Iskandar Thani, however, bears the clear literary imprimamateur of his spiritual advisor, al-Raniri, and this epistolary style appears to have been adopted unchanged long into the reign of Taj al-'Alam. Thus, even though we know that al-Raniri was replaced as spiritual advisor to the queen by the Minangkabau scholar Sayf al-Rijal, in 1643, al-Raniri's influence on royal letter-writing, like on so many other aspects of Aceh's Islamic written heritage, survived long after his departure from Aceh. However, by the early eighteenth century this distinctive style had all but vanished, and royal letters from Aceh conformed more closely with the pan-Malay norm.

In conclusion, in seventeenth-century Aceh, royal letter-writing followed a unique path that set it aside from epistolary practice in other parts of the

Malay world, with two distinct styles, initiated in the reigns of Iskandar Muda and Iskandar Thani. In addition to the political, economic and diplomatic realities which shaped the content of the letter, two forces, sacred and profane, can be detected in the composition of the compliments. They are the influence of the king's spiritual mentor, and the personal policies and passions of the king himself.

Finally, quite apart from their intellectual and historical value, these three beautiful letters, illuminated with gold, silver and lapis lazuli, occupy a unique position as perhaps the only surviving tangible link to the glory that was Aceh in the seventeenth century, when the splendour of the sultanate was made manifest in elaborate court ceremonies parading the dazzling riches of the royal treasury.

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Chapter vii

The jewel affair
The sultana, her *orang kaya* and the Dutch foreign envoys

Sher Banu A.L. Khan

Aceh has long been known as both a staunchly Islamic kingdom and a major trading centre for pepper. Pepper propelled Aceh's ascendancy in the sixteenth century, as it became the main Muslim commercial centre supplying pepper to the Mediterranean via the Red Sea (Boxer 1969:3; Reid 2005:6). Building upon this prosperity, the Achenese sultan Iskandar Muda (r. 1607-1636), inaugurated what is viewed by many today as a 'golden age', when Aceh's influence expanded as far south as Padang in Sumatra and Johor on the Malay Peninsula. During the latter half of the seventeenth century, four female monarchs ruled this Muslim kingdom in succession for half a century: Sultana Taj al-'Alam Safiyyat al-Din Syah (r. 1641-1675), Sultana Nur al-'Alam Naqiyyat al-Din (r. 1675-1678), Sultana 'Inayat Zakiyyat al-Din Syah (r. 1678-1688) and Sultana Kamalat Zaynat al-Din Syah (r. 1688-1699).

There are many contrasting views about their roles in the development of Acehnese culture and the history of that period. The Dutch colonial scholar P.J. Veth saw female rule as part of the indigenous practice of Southeast Asian states. He cited other examples of *vrouwenregeeringen* in Patani, Borneo, Palembang and Celebes (Veth 1870). He argued that discussions in state councils and consent of the council members did not mean that these monarchs were mere figureheads. Indeed, these were not unique to female rule, but were features of Malay political institutions practised under male sultans as well. Likewise, John Davis mentioned that during the reign of Sultan Ali Mughayat Syah al-Mukammil (r. 1588-1604), 'his women are his chiefest [c]ounsellars' (Davys 1880:150).[1] According to Anthony Reid, during the Southeast Asian

[1] The Acehnese historian Mohammad Said argued that female leadership in Aceh was not an aberration, as earlier, Aceh already had a female admiral, Laksamana Keumala Hayati, who was empowered by Acehnese cultural conceptions that women could be viewed as being as powerful and as capable as men (Mohammad Said 1961:379).

'age of commerce', female rule was one of the few devices available to a commercially-oriented aristocracy to limit the despotic powers of kings and to make the state safe for international commerce (Reid 1988:641). The reign of Iskandar Muda (1607-1637) saw the height of royal absolutism in Aceh.[2] After his death, the nobility no longer wanted to have to endure such threats to their own power again. Reid concluded that after having experimented once with the female alternative these Acehnese aristocrats sought to perpetuate it (Reid 1988:641).

Others, however, have not held such positive views of female monarchs. The British colonial scholar William Marsden, for example, saw female rule in Aceh as an aberration, believing that these female rulers were 'mere figureheads' (Marsden 1986). Later writers like Ilyas Sutan Pamenan have continued to assert that female rule was strange (*gandjil*) and unacceptable to the people. Indeed, Pamenan went even further, arguing that female rule was particularly inappropriate for that time, since Aceh was not economically secure and needed a strong hand to earn the respect of foreign merchants, something that, in his view, was impossible for a woman to accomplish (Iljas Sutan Pamenan 1959:35-6).

This chapter examines an episode during the early years of the reign of Sultana Safiyyat al-Din Syah, in which she was forced to constantly re-negotiate relations with her own court elite (the *orang kaya*) and the officials of the Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (VOC, Dutch East India Company). Her work of managing these complex relationships defines her style of leadership, and clearly demonstrates that she was neither manipulated nor merely tolerated by the elite as a figurehead. Her success in balancing the demands of diverse parties illustrates the acceptance and respect accorded to her as a ruler, suggesting that if female rule did indeed start off as an experiment, it came to be seen as a workable solution, and one to be perpetuated over the reigns of three subsequent sultanas.

The sultan who loved jewels

The Dutch officials in Aceh reported that Sultana Safiyyat al-Din's predecessor, Sultan Iskandar Thani (r. 1636-1641), was exceedingly fond of jewels (Van Der Chijs 1887:4). Peter Mundy, who had an audience with Iskandar Thani, observed that the sultan's clothes were ordinary, following the fashion of the

[2] Iskandar Muda exterminated the old powerful nobility and created new ones entirely dependent on him. A complex administrative and judicial hierarchy developed under his authority, where the slightest display of disloyalty was punished with exemplary severity (Reid and Ito 1985)

country, 'but [he] was adorned with many jewells of diamonds, etts. [and other] pretious stones' (Temple 1905:335-6). Paulus Croocq was also impressed with Iskandar Thani's crown and clothing, describing them as dazzlingly encrusted with diamonds and rare stones. Iskandar Thani's throne was also heavily bejewelled and estimated to be worth 40 *bihar* of heavy gold, or 100,000 guilders![3] Unsurprisingly, Iskandar Thani's fascination with precious stones was capitalized upon by the Dutch, who would often bring him gifts of jewels on their trade missions, as the sultan was prepared to accept jewels instead of cash from the Dutch in exchange for pepper and the payment of tolls (Van Der Chijs, Colenbrander and De Hullu 1887-1928:4).[4] Iskandar Thani evidently had a particular fascination with diamonds, especially those with all faces cut. Furthermore, he was not keen on the standard types of stones brought by the Dutch and preferred, instead, to order gems and settings specially designed and crafted for him in the Netherlands.[5] Commissar Deutecom reported that the sultan was particularly pleased with the sketch of a belt designed in the Persian manner, the belt of which was to be woven from silk and set with diamonds, and he wished to possess this rare and extremely expensive belt which was estimated to cost about a few thousand taels (Coolhaas 1964:57). To this order, he added his request for two to three emerald pendants and more beautiful diamond pendants, which he wanted holed, presumably to be threaded later by chains (Coolhaas 1964:109).

Gemstones form an important aspect of kingship in many parts of Southeast Asia and elsewhere across the world. Precious materials like gold, silver and gems were commonly used as royal regalia to increase the status and charisma of their wearers. In addition to being symbols of sovereignty and power, jewels could also sometimes take on *sakti* (magical) and divine powers in pre-modern Southeast Asian kingdoms.[6] The *Sulalat al-Salatin* (*Sejarah Melayu*) for example, mentioned the importance of precious stones

3 VOC 1131, f.1194. Iskandar Thani described himself as 'the auspicious Sultan, the honoured and revered Paduka Sri Sultan 'Ala' al-Din Mughayat Syah, Champion Sovereign, shadow of God on earth, the vicegerent of Allah, King of the whole world, who like God, is glittering like the sun at midday, whose attributes are like the full moon, is the king chosen by Allah whose characteristics are like the Pleiades, who is king of kings, descendents of Alexander the Great […]'. See Iskandar Thani's letter to Antonio van Diemen in Van der Chijs 1887:6-7. See also Annabel Teh Gallop 2007.

4 See also the Letter from Commissaris Paulus Croocq to the Governor General, 10-9-1639, VOC1131, ff.1142-1176, f.1162.

5 VOC 1131, 1639, f.1165.

6 Siamese kings regarded the magical nine-stoned jewel (*permata sembilan jenis*) as part of their regalia. This nine-stoned jewel refers to the Sanskrit *nava ratna*, an arm-ornament composed of nine precious stones: diamond, ruby, emerald, sapphire, topaz, pearl, coral, hyacinth and carbuncle (Gallop 1998:12-3).

in legitimizing the predecessors of all Malay rajas.[7] In Aceh, gold, *suasa* (a gold-copper alloy), precious stones, horses and elephants were all symbols of royal wealth and status. Sultan Iskandar Muda is one example of a king whose love for rich and expensive jewels was not only a matter of personal taste, but also a reflection of his royal prestige and magnificence. Jewellery stored in royal coffers were considered royal heirlooms, which, in Aceh, were carefully preserved. Sultan Iskandar Muda employed more than three hundred goldsmiths in his service, and had in his possession three diamond pieces estimated to weigh between 15 to 20 carats, several rubies, and an emerald acquired from his conquest of Perak (Kathirithamby-Wells 1994). The opulence of courtly garments and costumes has been described in Augustin de Beaulieu's account of court dancers, each dancer being estimated to have worn about 40 pounds of gold (Harris 1764:732). Audience days, royal parades, funeral processions, and festival days provided perfect opportunities for a display of these magnificent, precious and rare jewels, to inspire awe among foreigners and to garner loyalty from the sultans' subjects. On such important days, the sultans, bedecked with dazzling jewellery, resembled the glittering sun and moon with which they were so fond of associating themselves.

Unfortunately, it is difficult to ascertain exactly what and how much jewellery Sultan Iskandar Muda acquired during his reign. According to F. Valentyn, 'the Company suffered a heavy loss through the sale of the deceased King of Atsjien jewellery, since but 5,025 taels[8] of the said jewellery were taken

[7] Chapter 2 of the *Sejarah Melayu* tells of a hill named Si Guntang Mahamiru in the land of Andalas, Palembang, where the first mythical Malay rajas appeared. On this hill lived two widows, Wan Empuk and Wan Malini. They were said to have worked on a vast rice field (*padi terlalu luas humanya*). The field was described to be very fertile, with padi growing in great abundance (*terlalulah jadi padinya, tiada dapat diperkatakan lagi*). As the rice was becoming ready for harvest, one night Wan Empuk and Wan Malini saw what seemed to look like fire on the distant horizon. Thinking that it might be a dragon, they took shelter in their home, where they later fell asleep. The next morning, they decided to investigate the source of the light. To their amazement, after they came upon their fields on Bukit Guntang, they saw their padi turning into gold, the leaves turning into silver, and the stems into copper. The whole hill seemed to be awash with a golden hue. There, they found the three princes riding on white cows who had ascended from the realm below the sea. They were described to be very young, good-looking and clothed royally, each wearing a gem-studded crown. Wan Empuk and Wan Malini, awestruck by their good looks and fine clothing, deduced that they were the cause of their padi turning into gold. When the three princes were queried by the two widows about their origin, they related their story and introduced themselves as the great-great grandsons of Iskandar Dhu'l-Qarnayn. To verify their story, they pointed to their gem-studded crowns and clothing, and the magical transformation of the padi fields (Samad Ahmad 1984:19-21).

[8] A tael or *thail* is a unit of weight and a monetary unit that was used in China, Japan, Tonkin, Cambodia, Siam, Aceh and Makassar. As a unit of weight, 1 tael was about 37.5 g. The worth of 1 tael in monetary unit varied from place to place. In Aceh, the tael was usually measured in gold. One tael is worth 4 *rijksdaalders*, 16 golden *mas*. If in silver, it was worth about 60 *stuivers* or 8 silver *mas* (Stapel 1931:834-5).

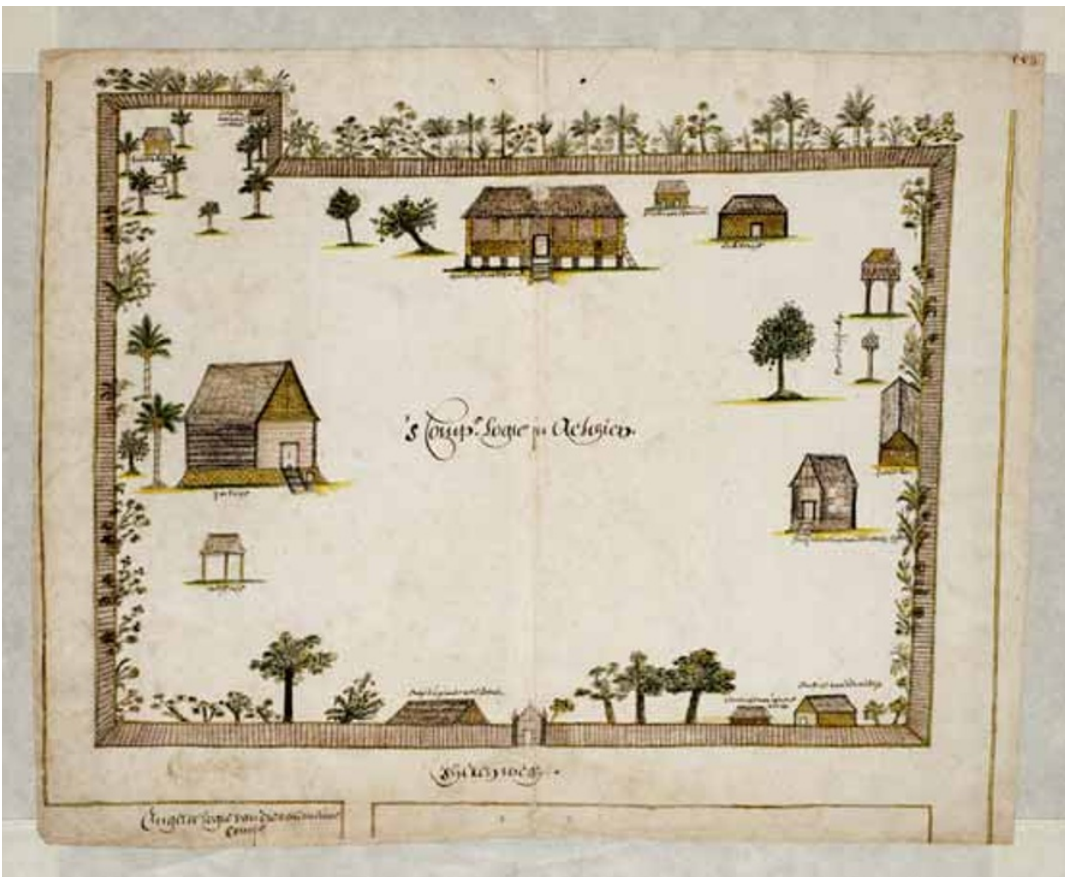

Figure 3. Seventeenth-century coloured drawing of the VOC 'factory' at Aceh. The note in the lower left corner indicates its close proximity to the English 'factory'. (Used with permission from the Nationaal Archief, the Netherlands, 4.VEL 1150.)

Figure 4. The Gunongan on the former grounds of the sultan's palace at Banda Aceh. Photograph by R. Michael Feener.

Figure 5. Qur'an MS pierced by a bullet - collected from beside a fallen Acehnese at Laut Tawar (Central Aceh) in August 1905 by Dr Knud Gjellerup, a Danish physician in the service of the Dutch expedition (used with permission from the Danish Royal Library, Cod. Arab. Add. 47). Photograph by R. Michael Feener.

Figure 8. Letter in Malay from Sultan Iskandar Muda to King James I of England, 1615. Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS Laud Or.Rolls b.1. Reproduced courtesy of the Bodleian Library.

Figure 9. Detail of the top part of the letter from Sultan Iskandar Muda showing the heading *Huwa Allah Ta'ala*. Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS Laud Or.Rolls.b.1. Reproduced courtesy of the Bodleian Library.

Figure 10. Letter in Malay from Sultan Iskandar Thani to Prince Fredrik Hendrik of Orange, 1639. Leiden University Library, Cod.Or.4818a.I.3. Reproduced courtesy of Leiden University Library.

Figure 11. Detail of the top part of the letter from Sultan Iskandar Thani showing the heading *Huwa Allah Ta'ala*. Leiden University Library, Cod.Or.4818a.I.3. Reproduced courtesy of Leiden University Library.

Figure 12. Letter from Sultana Taj al-'Alam to King Charles II of England, 1661. Photograph courtesy of the late Yasin Hamid Safadi.

Figure 15. Cloth envelope of Mansur Syah's Arabic letter to Abdülmecid, with inscription entrusting document to Ma'ruf al-Karkhi (B.O.A, İ.HR 73/3511)

Figure 16. Map of Sumatra and surrounding islands
sent to the Ottoman sultan by Mansur Syah

over by the Queen' (Valentyn 1890:236-7).[9] L. Andaya stated that the jewels were worth around 6,000 taels (Andaya 2004:77). A further search of VOC sources, however, revealed that the actual figure was much more than this. In his letter to Jacob Compostel, Antonio van Diemen mentioned that the total cost of the jewels brought by Justus Schouten was f.82018.6.8.[10] More detailed information on this can be gleaned from the queen's letter to Antonio van Diemen. Sultana Safiyyat al-Din wrote that she acknowledged the receipt of a gold chain with 1,064 diamond stones, two arm-rings with 306 diamonds, a golden *keris* with 211 diamonds, two pendants with 58 diamonds, four hoop-rings beset with table-diamonds, four ruby rings with set diamonds, four diamond rings, one hoop-ring beset with 16 table-diamonds and four pairs of earrings in gold.[11] These were worth 10,000 taels out of the 15,000 brought by Commissar Pieter Sourij. The third part of the jewels amounted to about 8,500 taels.

The first sign of trouble over the payment of jewels appeared in Antonio van Diemen's letter to the king of Aceh, where he drew attention to the fact that Iskandar Thani had declined to accept and pay for the jewels brought by a delegation led by Commissar Jan de Meere in 1640.[12] Although Jan de Meere advised the return of the jewels, Antonio van Diemen firmly urged the king 'to unburden us [the Dutch] with these and accept them in a pleasant way'.[13] The Dutch, Van Diemen argued, would not make it difficult for the king if these diamonds could be returned to the Netherlands. However, that was impossible because these diamonds had been ordered by the king and as such, were specially crafted according to the Acehnese style.[14] He stressed that if these jewels were not accepted and paid for, they would cost the Dutch great losses.

9 F. Valentyn did not mention the total sum brought by the Dutch.

10 Letter from Antonio van Diemen, Governor General in Batavia, to Jacob Compostel, resident in Aceh, 1642, ff.223-7, f.225. This was the sum brought by Justus Schouten, which was about 6,834 taels. Two other envoys, Pieter Sourij and Vlamingh Oudshoorn, respectively brought another 15,000 taels and 8,500 taels. The total sum brought would be 30,334 taels. The queen accepted a total of 21,000 taels, and the Dutch would have lost 9,334 taels. After this whole episode, the VOC was still left with five diamond rings and one emerald ring.

11 Letter from the queen of Aceh to the Governor General in Batavia, VOC 1141, ff.146R-148V, f.146R.

12 VOC 1136, f.951V.

13 VOC 1136, f.951V.

14 For example, the eight jewels crafted specially to decorate the shirt of the king was, according to Van Diemen, not only very costly; as they were fashioned in the Achenese style, it was also impossible for the Dutch to sell them to other kings. For instance, the king of Mataram preferred table-shaped diamonds whilst the king of Siam fancied pointed ones (VOC 1136, f.951V).

The sultana who preferred cash

When Commissar Justus Schouten arrived in Aceh, he found that the sultan who was responsible for ordering all these diamonds had passed away and in his place was his young widow, Sultana Safiyyat al-Din Syah.[15] At that time, the Dutch had no idea how this would affect their jewel trade with Aceh and the situation was critical, since the VOC officials were uncertain how this new successor would respond to the VOC. Dutch-Aceh relations had soured under Iskandar Thani, when he refused to help the VOC conquer Melaka in 1640, despite earlier promises to the contrary. The Dutch saw this sudden reversal of intent as a reflection of the sultan's own ambitious designs on the Straits and thus, were watching closely for signs of his successor's intentions for relations with the VOC.[16]

One of the first things Commissar Justus Schouten wrote in his report to Antonio van Diemen, after informing the governor of the ascension of the new sultana, was that the very expensive jewels he had brought with him had been refused by the queen. This, he noted, was very damaging to the VOC and of course did not augur well for relations between the VOC and the newly-crowned ruler of Aceh. Schouten reported that despite his great insistence, only a portion of the jewels was eventually accepted, that is, 5,025 taels at f.16 1/5 per tael.[17] The queen refused to accept the rest even when Schouten offered to sell them at the cost price. As far as the Acehnese were concerned, her reasons for this were justified, given that her late husband had been too extravagant, resulting in the depletion of the treasury. Furthermore, these jewels and accessories were specially designed and made for the male king's clothes and certainly could not be worn by a woman.[18]

The sultana, her orang kaya and Commissar Pieter Sourij

After Justus Schouten, the next commissar appointed to represent the VOC's delegation to Aceh was Pieter Sourij.[19] His task was to get the queen to accept and pay for the remainder of the jewels, and he was specifically instructed by

15 Iskandar Thani passed away unexpectedly at the age of 31 on 15-2-1641.

16 For a fuller account of the reasons behind Iskandar Thani's refusal to help the VOC and the VOC's perceptions of him, see Banu 2010.

17 Letter from Johan van Twist and Justus Schouten in Malacca, July 1641, f.339V. This presumably would be the 5,025 taels of jewellery accepted by the queen as mentioned by Valentyn 1890.

18 Letter from Johan van Twist and Justus Schouten in Malacca, July 1641, f.339V.

19 Sourij stayed in Aceh from 15-5-1642 to 18-8-1642.

Governor General Antonio van Diemen not to bring them back to Batavia.[20] Commissar Sourij's report reveals how affairs were conducted under the reign of the sultana. Matters of business had to be first discussed with her *rijksraden* (council members) before they could be forwarded to the queen on Audience Day. Thus, the VOC officials had to learn fairly quickly whom they had to petition to first and whom the VOC's friends were. In the first year of her reign, the most important council member was Lebe Kita Kali.[21] Being a friend of the VOC, Lebe Kita Kali gave Compostel two important pieces of advice. The first was that Sourij should visit the other *orang kaya* to discuss the sale of the jewels, and that he must be kept informed of their answers.[22] He also cautioned Sourij that the Dutch might face problems with the rest of the *orang kaya*, who were increasingly of the opinion that Aceh did not need any more jewels.[23] More importantly, Lebe Kita Kali said that since Aceh was now ruled by a queen, it was in the nature of women not to be willing to see the treasury depleted.[24]

On 12 July 1642, Sourij had his first audience with the queen. The sultana, much to Sourij's surprise, decided to accept the jewels with the consensus of her *orang kaya*. Happy at this good turn of events, and not wanting to prejudice the good standing the VOC had at the moment, Sourij decided not to be impolite by discussing questions of payment. The first shock Sourij faced was a week later, when the queen ordered the *orang kaya* and her jewellers to gather at the audience hall (*balai*) to evaluate the price of the jewels. All the *orang kaya* were present except, interestingly, for Lebe Kita Kali. Maradia Adonna Lilla, the queen's *capado* (eunuch), together with the *shahbandar* (port masters) and two other *orang kaya*, came with the jewel box and opened it for valuation by the queen's jewellers. After the jewels were carefully examined, the price was determined at a mere 5,900 taels; this was totally unacceptable to the VOC delegates.[25] At that moment, the queen herself was not present; she remained within the inner precinct of her palace. Sourij protested, claiming that either the Acehnese diamond jewellers did not know their stones, or they simply

20 *Dagh-register van Pieter Sourij*, 5-1642 to 8-1642, f.556R. In his letter to Jacob Compostel, Antonio van Diemen mentioned that the total cost of the jewels brought by Sourij was f.82018.6.8. Letter from Antonio van Diemen to Jacob Compostel, 1642, ff.223-7, f.225. More information the value of the jewels can be gleaned here, as Sourij wrote that the cost of production for these jewels was 12,000 taels, but that the Dutch asked for 15,000 taels, considering the dangers of transportation at sea and interest costs.

21 Lebe Kita Kali was said to be the illegitimate son of Iskandar Muda; thus, he was the sultana's half-brother (Ito 1984:71).

22 *Dagh-register van Pieter Sourij*, May 1642 to August 1642, f.557R.

23 One need to look no further than the jewel-studded grave of Iskandar Thani to prove this. For the *Bustan*'s description of Iskandar Thani's grave, see Iskandar 1966:60-73.

24 *Dagh-register van Pieter Sourij*, May1642 to August 1642, f.560V.

25 *Dagh-register van Pieter Sourij*, May 1642 to August 1642, ff.571R-571V.

refused to declare the real amount. The Dutch delegates threatened a walk-out. Maradia Adonna Lilla then wrote the price down and brought this to the queen inside the palace. This did not help in the least to calm Sourij, since the queen agreed with the price valuation of her jewellers. Sourij warned that this better not be a trick or a mere excuse devised by the Acehnese to avoid receiving the jewels, arguing that they remained obliged to take them, and that he was not allowed to bring the jewels back to Batavia. Sourij stressed that it was the Governor General himself who had requested the Acehnese to unburden the Dutch of these expensive jewels specially ordered by Iskandar Thani. The Acehnese retorted that although their king had ordered this, he was now dead and all that was done by him had died with him. They explained to Sourij that Iskandar Thani was not loved by the Acehnese, and that his name was now remembered and honoured less than that of his predecessor, Iskandar Muda. Sourij replied that regardless of this, the Governor General maintained that Iskandar Thani's successors were still obliged to receive the jewels and to pay an appropriate price for them.[26] From the Dutch viewpoint, the Acehnese, as subjects of the former king, were obliged to carry out his orders even after his death. The Acehnese argued otherwise, stating that the queen was following the law of the land, and was not obliged to execute her late husband's orders.[27] After a soft welcome, the situation had thus indeed turned problematic for Sourij.

Back at the *balai*, after much whisperings and discussions, the *shahbandar* offered the Dutch 2,000 taels more than what was initially offered. Sourij declared angrily that he would not accept such 'frivolous talk' any longer, and that he would not accept anything less than 15,000 taels. Sourij warned the Acehnese that their refusal to pay for the jewels would lead to the Governor General's displeasure. Maradia Adonna Lilla then asked whether this meant that the queen would be forced to accept them. This was too much for the VOC officials to tolerate. Sourij and the other VOC officials then started to walk out from the *balai* in a huff. It was at this tense juncture that the queen decided to intervene and sooth matters. When the VOC officials reached the third gate of the palace compound, by the order of the queen, Sourij and the others were called back to go and sit at the *balai*. They were subsequently treated to a banquet, which they accepted with courtesy. Sourij complained that after four hours of fruitless discussion, there was still no progress made regarding the sale of the jewels and subsequently he and the other VOC officials returned to

26 *Dagh-register van Pieter Sourij*, May 1642 to August 1642, f.572R.

27 The rights and obligations of successor kings in Aceh and, as it seems, in the Malay world during the pre-modern period in general, do not appear to have been written and codified in any form; thus, this law would most probably be one belonging to the oral tradition. C. Snouck Hurgronje, for example, reported that no king of Aceh felt obliged to fulfil the promises or concessions granted by his predecessor (Snouck Hurgronje 1906 II:126).

their lodge.[28] The queen's timely intervention left him disappointed, but no longer angry.

In the meantime, Sourij and other Dutch officials had to engage and lobby all the other important *orang kaya* to support their case. To do this, appropriate gifts were arranged to accompany their request for assistance. Such gifts were carefully calculated so that their worth would commensurate with the order of the rank and importance of the various *orang kaya.* Sourij learnt soon enough that although these gifts usually ensured fair reception, they did not always result in co-operation. The *orang kaya* at that time were divided into two factions: one comprising those who were against accepting the jewels, and the other consisting of those who were willing to accept the jewels, but at a reasonable price. Maradia Sri Maradia and his follower, the *panglima dalam*,[29] belonged to the former camp. The *panglima dalam* was friendly in his manner but pointed in his opinion about buying the jewels. Although he diplomatically told Sourij that some jewellery might be bought, like the four golden earrings and some rings, since the queen usually wore some jewellery to important occasions, he made it clear to Sourij that the rest of the jewellery were useless and would serve no other purpose than just to be admired, so paying for them would be like throwing away money.[30]

Since Sourij's arrival in Aceh, he had been unsuccessful in meeting up with the next most important *rijksraden*, Maradia Sri Maradia, who was second in rank in the council. Sourij complained that the latter had been avoiding him with the excuse that he was sick. When he was finally able to make an appointment to see the *maradia* at the latter's place, he found him there with some other *orang kaya.* Despite the *maradia*'s reluctance to see him, Sourij was treated well and given an Acehnese dress as a present. Sourij remarked that the *maradia* was a man of few words and, as usual, pretended to be sick. Nevertheless, the *maradia* did tell the Dutch officials that if it was a matter of 200-300 taels, it would not be a problem, especially since the Acehnese had been friends with the Dutch for so long. He also promised that he would prove himself a good friend of the Dutch, but made it clear that as far as it was in his power to do so, he would ensure that the means of the kingdom would not be adversely affected by this exchange.[31]

Other *orang kaya*, including Lebe Kita Kali and his follower Maradia Sestia, were secretly trying to work out a compromised price that would be acceptable

28 *Dagh-register van Pieter Sourij*, May 1642 to August 1642, ff.572R-572V.

29 In Aceh, the *panglima dalam* is also known as the *laksamana*.

30 *Dagh-register van Pieter Sourij*, May 1642 to August 1642, ff.573R-574R. Here, the *panglima dalam*, using a Malay proverb, likened the throwing of money to the throwing of water.

31 *Dagh-register van Pieter Sourij*, May 1642 to August 1642, f.576R.

to the VOC, the queen and the other *orang kaya*.[32] Maradia Sestia's utmost concern was to maintain good relations with the VOC. Thus, he wanted this jewel affair settled in a way that was least damaging to the friendship between Aceh and the Dutch, especially since the Governor General had maintained friendship with Aceh since the time of Makota Alam, that is, Iskandar Muda – the queen's father. Maradia Sestia suggested that the VOC must continue to show the same friendship to Aceh, although Aceh was now under the reign of a woman. He advised Sourij that this friendship should not be lessened, but instead, should be increased, and maintained that although a radical change had taken place in the court of Aceh with a woman on the throne, there would be no radical change in the friendship that previous Acehnese kings had shown to the Dutch. Being the daughter of Iskandar Muda, the queen would continue in the tradition of her illustrious father. Furthermore, she had shown herself to be even more accommodative towards the Dutch than her male predecessors. As far as Maradia Sestia and Lebe Kita Kali's arguments are concerned, their decision to accept the jewels demonstrates not so much their pro-Dutch attitude, but rather the need to maintain good friendship with the Dutch, since being an ally of the VOC was of paramount importance to protect the kingdom's interest. Lebe Kita Kali and Maradia Sestia's private efforts to keep relations between them and the Dutch cordial seemed to work, since Sourij told them that the VOC would be willing to lower the price and settle for 12,000-13,000 taels after the Acehnese offered to pay for 10,000 taels. In the meantime, Sourij was informed by their translator, Possie Melor, that all the *orang kaya*, except for Maradia Sri Maradia, were gathered at the court and were engaging in an intense discussion about the jewels. Sourij learnt that many of the *orang kaya* were still opposed to the purchase of the jewels on the grounds that the jewels served no purpose and that this would be tantamount to throwing away good money. Clearly, the elites of Aceh were unhappy with Iskandar Thani's extravagant spending on these diamonds and were not ready to oblige his wishes posthumously. To the *orang kaya*, keeping the treasury healthy was important to maintain the kingdom's power, and this consideration overrode any obligation to fulfil the wishes of a deceased king.

The tussle for an acceptable price for the jewels continued at the *balai* on the next Audience Day. Although the queen should have been present, she had instead sent her '*chap*' (seal), indicating that she would not be in attendance. The sultana left the preliminary bargaining and haggling to her *liefste* (favourite) eunuch and thus, all attention was on the *orang kaya* Maradia Adonna Lilla. He raised the Acehnese offer from 5,900 to 9,000 taels, although he claimed

[32] Sourij was convinced that Maradia Sestia and Lebe Kita Kali had been discussing this matter amongst themselves since they both spoke 'the same words'. See *Dagh-register van Pieter Sourij*, May 1642 to August 1642, f.575V.

that he was not happy with this price, since upon closer inspection, some of the big stones were felt to be worth 'no more than pebbles'; this alluded to the notion that he was suspicious of the true intentions of the Dutch.[33] However, because of the Acehnese affection for the VOC and the Governor General, they would pay 9,000 taels. This would be his offer, but if the Dutch were not satisfied, then they should speak to Her Majesty herself, since he would not dare to tell her.

This ploy seemed to work, given that Sourij finally relented and asked for 10,000 taels and Maradia Adonna Lilla promised that he would try to help the Dutch fetch that price. Maradia Adonna Lilla indicated that the queen was ready to pay part of the amount in cash, and the remainder would have to be paid in the form of the goods exchanged and some discount from the tolls the VOC was obliged to pay. Despite this positive change in the Acehnese position, Sourij's frustration persisted, and it was only a few days before Sourij's departure to Batavia that there were some signs that the jewel business would finally be settled. During the Audience Day on Saturday 3 August 1642, the sultana offered 9,000 taels for the jewels. Sourij pointedly but politely said that if he accepted this amount, he would not dare return to Batavia to face the Governor General. Thereafter, he told the queen that the honour and respect the Dutch had for her would hinge on a reasonable settlement of this issue. This most probably affirmed the sultana's suspicion of the gravity the VOC placed on this matter, and how this could subsequently affect Aceh-Dutch relations if not resolved amicably. By the end of the jewel negotiations, the sultana's policy of maintaining good relations with the Dutch prevailed, since despite much protest from some of the *orang kaya*, the amount of 10,000 taels was finally accepted.[34] The sultana promised to make the payment for these diamonds partially from the tolls that the Dutch ships had to pay, which, according to her calculation, would amount to 4,000 taels. The remainder of 6,000 taels would be settled in two *mousums* (seasons).[35]

The sultana, her orang kaya and Commissar Arnold de Vlamingh

This episode with Commissar Sourij did not bring about a closure. It just brought a temporary respite to the jewel affair, as the matter continued to test the tenacity and diplomacy of both parties.[36] The Governor General was

33 *Dagh-register van Pieter Sourij*, May 1642 to August 1642, f.577V.
34 *Dagh-register van Pieter Sourij*, May 1642 to August 1642, ff.581R-581V.
35 VOC 1141, f.146V.
36 On his return to Batavia, Pieter Sourij did not bring the jewels back with him. Instead, he left them in Aceh with Bintara Can Canan, the Acehnese envoy to Batavia, with Sri Bidia Indra as witness.

further dissatisfied that he had to pay interest on the jewels over the intervening three years. In a further attempt to resolve the situation, he appointed the more formidable Commissar Arnold de Vlamingh van Oudtshoorn as the next envoy. He was in Aceh from July to October 1644, tasked with selling five large diamond pieces for 8,500 taels, preferably to be paid 7,000 taels in cash and gold, 500 in merchandise and 1,000 in tolls.[37] There were also some other rings the late king had ordered, but the VOC had given up hope of ever selling these. De Vlamingh boastfully vowed that he would not return to Batavia with the jewels and incur the Governor General's indignation, but would rather wear himself out, be miserable and die in Aceh.[38]

When De Vlamingh arrived in Aceh on 13 July, he was welcomed with the customary protocol in which a foreign ship was received in the Acenese harbour. De Vlamingh's first disappointment on landing in Aceh was when he was told that the queen was away on an amusement trip with the English and other foreigners.[39] The queen's party was expected to return to court only on 21 July, about a week later. However, even then, De Vlamingh still had to wait longer, since the Governor General's letter and gifts were scheduled to be brought to court in a magnificent procession only on 31 July. As for De Vlamingh, he was granted his first audience with the queen only on 6 August, and even then, the issue of the jewels was not discussed, since it was considered improper to conduct business during one's first visit to court. De Vlamingh's patience was thus already severely tested with these delays, even before he had his first sight of the sultana.

De Vlamingh tried to keep himself useful and busy in the meantime before making his formal request to the queen. The *orang kaya* had to be lobbied and gifts had to be prepared. De Vlamingh proportioned the gifts in this manner: Lebe Kita Kali (first in rank and the VOC's patron) – f.176.18.4; Maradia Sri Maradia (second in rank) – f.131.1.8; the *laksamana* (third in rank) – f.123.7.5; Siry Paduka Tuan (fourth in rank and a friend of the VOC) – f.174.17.4; Maradia Adonna Lilla (the queen's favourite eunuch) – f.159.2.4; Maradia Sestia (another eunuch, who was also a VOC friend) – f. 123.7.4; Lebe Kita Kali's brother-in-law – f.113.3.4.[40]

After learning that Lebe Kita Kali was away on an elephant hunt, De Vlamingh decided to concentrate on lobbying the hardliners: Maradia Sri

37 *Dagh-register gehouden bij den Commissaris Arnold de Vlamingh*, f.591V, f.599R.

38 *Dagh-register gehouden bij den Commissaris Arnold de Vlamingh*, f.575V.

39 Most probably, this amusement trip referred to a hunting trip of the kind that the Acehnese court was fond of organizing since the reign of Iskandar Muda. English officials, however, complained of the hunger and terrible conditions they had to endure, since they had to sleep on mats under tents. De Vlamingh, whilst disappointed that he was not able to see the queen soon, was happy that at least, he escaped having to endure this hunting expedition.

40 *Dagh-register gehouden bij den Commissaris Arnold de Vlamingh*, ff.579V-580V.

Maradia and the *laksamana*. De Vlamingh was well-received at the Maradia Sri Maradia's house. However, when the matter of the jewels was brought up, the *maradia* did not bother to sweeten the ears of the Dutch, but directly declined to accept the rest of the jewels from De Vlamingh, reiterating his earlier objections to the purchase of the jewels. He reasoned that the king who had ordered such costly jewels was now dead; in his place was the present queen, who, according to the Acehnese, was not obliged to carry out the former king's orders. Furthermore, the *maradia* said, the queen, being a woman, preferred cash and liquid assets to jewels, which were 'dead assets' which would not serve the kingdom better.[41]

The *laksamana* was the next council member visited by De Vlamingh. He later reported that unlike the 'inconsiderate' *maradia*, the *laksamana* was downright contemptuous. After the customary greetings and gifts, De Vlamingh told the *laksamana* that because of the Acehnese friendship with the Dutch, they should accept the jewels. Instead, the *laksamana* retorted by questioning the Dutch sincerity in wanting to maintain and preserve their friendship with the Acehnese. He pointed out that all this talk of the Dutch professed friendship ran counter to their actions of merely getting down to the business of selling the jewels, so much so that the queen appeared to be forced to accept them. For good measure, he added that the amount of jewels being put up for sale by the Dutch was not even worth the effort spent by the exchange of so many words. Indeed, if De Vlamingh's mission was to sell jewels, then it had been unnecessary for the Governor General to send such a high-ranking person as the commissar to Aceh. It would be sufficient to send a mere trader instead of a commissar, who rightly should be concerning himself only with courtly matters.[42] De Vlamingh was then reminded of how Sourij had left the jewels behind, hoping that they would be accepted, when in fact the queen was not in the least inclined to accept them. The *laksamana* found it strange that the Governor General, being aware that the Acehnese were totally averse to accepting the jewels, was still insistent on making matters so difficult for the queen and 'making her ears warm' with this talk about the jewels, even after she had given the Dutch exceptional pre-eminence in her territories.[43] This disagreeable posture taken by the Dutch was damaging the old alliance between the two nations, and it risked the alienation, or at least incurred the displeasure of the Acehnese.[44]

After two months of lobbying and presenting gifts to the *orang kaya*, De

41 *Dagh-register gehouden bij den Commissaris Arnold de Vlamingh*, f.581R.

42 *Dagh-register gehouden bij den Commissaris Arnold de Vlamingh*, f.582R. This crisis of identity was a perennial problem faced by the VOC in the East Indies.

43 The sultana had granted the Dutch a *firman*, allowing them exclusive trading privileges on the west coast of Sumatra.

44 *Dagh-register gehouden bij den Commissaris Arnold de Vlamingh*, f.582V.

Vlamingh wrote that all hope for the acceptance of the jewels was lost. De Vlamingh's desperation became more apparent when he came to know that despite the violent disputes among the *orang kaya* over the jewels,[45] the *laksamana* still 'sang his old tune'.[46] De Vlamingh lamented that he had gone to the extent of even giving his gun, which was hanging in his room, as a gift to the 'rude' *laksamana*, since the *laksamana*'s servant had spotted the gun and claimed that his master had wished to have it.[47] De Vlamingh confessed that he had done all that he could and had thrown away so many gifts, but still obtained no results, leaving him to complain that these 'hungry vultures remained insatiable'.[48]

After tiring the commissar and weakening his spirit for almost a month and a half, the queen instructed the Dutch to bring the jewels to court the following Saturday, where they would be valued by her diamond experts, the *naeleer* (captains) and the *shahbandar* (port masters), and a decision would be made regarding the purchase of the jewels. De Vlamingh became furious when the queen's experts valued these jewels at 3,000 taels, which to him was a disgraceful price for five large diamonds. De Vlamingh's ill fortune seemed to see no end. He reported on how he was ridiculed by the queen's jewellers, since they had asked whether the Dutch had been mistaken and placed the cost in taels when it should have been only in reals.[49] They had also asked whether the VOC officials had ever seen diamonds, since they had seen better ones, and alluded to the fact that the VOC might even have obtained these through dishonourable means.[50] The Acehnese further accused the Dutch of aggressively pushing the jewels on them, after which De Vlamingh retorted on the 'extraordinary manner in which he was spoken to' by the Acehnese, considering that he was a commissar, an official appointed to lead a diplomatic delegation to Aceh by the Governor General in Batavia.

Realizing that he was getting nowhere with the *orang kaya*, De Vlamingh and the senior trader in Aceh, Harmanszoon, adopted another approach. They resolved to pursue the queen's *liefste capado*, Radjia [Maradia] Adonna Lilla, to promote the sale of the jewels. When Harmanszoon was finally able to meet Maradia Adonna Lilla, the *capado* assured him that he was a friend of the VOC, and that they should not have any reservations about the goodwill the queen had for the Dutch, just as she had for the earlier commissars who were in Aceh. He told Harmanszoon that the queen had yet to fix the price of the jewels, and that the Dutch should not be troubled when the *orang kaya*

45 *Dagh-register gehouden bij den Commissaris Arnold de Vlamingh*, f.591R.
46 *Dagh-register gehouden bij den Commissaris Arnold de Vlamingh*, f.589V.
47 *Dagh-register gehouden bij den Commissaris Arnold de Vlamingh*, f.595R.
48 *Dagh-register gehouden bij den Commissaris Arnold de Vlamingh*, f.589V.
49 *Dagh-register gehouden bij den Commissaris Arnold de Vlamingh*, ff.593V-594R.
50 *Dagh-register gehouden bij den Commissaris Arnold de Vlamingh*, f.594R.

had offered to pay less than half the cost desired by the Dutch. According to Maradia Adonna Lilla, this was the Acehnese way of doing things.[51]

This new approach proved to be fruitful, as Maradia Adonna Lilla provided the Dutch with good advice compared to the *orang kaya* with regard to the sultana's stand on the matter. On Audience Day, Sunday 11 September, the queen demonstrated that her foremost concern was still in maintaining good relations with the Dutch, confirming Maradia Adonna Lilla's counsel. The young sultana dealt with the Dutch in a skilful and astute manner, first putting the officials in a good temper by generously honouring *oppercoopman* Harmanszoon with two titles, namely, *Orang Kaya Poeti* (White *Orang Kaya*) and *Capitain Radja* (Prince of Captains), which he was at liberty to use in all the lands under her jurisdiction. However, when it came to the business of the jewels, the queen was rather coy. When De Vlamingh requested her to settle the matter of the price of the jewels, she maintained that it would be 3,000 taels. De Vlamingh tried to keep his composure and attempted to persuade the queen by appealing to the fact that these were especially ordered by her late husband, and that these were very expensive jewels specially crafted and brought all the way from the Netherlands. The queen replied that the price offered was based on what these jewels were worth, and that it was because of her friendship with the Dutch and the Governor General that she had agreed to accept the jewels in the first place, although she had no desire for them. However, she said teasingly that, as a sign of goodwill, she would raise the offer to 3,500 taels, to which De Vlamingh promptly replied that this was too little. She finally declared that she would offer 4,000 taels and then, as per customary, she retired to the inner palace and left the *orang kaya*, led by Maradia Sri Maradia, to gather in the *balai* to discuss the matter. The general feeling among the *orang kaya* was that they doubted the sincerity of the Dutch, and they were particularly suspicious as to whether the Governor General had seriously ordered this course of action since De Vlamingh had refused to deviate even a *penning* from the original price. The *orang kaya* complained that this was making it more difficult for them to persuade the queen. De Vlamingh was told that the matter of the jewels depended on them, since the queen, being a woman, did not have the greatest knowledge regarding these things and had to be taught.[52] While the *orang kaya* were still debating on the price, Maradia Adonna Lilla appeared at the *balai*, and after a short discussion with the *orang kaya* in Malay, Maradia Sri Maradia informed De Vlamingh that the *orang kaya* had agreed to raise the offer to 4,500 taels, subject to the queen's concurrence. De Vlamingh, as expected, disagreed with this slightly higher offer, and he showed no sign of relenting, insisting still on the original price.

51 *Dagh-register gehouden bij den Commissaris Arnold de Vlamingh*, f.596R.
52 *Dagh-register gehouden bij den Commissaris Arnold de Vlamingh*, f.597R.

Maradia Adonna Lilla then went back to the inner *balai* to talk to the queen, but she would not assent to an offer of more than 4,000 taels. By this time, De Vlamingh was in despair; he pithily described how sad and hopeless he felt about the whole affair, and how he wished he understood the Malay language. Maradia Adonna Lilla was sent, for the second time, to the queen. When he reappeared, he brought with him a silver dish with all the jewels that had been bought by the Acehnese from the Dutch from time to time. The Acehnese claimed that the pro-rated price of all these jewels did not come up to the cost the Dutch demanded for the five big pieces of diamond. Realizing that he was caught in a spot, De Vlamingh confessed that he was ignorant of the previous jewel transactions, but explained that these other jewels were uncut, whilst the five big pieces of diamond were expensive because they were made from cut table-diamonds (*tafels diamanten*), which had to be specially ordered and cut in the Netherlands. As the discussion proceeded, another *capado* appeared from the inner *balai* and announced that the queen had increased the offer to 5,000 taels.[53]

Feeling desperate by that time and being worn down after two months of fruitless negotiations, De Vlamingh wanted this affair to be settled quickly before he returned to Batavia. Following a tip from Sri Paduka Tuan, who advised the Dutch to enlist the help of the queen's *liefste capado*, De Vlamingh realized that he had to change the usual Dutch way of handling court matters. Although De Vlamingh had reservations that this eunuch was not one of the four *rijksraden*, it appeared that he might have unique access to the queen's ears, or rather, he had the unique privilege of listening to the queen's whispers. De Vlamingh had consistently complained about the 'obscure and slow negotiations' he experienced in Aceh, since he was not allowed to speak with the queen directly, but could only speak to her through intermediaries, which he understood was the custom of the land.[54] According to Sri Paduka Tuan, the only 'man-person' (*man-persoon*) who could speak to the queen was the *capado* Maradia Adonna Lilla, and all the queen's business must be executed through him. It slowly dawned on the Dutch then that they had to treat this particular *capado* well, and keep him in the camp that favoured the VOC.[55] True enough, it was Maradia Adonna Lilla's dealings with the Dutch

53 *Dagh-register gehouden bij den Commissaris Arnold de Vlamingh*, f.598R.

54 De Vlamingh might have been mistaken here since it was not only in Aceh that the ruler was not accessible to anyone. Other monarchs in Southeast Asia, including male ones, were also not accessible in the inner palace except to women, children and eunuchs. The commissars' reports on the visibility of the sultana were sometimes unclear and sometimes contradictory. At times, it appeared as if the sultana was clearly visible when she made declarations at the audience hall, but at times, she was reported to give instructions from the inner-most precincts of the palace.

55 *Dagh-register gehouden bij den Commissaris Arnold de Vlamingh*, f.599R.

that finally broke the deadlock. During the discussion with him, De Vlamingh finally agreed to reduce the price of the jewels to 6,000 taels, where the Dutch requested for 2,000 taels to be paid in cash and the rest to be paid in tin and tolls. To sweeten the deal, the Dutch presented Maradia Adonna Lilla with a table-emerald-ring worth f.268 – one of the many rings ordered by the late king that could not be sold – as a token of their hope and appreciation for his willingness to bring the matter to the sultana, which he accepted kindly. Maradia Adonna Lilla then ordered De Vlamingh to keep this dealing a secret from the rest of the *orang kaya*, so as not to arouse any suspicion. The Dutch were also told to make another round of visits to the *orang kaya*, to request their help to bring the matter of the jewels to court at the next Audience Day, on Saturday 17 September. De Vlamingh was even taught the correct manner he should adopt while speaking to the queen and the *orang kaya*. The Dutch was told to speak to the sultana in a submissive manner, while to the *orang kaya*, he should use beautiful words.[56]

At the next Audience Day, the sultana summoned all the *orang kaya* to court, and Her Majesty declared that she had agreed to accept the jewels at 6,000 taels – 1,000 taels to be paid in cash and the rest to be paid within three years.[57] Finally, a negotiated price was agreed upon by both parties. Still, however, this trying affair did not end there. This amount of 6,000 taels had to be agreed upon by all the *orang kaya*, including the *laksamana* and Lebe Kita Kali, who had just returned from his elephant hunt. Despite some misgivings from the *laksamana*, and even from Lebe Kita Kali, the VOC's friend, the consensus was finally reached with the uttering of the word '*Daulat*' at the *balai*.

More than two months of negotiation were thus spent before the final price of the jewels was agreed upon. The affair became protracted, and at some junctures caused much tension and despair between the VOC and the *orang kaya*, and among the *orang kaya* themselves, but it did not end on a bitter note. The sultana was careful and deft at keeping the relations cordial and at an even keel, especially when things were about to get out of hand. At opportune times, her views were conveyed through her eunuchs to the *orang kaya*. She apparently knew when to send her eunuchs out to the *balai* to soothe the tensions on both sides. On Tuesday 20 September, the queen made good her promise of the 1,000 taels in cash, but she also made the Dutch 'pay' for their part of the bargain by playfully asking them to honour her by dancing in front of her and her ladies-in-waiting (*state-juffrouwen*). De Vlamingh reported that Her Majesty and her ladies were exceptionally amused by their hops, and the court was filled with loud laughter and shouts.[58]

56 *Dagh-register gehouden bij den Commissaris Arnold de Vlamingh*, f.599V
57 *Dagh-register gehouden bij den Commissaris Arnold de Vlamingh*, f.600V.
58 *Dagh-register gehouden bij den Commissaris Arnold de Vlamingh*, f.601R.

Some observations

This 'jewel affair' was significant because it tested the young queen's mettle in the early years of her reign, in her dealings with the foreign elites. It was also a test of wills and the diplomatic skills of both the *orang kaya* and the Dutch commissars like Pieter Sourij and Arnold de Vlamingh van Oudtshoorn. Both parties had no idea how the change in Aceh's political leadership would impact their fortunes, and this affair demonstrates that despite the difficult situation, both parties were able to avoid a potentially destabilizing or threatening position. Both the Acehnese and the Dutch had to compromise on an acceptable price. On the part of the Dutch, there was also that paramount need to maintain the VOC's good relations with Aceh, if the Dutch were to enjoy trade privileges such as toll-free trade and exclusive nation treatment at the west coast of Sumatra.

In the precinct of the *balai*, the jewel affair reveals the presence of the different foci of power and influence in the Acehnese court, which were undergoing constant contestation. While the *orang kaya* thought that the resolution of this affair depended on them and that the young sovereign, being a woman, needed to be instructed in such matters, it appeared that the queen had her own ideas. The *orang kaya* were adamant not to pay a higher price for the jewels, but she had the final say over the matter. Compromises, therefore, had to be made by everyone to preserve the Dutch-Acehnese alliance. Even though the *orang kaya* played an important role in the decision-making, and were lobbied with gifts and 'beautiful words', the final authority lied in the queen's hands. This policy was consistently pursued throughout her reign, and largely helped to engender peace in the region for commerce to thrive.

However, the very fact that the queen obtained the concurrence of the *orang kaya* showed that she chose to involve her elites in the decision-making process. The jewel affair demonstrated that the sultana's preferred decision-making process was collaborative and reciprocal, working through consensual decision-making (*muwafakah*, *musyawarah*) as opposed to the absolutism practised by her father, Iskandar Muda. This custom (*adat*) of consensus-making had been practised in Aceh and institutionalized at all levels of society, and the absolutism practised under Iskandar Muda was an aberration to local tradition, and was an exception rather than the rule.[59] Though absolutist rulers may be needed in dangerous times, for indigenous polities in the face of powerful European rivals of trade and power, it might be too dangerous

[59] Snouck Hurgronje (1906 II:76) wrote that Habib Abdurrahman had told him that *mupakat* (Ar. *muwafakah*) was the strongest factor in the statescraft of an administrator. The administration of the *gampong* (village) was composed of three elements: the *keuchi* (village head), the *teungku* (religious village head) and the *ureueng tuha* (man of wisdom). All three components had a role in discussion and decision-making processes.

that the affairs of the state be left in the arbitrary hands of one man.[60] In this episode, the *orang kaya* had important contributions to make in the *musyawarah* process, giving a macro-perspective of how the jewels impacted on the finances of the kingdom. The young queen had her jewellers, the *naeleer* and the *shahbandar* each give their own assessments of the worth of the jewels. Although the queen was not directly involved in the preliminary rounds of negotiation, she used her power to resolve conflicts when the discussions seemed to be getting out of hand.

The jewel affair initially revealed that the elite at the court were not a homogenous group, and were divided into pro-Dutch and anti-Dutch factions. The *orang kaya* thus differed in the way they perceived Dutch intentions in the jewel affair, and the manner to which they should respond and deal with the Dutch officials. The faction led by Lebe Kita Kali supported the queen's undeclared plan of adopting a soft approach. Accommodating the Dutch was important, in the view of this faction, to maintain good relations, particularly when the VOC was becoming increasingly stronger after their conquest of Melaka. The other faction, led by the *maradia* and the *laksamana*, took the hard-line approach, and would rather reject the jewels than be cowed by the Dutch. The *laksamana* was strident in disagreeing with the manner in which the Dutch asked the Acehnese to purchase the jewels, and the price demanded by the Dutch for these jewels. This lack of cohesiveness amongst the *orang kaya* is a double-edged sword, as such factional difference amongst the court elites could potentially be exploited by the Dutch. However, the existence of such factions represented the plurality of interests in the kingdom. They acted as checks and balances on one another, with the queen acting as the final arbiter and balancer. The role of balancer and arbiter served to enhance the queen's unique position and the preservation of her 35-year reign.

Gendered perceptions, such as the queen being inaccessible and inconsistent because she was a woman, were cleverly turned to an advantage. The 'inaccessibility problem', as described and identified by De Vlamingh during the negotiations, proved valuable, since it provided the queen with wide room to manoeuvre. Her 'inconsistencies', typically considered as characteristic of a woman in a decision-making role, were turned into an advantage that bought time for the Acehnese during periods of difficult negotiations.

Unlike her predecessor and deceased husband Iskandar Thani, the sultana was more concerned with the health of her kingdom's treasury than with the

[60] Anthony Reid (2003:35) argued that the exalted kingship practised by Iskandar Muda reflected power, and that trade and guns were necessary to maintain order and independence at a dangerous time, when Europeans were seeking monopoly rights over pepper and spices. However, because it was alien to local tradition, this kind of power came with few built-in theoretical limitations.

display of extravagant riches.[61] Extravagant rulers were clearly not popular with the *orang kaya.* In fact, Sultan Sri Alam was killed, and Iskandar Thani most likely poisoned, due to their extravagant wastage of the kingdom's wealth on expensive trivialities, such as decorative jewelleries to boost their egos and statuses.[62]

As a female ruler in a largely patriarchal court, the sultana had to devise means to stay abreast of court happenings, regardless of whether they were rumours or real. In this context, the favourite *capado* of the queen, Maradia Adonna Lilla, assumed an important role in this affair, acting as the intermediary between the queen, her *orang kaya and* the VOC officials. Indeed, Maradia Adonna Lilla was apparently quite adept in manipulating his 'third sex' status to engage the men at court, and to serve as the queen's eyes and ears in the *balai*.

The sultana's astuteness, creative diplomacy and impeccable hospitality facilitated her overriding plan to maintain cordial relations and friendship with the Dutch without unduly compromising the royal treasury. Through a deliberate deference to her elite, with a dash of feminine softness to sooth ruffled tempers when necessary, she was able to successfully steer her kingdom away from 'troubled waters'. Her rule was indeed collaborative, designed to keep factions in balance, subjects in obedience and courtiers occupied.

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61 This may attest to Reid's claim that in Southeast Asian societies, women were entrusted with handling money, purchasing and selling goods, promoting family businesses, and closing deals (Reid 2003:35).

62 In the *Hikayat Aceh*, Sultan Sri Alam was depicted as extravagant, since he depleted the kingdom's treasury by giving expensive gifts to certain soldiers and elites from Fansur (Barus). As related by the *Hikayat Aceh*, the *orang kaya* and ulama in Aceh then gathered together and decided that this state of affairs was injurious to the kingdom, and that this sultan must be deposed. According to the *Bustan*, he was killed. See Iskandar 1958:32, 96.

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Chapter viii

Writing history
The Acehnese embassy to Istanbul, 1849-1852

İsmail Hakkı Kadı, A.C.S. Peacock and Annabel Teh Gallop

Introduction

Several surveys of the longstanding relations between Aceh and the Ottoman Empire have drawn attention to the importance of the Ottoman archives in Istanbul as a repository of information on the history of Aceh.[1] Among the numerous references to diplomatic and military relations with Aceh in Ottoman archival documents, there is also a number of letters sent by the Acehnese sultans to Istanbul, written in Arabic and Malay. These are valuable from several perspectives: they are important primary sources for Acehnese history, offering an insight into Acehnese diplomacy; as rare examples of Acehnese correspondence with fellow Muslim rulers, they shed light on the art of the Malay letter and its conventions; and they provide invaluable evidence about how the Acehnese represented themselves and their history to the outside world.

In this chapter, we consider an especially significant collection of documents from the mid-nineteenth century, written in connection with Acehnese efforts to convince the Ottomans to provide both diplomatic and military support against the Dutch, whose encroachment over Sumatra was presenting an ever-greater risk to Acehnese independence. The correspondence comprises a letter in Jawi-script Malay from the Acehnese sultan, Mansur Syah, to the Ottoman sultan, Abdülmecid, dated 15 Rabi' al-Awwal 1265 H/8 February 1849 CE (Appendix B1); a second letter, in Arabic, from Mansur Syah to Abdülmecid, written the following year, 3 Jumada al-Awwal 1266 H/17 March CE 1850 (Appendix B2); and a letter in Arabic from Mansur Syah's envoy, Muhammad Ghauth, to Hasib Pasha, Ottoman governor of the Hijaz, also dated Jumada al-Awwal 1266 H/March-April 1850 CE (Appendix B3). Among these

[1] See the chapter by İsmail Hakkı Göksoy in this volume, Göksoy 2004 and Reid 1969.

documents are also letters of introduction and financial guarantees written in Arabic for Muhammad Ghauth (Appendix B5), along with the envelope (Appendix B4) and lists of the gifts of spices, pepper and cloth which had been sent on three previous occasions to Istanbul but which appear never to have arrived (Appendix B6). Most strikingly, the documents contain a map of the Indonesian Archipelago, annotated in Ottoman but clearly produced by the Acehnese side as part of their campaign to convince the Ottomans to intervene in Southeast Asia (Illustration 16; see also Appendix B7).

Istanbul was not the sole objective of Muhammad Ghauth's mission. Mansur Syah also sent a letter to Louis-Napoleon, president of France, but the envoy was preoccupied with the more important diplomatic objective of securing Ottoman support, and never went to Paris himself. Instead, he sent a junior deputy (Reid 2005:172-3). The documents from Istanbul discussed here underline the supreme importance of the Ottoman connection from the Acehnese perspective. The Acehnese drew not just on notions of pan-Islamic solidarity, but also on their earlier history of relations with the Ottomans in the sixteenth century, to try to win Abdülmecid and his officials over to their side. This suggests that legends and even documents relating to these earlier links must have survived into the nineteenth century, attesting to the powerful influence that the idea of ties with the Ottoman sultan ('*raja Rum*') had over the formation of Acehnese identity. The Ottoman response, examined in the second part of this chapter, suggests that these strategies met a measure of success in persuading at least some in Istanbul of the justice of the Acehnese cause, even if the geopolitical realities of the Ottomans' weak position vis-à-vis colonial powers meant that Istanbul could reply only cautiously.

Acehnese self-representation to the Ottomans

The letters of 1849-1850 were not the first Acehnese attempts to re-establish relations with the Ottomans in the nineteenth century, for they referred to three previous attempts to send messages to Istanbul. The first was sent with the American Captain, Tuan ?Dansart [d.a.n.s.r.t.],[2] in 1253 H/1837-1838 CE, in response to the Dutch subjugation of the West Sumatran kingdom of Minangkabau in the same year. The next was sent with a French captain, ?Banguine [B.n.q.y.n], four years later, and the third with another French captain, ?Estilung [a.s.ti.l.w.ng], in 1261 H/1845 CE. No reply to any of these was received, and given their apparent absence from the Ottoman archives, it may be doubted as to whether they ever arrived. As for their contents, Mansur

[2] This is the form given in the Malay letter; in the two Arabic letters, however, it appears as T.w.n alone (for ?Tuan).

Syah's Malay letter states that 'in the [first] letter I laid forth all our grievances about the Dutch who had come into the Jawi lands and the problems facing the Muslims'.[3] Most probably, their content was very similar to that of the surviving letters.

Both the content and the diplomatics of Mansur Syah's letters illustrate the strategies he used to try to bring himself to the Ottomans' attention, and to convince them of his status as a vassal. The Malay letter emphasizes Mansur Syah's vassal status by the humility of its forms of address to Abdülmecid and, most visibly, by the positioning of the seal (Illustration 13). Unlike in other Malay kingdoms where the relative status of the sender and recipient of a letter was expressed by placing the seal higher or lower in the right-hand margin, in Acehnese documents, rank was measured along a sliding horizontal axis at the top of the sheet of paper, from right (superior) to left (inferior). Most surviving letters from Acehnese sovereigns to foreign potentates bear the royal seal in the middle; never before has the great seal of Aceh been seen placed on the far left as here. Within the text of the letter, two features stand out: Mansur Syah accords to Abdülmecid, rather than himself, the uniquely Acehnese honorific epithet 'the Sovereign Champion' (*Johan Berdaulat*), borne by all sultans of Aceh since the days of Iskandar Muda, and commences his request proper with the age-old formulaic words of obeisance from a Malay subject to his lord, 'pardon, Your Majesty, obeisance and pardon, pardon and a thousand more pardons' (*ampun tuanku sembah ampun*, *ampun beribu kali ampun*). Mansur Syah's Arabic letter (Illustration 14) is similarly humble in tone, but reflects the completely different epistolary etiquette then current in the Ottoman empire for writing in Arabic to an overlord. Thus, the seal is placed in a supplicatory position at the bottom of the letter, and the name of the sender himself is not given, while that of the recipient – Sultan Abdülmecid – has been 'elevated' from the fourth line, leaving a blank space, and placed diagonally above the text as a mark of respect, continuing a practice introduced at the court of Süleyman the Magnificent in the sixteenth century.[4]

In his Malay letter, Mansur Syah explains that the reason he is writing to the Ottomans (Rum) for help is because of the advice of his commanders after the Dutch capture of Minangkabau:[5]

> So I conferred with all the [war] commanders and nobles of Aceh on this matter, and the commanders said to me: 'At the present time we are on the brink of war

[3] Başbanlık Osmanlı Arşivi, Istanbul (Prime Ministry Ottoman Archive, henceforth B.O.A.), İ.HR. 66/3208, [6].

[4] For an example of *elevatio* in an eighteenth-century Arabic letter from a sultan of Aceh, see Annabel Teh Gallop 2007:54.

[5] Referring to the crushing of the last stand of the Padris in northern Minangkabau in 1833, and the exile to Batavia of Sultan Alam Bagagar Syah (Dobbin 1983:141, 151-2, 200).

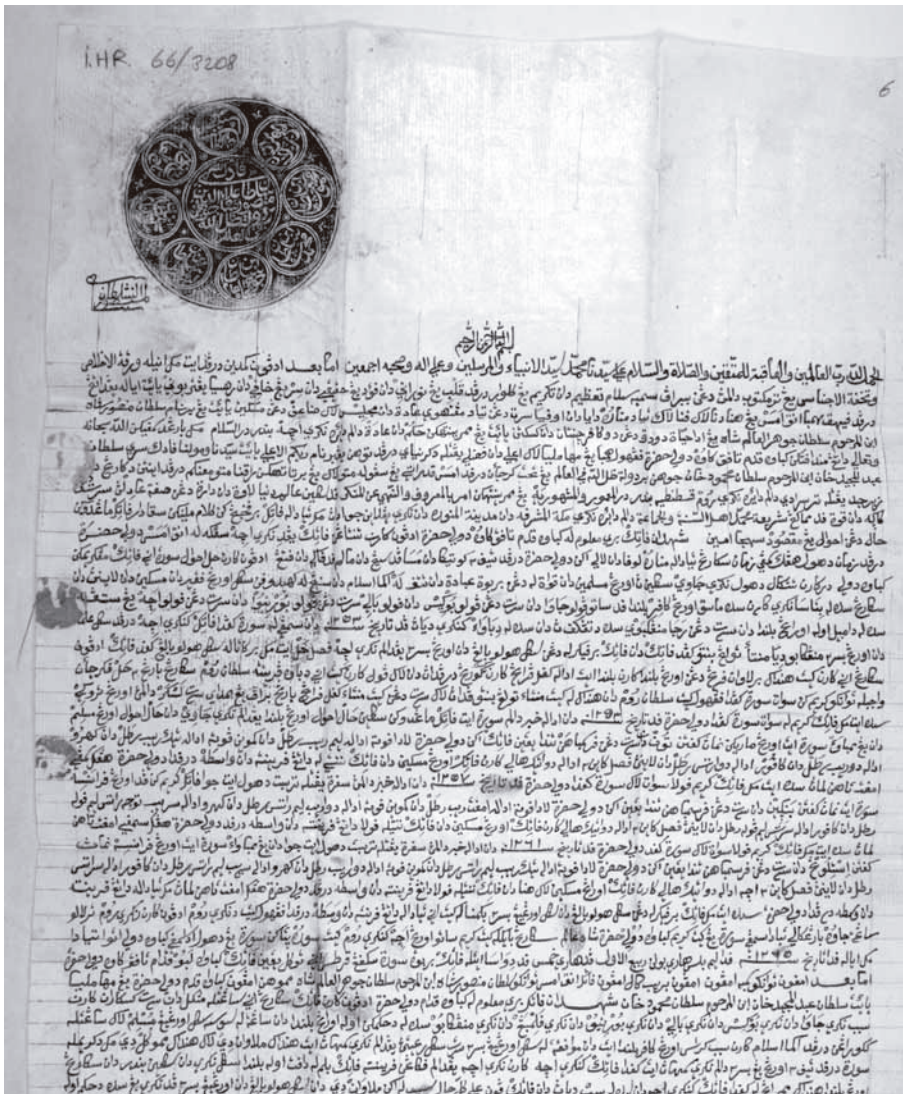

Figure 13. Mansur Syah's Malay letter to the Ottoman Sultan Abdülmecid, 15 Rabi' al-Awwal 1265/8 February 1849 CE (B.O.A, İHR 66/3208, [6])

> with the Dutch, but the Dutch have warships while we have none, and furthermore because we are under the rule of the Sultan of Rum, before we do anything at all it is essential that Your Highness should send a letter to our lord the Sultan of Rum and we should ask for his assistance, and we should ask for an adequate number of warships manned by Turkish troops.'[6]

The Arabic letter sent the following year also emphasizes Aceh's status as a vassal of the Ottomans, but with a marked difference in the level of historical detail. While the 'special relationship' is expressed in the Malay letter in evocative but temporally inexact terms – 'we in the land of Aceh have truly been the born slaves of Your Majesty from ancient times to the present day, and we have never forgotten or neglected Your Majesty at any time or moment, whether day or night, whether morning or evening' – the Arabic letter is much more expansive about what exactly Acehnese claims to vassal status were based on, rooting them firmly in the sixteenth-century contacts between the Ottomans and Aceh:

> We, the people of the region of Aceh, indeed all the inhabitants of the island of Sumatra, have all been considered subjects of the Sublime Ottoman State generation after generation, since the time of our late lord Sultan Selim Khan son [of] the late [S]ultan Süleyman Khan son of the late [S]ultan Selim Khan Abu'l-Futuhat. This is attested by the sultanic record-books.[7]

Ottoman sovereignty over Aceh is thus dated to the reign of Selim II (1566-1574), when contacts between the two sides are historically attested to in Ottoman archival materials (see Chapter IV). This chronological accuracy and the reference to 'sultanic record-books' (*al-dafatir al-sultaniyya*) suggests that the Acehnese court may have preserved original documents from these earlier encounters until the nineteenth century. Even more curious, however, is the account given in Muhammad Ghauth's Arabic letter to Hasib Pasha, which relates how Ottoman sovereignty over Aceh was established:

> The reason for this is that in the time of one of the ancestors of my lord [Mansur Syah], Sinan Pasha came to Aceh with war-boats, a large number [of men] and [military] equipment and the sultan of Aceh ruling at that time met him and honoured him exceedingly. He committed to him his kingdom and put himself in obedience to Sinan Pasha. He blessed him [Sinan Pasha] with glorious gifts and abundant presents, and security and peace spread in the entire region. Copper was found in Aceh, and the pasha ordered cannons and many rifles to be made from that copper. They inscribed on them the date they were cast, the name of the caster, the name of our lord Selim Khan and that of the ruler of Aceh. He ordered the people of Aceh to learn the art from them, and they too cast many cannon. The late Sinan Pasha took

6 B.O.A., İ.HR. 66/3208, [6].
7 B.O.A., İ.HR. 73/3511, [2].

> control of the whole island of Sumatra and its regions. He entrusted each region to a sultan, each one of whom he established in his kingdom. Then he returned, making for the Two Holy Shrines, and since that time the entire island has been subject to the jurisdiction of the Sublime Ottoman State and obedient to it, generation after generation until today.[8]

The claim that the sultanates of Sumatra had been established by Sinan Pasha is also reflected in Mansur Syah's Arabic letter, which states that:

> This great, long island contained a number of regions each of which had a governor subject to the Sublime Ottoman State, although every governor had the title of sultan and king according to their custom, seeing as each one was independent in governing the people of his region, in which noone opposed him. Their affairs were in order because of his late excellency the vizier Sinan Pasha who settled the sultan of each region in rule of its people.[9]

The reference to Sinan Pasha is intriguing. Sinan Pasha crushed a major rebellion in Ottoman Yemen in 1568-1571, which was the very rebellion that the Ottoman fleet Selim II had designated to be sent to Aceh, was diverted to suppress (Reid 1969:404). Selim had promised the Acehnese that he would send the fleet the following year (976 H/1568-1569 CE) instead, but whether or not he did is unrecorded in the archives. It seems unlikely, from what we know of Sinan Pasha's career, that he ever set foot in Aceh, or indeed, anywhere around the Indian Ocean east of Yemen, but he did become grand vizier in 1580.[10] It is possible that in this capacity, he did correspond with the Acehnese, and a memory of these contacts is reflected in the legend of him having personally founded the sultanates of Sumatra and receiving the allegiance of the sultan of Aceh. This legend is certainly not completely without historical basis, for Ottoman officials did travel to Aceh on occasion, and several sixteenth-century sources contain several references to Turks assisting the Acehnese with military technology, especially teaching them to cast cannons (Casale 2005:54-5, 68; Reid 1969:405-6). Δ170

8 B.O.A., İ.HR. 66/3208, [4].
9 B.O.A., İ.HR 73/3511, [2].
10 On Sinan Pasha's career, see Turan 1967.

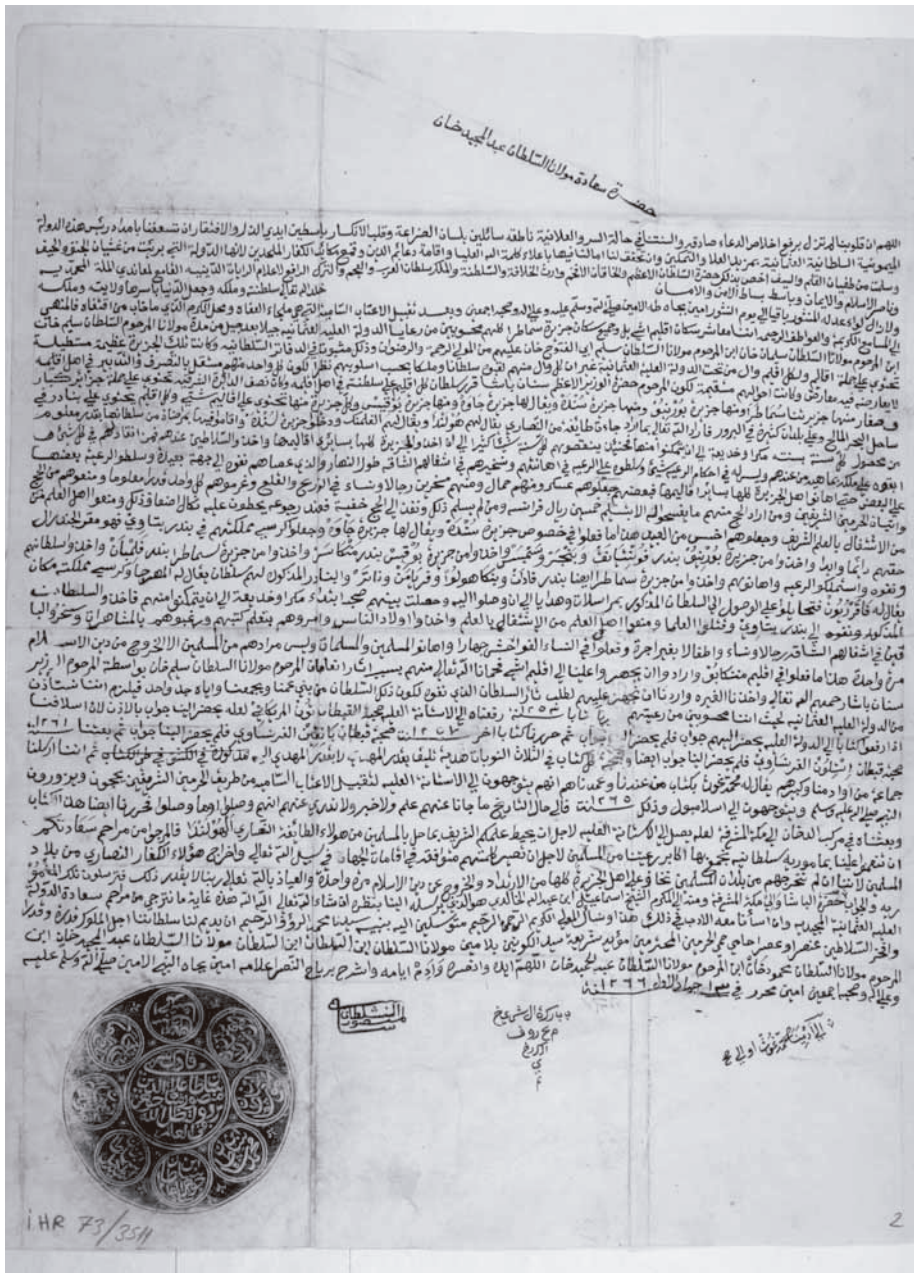

Figure 14. Mansur Syah's Arabic Letter to the Ottoman Sultan Abdülmecid, 3 Jumada al-Awwal 1266/17 March 1850 (B.O.A, İ.HR 73/3511, [2])

Mansur Syah's attempts to position himself as an Ottoman vassal did not, however, stop at this, but went so far as to assert that he himself was of *Rumi* descent. Claims of an association with Rum were widespread among kings in the Malay world, but nowhere more so than in Minangkabau. While Malay kings of the line of the great sultanate of Melaka claimed descent from Iskandar Zulkarnain 'of the race of Rum', in West Sumatra the myth of origin held that Iskandar Zulkarnain himself had three sons: the Emperor of China, the Emperor of Rum and the Emperor of Minangkabau. In the late eighteenth century, the sultan of Minangkabau still styled himself as the younger brother of the ruler of Rum (Drakard 1999:168-9; Reid 1969:395). The legend retained potency into the mid-nineteenth century, for it was through his connection with Minangkabau that Mansur Syah asserted his own claim to *Rumi* descent. Although Mansur Syah's Malay and Arabic letters mention Minangkabau only in the context of its fall to the Dutch, and as the immediate cause that prompted the first Acehnese letter to Istanbul, Muhammad Ghauth's missive to Hasib Pasha, which apparently relates some of the messages he was given to pass on orally, states that:

> One of the largest territories [in Sumatra] is that of Minangkabau which has a sultan who looks after the affairs of the people called Sultan Maharajadiraja, whose capital is called Pagar Ruyung. They say his origin is from Rum and one of the ancestors of the aforementioned lord [Mansur Syah of Aceh] is descended from the same line as this sultan.[11]

Mansur Syah's Arabic letter also alludes to his family connection with Minangkabau, stating that the Acehnese preparations for war were required after the Dutch had exiled its sultan to Batavia because 'that sultan was from the family of our maternal uncle and a single ancestor joins us and that sultan'.[12] However, instead of stressing Minangkabau's connection with Rum, this letter emphasizes the Dutch crimes against the Muslims of Minangkabau, their killing of the *ulema* (ulama), the prevention of the hajj, the treatment of the population with contempt, and the subjugation of them to hard labour. As the letter states, '[t]heir aim with regard to the Muslims was nothing less than taking them away from the religion of Islam completely'.[13] In both the Malay and Arabic letters, Mansur Syah explains that he had not yet taken action against the Dutch because he was waiting for instructions from his sovereign, Sultan Abdülmecid, to authorize the planned jihad. Thus, the Acehnese request for military aid in the form of warships was accompanied

11 B.O.A., İ.HR. 66/3208, [4].
12 B.O.A., İ.HR. 73/3511, [2].
13 B.O.A., İ.HR. 73/3511, [2].

Figure 15. Cloth envelope of Mansur Syah's Arabic letter to Abdülmecid, with inscription entrusting document to Ma'ruf al-Karkhi (B.O.A, İ.HR 73/3511)

by an emphasis on Mansur Syah's humble status as an Ottoman vassal, and an appeal to common Muslim sympathy for the outrages the Sumatrans were subjected to by the Dutch.

The documents are a treasure trove on Aceh and its view of itself in the mid-nineteenth century, in some cases supplying information, such as Mansur Syah's family connection with Minangkabau, which has never been found elsewhere in the historical record. Particularly impressive is the facility of the Acehnese chancery officials in 'code-switching' with ease between the very different sets of epistolary protocol appropriate for diplomatic correspondence in Malay and Arabic, affecting not only the graphic layout of the text and placement of the seal, but also the composition of the salutations and forms of address. Even more significant is the distinct difference in historicity of the contents, carrying the intriguing implication that linguistic choice affected more than merely formulaic changes which could be learned from any manual of letter-writing or *tarasul*, but that these linguistic differences also shaped the basic intellectual idiom of the epistle.

In view of the care taken, at every level, by the Acehnese to ensure that their writing of history would be read accordingly by the Ottomans, one

Figure 16. Map of Sumatra and surrounding islands
sent to the Ottoman sultan by Mansur Syah

formal element of these documents begs comment. Located prominently at the bottom of Mansur Syah's letter in Arabic and on its envelope is the inscription, in magically-charged disconnected letters, 'by the grace of Shaykh Ma'ruf al-Karkhi' (Illustration 15). This formula is an epistolary amulet used throughout the Malay Archipelago to ensure the safe delivery of a letter, but it is not known elsewhere in the Islamic world, and hence, was likely to have caused some puzzlement on arrival in Istanbul. Its use should probably be read as a mark of the extreme concern of the Acehnese that this second letter, and its plea for help, should at last find its way safely across the oceans and into the hands of the great sultan of Rum.

The map of Sumatra and the Indonesian Archipelago

Alongside these strategies, the Acehnese also attempted to persuade the Ottomans of their case through the map reproduced here (Illustrations 16 and 27 [translation]), which attempted to aggrandize Mansur Syah and his kingdom. The map is striking in its claims. Sumatra is situated at its centre, with Acehnese influence depicted as stretching across Southeast Asia. Bandar Aceh is described as 'the seat of Mansur Syah', but a number of ports on the Malay Peninsula are annotated with the comment *vezir-i sultan Mansur Şah* or 'representative of sultan Mansur Syah'; these are the ports of Kedah, Selangor, Pahang, Terengganu, Kelantan and Patani. On Sumatra itself, Minangkabau, although it is shown as being cut off from the northern and central parts of the peninsula by a line presumably meant to denote the limits of Dutch control, is also described as under Mansur Syah. On Java, a line around Batavia also seems to indicate the Dutch-controlled areas, while Semarang appears as subject to Mansur Syah. On 'Bugis' and Borneo, the ports of Bone and Banjar respectively have a 'vizier', as does Daik on the island of Lingga in the Riau Archipelago. Thus, the map minimizes the extent of Dutch influence and greatly exaggerates Aceh's importance.

The map was clearly drawn specially for presentation to the Ottomans, as it conspicuously draws parallels between Southeast Asia and the Mediterranean world. The Malay Peninsula is curiously labelled 'Anadol', that is, Anatolia. A note also compares the Indonesian Archipelago to the Mediterranean: *adalar olarak cezire hesabı misl-i Susam ve Sakız ve İstanköy bu mislü iki yüz elli kadar vardır* or 'the number of islands like Samos, Chios and Kos is two hundred and fifty'. This legend and the positioning of Sumatra just off 'Anadol' seem calculated to reinforce the Acehnese message of their proximity to the Ottomans.

Where, however, was the map prepared, and by whom? It bears Muhammad Ghauth's seal beneath the legend, *qawl al-haqir Muhammad Ghauth*, suggesting it was based on, or at least validated by, his oral testimony. However, it

is unlikely to have been compiled in Istanbul, for the Ottoman used in the legends is full of unusual forms and spellings. Aceh itself is spelled rather strangely as Ashjeh/Aşceh (اشجه) – a form not otherwise encountered in Ottoman, which appears to be a hybrid of the Malay and Arabic spellings of the word. The lakes in the centre of Sumatra, Borneo and the Malay Peninsula are given the label *tatlı deniz* or 'sweet water sea', again with a peculiar orthography.[14] Almost none of the words in the Turkish note on the Aegean islands are spelled correctly. The Persianate *izafe* is used rather awkwardly to form possessives rather than the Turkish genitive. The use of the term *vezir* to mean a representative or deputy of the sultan sounds quite unnatural in this context in Ottoman, but the Malay *wazir* is commonly used with this meaning. In short, a native speaker of Turkish is highly unlikely to have composed it, but it seems equally unlikely that the Aegean islands would have been familiar by name in Aceh in the period, casting doubt on whether it really could have been composed there. Yet, there were travellers between Aceh and Istanbul that were quite apart from the embassy. The Ottoman Foreign Ministry made use of the testimony of 'a man who had come to Istanbul from those parts [Aceh]' as an independent source of information to try to verify some of Muhmmad Ghauth's claims.[15] Perhaps some such passing traveller, possibly a Hadrami with a smattering of Turkish, composed the map in Aceh at the request of the sultan. However, as the map is not mentioned in any of the royal correspondence, it may have been composed as an explanatory tool subsequent to the mission's departure. Most probably, it was compiled in the Hijaz on Muhammad Ghauth's way to Istanbul, where there would have been different merchants and pilgrims, some familiar with the Indian Ocean and some with the Mediterranean, as well as the resident 'Jawa', or Malay Muslims. One of these who had picked up some rudimentary Turkish through living in the Ottoman territories may have helped compile the map. The decorative flourish on the compass points on the map is distinctively Acehnese, while the seal of Muhammad Ghauth used is a typically Ottoman design, pointing to its having been made in the Hijaz.

The probable circumstances of the map's composition explain why its emphasis on the extent of Aceh's dominions, to some extent, seems to contradict the contents of the letters. In Mansur Syah's Malay letter, he emphasizes the extent of the lands under Dutch control, writing that:

14 The use of this spelling of '*tatlı*' is very strange for a document of this period.

15 B.O.A., İ.HR. 67/3270. Evidently, this was not entirely successful, for the traveller from Aceh informed the Ottomans that the Acehnese had a treaty with the English, but left them in the dark about the extent to which Mansur Syah's claims were exaggerated; perhaps, however, he was not asked about this.

> I am currently in very sorrowful and difficult circumstances because the lands of Java and Bugis and Bali and Borneo and Palembang and Minangkabau are already under Dutch rule, and all the Muslims are in great distress, and the religion of Islam has been greatly suppressed because of the harshness of those infidel Dutch.[16]

At the same time, however, Mansur Syah states that 'all the people who are currently being ruled by the Dutch in all the different lands are all waiting for instructions from me in Aceh'. The map and the letters suggest a certain confusion among the Acehnese as to how best to portray themselves to the Ottomans. On the one hand, it was necessary to make Aceh look sufficiently important to be worth helping; on the other, the imminence of the Dutch threat had to be emphasized to prompt the Ottomans into action, but not so much as to alarm the Ottomans. On reaching Ottoman territories, Muhammad Ghauth probably realized that his hosts' prime concern was that involvement in Southeast Asia might lead them into conflict with European powers. In response, he seems to have adjusted his strategy by understating the Dutch threat. Hence, the map minimizes the extent of Dutch possessions while the text stresses them.

Ottoman reactions to the Acehnese mission

The Acehnese mission was the subject of intense deliberations by Ottoman officials of the highest rank, with Sultan Abdülmecid himself involved. At first, Muhammad Ghauth was kept in the Hijaz by its governor, Hasib Pasha, who sent on to Istanbul the Malay letter and Muhammad Ghauth's Arabic letter summarizing his oral message. Muhammad Ghauth and the rest of the Acehnese delegation were summoned to Istanbul six months later. The course of Ottoman deliberations on the mission has been summarized elewhere;[17] here, we examine what role the textual, historical and visual devices employed by the Acehnese played in convincing the Ottomans of Mansur Syah's status and the appropriate response.

The first concrete remarks of an Ottoman dignitary about the Acehnese narrative were those of Hasib Pasha, based on the missive of the envoy addressed to him and Mansur Syah's first (Malay) letter to Abdülmecid. From a note sent to Istanbul accompanying the Acehnese letters,[18] Hasib Pasha seems to have been quite convinced by the mission, commenting that the content of the documents revealed that Aceh was a part of the well-

16 B.O.A., İ.HR. 66/3208, [6].
17 See Göksoy, Chapter IV in this volume.
18 B.O.A., İ.HR. 66/3208, [1].

protected dominions of the Ottoman sultan, and that its Muslim inhabitants were known to be fully obedient to his rule. Thus, Hasib Pasha advocated the approval of the Acehnese requests, although he was aware that this had the potential to violate international treaties and regulations, remarking that this aspect should be investigated in depth. The reaction of Grand Vizier Reşit Pasha to the documents was more reserved, and the note he sent explaining the situation to Abdülmecid offers few clues as to his attitude. Equally muted were the comments of the sultan on the grand vizier's note.[19] Both the sultan and the grand vizier considered the issue sensitive, and deemed it appropriate for deliberation at a special gathering with participants possessing more expert knowledge, which was done at the mansion of the Shaykh al-Islam on 6 August 1850.

The reflections of the Ottoman statesmen at that gathering were also based on the first letter of Mansur Syah and Muhammad Ghauth's missive to Hasib Pasha. It appears from the grand vizier's note, which related these reflections to the sultan, that the participants relied primarily on the envoy's letter,[20] probably because it was more explicit with regard to Mansur Syah's demands. The meeting seems to have largely ignored the historical account in these letters, both the sections about the historical developments in Aceh and those concerning Aceh's ancient relations with the Porte. Instead, the Ottoman officials were interested in Aceh's contemporary status, and the concomitant implications for international engagements with European powers. Their suspicions were probably exacerbated by the advice of the anonymous traveller from Aceh to the Foreign Ministry that Mansur Syah had come under British sovereignty with certain stipulations as a result of a recent treaty. Consequently, the meeting concluded that it would be too risky to take any action over Aceh until the contradictions between the two accounts were clarified. As the Ottomans were aware that the European powers had possessions in those quarters, they deemed it necessary to carry out an in-depth investigation of 'Java's' treaties with England and other countries, as well as its ancient connections with the Ottoman government.

The grand vizier's minutes suggest the limitations of the Ottoman bureaucracy's intelligence about the political and administrative structure of Southeast Asia. He wrote that 'the place called Java is a sort of province of the great island of Sumatra', implying that the Ottomans did really consider Java as a province of Sumatra, as the Acehnese mission claimed. However, Mansur Syah is described in the same document as the 'ruler of Aceh in the land of Java' (*bilad-ı Cava'dan Aşi hükümdarı*), reflecting the traditional Arabic use of the term 'Jawa' to mean Southeast Asia more generally. Later Ottoman

19 B.O.A., İ.HR. 66/3208, [9].
20 B.O.A., İ.HR. 67/3270.

documents, however, described Mansur Syah as the 'ruler of the land of Java' (*bilad-ı Cava hükümdarı*),[21] suggesting that they accorded him greater prestige, which in turn suggests, perhaps, that Muhammad Ghauth's efforts to promote his master's influence bore some fruit in Istanbul. At any rate, it seems that the relationship between Java and Sumatra was not wholly clear in the Ottomans' minds. All these uncertainties must have played an important role in the decisions of the participants of the gathering to investigate the issue in depth by inviting the envoy to Istanbul, as well as by employing an Acehnese subject resident in Mecca to go to the region in disguise to gather first-hand information.

After the arrival of Muhammad Ghauth in Istanbul, a second gathering on the issue, of a comparable nature, took place at the Meclis-i Vâlâ[22] on 25 November 1851, more than a year after the gathering at the Shaykh al-Islam's mansion. By then, Mansur Syah's second letter,[23] conveyed by his ambassador Ismail Efendi, had arrived in Istanbul. Muhammad Ghauth was interviewed during the meeting of the Meclis-i Vâlâ. Both the minutes of the interview with the envoy[24] and the report on the deliberations of the Ottoman statesmen[25] offer further clues about the Ottoman perception of the Acehnese narrative. It was at this meeting that Muhammad Ghauth produced the map. Judging by the comments in the minutes of the meeting, the map does seem to have played a role in convincing the Meclis-i Vâlâ, at least, that Mansur Syah was a good deal more important than he really was. Initially, the Ottoman officials reacted with some scepticism to the map, owing to the lack of any latitudes or longitudes. They compared it with the geography books available in Istanbul, quite possibly Katib Çelebi's seventeenth-century *Cihannüma*, printed in 1744, which contains a series of detailed maps of Southeast Asia based on European sources. On the basis of this and Muhammad Ghauth's oral testimony, the officials noted that

> the lands of the abovementioned [Mansur Syah] comprise three great islands [called] Sumatra, Java and Borneo, and a number of small islands in the south, at the end of the Bay of Bengal in the lands of India, and off Cape Malaka that is located at the eastern shores of the ocean.[26]

21 For example, B.O.A, İ.MVL. 230/7935, [1], İ.DH. 368/24377, [2].

22 An Ottoman council of deliberation, established in 1838, primarily to supervise the reforms of the period.

23 B.O.A., İ.HR. 73/3511, [2].

24 B.O.A., İ.MVL. 226/7706, [1].

25 B.O.A., İ.MVL. 226/7706, [2].

26 B.O.A., İ.MVL 226/7706, [1].

While the minutes record more or less verbatim the 'mainstream' Acehnese historical narrative, as expressed in the second letter of Mansur Syah as well as in the missive of Muhammad Ghauth, they diverge from it on the role of Sinan Pasha in the sixteenth-century relations between the two countries. Although, as we have seen, the Acehnese documents attributed a very prominent role to Sinan Pasha in establishing Ottoman sovereignty over Sumatra, in the minutes of the interview, he is referred to (correctly) as the governor of Yemen during the reign of Selim II (1566-1574), who had deployed officials to Sumatra to cast cannons there. This is striking because it suggests that, despite the apparent lack of comment on the Acehnese claims to be Ottoman subjects, officials in Istanbul were sufficiently concerned by them to delve into the sixteenth-century archives, and adjust the minutes accordingly.

The report of the Meclis-i Vâlâ was presented to the sultan, together with a note from the grand vizier dated 11 December 1851.[27] This note indicates, for the first time, that the sultan was favourably inclined to the Acehnese requests, but gives no further detail. A similar response is suggested by the introductory part of the draft instructions that were prepared for the official whom, it was decided, should go to Aceh in disguise to gather first-hand information, for he was instructed to seek the appointment, by Mansur Syah, of an Acehnese official vested with the authority to deliberate on the provisions of suzerainty.[28] This also states that the Acehnese requests had received the consent of the sultan without further explanation. Although this seems to suggest that the Ottomans had accepted the Acehnese as their subjects, a crucial remark in the same document indicates that the Ottoman statesmen maintained a degree of circumspection, even scepticism, regarding the embassy, for it was noted that Aceh's current situation, and its connections and allegiances, were not known and should be investigated. Ottoman documentation about the Acehnese mission ends with a resolution of the Meclis-i Vâlâ, dated 19 Rajab [12]68/11 February 1852, concerning the expenses of the Acehnese envoys and the Ottoman official who would go to Aceh in disguise to meet Mansur Syah personally.[29] Enclosed with this resolution, we find an undated draft letter from the grand vizier to Mansur Syah.[30] Another undated document, which must have been prepared at approximately the same time, concerns the draft instructions of the Ottoman official to Aceh.[31] None of these documents indicate that the Ottomans were totally convinced by the Acehnese mission and agreed to meet their requests. If the draft letter of the grand vizier ever made its way to Aceh together with the Ottoman official, Mansur Syah would

27 B.O.A., İ.MVL. 226/7706, [3].
28 B.O.A., HR.SYS 551/4.
29 B.O.A., İ.MVL. 230/7935, [4].
30 B.O.A., İ.MVL. 230/7935, [1].
31 B.O.A., HR.SYS 551/4.

have seen that his requests had gained the sympathy of the sultan, but that he was now required to send yet another embassy with the requisite credentials to deliberate on the provisions of subject status. Thus, despite the explanations of Mansur Syah as well as the Acehnese envoy, and the independent information that had reached the Foreign Ministry, the Ottomans remained acutely aware of the limitations of their knowledge of Southeast Asia, and were concerned about the potential international implications of any intervention there.

Conclusions

Despite the risks of involvement in this remote and unfamiliar region, where, by the nineteenth century, the Ottomans had no vital political interests, it is striking how much attention Istanbul devoted to the Acehnese cause. The ideological underpinnings of the caliphate seem to have played a prominent role in stimulating the Ottoman authorities, and the sultan in particular, as the leader of Muslims, to respond favourably to Acehnese overtures. The latter point was underlined in the draft letter from the grand vizier to Mansur Syah, which states that '[it is] a requirement for the community of Islam as well as [a requirement of the] natural quality of the illustrious Caliphate'[32] to respond favourably to Mansur Syah's requests. This is not the only indication of the importance of the religious aspect of the issue. The Ottoman documents repeatedly emphasized the devotion of the people of Aceh to Islam, and their willingness to recite the name of the caliph during Friday prayers. The nascent pan-Islamic ideology that Istanbul was beginning to actively espouse in the later nineteenth century meant that the Acehnese could not be wholly ignored.

Notwithstanding a degree of willingness on the Ottomans' part to entertain the Acehnese requests, excluding those for military support apparently, insuperable obstacles impeded action. Firstly, the acute lack of information about Aceh and the region paralysed the Ottoman administration from the start. Secondly, this same lack of communication exacerbated the first problem and prevented its remedy. Thirdly, there was the risk of running into conflict with major European powers. It was again the first problem that prevented the Ottoman administration from judging the extent of these risks. We see that the Ottoman administration tried to remedy these obstacles in various ways. Their short-term remedy for the lack of information was to extract as much information as possible from the envoy, and by interviewing the other anonymous traveller from the region. Another solution was to gather information from the Acehnese in Mecca,[33] a city which was an intermediary

32 B.O.A., İ.MVL. 230/7935, [1].
33 B.O.A., İ.HR. 67/3270.

between the imperial capital and Southeast Asian Muslims, a source of basic intelligence, as well as a sort of clearing-house for diplomacy. Mecca's crucial role was also confirmed when the Ottomans considered the deployment of an official to Southeast Asia to gather information.[34] The decision to send an envoy to the region, rather than to request information from their embassies in Europe or to consult European diplomatic representatives in Istanbul itself, is suggestive both of an improvement in the Ottomans' understanding of European colonial policies and of a new engagement with the wider Muslim world. More than half a century ago, in 1787, when another 'exotic' ruler, Tipu Sultan of Mysore, sent a mission to Istanbul, the Ottomans had consulted the British embassy in Istanbul for advice instead of finding a solution on their own (Bayur 1948:636).

Indeed, despite the somewhat muted Ottoman response, the Acehnese mission was far from wholly fruitless. It was able to at least boost the posture of Mansur Syah at the Porte, and encouraged a revival of Ottoman interest in Southeast Asia. Even though the documents relating to the embassy of Muhammad Ghauth give little indication of the Ottomans being especially impressed by Acehnese claims to longstanding vassaldom, they surface in later documents, such as a letter of 1873 addressed by the Ottomans to the Dutch embassy in Istanbul, suggesting that the Acehnese historical narrative may have had more impact than was initially apparent.[35] The Acehnese embassy of 1849-1852 was the first of a series sent by Muslim rulers of Southeast Asia to Istanbul over the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and as such, was doubtless responsible for stimulating Ottoman interest and involvement in the region. Yet, it should be remembered that it was by no means a given that the Ottomans would respond at all favourably to the Acehnese approach, just because the Acehnese claim to be long-lost subjects of the Porte; 30 years earlier, in 1819, Haydar Syah, khan of Bukhara, had written to the Porte in terms very similar to those of Mansur Syah, unilaterally declaring the sultan to be his suzerain. Fearful of the risks of provoking Russia, the Ottomans rejected him. While they agreed that as Muslims the Bukharans were, in a sense, automatically subject to the caliph, they avoided reaffirming this relationship of vassalage (Özcan 1997:26). Although the Ottomans' reply in 1851 may have seemed rather disappointing from the Acehnese point of view, it did signify a growing willingness on the part of the Sublime Porte to assert its influence in more concrete terms abroad. As such, the Acehnese

[34] An initial examination of the matter by the Meclis-i Vâlâ had suggested sending him via Baghdad, as Basra also had links with Southeast Asia. However, considering the difficulties of deploying men overland to Baghdad, the Ottoman statesmen deemed it more appropriate to rely on the traffic from Hijaz and Bab al-Mandab, where steamboats and ships were available; see B.O.A., İ.MVL. 226/7706, [2].

[35] B.O.A., İ.HR 260/15586.

embassy and the resulting Ottoman response may be seen as among the very first concrete expressions of the pan-Islamic ideology that was to underpin the empire in the late nineteenth century, both in its dealings with Southeast Asia and more generally.

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Chapter IX

Exploring Acehnese understandings of jihad
A study of the *Hikayat prang sabi*

Amirul Hadi

Introduction

This chapter attempts to explore the concept of jihad in Acehnese cultural tradition. Over centuries of armed conflict in the region, the Acehnese have often been heralded for their activities on the battlefield. Over the course of the sixteenth century and the first half of the seventeenth century, Aceh was involved in constant and bloody religious wars against the Portuguese in Melaka, not to mention a number of military confrontations with other states in the region during that period and after. In 1873, a long and arduous war broke out between Aceh and the Dutch, and extended periods of armed conflict continued to plague Aceh during the post-independence period. In these later conflicts, the lines were drawn in new ways, such as in the bloody 'Social Revolution' of late 1945 to early 1946, known locally as the Prang Cumbok (*Cumbok* War). Later, in 1953, M. Daud Beureueh inspired the Acehnese to rebel against the newly established Republic of Indonesia, in an effort to win independence for the region as an Islamic state. This Darul Islam movement was eventually contained by the Indonesian central government, and Daud Beureueh finally capitulated in 1962. However, in 1976, a new armed movement for Acehnese independence was founded. It was known as the *Gerakan Aceh Merdeka* (GAM, Free Aceh Movement), and was engaged in extended armed conflict with the Indonesian military until the signing of the Helsinki agreement in 2005.

This bitter dimension of Aceh's history has attracted considerable attention from external observers, including both Dutch colonial officials and, later, international academics.[1] However, such studies tend to focus on the origins

[1] Among the prominent works are De Klerk 1912, Brooshooft 1886 and Van 't Veer 1969. The Acehnese-born scholar Ibrahim Alfian has also contributed a comprehensive and detailed work

and progress of the various conflicts, and their direct impact upon society and government. This chapter attempts to do something different, by adopting a cultural perspective to explore how the Acehnese have, historically, perceived their ongoing engagements in war, and the extent to which they value peace. These issues will be addressed through critical examinations of written sources, particularly, the texts of Acehnese epics known as *hikayat prang*. What is striking about these sources is that even though they are considered to be literary in nature, the *hikayat prang* convey a wealth of historical data, and, most importantly, they reveal important aspects of a traditional Acehnese worldview, including perspectives on war and peace.

Acehnese *hikayat* have two characteristics that distinguish them from their Malay counterpart. First, unlike the Malay version, which is usually in prose form, the Acehnese *hikayat* have a distinctly poetical form, called *sanjak* (Drewes 1979:3-5; Snouck Hurgronje 1906:77; Imran Abdullah 1991:17, 47-51). Second, while the Malay *hikayat* developed out of written tradition and was linked to the court (Yock Fang Liaw 1975:1; Sweeney 1973:2), the Acehnese *hikayat* evolved from oral tradition and enjoyed a popular following. The tradition of putting a *hikayat* into writing was in fact a later development, and took place only after its oral composition (Snouck Hurgronje 1906:66; Imran Abdullah 1991:3).

In his pioneering survey of Acehnese literature, C. Snouck Hurgronje categorized Acehnese *hikayat* as verse compositions conveying 'not only […] tales of fiction and religious legends, but also […] moral instruction and even simple lesson-books' (Snouck Hurgronje 1906:77). He did, however, assign a special status to the 'heroic' poems of the Acehnese, which he described as 'original in both form and subject matter, [and which] st[ood] undisputedly higher in all respects than any other part of their literature' (Snouck Hurgronje 1906:80). The most important *hikayat* of this type are the *Hikayat Malem Dagang*, composed during the seventeenth century, the *Hikayat Pocut Muhammad* of the eighteenth century, and the *Hikayat prang sabi* tradition of the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Acehnese *hikayat* provide both local perspectives on historical events and insights into the beliefs and cultural visions of the Acehnese in earlier periods. The *Hikayat Malem Dagang* concerns the Acehnese preemptive strike against Melaka in 1629, while the *Hikayat Pocut Muhammad* tells the tragic story of the succession dispute that expanded into a civil war in Aceh during the 1720s. The *Hikayat prang sabi* concerns the defensive war against Dutch aggression that began in 1873. For the purpose of the present discussion, the

on the war; see Ibrahim Alfian 1987. A number of works on the conflicts in Aceh during the post-independence period have also been written, and of these, the prominent ones are Van Dijk 1981, Morris 1981, Isa Sulaiman 2000, Nazaruddin Sjamsuddin 1985 and Kell 1995. All these works focus on the history of Aceh's wars in modern times from social, political and religious perspectives.

main focus will be given to the third of these hikayat, the *Hikayat prang sabi* (*HPS*).

From the very outset, the *HPS* appears to be saturated with Islamic religious zeal. The title itself, which means 'the story of the war in the path of God', explicitly conveys this impression. The understanding of Islamic conceptions of jihad expressed in the *HPS* reflects not only aspects of a long Muslim tradition, but also elements of the specific historical context in which it was composed, that is, the period when Aceh was invaded by Dutch colonial forces. The intent of the composition of the *HPS* was to consequently cast Acehnese resistance to the Dutch as a religious cause, and to call Muslims to take up arms in support of it.

The *hikayat prang* genre was popular among the Acehnese during this period, not only due to the content of its message, but also because of the beauty of its composition. The religious commitments of the Acehnese made it easy for the *HPS* to win their sympathy, while the aesthetic accomplishments of the work were enjoyed by both reciters and their audiences. T. Iskandar has argued that the *HPS* is 'the most popular work in Achehnese literature' (Iskandar 1986:94). The popularity of the *HPS* is attested to in Dutch reports of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, where some officials deemed it responsible for the fierce resistance shown by the Acehnese during the war. This eventually led the Dutch to consider the *HPS* as 'subversive literature', and to adopt a policy of confiscating and burning any written copies of the work seized by the authorities (Damsté 1928:545).

In his study of the manuscripts of the *HPS*, T. Iskandar found 46 texts preserved in libraries and private collections all around the world. Most of them, however, are preserved in the collections of the Leiden University Library in the Netherlands. T. Iskandar maintained that while all the *HPS* texts had the same purpose, namely, to encourage the Acehnese to wage a holy war, existing recensions can roughly be divided into two categories based upon a structural typology. The first category centres on the admonition to wage a holy war against the Dutch and the future hardship of living under the infidel occupation. The second category focuses more on the heroic stories of holy wars in the Islamic tradition (Iskandar 1986:94-8).

In this study, only two manuscripts of the *HPS* are consulted. The first is the text that was confiscated from Teungku Putro, the wife of Sultan Muhammad Daud Syah, the last ruler of Aceh, when she was attacked by Dutch soldiers led by Captain Christoffel in Glumpang Payong, Pidie, on 26 November 1902.[2] This text is now available at the Leiden University Library (Illustration 17).[3]

[2] This text was romanized and translated into Indonesian by Ibrahim Alfian in his book; see Ibrahim Alfian 1992.

[3] Leiden University Library, Cod.Or.8689. This text will be referred to as the *Hikayat prang sabi I* (abbreviated as *HPS I*).

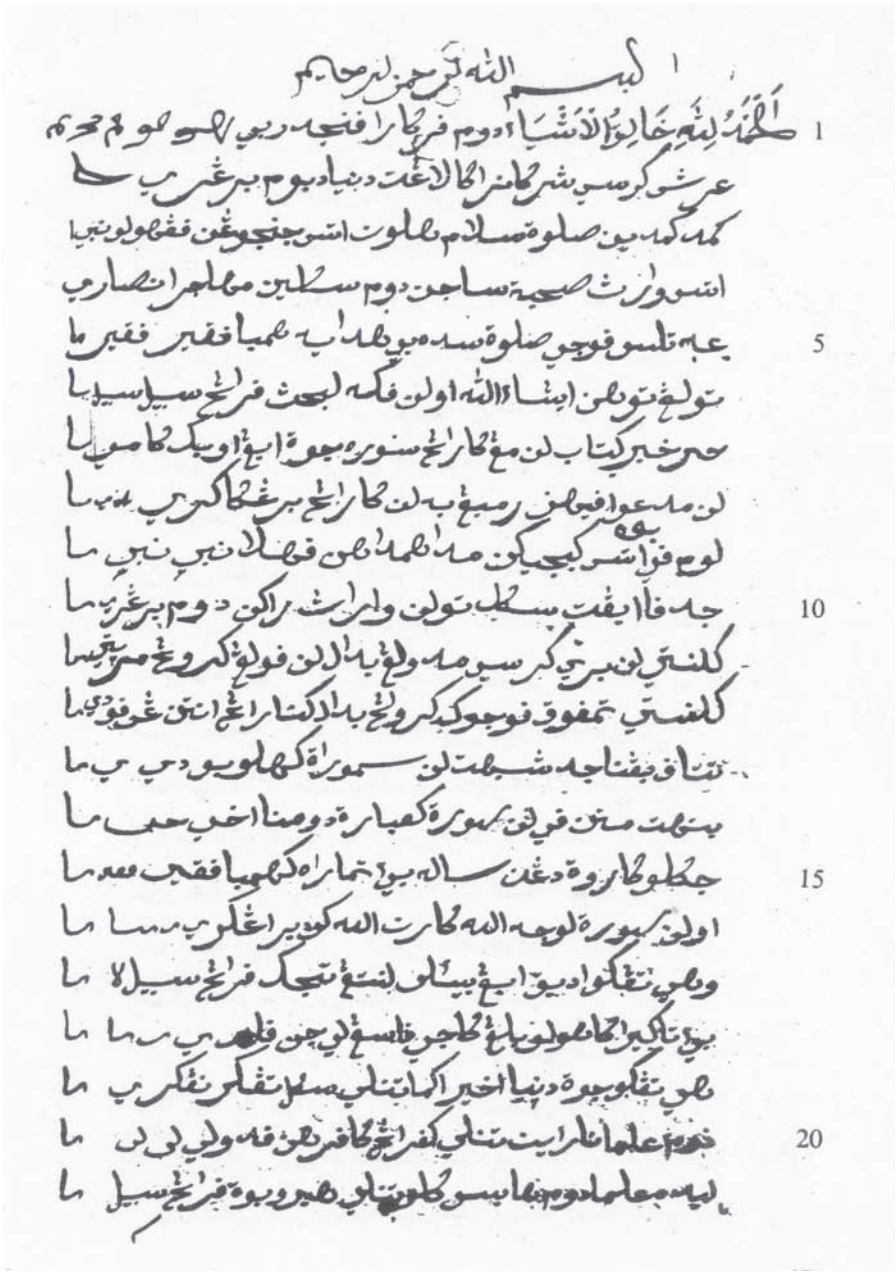

Figure 17. Copy of the first page of the *Hikayat prang sabi* belonging to Teungku Putro, the wife of Sultan Muhammad Daud Syah, confiscated by the Dutch on 26 November 1902.

The second is the 1928 text published by H.T. Damsté (Damsté 1928). The manuscript was found by Dutch officials in the hiding place of the 11-year-old Teuku Raja Sabi of Keuruto in 1911. This text is also available at the Leiden University Library.[4]

The analysis of these texts in this chapter will focus on their conceptual content, rather than on elements of literary style. This study is thus conceived of as a 'hermeneutics of recovery', that is, an attempt to 'reconstruct the original context of production (the circumstances and intentions of the author and the meanings that the text might have had for its original readers)' (Culler 1997:65-7). It is from this perspective that the *HPS* will be examined here as reflecting the worldviews of its authors and audiences in Aceh.

The Hikayat prang sabi and Acehnese conceptions of jihad

The competition between Britain and the Netherlands to occupy Aceh led to the Treaty of London Treaty in 1824, which recognized Aceh's independence (Reid 1969:17). However, the Dutch, with strong ambitions to colonize the entire archipelago, initiated conflicts with Aceh by conquering several regions under Acehnese influence, such as Barus and Singkel (Reid 1969:17-24). In 1871, the Dutch succeeded in convincing the British to agree to the Treaty of Sumatra, which removed external opposition to the Dutch occupation of Aceh. However, the Acehnese themselves never accepted Dutch claims of control, leading the Dutch to proclaim war on 26 March 1873 (Reid 1969:52-78).

In response, the Acehnese called for armed resistance in terms of a *prang sabi* (war in the path of God), and the subsequent conflict came to be known, in Acehnese, as the *prang Beulanda* (war against the Dutch), *prang Gompeuni*[5] and *prang kaphee* (war against unbelievers).[6] The *HPS* is very clear in defining this war as a defensive act against the aggression of the Dutch infidels,[7] and

[4] Leiden University Library, Cod.Or.8133 (= BG37). This text will be referred to as *Hikayat prang sabi II* (abbreviated as *HPS II*).

[5] *Gompeuni* is the Acehnese word for 'company', which refers to the Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (VOC, Dutch East India Company). Therefore, it can be translated as 'war against the Dutch'.

[6] See *HPS I*, lines 138, 164, 645, 655, 677, 818, 820, 833, 894, 900, 975, 980, 1020, 1144, 1395; *HPS II*, lines 6, 55, 57, 83, 99, 109, 155, 198, 306, 318. See also Ibrahim Alfian 1987:20. The most dominant term used to describe the war in the *HPS* is *prang sabi*. It is only in one place that the word jihad is mentioned; see *HPS I*, line 895.

[7] It explicitly stated that '*[c]it waje'b that ba' masa nyoe, sabab ka sinoe ji due*' Ulanda' (*HPS I*, line 991). In *HPS II*, line 168, it was stated that '*[w]atee kaphe jitoeeng nanggroe-tabeudoih jinoe be' tadoee' le*'. See also line 667.

the central appeal enunciated by the text was for the preservation of Islam against this threat.[8]

In order to garner Muslim support against the threats that this intrusion imposed on both Islamic faith and social order, the Dutch were portrayed as those who would bring the life of the Acehnese into catastrophe. They were accused not only of killing people, but also of attempting to destroy religious values, established political structures and the integrity of Acehnese custom (*adat*). The Dutch invasion was thus depicted as causing social disruption, the displacement of Acehnese communities and numerous other forms of suffering. Particularly strong reactions to the perceived immorality of the Dutch and their soldiers (*sipa'i* – referred to, in the *HPS*) were expressed,[9] such as the imposition of arbitrary taxes, the raping of Acehnese girls, and even the forcing of Acehnese men to hand over their wives.[10] The *HPS* chronicles such atrocities in the various regions that had fallen under Dutch control, including Singkil, Melayu (Deli), Padang, Palembang, Betawi and Jawa.[11]

The war was seen from the Acehnese perspective as defensive, and its justification was elaborated in terms of preserving Acehnese society, culture and religious values from the threat of an outside aggressor. In doing so, the Acehnese appealed to Islamic religious injunctions for the preservation of 'God's religion', which complemented and elevated the basic imperative of 'self defense'. Well beyond the level of individuals, the Acehnese were fighting to maintain what they considered to be a just social and political order. At this point, the *jus ad bellum*, that is, the right to wage a war, became clear, since the justification for it was clearly determined, and this allowed for the *prima facie* religious injunction against killing and injuring others to be suspended in the face of an imminent threat.

In order to comprehend the specifics of this issue more deeply in the Acehnese context, one needs to look at Aceh as a sovereign political entity in the form of an Islamic sultanate (*kerajaan Islam*). From its inception at the end of the fifteenth century, and indeed, even two centuries earlier, during the rise of the Islamic kingdom of Pasai, the region was known as a centre of Muslim culture. The Muslim rulers of Aceh held many titles over the centuries, among which was *khalifah*, which means 'the deputy of God', or a representative in this world obliged to uphold God's religion.[12] Thus, an attack on the Acehnese state could also be construed as an assault on Islam and the Muslim community.

8 *HPS II*, lines 536, 548.
9 *HPS II*, line 414.
10 *HPS I*, lines 1530-49; *HPS II*, lines 155-64, 263-85, 340-9, 410-549.
11 *HPS II*, lines 265-71, 540-9.
12 For further discussion of this issue, see Amirul Hadi 2004:57-65, 83-5.

In Islamic legal terms, the *HPS* explicitly stated that the war effort was a *fardh 'ayn* (individually incumbent duty),[13] which obliged every single Muslim, regardless of gender, age or any other criteria, to wage the war as a defensive act. In this case, armed struggle against the Dutch came to be understood as a mandatory religious act (*wajib*), and all Muslims were urged to sacrifice their lives and property for the effort. Those who responded to the call would be rewarded with heaven (*al-janna*), while those who refused were destined for hell-fire (*al-nar*).[14]

Religious and moral values constituted the main foundation on which the *HPS* justified war. The *HPS* developed its message about the significance of the war and the urgent need for Muslims to participate in it, through the redeployment of established Islamic doctrines and symbols in ways that resonated with the immediate communal concerns in Aceh. The text insisted that there were three 'pillars' (*arkan*) of Islam: 1) testifying that '[t]here is no god but Allah and Muhammad is His Messenger' (*shahada*); 2) the performance of obligatory daily prayers (*salat*); and 3) waging war against the Dutch unbelievers.[15] Traditionally, most Muslims have enumerated five 'pillars' of Islam, which, in addition to *shahada* and *salat*, include alms-giving (*zakat*), fasting in the month of Ramadhan, and the pilgrimage to Makkah (*hajj*). Waging war against infidels, however, is not included as one of the five 'pillars' in their standard elaboration.

The fact that the *HPS* prescribed that the war against the Dutch constituted a pillar of the religion reflects not only the context of armed conflict in which it was composed, but also certain religious rationalizations, according to which none of the other three standard 'pillars' could be performed in a situation where Muslims were being attacked and at war with non-Muslims. In this sense then, the war against the Dutch unbelievers came to be seen as a necessary precondition for the valid performance of the remaining 'pillars'. The *HPS* emphasized the special religious nature of armed struggle, elevating participation in war to the position of the noblest of religious observances (*ibadat*), and claiming that the performance of one 'cycle' (*raka'a*) of ritual prayer during wartime was better than a thousand performed in the holy city of Mecca.[16]

The religious value of engaging in armed struggle against the Dutch was also argued for in the idiom of martyrdom (*shahid*). The view that this is the best of deaths was emphasized repeatedly in the text, where it was often

13 *HPS I*, lines 985-7; *HPS II*, lines 172-9, 305, 353.

14 *HPS I*, lines 36, 40-9; *HPS II*, lines 25-9, 100-4, 125-9, 135-9, 180-4, 310-4.

15 *HPS I*, lines 988-9.

16 In suggesting this idea, the author was referring to the Hadith. Yet, he admitted that it was only the meaning of the Hadith that was referred to, not the text itself. See *HPS I*, lines 25-9, 780-4, 1140-4, 1173-4. For another version of the highest value given to the war, see *HPS II*, lines 245-9.

connected to broader conceptions of the destiny of human beings.[17] There are two stages in the life of man, the first being the life in this world, which is corporeal and temporal (*fana*), and the second being the life in the hereafter (*akhira*), which is eternal (*baqa*). It is the *akhira* that is considered the best, for it is the final destination of the human journey, and thus, believers are strongly urged to prepare themselves for it by performing good deeds in this world.[18] The *HPS* stressed that the best means for this preparation was to take up armed struggle in the path of God (*prang sabi*) and martyrdom.[19] Those who fight would be honoured as the protectors of God's religion, while those who failed to participate could be held responsible for the devastation of Islam in Aceh.[20] This statement was not without its far-reaching consequences, as it was along these lines that the *HPS* distinguished between the people of heaven (*ceuruga*) and the people of hell (*neuraka*).[21]

In the Western tradition, legitimate authority constitutes the first criterion of a 'just war', as it is both *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello* because war is 'a rule-governed activity' (Childress 1982:73-4). Similar conceptions of authority come into play in Islamic discussions of legitimizing war. In general, both Sunni and Shi'is jurists agree that the authority to declare and pursue war rests in the hands of the legitimate ruler of the Muslim community. In defensive warfare, however, the case is different, as permission of the ruler is not required for Muslims under attack to defend themselves either individually or collectively.

It could also be described as 'a defensive national war' under the command of the sultan. The role of legitimate authority is not required in declaring a 'holy war' (*prang sabi*), but it did become important for the Acehnese in some complex ways. Unlike its role in the period of emergence and the golden age, the Aceh sultanate in the nineteenth century was not a strongly centralized state. The rise of traditional elites and local chiefs as regional power-holders resulted in considerable disunity in Acehnese war efforts. Nevertheless, the sultan continued to be regarded as the highest symbol of the state. On 29 January 1874, five days after the fall of the sultan's court (*Dalam*) to the Dutch, Sultan Mahmud Syah died. Immediately thereafter, the Acehnese leaders took the initiative of appointing his child, Tuanku Muhammad Daud Syah, as the new sultan. During the new sultan's childhood, state affairs were conducted by Acehnese officials, led by Tuanku Hashim. The young sultan did not rule by his own authority until 1883. Despite this, however, he wielded enormous influence over the Acehnese people, which led the Dutch to attack, force surrender and exile the sultan to Ambon in 1907 (Ibrahim Alfian 1987:68, 200-2).

17 See for instance *HPS I*, lines 635-9, 690-5.
18 *HPS I*, lines 50-4, 1085-9, 1430-1, 1524; *HPS II*, lines 45-9, 195-9.
19 *HPS II*, lines 235-9.
20 *HPS I*, lines 990-1144; *HPS II*, lines 45-9.
21 *HPS I*, lines 35-44, 637, 642-8, 690, 990-1000, 1070-3; *HPS II*, lines 101-37, 180-4, 223, 310.

The return of the sultan was very much expected in order to bring Acehnese life back to normal again.[22] In the absence of a clear heir to the sultanate in Aceh, the people turned increasingly to the ulama, including Tgk. Cik Di Tiro and Tgk. Cik Kuta Karang, for leadership. These ulama were successful, both in motivating people to join the struggle and in actively leading the war itself.[23]

In his book on local forms of warfare in the Netherlands East Indies, K. Van der Maaten characterized the Acehnese war against the Dutch as a 'people's war' in which all elements of the society were involved. The war in Aceh was regarded as a 'people's war', in the sense that all were obliged to participate. The *HPS* emphasized this point very clearly through its assertion that everyone capable of conducting the war must participate, regardless of gender, age, social and economic status, and even intellectual level.[24] Religion constituted the main driving force behind this wide base of participants in the struggle, and this is clearly reflected not only in texts of the *HPS*, but in other Acehnese sources from the same period as well (Van Der Maaten 1978:13). On 18 April 1874, for instance, Tuanku Hashim, Sri Muda Perkasa Panglima Polem, Sri Muda Setia and Sri Setia Utama wrote a letter to other Acehnese leaders concerning the hardship suffered by the Acehnese people due to the Dutch conquest of the Achenese court, as well as the great number of casualties from the fighting and the cholera epidemic that swept the region. The letter included the following paragraph:

> Four areas (*mukim*), i.e. Lheu and Masidjid Raya, Masidjid Lheung Bata, Gigieng and Lhok Gulong, and some areas of the Meuraksa region have been occupied. However, *insha Allah*, in our obedience to God and His prophet we must defend ourselves day and night; even if we have only a *nyiru* of land we still have to wage the war. That is the agreement of the people from the regions (*sagis*), 'ulama', *hajis*, and all the Muslims. Therefore, if you, our brothers, still obey God and His prophet, still wish to establish Muhammad's teachings, and still wish to be friends with all of us under the banner of Aceh, you, our brothers, must fight them as hard as you can for the sake of protecting Muhammad's teachings and the religion of the Acehnese.[25]

Pressure by the Dutch, whose military power was far superior to that of the Acehnese, forced the latter into guerilla warfare. As this mode of armed resistance did not comply with the standard rules of war, it raised a dilemma. In Islam, waging defensive guerilla warfare permits various stratagems not

22 *HPS I*, lines 20-4, 1530-69.

23 For further discussion, see Ibrahim Alfian 1987:151-73.

24 *HPS II*, lines 170-7, 305-14.

25 Quoted in Ibrahim Alfian 1987:107. A similar letter was also written in December 1877 by Tgk. Muhammad Amin Dayah Cut Tiro.

permitted in an offensive war, such as surprise attacks, attacks at night, cutting off the enemy's supplies and destroying houses (al-Tabari 1933:3-4; Kohlberg 1976:85; al-Shaybani 1335 H (b):212). These tactics eventually created serious problems for the Dutch. After occupying the sultan's palace in Banda Aceh and receiving the surrender of 'Abd al-Rahman and T. Muda Baid, two of the most prominent Acehnese war commanders, the Dutch established an occupational government in Aceh (Reid 1969:218-49). However, guerilla-style resistance continued through a campaign of surprise attacks against Dutch forts, policemen, communications installations and supply convoys (Ibrahim Alfian 1987:74-6, 78, 80, 194).

These guerilla tactics raise questions on the distinctions between combatants and non-combatants, and other forms of restraint on violence during warfare. For the Acehnese, however, the war was seen as a defensive one, and any means necessary for ensuring their own survival could be considered legitimate. A few cases mentioned here illustrate the Acehnese behaviour during the war. In 1883, the British ship *Nisero* was driven ashore in Teunom on the west coast of Aceh. The ship was seized and its crew members captured. The crew and their ship were released upon payment of the ransom demanded by the chief of Teunom (Reid 1969:218-49). In another incident that took place in 1880, two Frenchmen who arrived in Teunom to explore for gold were killed by the Acehnese.

These two examples raise the question of whether or not the Frenchmen and the British crew were combatants who should have been attacked. The issue becomes particularly complicated with regard to the status of the two Frenchmen. The chief of Teunom had assumed that the foreigners were exploring for gold, an assumption which placed them under his protection. However, Lam Ara – the commander of war of the region – denied them protection, by claiming that the chief had no authority to protect the foreigners, as anyone who cooperated with the foreigners was a *kafir* (unbeliever). For him, therefore, the killing of the Frenchmen was justified (Ibrahim Alfian 1987:126-7).

The last incident in particular raises issues of legitimacy and authority in relation to the war discussed above. The two leaders – the chief Teunom and his military commander, Lam Ara – had different views on whether killing the Frenchmen was justified. As a matter of fact, the Frenchmen were neither combatants nor under the protection of Islam. Therefore, they should be regarded as non-combatants, who have a right not to be attacked. However, the issue becomes complicated when seen in the context of a country being besieged by an aggressor. In this case killing them could be considered justified, according to the commander. The British crew members were regarded as prisoners of war in the same context, leading to the demand that they be ransomed before being released (al-Tabari 1933:145).

The strong Acehnese reaction against the Dutch aggression resulted in a great deal of frustration for the latter. In 1881, J.W. van Lansberge, the Governor-General of the Netherlands East Indies, recognized that the determined resistance of the Acehnese had resulted in the 'total disorganization' of the Dutch soldiers (Ibrahim Alfian 1987:75). To solve the problem, the Dutch government sent the Islamicist C. Snouck Hurgronje to the Netherlands East Indies. Not long after his arrival in Aceh, Snouck suggested that the Dutch should attack the ulama-led Acehnese army continuously and harass it everywhere. He recognized that as the war was based on religious doctrine, the only way to end it was to employ Dutch military superiority to crush those providing religious legitimacy for the resistance. Another suggestion was to use the 'kidnapping' strategy in reverse to force the Acehnese leaders to surrender. By kidnapping the wife of the sultan and other chiefs, the Dutch were able to force some leaders to surrender (Ibrahim Alfian 1987:195-7). The sultan's surrender, however, did not end the Acehnese resistance, as the ulama and other chiefs continued to lead their soldiers in attacks against the Dutch.

As the Acehnese soldiers were not united under one commander, diverse fighting forces could operate more or less independently under the direction of various ulama and traditional chiefs. One of the most important commanders was a woman known as Cut Nyak Dien. She was the wife of Teuku Umar, a renowned war commander from west Aceh. After his martyrdom, Cut Nyak Dien took up the command of her late husband's armies on a celebrated campaign.[26] While under normal circumstances Islamic law restricts the participation of women in war to supporting roles, such as that of attending to wounded Muslims and providing other non-combat support (al-Shafi'i 1321 H:88; Khadduri 1955:85; al-Shaybani 1335 H(a):125), Cut Nyak Dien's case reflects the exceptional circumstances of the war as a defensive struggle for survival requiring the participation of women and children, which follows the conception of the struggle propounded in the text of the *HPS*.

The strong defensive military power of Aceh was able to stem the tide of Dutch pressure initially. However, once the Dutch succeeded in occupying parts of Aceh, some local chiefs (*ulèëbalang*) signed treaties recognizing Dutch authority over the region. Those who surrendered, including T. Nanta, 'Abd al-Rahman and T. Muda Baid (Ibrahim Alfian 1987:70-3, 233), were criticized very strongly in the *HPS*. As the ulama of Aceh continued to lead the war, fatwas on many issues concerning the war were produced. Shaykh 'Abbas Ibn Muhammad, known as Tgk. Cik Kutakarang, pronounced that the land

[26] The rise of women as state leaders in Aceh is not surprising. In the second half of the seventeenth century, Aceh was ruled by four queens. They were Sultana Taj al-'Alam Safiyyat al-Din (r. 1641-1675), Sultana Nur al-'Alam Naqiyyat al-Din (r. 1675-1678), Sultana 'Inayat Syah Zakiyyat al-Din (r. 1678-1688) and Sultana Kamalat Syah (r. 1688-1699). For more on this see Sher Banu A.L.Khan's contribution to this volume.

occupied by the Dutch had become a *dar al-harb* (the abode of war). Therefore, everything within that area was legitimate booty for the Muslims. He also issued a fatwa claiming that those who helped the Dutch became unbelievers (*kafirs*) (Ibrahim Alfian 1987:164-5). Tuanku Hashim even suggested that those Acehnese who helped the Dutch could be legitimately killed (Ibrahim Alfian 1987:230). Tgk. Cik Di Tiro repeated the same statement in his letter to the people living in the area the Dutch had occupied. He added that Muslims under Dutch occupation should migrate (*hijra*) to areas still under Muslim control as commanded by the Qur'an (8:72) (Ibrahim Alfian 1987:154-5)[27] – a position also advocated in the text of the *HPS*.[28]

Realizing the desperate situation that the Acehnese were in, Tgk. Cik Di Tiro sent a letter to the Dutch, inviting them to embrace Islam as a precondition for making a treaty with them. In doing so, Cik Di Tiro was not necessarily intending to give up his defensive war effort against the Dutch. Rather, his appeal may be understood as an attempt to implement the classical jurist's suggestion to invite (*da'wa*) the unbelievers into Islam before attacking them (al-Tabari 1933:2-3). It is important to point out, however, that the classical jurists originally intended this concept to be used in an offensive war aimed at expanding Islamic territory. Dutch Commander Van Tijn's reply to Cik Di Tiro's letter expressed agreement with the latter's concerns, as thousands of people had died in the war. However, he rejected Cik Di Tiro's invitation/call to Islam as a precondition to establishing a treaty, since the Dutch, he argued, were not waging a religious war (Ibrahim Alfian 1987:159-60). This correspondence reveals how both sides differed in their perspective of the war.

In later developments, the war was weighed against the question of proportionality. In August 1909, three Acehnese leaders – Tuanku Mahmud, Tuanku Raja Keumala and T. Panglima Polem – asked the ulama who were still waging the war to surrender (*taslim*), claiming to have arrived at that position through the exercise of independent judicial reasoning (*ijtihad*). As the Acehnese could not continue the war against the powerful Dutch, submission (*taslim*) was the wisest solution, since the Dutch did not interfere with religious rituals and rites. At this point, considerations of the hope of success in the war had to be taken into account. Most classical jurists agree that Muslim soldiers must be aware of their own power, usually in terms of numbers. Malik Ibn Anas and Ibn Rushd, however, viewed power in terms

27 According to Allah, '[s]urely those who believed and fled (their homes) and struggled hard in Allah's way with their wealth and their lives, and those who gave shelter and helped – these are friends one another. And those who believed and did not flee, you are not responsible for their protection until they flee. And if they seek help from you in the matter of religion, it is your duty to help (them) except against a people between whom and you there is a treaty. And Allah is Seer of what you do'.

28 *HPS I*, lines 1185-204, 1214-5; *HPS II*, lines 50-4, 395-409.

of military capabilities. In cases where it is clear that they would have little chance of military victory, Muslims are permitted to make treaties with their enemies for their own good (Rushd 1902:374-5).

Again, the main problem here is that most jurists would discuss the subject within the context of an 'offensive' war as territorial expansion, not a specifically defensive one. Therefore, in practice, Muslim reactions to this case varied. In India, for example, a fatwa was issued forbidding Muslims to wage a war against the British, as the latter did not oppress the Muslim faith (Peters 1979:44-53). The ulama of Aceh reacted in a different manner from their Indian counterparts, insisting that the war had to be pursued to the utmost limits of Acehnese capability. The ulama continued to resist until they were completely defeated by the Dutch. This is the creed that is prescribed in the *HPS*, and indeed, the text asserted that the superiority of Dutch military power was not a valid reason for submission to the invading infidels.[29]

In the final analysis, it is important to reiterate that the *HPS* textual tradition was the product of a time when the Acehnese were under attack by the Dutch. In a way, it can be categorized as 'resistance literature', and indeed, the *HPS* was regarded as a subversive work by the colonial authorities. Its composition was intended as an exhortation for the holy war against the Dutch, yet its messages went beyond its initial objective. Indeed, its contents also reflect Acehnese cultural conceptions of war and peace. The idea of ultimate resistance to occupation motivated by religious fervour is perhaps most strikingly illustrated outside the *HPS*, in the phenomenon of the slaying of Europeans by Acehnese overwhelmed by violent and often suicidal passions, which the Dutch referred to as *Atjeh moord*. Undertaken by individual rather than collective initiative, instances of *Atjeh moord* peaked between 1910 and 1937, with over 120 cases reported during that period. In his study of this history, James Siegel described *Atjeh moord* as 'a religious act' (Siegel 1969:83). During the war, the Dutch psychiatrist F.H. van Loon interviewed an Acehnese who had made an unsuccessful attempt to commit *Atjeh moord*. As Van Loon explains:

> Some time ago he intended to go and murder a *kafir* [unbeliever] and especially a Dutch *kafir* […] He sold his property, sharpened his *rentjong* (dagger) and left his village. When it became known what his intentions were, he was arrested. He said he 'preferred to die rather than to live like this'.[30]

29 *HPS I*, lines 1205-14.

30 F.H. van Loon, quoted in Siegel 1969:83.

Before giving up his own life, however, this man had decided to prepare for this by killing a Dutch unbeliever. As has been demonstrated above, this course of action had, during that period, been evocatively advocated in the text of the HPS as the key to attaining the most glorious of deaths and securing one's good standing in the hereafter.

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Chapter x

Aceh histories in the KITLV images archive

Jean Gelman Taylor[1]

In any society, the past is forever being swept aside. Memories fade, records are lost, and those in power manipulate images of the past. In Aceh, survivors of the tsunami have to confront the sudden, massive loss of people and of their history. Material culture, which is the physical record of minds and hands, also vanished beneath the tsunami waves. Loss of material culture destroys evidence of the connections forged between maker and user that knit social classes together. Here, I introduce the Images Archive of the Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies (hereafter: KITLV Images Archive) at Leiden as a repository that offers the possibility of recovering traces of Aceh's past. The archive is also an important source for historians rethinking the history of Aceh within the larger histories of Indonesia.

All visual sources – paintings, portraits, photographs – need a context for their explanation and interpretation. My research method combines the study of document-based histories of Aceh with the study of images. I focus on the content of the photographs. Who or what was considered by photographers to be important to record through the expensive processes of early camera technology? How does a visual record contribute to understanding the past? I also consider the Aceh photographs in comparison with other photographs stored in the KITLV Images Archive that were taken in the same time period at other locations around the archipelago.

Major themes of histories of Aceh are the early seventeenth-century sultanate with its global connections, and the Aceh War, or rather, Aceh wars, over

[1] My thanks go to the Agency for the Rehabilitation and Reconstruction of Aceh and Nias (BRR) for support to participate in the First International Conference of Aceh and Indian Ocean Studies. I would also like to thank the Rethinking Indonesian Histories-project of the Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde (KITLV, Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies), for the opportunity to join the team of researchers in Leiden and Yogyakarta in 2005. Project colleagues Henk Schulte Nordholt, Ratna Saptari, Bambang Purwanto, Degung Santikarma and Hilmar Farid were generous in sharing their knowledge and companionship. I also thank Peter Boomgaard, Robert Cribb, Noorhaidi Hasan and Gerrit Knaap for valuable insights. An earlier version of this chapter was published in Jean Gelman Taylor 2008.

the years 1873 to the 1930s. In official histories of the Republic of Indonesia and in popular conception, Aceh is presented as a tenacious opponent of colonial rule and fierce supporter of independence. These themes of power, alienation and resistance in the historiography of Aceh have influenced its visual representation in published collections of photographs and art histories of Indonesia. In them, photographs of soldiers, bivouacs and military infrastructure represent Aceh. An examination of the KITLV Images Archive, however, reveals a great many more facets of Aceh. I will describe the materials in the archive from Aceh, after brief remarks on using photographs as research tools for understanding the region's complex history.

Photographs as tools of history

At its birth, photography seemed to be a tool of science; the images it produced imparted ideals of reality and truth. The Netherlands Indies government quickly grasped the potential of photography and commissioned photographs in 1841 of Borobudur and of other ancient monuments that were being pried loose from their cover of vegetation by amateur archaeologists. Once photographs became reproducible, and supplies of chemicals and paper could be ordered by telegraph from Holland and dispatched promptly by steamer, a new industry established itself in Java. The professional photographer subsequently followed explorers, the colonial army, civil servants and commercial agents across the archipelago, and the camera began to replace pencil and paint in creating official records of Indonesian peoples and places. Amateurs joined the ranks of photographers after the release of the Kodak camera to the public in 1888. They contributed domestic themes and picturesque landscapes to the stock of photographs of Indonesia. Less cumbersome and cheaper photographic equipment with faster operating times meant that in theory, anything at all could be photographed.

Consideration of what actually was photographed obliges us to recognize that photography is not an objective record of peoples, times and places. Photographs are subjected to manipulation through selection, like any other set of documents. They are staged records and products of fleeting relationships between the photographed and the photographer. Anthropologists and historians of photography remind us to examine with care photographs taken by Europeans of colonized places and peoples (Wachlin 1994; Wachlin and Van der Linden 1989).[2] Specialists in colonial photography draw attention to the social distance between the viewer and the viewed, and to the proc-

[2] See also the chapters by E. Edwards, N.J. Bradford, M. Macintyre and M. McKenzie, C. Pinney, J.C. Scherer, and T. Wright in Edwards 1992.

ess of 'othering'. Often, the subjects of photographs are presented as 'native types', made known only by their occupation as cooks, nursemaids, coolies, food-sellers or performing girls. By contrast, usually the personal names of 'European types' – generals, governors, aunts, children – are preserved, so that the viewer perceives the photographed as individuals.

Generalizations about 'othering' should not lead us to overlook cases where Indonesians were photographed as people, not as types, with their personal names recorded in the family albums of the colonizer. An example is the recently published *Het album van Mientje*, assembled in 1862 for Wilhelmina van der Hucht by her relations on the occasion of her marriage (Van den Berg and Wachlin 2005). The Indonesians photographed in it are not anonymous 'types', but named family friends, associates and servants. Several group photographs of the Acehnese and the Dutch in the KITLV Images Archive preserve only the names of the Acehnese, and it is the Dutch who are the nameless 'types', presented as officials, officers, colleagues and wives.

Most published research on colonial-era photography focuses on European photographers and pays little attention to photographs produced by Asian photographers. Indigenous photographers photographed Europeans as well as fellow Javanese (Knaap 1999).[3] Well-to-do Indonesians commissioned photographs for their own family albums, to give to Dutch colleagues in the colonial civil service or to send to the Dutch royals.[4] The photographs of Europeans in Indonesian family albums await analysis. Photographs taken by Indonesians during visits to the Netherlands in the 1920s and 1930s could also serve as a valuable counterpart to studies of how Europeans photographed Indonesians. I would expect to find a similar 'othering' process in photographs that Indonesians made of the Dutch.

The KITLV Aceh images: content and context

The records that make up the Images Archive of the KITLV are stored in Leiden, the Netherlands. The archive has been digitalized, so its contents are available online to anyone anywhere with access to a computer and the internet.[5] Indonesian lives abound in the KITLV Images Archive. In January 2007, it contained 1,053 items stored under the keyword 'Aceh', within a total collection of 43,841 images. Most of the Aceh images are photographs, but

[3] See also photographs in the KITLV Images Archive taken by Chinese and indigenous photographers of Europeans.

[4] See examples of these photographs and their inscriptions in Nieuwenhuys 1973, Wassing-Visser 1995, and in the KITLV Images Archive.

[5] The URL is http://kitlv.pictura-dp.nl (accessed 28-1-2010). The photographs discussed here are identified by their archive number.

there are also pencil sketches, watercolours and a few newspaper cartoons. All were made between the years 1873 and 1939.

The earliest photographs taken by Europeans in Aceh date from 1874. They record the second Dutch invasion, termed 'military expedition' in Dutch sources, from the time. At various dates, the Dutch declared the Aceh War to be over. Some historians argue that it never ended, and cite suicide-murders of the 1920s and 1930s as evidence for this claim. The photographs in the KITLV collection therefore cover the time period, considered most broadly, of the Aceh wars.

In this 60-year period (1870s-1930s), numerous wars were fought across the Indonesian Archipelago. Units of the colonial army were dispatched to Bali, Lombok, Sulawesi and Borneo, as well as to Sumatra, to incorporate these regions into the colonial state. It was the era of 'high colonialism', when uniform grids of administration, commerce, education, health and agricultural services were laid down, and when all islands were connected to the colonial capital by steamship services, and postal and telegraph systems. The 1870s-1930s was also the era of *tempo doeloe* – a time recalled in Holland with nostalgia by old-timers and Eurasians, with their memories kept alive through photograph albums of an Indies world that has disappeared. Looking further afield, the period of the Aceh photographic record follows on the Indian Mutiny (or Indian Rebellion) of 1857, which falls within the last years of the Ottoman caliphate and the rise of modern Islamic reform movements.

Many photographs show Aceh as a site of war. The oldest image in the Aceh collection is a coloured lithograph, made in 1873, which gives a bird's-eye view of Aceh from the sea, and of the coastal defensive works that the first Dutch invasion force encountered [51-J-2]. There are photographs of officers and men of the colonial army, Koninklijk Nederlandsch-Indisch Leger (KNIL), in jungle bivouacs [16451], and studio portraits of individual officers [2504] and of Acehnese *panglima* (commanders, district heads) [2508].[6] There are photographs of observation posts [52053], barracks [2663], graves [3415], KNIL's Acehnese auxiliary troops [11783], Acehnese militias [4916] and informants [27130]. All these photographs show how multi-racial and multi-cultural the KNIL was. The photographs exemplify the dominant themes of war and resistance to the Dutch in the published histories of Aceh, and the selections for Aceh made by assemblers of photographic and art books on Indonesia.

Examination of all the Aceh photographs in the KITLV collection, however, reveals that there are also many other subjects of photographs under the key-

[6] Only one example of each topic is given in parentheses here, but the KITLV Images Archive contains numerous examples of each of the topics identified. Each online photograph can be retrieved by entering its number alone into the 'advanced search' function.

word 'Aceh'. Contents of the photographs include the following: landscapes showing the natural beauty of Aceh's mountains, valleys, rivers and waterfalls [18019], the sultan's residence [19261], and grave stones of past sultans [4929] and holy men [4925]. There are photographs of Sultan Muhammad Daud [6583] and members of his family, including wives and princesses [15995], studio portraits commissioned by leading Acehnese figures in the colonial society [6541], and group photographs of Dutch and Acehnese members of the new colonial administration [4907]. There are photographs of residential sections of Kotaraja (former name of Banda Aceh) [4941], and of men and women presented as Acehnese 'types' in elaborate bridal costumes [6517], as market traders [18925)] and as villagers [3611]. Photographs were also taken of performers of traditional arts such as *didong* (a traditional genre of poetry recitation) [6190] and *seudati* (a form of traditional Achenese dress) [5269], of craftsmen and craftswomen [4950], and of technicians in modern enterprises [11779]. There are photographs of agricultural machines of local materials and construction [18394], and of Acehnese handicrafts and the Aceh Museum established by the colonial government [35169]. There are examples of 'traditional' Acehnese [2991] and Gayo houses [27356], many of mosques of wood and thatch with tiered roofs [27137], and mosques in the new, Indo-Saracenic style introduced by the Dutch [3997].

Other photographs record roads under construction [26353], bridges and trains [27493], cars [25020], government [4986] and Islamic schools [25151], petroleum drills [16734], dockside coal depots [28445], lighthouses [3275], telegraph transmitters [19246], *kampong* (town quarter, village) street lighting [4939], plantations [18507], and shops operated by Dutch [27597], Acehnese [11761] and Chinese [3170] in Kotaraja.

The camera also recorded local celebrations of important events in the colonial calendar, such as the illumination of the Baiturrahman Mosque in Banda Aceh to celebrate the marriage of Princess Juliana to Prince Bernhard in 1937 [54545] (Illustration 18). Many photographs are of colonial families [25357], both at home [17982] and travelling with armed escort [52072], and of European children barefoot in the garden [17991]. There are photographs of places frequented by Europeans, such as the beach [17975], the Masonic lodge [7531] and clubs [5100]. There are also photographs of the Acehnese playmates of Dutch children [18040].

This great diversity of images suggests topics for social histories of Aceh, to complement the political aspects that have dominated most scholarship to date. Photographs of KNIL and Acehnese militias, of the new infrastructure of bridges, railway lines and roads, of Dutch and Acehnese colonial officials, and of new-style schools, for example, are sources for histories of Acehnese interactions with the Dutch, and with Indonesians from all over the archipelago. Photographs of mosques throughout Aceh, the Indonesian

Figure 18. The Baiturrahman Mosque, Banda Aceh, 1937, illuminated in honour of the marriage of Princess Juliana to Prince Bernhard (KITLV 54545)

Archipelago and Malay Peninsula establish the existence of a Southeast Asian style in mosque architecture that is now disappearing. Photographs from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries of new mosques in the major colonial cities demonstrate the role of Dutch money, and of colonial architects, in introducing Indonesians to styles in mosque architecture imported from elsewhere in the Muslim world.

Photographs of the capital can also contribute to developing an urban history of Banda Aceh, and the collection as a whole can be mined to study minorities in Aceh, such as the Minangkabau, the Javanese and the Chinese. Everyday Acehnese economic life can be studied through photographs of houses, villages and markets. The gender division in labour is illustrated through photographs of men slaughtering buffalo, women weavers at their looms and the like. Photographs of Acehnese 'types', such as village inhabitants, *seudati* performers and market sellers, are further sources for consideration of public space and roles for women. Photographs of elite and village women show hair and clothing styles that are quite different from female dress in Java from the same time period, and from female dress required today by Aceh's implementers of Shari'a. The KITLV photographs also record social interactions between Dutch and Acehnese elites. These photographs, when put side by side with *tempo doeloe* photographs from

Java, are source material for a comparative study of colonial societies across the archipelago.

In sum, then, while visual records enrich historical narratives, they also challenge them and suggest new topics for research. I will now briefly survey histories of Aceh, and discuss how their dominant themes of war and resistance have influenced the selection of items for visual representations of Aceh in the photograph and art books of Indonesia. I will then revisit the histories through a consideration of a selection of photographs from the KITLV Aceh collection.

Aceh histories in word and image: a sampling

Today, contrasting versions of Aceh's history by professional and popular historians compete in scholarly publications and websites.[7] At the outbreak of war, P.J. Veth rushed to compile information on Aceh's topography, climate, peoples and customs, impelled, as he stated in his foreword dated 29 April 1875, to help ensure the success of the second invasion force (Veth 1875:5-6). He drew on Malay chronicles, the works of travellers to Aceh, and on earlier scholars, such as the eighteenth-century British colonial officer William Marsden (Marsden 1975). There were patriots such as P. Vergers, who wrote of heroic KNIL forces combating fanatical, opium-addicted Acehnese (Vergers 1875). C. Snouck Hurgronje compiled his two-volume *De Atjehers* from within the occupied capital of Kotaraja itself, in collaboration with two assistants from Aceh's highland Gayo territory (Snouck Hurgronje 1906). For many historians writing since the 1950s, Aceh is important in the narrative of the making of Indonesia. Authors stress that this northern end of Sumatra was the only area of all Indonesia not to be re-occupied by Dutch military and civil administrations during the struggle for independence.[8]

Prior to the settlement in July 2005 between the *Gerakan Aceh Merdeka* (GAM, Free Aceh Movement) and the Indonesian government, there was also

7 The texts that I have consulted are cited in full. I make no claim that the sampling is exhaustive.

8 I find it curious that the website of Syiah Kuala University, in its historical section 'Sejarah Singkat Universitas Syiah Kuala', stressed Aceh's 'subjugation' to colonial rule, rather than its resistance. As it states (my translation): '[t]he age of Iskandar Muda represented the great epoch of the Kingdom of Aceh. And yet, over the course of time, its eminence dwindled, as a direct result of the actions and ploys of the enemies, the colonialists, who 'for hundreds of years' [my emphasis] colonized the Land of Iskandar Muda. As a result, Aceh suffered a decline, especially in the field of education. The decline of a state is closely linked to the level of education of its people.' This is quoted from www.unsyiah.ac.id (accessed 1-11-2005). The Syiah Kuala University's version of Aceh's history contrasts with the majority view summarized, in Paul van 't Veer's words, as 'last colonised, first free' (Van't Veer 1969:320).

another historical narrative – one that detached Aceh from the story of the making of Indonesia. It stressed Aceh's history as an independent state, and its lack of links with icons of Indonesia's national past, such as Majapahit. This narrative argued that the Dutch should have ceded sovereignty in 1949 to two new nations, one comprising Java and eastern Indonesia, and the other comprising 'Aceh-Sumatra'. This narrative may be found in the writings of Hasan Di Tiro (1986),[9] and in many websites created by GAM members.[10]

Professional historians, that is, historians who document their sources, submit their manuscripts to peer review, and publish these manuscripts in academic journals and presses, focus either on the seventeenth century or on the years preceding Indonesia's independence. Principal topics for seventeenth-century Aceh include pepper, sultans, consolidation and expansion of the sultanate, Aceh's queens, international trade, embassies to Europe and to the Ottomans, wars against the Portuguese, and Aceh's administrative system and its great wealth as counted in elephants and horses (Andaya 2004; Kathirithamby-Wells 1998; Kam Hing Lee 1995; Lombard 1967; Marsden 1975; Hoesein Djajadiningrat 1982/1983; Reid 2005). Historians have shown less interest in the eighteenth century. Instead of making the Acehnese the central focus, studies of the Aceh War recount it as a series of Dutch actions (Bakker 1993; Kempees 1905; Taselaar and Van Santen 1993; Van 't Veer 1969; Zentgraaf 1938). A pattern in Aceh's history seems to be frequent, low-level warfare between the many small territories into which Aceh fragmented following the decline of royal power. The Dutch inserted themselves into internal conflict, but transformed warfare and its outcome in Aceh through the scale of their operations.

The subject of war for Indonesia is perhaps most marked in studies of Aceh. Mention has been made of jingoistic works by civilians, such as Vergers's *De oorlog met Atchin* (Vergers 1875). His call to glory has an interesting counterpart in the 'I was there' journal of the French entrepreneur and adventurer Xavier Brau de Saint Pol Lias (Brau de Saint-Pol Lias 1884). Diary extracts of the half year he spent in Aceh (1880-1881) recounted his advice to the Dutch governor, his business relations with Acehnese district power holders, and his journeys scouting for suitable land leases for coffee plantations and gold mining in the Lohong district, all undertaken during a period when Europeans were supposedly cowering behind defensive fortifications in Kotaraja. E.B. Kiesltra, who was in Aceh with the army corps of engineers, gave detailed accounts of the first and second invasions, the composition of units, critical biographies of

[9] See also Hasan Di Tiro 1984, which covered Tengku Hasan Di Tiro's activities from 4-9-1976 to 29-3-1979, and made the argument that '[w]e have no historic, political, cultural, economic or geographic relationship with them [the Javanese]' (Hasan Di Tiro 1984).

[10] See, for example, www.AcehKita.com (accessed 7-10-2005), www.asnlf.net (accessed 2-12-2005), www.gimonca.com 'Entry Aceh' (accessed 10-2005), www.kabar-irian.com/pipermail/kabar-indonesia (accessed 2-12-2005). See also Hasballah Saad 2000.

their commanders, and maps of major military actions (Kielstra 1883). Three decades later, the KNIL was still fighting in Aceh. J.C.J. Kempees – former aide to Commander G.C.E. van Daalen (1863-1930) – narrated his personal experience of the 1904 'Gayo expedition' (Kempees 1905). H.C. Zentgraaf's *Atjeh* is different from previous accounts by military men, because this civilian journalist interviewed Acehnese as well as Dutch veterans (Zentgraaf 1938). Paul van 't Veer gave a detailed account of the wars, set within contexts of Netherlands and Netherlands Indies politics (Van 't Veer 1969). In his recent study of the creation of the border between British Malaya and the Netherlands Indies, Eric Tagliacozzo (2005) provided much information about the meticulous mapping of the Sumatran coast, the new lighthouses, the exploratory journeys up rivers to chart the 'very hilly and almost wholly unknown' territory, which Veth described Aceh's interior.[11] Tagliacozzo showed how, at the same time as the sea border was constructed and patrolled, it was evaded, avoided or transgressed by people carrying opium, textiles and firearms, and the living cargoes of prostitutes, slaves and black marketeers. His monograph, while being a larger study of the border through the Straits of Melaka, provides important material for a new history of the Aceh wars.

Few ethnographers have followed the work of Snouck Hurgronje. James Siegel focused on the matrilocal organization of rural villages (Siegel 1969), while John R. Bowen reminded us, in his studies of the Gayo (Bowen 1991, 1993), that Aceh's population was not homogeneous. The 'traditional' Acehnese house style is drawn and discussed by Peter Nas (2003). Historians of Islam, such as Azyumardi Azra, Michael Laffan and Peter Riddell, emphasized the connections forged between Aceh, Arabia and Egypt by itinerant scholars and jobseekers, and the leading role of the Acehnese ulama in translating important commentaries from Arabic and Persian into Malay (Azyumardi Azra 2004; Laffan 2003; Riddell 2001). Their studies are complemented by specialists in literature and language such as G.W.J. Drewes, James Sneddon and James Siegel (Drewes 1979; Siegel 1979; Sneddon 2003). Hoesein Djajadiningrat compiled an Acehnese-Dutch dictionary (Hoesein Djajadiningrat 1934). Denys Lombard reprinted the first Malay-Dutch word list and set of sample conversations, originally compiled in Aceh by Frederik de Houtman and subsequently published in Holland in 1603 (Lombard 1970).[12]

[11] A sketch map of Aceh made by KNIL officers around 1876-1877 shows the same want of exact topographical information as P.J. Veth lamented in his 1875 study. See Kees Zandvliet (2002, plate 176). This map shows the course of the Aceh River, the location of rice fields and the headquarters of Panglima Polem. According to the map's accompanying note, its information was obtained from 'Acehnese spies and is therefore unreliable'. Kielstra called Aceh an 'unknown land' (Kielstra 1883:1, 84).

[12] The value of Frederik de Houtman's word list and sample dialogues as a window on the Acehnese world was widely acknowledged. The first translation into English appeared in 1614. See Annabel Teh Gallop 1989.

André Wink and Hugh O'Neill have argued that Aceh's royals were influenced by the courts of Mughal India (O'Neill 1994; Wink 1988), but advance little evidence beyond the adoption of the royal title of *Syah*. Mosque architecture, for example, as recorded in nineteenth-century photographs or in sketches and paintings dating from earlier centuries, shows little affinity with Mughal large-scale buildings, domes and colourful tiles.[13] Robert Wessing's consideration of features of the Gunongan, connected to the residence of Aceh's sultans, led him to classify it as either a Hindu cosmic temple or a symbolic mountain (Wessing 1988). Lack of archaeological evidence means that the nearby *kandang* also defies definition, with suggested uses for this structure ranging from a pleasure garden for royal ladies to a burial enclosure for the graves of former sultans (Wessing 1991). Neither of these remains from the early seventeenth-century sultanate appears to reflect Mughal influence. It is in the 'golden letters' of Aceh's sultans that Mughal (and Ottoman) influence is most apparent. Annabel Teh Gallop reproduced the metre-long letter sent in 1615 by Sultan Iskandar Muda to James I of England, in which the text is framed by foliage and flower motifs, and the paper is covered in gold. She also reproduced images of royal seals modelled on those of Mughal emperors (Gallop 1991:35, 53-4).[14]

There is little agreement on how to characterize the system that evolved as sultans lost their monopoly of political and economic power. Aceh is variously termed feudal or oligarchic by historians, while GAM separatists often characterized Aceh as an egalitarian society, especially in contrast to Java. Otto Syamsuddin Ishak described indigenous society as decentralized, cooperating, non-hierarchical and grounded in Islam, in contrast to Javanese society, which he characterized as centralized, hierarchical and with a submissive population, resulting in aggressive government (Otto Syamsuddin Ishak n.y.:6, 8, 9). Anthony Reid argued against the feudalism characterization, because essential features of feudal societies, that is, independent cities licensed and let alone by lords whose wealth was based on the control of agricultural production, did not emerge in Aceh when royal power declined (Reid 2005:149).

[13] There are many examples of photographs and drawings of mosques from across the Indonesian Archipelago to Terengganu (Malaysia) in characteristic Southeast Asian Muslim-style, that is, constructed from wood, square in shape, and with several layers of roofs rising in a pyramid. See, for example, pencil sketches from 1881-1883 of three mosques in Aceh by O.G.H. Heldring in the KITLV Images Archive, 37B-583, 598, 604. See also a photograph of T. Anjong mosque, 1892, sketches from the seventeenth-century mosques in Demak, Jepara, Kudus, Banten and Aceh in H.J. de Graaff 1963, and photographs of Halmahera and Ternate mosques in Boomgaard and Van Dijk (2001:452-3). In 1861, Adriaan Holle had a mosque built in the Southeast Asian style for the population on his Parakan Salak estate in West Java. A photo of this mosque is in Mientje's album; see Van den Berg and Wachlin 2005:166.

[14] See also James Siegel (1979:23-31) on royal seals of Aceh.

Important themes that stand out in works aimed at popular consumption, particularly for political purposes, and that do not extensively document their sources, concern dating the arrival of Islam in Aceh and the position of Hasan Di Tiro. On the former, authors draw attention to a long history of contacts with western Arabia and Muslim peoples. It is claimed that indigenous Islamic communities already existed in the northernmost part of Sumatra in the eighth century CE , that is, from very shortly after the beginning of Islam itself.[15] Scholars who used the evidence of royal tombstones to date the earliest indigenous Muslim communities were condemned as perpetrators of a Western plot to diminish the importance of Islam in Aceh.[16] On Hasan Di Tiro, there is slippage in website material from that of a descendant of a family 'close to the sultan' to that of a 'descendant of sultans', and hence the title 'Prince' Hasan Di Tiro.[17] There follow stories of signs of peculiar greatness and destiny appearing already in his childhood, for example when the young Hasan was delayed on his way to school by Acehnese anxious to greet him and kiss his hand.[18]

In writings of professional and amateur historians alike, the judgement of 'strongly Islamic' is often applied to Aceh and the Acehnese, although the criteria by which this assessment is made are not spelled out. The judgement makes its way into other kinds of texts too. For instance, in introducing the peoples of Sumatra for the Leo Haks and Steven Wachlin study of Indies postcards (Haks and Wachlin 2004), Diana Darling listed 'the Malay, the Batak, the Lampung, the fiercely devout Acehnese and the famously matriarchal Minangkabau' (Haks and Wachlin 2004:29). Aceh figures strongly in the 'Early Modern History' volume of the *Encyclopaedia of Indonesian heritage* (*Indonesian heritage* 1996-1998), and makes brief appearances in the 'Arts' volumes, but oddly for a place labelled 'strongly Islamic', there is not a single mention of the Acehnese in the *Encyclopaedia of Indonesian heritage*'s volume on 'Religion', except for a photograph of the Baiturrahman Mosque in Banda Aceh (*Indonesian heritage* 1996-1998).[19] Only Aceh's Gayo have a paragraph and illustration concerning a folk ritual for welcoming the newborn in the 'Religion' volume. In the new three-volume *Southeast Asia: A historical encyclopedia* edited by Ooi Keat Gin, Aceh has two entries: one a brief political

15 John R. Bowen discusses claims by Hamka, M. Junus Djamil, Ali Hasymy and Teungku Hasan Basri; see Bowen 1991:248-54.

16 See, for example, Hill 1963 and Ricklefs 2001.

17 The genealogy of the sultans of Aceh, constructed by Hoesein Djajadiningrat, ends with Sultan Ibrahim Mansur Syah (r. 1836-1870) (Hoesein Djajadiningrat 1982/1983: Appendix 2).

18 See, for instance, www.Acehkita.com, www.Islamic-paths.org, www.asnlf.net, www.groups.yahoo.com/group/keyakinana/message/426 and www.kabar-irian.com/pipermail/kabar-indonesia (accessed between 8-2005 and 12-2005).

19 See Vol. 8 of this series.

history, and the other an outline of the Aceh War (Ooi Keat Gin 2004:118-22, 122-3).

Aceh is little evident in publications on Indonesian arts. There is no example of Acehnese arts in Claire Holt's pioneering *Art in Indonesia* (Holt 1967). While Acehnese history is discussed in the written text accompanying Helen Ibbitson Jessup's *Court arts of Indonesia*, there is only one visual entry, that is, a small photograph of the Gunongan (Jessup 1990:123, plate 88). The decline of royal power, and the destruction caused by fires and centuries of warfare and plunder described in texts such as the *Hikajat Potjut Muhamat* (Drewes 1979) and in the *Bustan al-Salatin* (Hoesein Djajadiningrat 1982/1983:58) account, in part, for this absence of material objects. Further, the lack of cordial relations between Aceh's sultans and the House of Orange-Nassau in the nineteenth century, together with the abolition of Aceh's sultanate by the Dutch in 1874, means that there is barely a representation from Aceh among treasures owned by the Dutch royal family. In Rita Wassing-Visser's (1995) *Royal gifts from Indonesia*, there are only three artefacts representing Aceh amongst the shimmering pages of bejewelled *keris*, sumptuous textiles and Buddhist statues. Two are of Acehnese manufacture, namely, a ribbed betel box worked in gold (176]) and an inscribed dagger with sheath (227). The third artefact – a black square of cloth with Qur'anic verses woven into it (104) – is not the product of Aceh weavers, but cut from cloth covering the Kaabah in Mecca and subsequently sold there in pieces as souvenirs to pilgrims. These objects representing Aceh were given to Queen Wilhelmina by administrative heads of Pidie and by Teungku Haji Ismak from Sigli.

Two illustrations from *Nineteenth century prints and illustrated books of Indonesia* represent Aceh (Bastin and Brommer 1979:245 [plate 105], 259 [plate 259]). One is a drawing of a haji in white costume and turban, and the other is an imagined staging of a battle in the Aceh War by L. van Leer – an artist who never left Haarlem.[20] Again, war predominates in images of Aceh in Zandvliet's (2002) *The Dutch encounter with Asia, 1600-1950*. Plates include an early map [#176], captured militia banners [#169, #177], an Acehnese shield [#175], the important naval base at Sabang harbour [#199, #200] and portraits of two generals who commanded KNIL forces in Aceh [#94, #178]. Peter Boomgaard made a selection of 500 photographs from the Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen's vast collection of 150,000 photographs for his *Indië boek* (Boomgaard and Van Dijk 2001:255). Indonesia's past is represented by sections (Sumatra, Java, and so on) divided under headings such as 'Nature',

[20] This picture by L. van Leer illustrates Vergers's *De oorlog met Atchin*. In the centre of another picture by Van Leer, between pages 144-5, a Dutch soldier clubs a prostrate Acehnese. Other Acehnese fighters, dressed in white turbans and clothing, flee from KNIL soldiers, who are armed with bayonets and swords, and wear military caps with neck protectors. Information on Van Leer is from Haks and Maris 1995:167.

'Elite Politics', 'Transport', 'Town', 'Primary Industry' and 'Education'. He selected, for Aceh, photographs of sultans' tombs, the Baiturrahman Mosque, General J.B. van Heutsz, KNIL and Acehnese administrators, but he did not have Aceh represented in the 'Culture and Nature' sections.

Boomgaard included one very rare photograph of an elephant carrying military supplies.[21] In the 1880s, KNIL planners experimented with elephants for moving supplies in Aceh. Buffalo carts were too slow and could only be used on flat ground, while the railway lines built from 1874 connected forts and observation posts in a defensive ring around the capital without reaching into the hinterland or mountains. Due to the earlier collapse of the local industry in capturing and training elephants,[22] KNIL planners turned to Javanese convict labour as the solution to moving supplies for troops and building materials for Aceh's new infrastructure of roads and railways. Twenty-five thousand Javanese served penal sentences in Aceh under conditions so harsh that the death toll of the war years weighed the heaviest on them (Van 't Veer, 1969:311).

The Eurasian photographer Jean Demmeni (1866-1939) was the son of a Frenchman who had risen to the rank of major-general in Aceh. The Indies-born son also joined the army, and, in the course of his military duties and later career in the colonial Topographical Service, crisscrossed the archipelago, amassing an important photographic record. Travelling through Sumatra, Demmeni photographed people in festive dress from Lampung, irrigated rice fields in the Minangkabau valleys, mosques and *madrasa* (Islamic schools) in Padang, dugout canoes in Mentawai, and hillsides stripped bare of jungle cover for commercial plantations along the east coast. However, Demmeni's photographs from Aceh, chosen by Leo Haks and Paul Zach for inclusion in their homage to the photographer, feature mainly military themes – a KNIL unit, a military field hospital, supply wagons drawn by horses and coolies working as porters (Demmeni 1987:88-91). Similarly, a military theme is the choice of J.R. Diessen and R.P.G.A Voskuil in their collection of aerial photographs of the Indies (Diessen and Voskuil 1993). Instead of evidence of urban and rural Acehnese life, there are photographs of military bases, and the allied modern infrastructure of the harbour, railway lines, bridges and supply sheds.

Haks and Wachlin (2004) conceived of assembling a pictorial heritage for today's citizens of Indonesia in *Indonesia: 500 early postcards*. Between 1893

21 There is a photograph [18017] of two elephants and their driver in the Aceh collection of the KITLV Images Archive. It was taken around 1924.

22 The industry of capturing and training elephants, and of breeding horses, depended on wealthy patrons; see Boomgaard and Henley 2004. This industry appears to have collapsed in later seventeenth-century Aceh with the decline in royal wealth and power, as did the export trade in these animals. Cattle were not available in sufficient numbers as draught animals in the nineteenth century, because of the decline in the cattle-breeding industry due to warfare and cattle disease (Kielstra 1883:10).

and the 1930s, thousands of photographs were made for picture postcards of Indonesia's towns, landscapes, and ancient and modern architecture, as well as studio portraits of 'Indies' types. These postcards were sent to Holland where they created visual impressions of far-off lands for their recipients and became collectors' items. Aceh is represented in the Sumatra section of this collection by a railway line and five postcards from Sabang – the Dutch suburb that grew up on Weh Island around its strategic harbour, naval base, coaling station, dry dock and lighthouses.[23] The postcards depict street scenes, ships in harbour and the town park.

Rob Nieuwenhuys devoted the fourth volume of his *tempo doeloe* series to Indonesians photographed by Europeans (Nieuwenhuys 1998). His Aceh photographs, chosen mainly from the KITLV archive, are dark; they include convict labourers, grave markers for members of KNIL fallen in battle, mass graves for nameless Acehnese, prisoners of war, and figures of controversy in the conflict, such as Teuku Umar and Cut Nyak Dien.

Books by Holly Smith (1997) and Barbara Leigh (1989) present Aceh's material culture. Coloured plates of ceremonial 'traditional' dress in Smith's book show how recent 'tradition' is; for the *jilbab*, fitted blouses and trousers of today are not to be seen in photographs of women that date from the 1880s. Smith noted weaving patterns that are symmetrical, abstract, geometric and 'nomadic', and the strong red, yellow, purple and black colours of the silks; she also drew attention to decorative elements, such as horns, fishtails, leaves, petals and stars, rows of beadwork, gold and silver embroidery, and Arabic letters woven into textiles and incised on dagger handles. Smith also included photographs of gold, silver and bronze receptacles, jewellery and weapons, and photographs of musical instruments and dance. For a region that had experienced the Aceh wars, Japanese invasion, the Indonesian revolution, Darul Islam, GAM and military occupation, Smith's conclusion, as follows, may be surprising:

> Today [meaning before the book's 1997 publication date, JGT], little in Aceh has changed. […] Along the coastal road are common scenes of Aceh, snapshots of a simple village life that has existed in serenity, and without interruption from time immemorial. (Smith 1997:61-2.)

Leigh's analysis documented differences between coastal and highland arts, and between crafts dominated by men and those that are the specialty of women. She recorded the disappearance of traditional modes of production,

[23] J.B. van Heutsz wanted to turn Sabang into a free port and transit centre to rival Penang. Sabang achieved free port status in 1909. It was the only port in the Dutch colony that was not run by the colonial government (Zandvliet 2002:380).

for example, the replacement of hand embroidery by machine-sewing. Leigh approached each art and craft form by describing how a named individual made the object from start to finish. This approach allows her to establish an ongoing dialogue between the artisan and outside influences. Even the artisan producing 'traditional' arts made changes when copying from mother or father. Leigh saw more Islamic influences in designs in the second half of the twentieth century, such as an increased use of Arabic calligraphy as a decorative element.

Robyn Maxwell's comprehensive survey of Southeast Asian textiles included information on production techniques for Acehnese textiles, illustrated by the coloured plates of men's and women's shoulder cloths (Maxwell 2003). She identified models for Acehnese forms and motifs in designs on Persian prayer mats and Indian cloths, and in Turkish metallic thread embroidery. The Leigh, Smith and Maxwell studies contrast strikingly with the general absence of Aceh in most art and photograph books on Indonesia, which represent Java, Bali, West Sumatra and other regions with photographs of domestic and palace architecture, textiles woven, batiked and embroidered, elaborate work in gold and silver, and paintings of idyllic villages with the family buffalo, happy workers in the rice field and appealing portraits of mothers and children. There are also images of bare-breasted women and the slim, naked bodies of young boys.

This brief survey of histories, encyclopaedias, websites and art books yields the conclusion that Aceh is rarely shown in dimensions other than war. Somehow, the history of war casts a shadow over how Aceh was and continues to be represented within Indonesia. It seems as if Aceh's function is to be a grim reminder of a colonial past. Indeed, from the time of its incorporation into the Netherlands East Indies, Aceh seems to warrant a photographic record. Brau de Saint Pol Lias, for instance, told us that he learnt how to make photographs in Aceh. He recorded the trials of carrying his photographic and developing equipment with him on his journeys into the Aceh countryside, or rather, the trials of his Javanese man servants who did the actual carrying, and said that the illustrations in his book, *Chez les Atchés*, were paintings he made from the black-and-white photographs that he took there (Brau de Saint-Pol Lias 1884:28). Commercial studio owners based in Java's cities sent photographers to Aceh to record the progress of KNIL forces, while KNIL itself appointed officers as official photographers. Van Daalen instructed a military doctor, H.M. Neeb, to photograph the six Gayo and three Alas villages that were targets of his 1904 raids, providing a precise record of broken village defences and the broken bodies of their inhabitants.

The prominence of photographers in the Aceh wars has continued to attract notice. The Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam drew attention to photography in its 2005 exhibit in the Indies/Indonesia section, which contained a life-sized

model of a blonde photographer, with a tripod and large camera, recording an Indonesian landscape of tropical trees and animals. Eros Djarot, director of the 1988 motion picture *Tjoet Nja' Dhien* filmed a European photographer standing on a hill, again with a tripod and large camera, and with his back to the viewer, in a scene set in 1905.

Aceh was the most photographed of the colonial wars fought in the last 75 years of Dutch rule. Photography did not exist when the Diponegoro War was fought in Java (1825-1830). The daguerreotype had just been invented in 1839, when the Padri War was over. Official photographers accompanied colonial armies to Bali and Lombok. The KITLV Images Archive includes photographs of the *puputan* of 20 September 1906 [10084, 1014]. Dutch authors described *puputan* as '*zelfmoord*' (suicide), which is the same term they used to describe Acehnese and Gayo deaths in battle. And yet, the representation of Balinese in art books and museum collections does not focus on warfare. Instead, what is featured is the beauty of Balinese people and objects. Within a few years of invasion and conquest, Bali and Bali-in-Lombok are represented by photographs of dancers and musicians in rich costumes and elaborate headdresses, jewelled daggers, temples, pavilions and priests making offerings, as well as women with elaborate baskets of fruits and flowers, lots of gold, wealth, and exotic loveliness. Landscape painting features peaceful scenes of Balinese villages and their languorous inhabitants, moonlight over the water, and young men leading their buffaloes home (Spruit 1996).

Published collections of paintings and photographs are the product of their authors' choices. The number of photographs in a book is determined by printing costs. There are hundreds of thousands of photographs on Indonesian subjects, but an author can, at most, select only a few. Selection is based on any number of factors, for example, the aesthetic appeal of a particular image, the wish to make a 'representative' selection, or the weight of knowledge or unconscious influence of received ideas that shape conceptions of places. Here, I think, is the reason why Aceh is so little represented in art books. It is not just that sultans lost the wealth to patronize the arts and finance monumental buildings; Smith and Leigh have shown us there are treasures from Aceh that could be included in art histories alongside those from Java and Bali (Leigh 1989; Smith 1997). Aceh is elusive because it is discussed in histories mainly as a place of war and conflict, so photographs of Aceh's flora and fauna, its landscapes of natural beauty, and so on are not chosen for publication. When Aceh is represented, knowledge of past conflict produces other choices, for example, images of soldiers, forts and the massed dead.[24]

[24] A recent example is James Siegel's analysis of photographs from the Aceh wars of soldiers, forts, weapons, prisoners of war and cemeteries, and of Acehnese men, women and children killed in their villages (Siegel 2005). The theme of war is also dominant in the Aceh photographs in Reed 1991.

Fifty-six images of Aceh and a commentary

I will now discuss 56 photographs from the KITLV Aceh collection for closer scrutiny, beginning, as the photographs themselves do, with military topics. There are also examples of what European photographers chose to photograph when they looked at urban and rural landscapes around them. I have selected some photographs that describe stages in introducing Acehnese to the colonial state through schools and Western medicine. Some photographs record the adoption of Western habits by prominent Acehnese, such as commissioning photographs of their own families. Other photographs suggest comparison of the colonial culture planted in Aceh with that of Java. These images are considered in dialogue with the histories discussed above.

Two of the earliest photographs in the KITLV Images Archive are of Sultan Mahmud Syah's official residence [19261, 19242]. These photographs make clear why the Dutch could not find the royal residence on first landing. Not only did dense foliage screen it from view (Kielstra 1883:262), its poor condition, the run-down state of many of the buildings, the sultan's own quarters of wood and thatch, and the small number of people in the compound did not match Dutch preconceived ideas of Aceh's royalty and its powers. The royal compound's swamps, wasteland and neglected graves[25] are a striking contrast with European and Acehnese descriptions of royal grandeur in the seventeenth century. Sultan Iskandar Thani (r. 1637-1641), for instance, set out an inventory of his wealth in a lavishly embellished letter to Stadhouder Frederik Hendrik that listed the contents of his treasury and enumerated his goldmines, elephants, horses, artisans and servants (Gallop 1998:9).

How is the drastic decline in royal wealth explained? Kam Hing Lee dated Aceh's decline to the reign of Sultan Iskandar Muda (1607-1636), who is more usually described as inaugurating Aceh's 'golden age' (Kam Hing Lee 1995:15). Kam Hing Lee cited in evidence Iskandar's wars of expansion as drains on Aceh's economy, particularly the cost of outfitting thousands of fighting men for his attack on the Portuguese in 1629 and the four-month siege of Melaka, and the associated expenses of acquiring ships, supplies and weapons. We could also include the loss of work hours in Aceh itself.

Hoesein Djajadiningrat cited the major fire that destroyed the royal compound during the reign of Sultana Nur al-'Alam Naqiyyat al-Din (r. 1675-1678) as a contributing factor in the loss of royal wealth and power (Hoesein Djajadiningrat 1982/1983:57-8).[26] However, the chief reason Hoesein Djajadiningrat gave for Aceh's decline was the half-century of female rule that

25 Kielstra 1883 includes a map of the compound, drawn in January 1874.

26 In the *Hikajat Potjut Muhamat*, which described the battles arising from two men claiming to be Aceh's sultan in the years 1726-1735, there are lengthy descriptions of soldiers plundering the palace and marketplace. The sultan refused to aid the Indian ('Kling') merchants, who turned to him for help.

began in 1641. Female rulers, he argued, were restricted to the royal harem; they were obliged to create the position of head of federations of rice- and pepper-producing villages and to appoint local (male) power holders as federation heads, to allow succession to remain with their families. Royal Muslim culture obliged female rulers to handle relations with leading merchants and heads of the federations indirectly through court eunuchs. Opposed by the religious establishment and male members of the royal family alike, and obstructed by district chiefs, female rulers were powerless to prevent encroachment on royal prerogatives. Every man who could seize control of locally-produced pepper became a quasi-independent ruler of his home territory. Known as *ulèëbalang*, they deprived successive Aceh monarchs of income from export taxes by shipping their pepper out of ports under their own control. The most powerful *ulèëbalang* developed into kingmakers; they decided who, from the many claimants in the royal family, should occupy Aceh's throne. Whenever sultans tried to reassert royal monopoly in the eighteenth century, the kingmakers deposed them and appointed weaker men in their stead.[27]

Leonard Andaya argued, by contrast, that the first of Aceh's female rulers, Sultana Safiyyat al-Din Taj-al-'Alam (r. 1641-1675) was respected and secure in her authority (Andaya 2004). Sher Banu Latief Khan also investigated female rule in 'The jewel affair: The sultana, her *orang kaya* and the Dutch foreign envoys' (Chapter VII of this volume). She documented, from contemporary Acehnese and European sources, the lavish spending on precious stones by Sultans Iskandar Muda and Iskandar Thani, which depleted Aceh's treasury. She argued that under Safiyyat al-Din's rule, Aceh's political life resumed its 'normal' pattern whereby the monarch ruled by consent and manoeuvred amongst powerful men. From this perspective, concentration of power in the monarchy under Iskandar Muda and Iskandar Thani was an aberration in Aceh's history.

By the nineteenth century, Aceh supplied half the world's pepper (Reid 2005:338), but pepper profits could not finance or create a united Acehnese opposition to Dutch invasion forces. Veth's (1875) map shows why. Power was, by then, fractured among over a hundred little fiefdoms. All contenders for power, *ulèëbalang* and ulama alike, maintained their own fighting bands. Raids launched on neighbouring fiefs by private militias were regular features of Acehnese life. The revenues earned in the world's pepper markets were spread among many fief-holders and spent on conspicuous consumption, such as silk clothing, gold jewellery and slaves, and on maintaining private militias, while every village barricaded itself against attack behind earthen walls and fences densely planted with bamboo. Consequently, when

[27] An appendix to Lee Kam Hing's *Sultanate of Aceh* gives the reign dates for Aceh's sultans. Some occupied the throne for only a few days before being deposed or assassinated.

the Dutch invaded Aceh, they became caught up in local wars, and had to conduct campaigns in a landscape where villages were already fortified and entry into them could only be gained through combat (Kielstra 1883:9). However, Dutch forces also operated in an environment of shifting allegiances, where Acehnese militias fought alongside the Dutch whenever alliance offered an opportunity for local gain, and fought against the Dutch when this was the best way to preserve their local authority. Photograph 11783, taken around 1894 and captioned 'KNIL officers from the ship *Benkoelen* with Acehnese soldiers near Lhokseumawe', records an instance of military alliance.

Sultan Mahmud Syah (r. 1870-1874) died of cholera during the second invasion. Aceh's kingmakers chose as his successor a 13-year-old boy who took the reign and was named Sultan Muhammad Daud. The Dutch did not acknowledge him and always referred to Muhammad Daud as 'the pretender', because Mahmud Syah had rejected 'offers' to negotiate his entry into the Netherlands East Indies and thereby secure a place for Aceh's sultans within the colony as subsidized, vassal kings. Consequently, Aceh's status within the Netherlands Indies was that of conquered, directly-ruled territory, and sultans were replaced by colonial governors.

The Dutch moved quickly to teach the Acehnese that they were the new rulers by erecting the governor's residence on the very site of Mahmud Syah's demolished private quarters within the royal compound. Photographs 2987 and 2988 show the governor's residence in the capital. These photographs date from 1877, just three years after the abolition of Aceh's monarchy. They illustrate how quickly the Dutch had brought in construction materials and master builders, and the importance of the symbolic statement in establishing colonial rule. The photographs also suggest a wish to give a local, 'oriental' character to the residence in the fretwork of the verandah, rather than the Grecian-style pillared verandah of official residences in Java. The photographer ensured that other symbols of the new power were recorded. The governor's horses and carriage – both shipped into Koetaradja – are drawn up in front of the residence in photograph 2988. Visible in both photographs is the rotunda erected in the former palace grounds to accommodate musicians who performed at official festivities that now marked a colonial calendar.

Colonial power everywhere relied on alliances between the foreign power and local elites. Photograph 3508, taken in 1877, is of Acehnese district heads who had switched allegiance and been confirmed in office by the new administration. To mark their status, the most senior Acehnese and a Dutch official sit on chairs that have been brought outdoors to the photograph site, with lesser men standing behind them. The selection of an outdoors site for the photograph, with no identifying marks of location in the background, suggests an administration not yet rooted in Aceh. An interesting feature of this photograph is that we do not know the name of the Dutch official, but the

name of the senior Acehnese dignitary is recorded. The photograph's caption reads: 'A controleur in Kroeëng Raba on the northwest coast of Aceh with several Acehnese and (on the right) Teukoe Lampasei, the *ulèëbalang* of Peuet Moekim'. Also noteworthy is the fact that the Dutch did not bring the *payung* (parasol) with them from Java. This Javanese status marker, which had been adopted as an emblem of colonial authority, and which is such a prominent feature in photographs of Dutch and Javanese colonial officials on Java, is absent from all the Aceh photographs, both in the early days of Dutch rule and in subsequent decades, as, for example, in photograph 5951, taken in May 1910.[28]

Occupation introduced Indonesians from other areas of the colony into Aceh. Most of the troops who served in Aceh were Indonesians from Java, Madura, Ambon and Menado, and there was, in the second invasion force, a troop of 180 West African riflemen[29] called '*blanda item*' ('black Dutch') by the Acehnese (Van 't Veer 1969:118). The proportion of soldiers recruited from Europe was the highest in the first years of engagement. In 1873, Europeans totalled 1,000 of the 3,000 soldiers; in 1910, European soldiers still numbered 1,000, but Indonesian troops totalled 5,000 (Van 't Veer 1969:234). The Acehnese experience of resisting the Dutch therefore entailed fighting men from other parts of the Indonesian Archipelago.

The first invasion force was also accompanied by 220 Javanese and Ambonese women, and by 300 officers' servants, who were Indonesian men whose ethnic origins were not specified (Van 't Veer 1969:51). Two hundred and forty-three women accompanied the second invading force (Van 't Veer 1969:95). Women were cooks and servants, as well as wives and partners to officers and men. The caption to photograph 19278 describes its subject as KNIL artillery specialists near the main entrance to the sultan's residence in 1874, but among the soldiers is one of these Javanese women, identifiable by her *kebaya* and batiked kain. Such photographs document the entry of women from Java into Aceh's history, and compel consideration of gender in the history of mobile labour within the archipelago. Women, as well as men, found an expanded workspace in the colonial state. The photographs hint at conditions of barracks' life for the few women imported to provide domestic services for the troops.

28 It may be noted that the Governor General who banned Dutch officials from using the *payung* was J.B. van Heutsz – former military and civilian governor of Aceh.

29 Around 3,000 West Africans served as KNIL auxiliaries during the Aceh wars. They were recruited in the Dutch Elmina base (in today's Ghana), given Dutch names and signed six- or twelve-year contracts with KNIL. The Dutch artist Isaac Israels painted two West African fusiliers, Kees Pop and Jan Kooij, in 1882, following completion of their military service in Aceh, for which both were decorated. The portraits are reproduced in Zandvliet 2002 (plates 207a and 207b).

The photographs also supply evidence for the proposition that invading armies are agents of cultural transmission. Photograph 12000, dated c. 1900, is captioned 'Batiked *kain* from Aceh showing Javanese influence'. Colonial institutions and career ladders that moved Indonesians around the archipelago heightened awareness of the material culture of other ethnic groups. Textiles such as the one photographed, introduced motifs and patterns typical of Java's Hindu-Buddhist heritage to the Acehnese, along with Javanese techniques of decorating cloth. Photographs 11776 (c. 1894) and 27236 (c. 1910) also provide evidence for KNIL as an agent of transmission of colonial cultures. The caption under the first reads 'Gamelan in the fort at Meulaboh attended by Dutch military' (Illustration 19). It shows a male dancer, performing in East Javanese style,[30] and supported by a band of musicians. The photograph also illustrates that attention was paid to amenities for the armed forces, providing them, in this case, with a performance that was probably familiar to the troops from Java. A close look at the photograph shows Javanese women among the crowd of onlookers. The second photograph, taken around 1910, is of a KNIL music corps (Illustration 20). Here, we see the military brass band, assembled from European and Indonesian soldiers to perform at ceremonies celebrating the might of the colony. Like the gamelan musicians, members of KNIL's brass band introduced into Aceh a new cluster of instruments and new musical sounds, in this case from the Western repertoire.

The colonial army also introduced Javanese convict labourers into Aceh. One thousand accompanied the first force, and 3,280 the second (Van 't Veer 1969:51, 95). Javanese men sentenced to terms of imprisonment longer than twelve months were routinely shipped to Aceh, where they were employed as porters and construction workers. The man squatting at the centre of a jungle bivouac [18031], for example, was a carrier of supplies for troops that patrolled Aceh's mountains. Dutch engineers and Javanese labourers created the first modern infrastructure of Aceh. The second invasion force of 1874 brought narrow gauge rails, 16 train wagons, a complete steam-powered canteen to feed troops, modern water pumps, two iron bridges, a laboratory for testing water and a smith's forge to Aceh (Van 't Veer 1969:93). In order to maintain a toehold in Aceh and to defend themselves from Acehnese attacks, KNIL used convict labour to construct a ring of fortresses in a semi-circle around the capital, of which coast and war ships formed the defensive line of the other half circle. Forts were constructed at intervals of several kilometres and connected by rail. Photograph 19236, captioned 'Bridging the Aceh River', was taken around 1874, and photographs 27493 (1895) and 43052 (c. 1905) of railway lines and trains tell this military history, but they also tell the history of Javanese labourers in Aceh. The photographers did not include, in these

30 I am indebted to Dr Bambang Purwanto for identifying the style of this dance performance.

Figure 19. Gamelan and dancer perform at the Meulaboh Fort before KNIL soldiers and Javanese wives, c. 1894 (KITLV 11776)

photographs, a recording of the triumph of the modern transport systems, and the men who actually built them. However, the rail system and bridges photographed represent an enormous input of labour. Javanese men, using shovels, dug the deep trenches and moved the earth in baskets; they laid and continuously repaired the rail tracks. They were easy targets for attack by Acehnese militias. Sabotage and nature frequently destroyed their work. Construction projects must have created opportunities for women to earn cash from making meals, snacks and drinks for the workers.

Convict workers are either absent from most photographs recording their labour, or are nameless individuals working on roads, railways and docks, and at electrical installations and telegraph offices. Photograph 18021 is unusual in that its caption names the convict men: 'Forced labourers Kantor, Reban and Wongsosetiko as porters for the KNIL on the Gayo highway in Aceh.' The photograph was probably taken by KNIL officer D.P. Ravelli, around 1924. He made a point of noting the names of the Indonesians he photographed, regardless of whether they were his personal household staff or men on work details. By the 1920s, conditions for the Javanese convicts were improving in terms of their diet and the treatment they received. The

Figure 20. The KNIL music corps demonstrates the multi-racial composition of the colonial army, as well as its introduction of new musical instruments and repertoire into Aceh, c. 1910 (KITLV 27236)

photograph documents that by 1924, clothing rations for convicts included footwear.

In the later stages of military operations in Aceh, small KNIL patrols, composed of around 15 Indonesian troops, one European officer, and two or three Javanese convict labourers, were formed to locate militias in their mountain hideouts. Patrols specialized in tracking in jungle terrain and surprise attacks. While some patrols employed Acehnese as guides and informants, most patrols had a core of KNIL regulars who spoke Acehnese, and who were familiar with Acehnese customs and the calendar of rituals that brought militia men out of their forest camps to visit relatives in their home villages. Ordinarily, guerrilla-style tactics precede conventional warfare and military success requires pre-eminence on the battlefield. The Aceh wars present a case of the opposite: the KNIL began with the strategies and tactics of conventional warfare, and then switched to guerrilla warfare in order to subdue Acehnese resistance.

Many questions remain unexamined for this episode in Indonesian histories of warfare. Which men were attracted to join guerrilla bands? I would suggest that they were not recruited from peasants, but were landless men,

who were similar to that detached group on Java that Jan Breman and Daniel E. Valentine described as the labour pool for plantation coolies, and who were available because they were landless (Breman and Valentine 1992). Recruiters found them at Java's ferry crossings, in markets and on the road – anywhere but in the rice fields. Snouck Hurgronje spoke of recruits in Aceh as vagrants (Snouck Hurgronje 1906:176). Siegel said that matrilineal inheritance and matrilocal existence gave Acehnese men nothing to do and no stake at home, so they became absorbed into *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools) and the roaming life of the seeker after religious knowledge (Siegel 1969). There are hints in the literature of '*rampok* parties', of militias pillaging, of revenge attacks, of betrayals, and of fights over wives and house property. Indigenous beliefs in daggers with magical powers, amulets and the invulnerability of holy men, combined with teachings in texts such as the *Hikajat prang Kompeuni* and the *Hikayat prang sabi*, on the duty of Muslims to kill non-Muslims, probably encouraged some recruits.[31] In local causes and conditions lie explanations on why a man such as Teuku Umar gave up the European comforts of his new house, his newspapers in Dutch and English, and his enjoyment of local girls to endure the hard life of the guerrilla fighter opposing the Dutch for a lengthy period.

Photographs from the KITLV collection suggest additional lines of inquiry. Photograph 4917, taken in 1892, for example, shows a control post in the defensive line that guarded Koetaradja at which Acehnese with horse-drawn carts are waiting for clearance to continue their journey. Most people, in Aceh as everywhere, do not join armies or heed the call to war despite the rhetoric of unity of purpose and action. Most Acehnese experienced the Aceh wars as civilians caught between a colonial government based in the capital and Acehnese militias based in the hills. They paid taxes to the Dutch and taxes to the militias. The new roads and bridges that the Javanese labourers built sped up the movement of KNIL patrols; they were also used by the Acehnese to move their goods to markets quickly and conveniently.

The Gayo highway that was completed in 1913 opened the highlands to Minangkabau and European entrepreneurs, who leased land for sisal, hemp and coffee plantations, and imported Javanese labourers to work them. Gayo farmers responded to the new opportunities brought by this road, which connected them to coastal markets and ports, by growing dammar and sugar commercially. Such farmers did not require large amounts of capital; the sugar

[31] In Chapter IX in this volume, 'Exploring Acehnese understandings of jihad; A study of *Hikayat prang sabi*', Amirul Hadi argues that the *Hikayat prang sabi* explicated Acehnese cultural conceptions of war and peace. Composed during the Aceh wars, the *Hikayat* exists in many written versions. The common assertion is that fighting the Dutch was a defensive war, as the Dutch were intent on destroying Islam, Acehnese culture, people and property, and that death in battle ensured martyrdom status.

mill of photograph 18394, taken in 1925, shows use of local materials and engineering in its construction. Another example of local engagement in the colonial economy may be seen in a photograph of a tailor shop. The sewing machine travelled with the Dutch to Aceh. It could be operated by hand or by foot pedal. In the colonial household, it was operated by seamstresses, but in shops in the commercial districts of new towns, it was operated by men, as photograph 40417, taken in 1931, demonstrates.

The itinerant European who photographed Acehnese as nameless 'types' in nameless villages, as in photograph 3611, taken around 1900, was unable to convey the dramatic social changes that colonial rule brought to the lives of his subjects or any clues as to their responses. In comparing this photograph with photographs of villagers from Java from the same time period, I am struck by the absence of mothers with children, by the minimal clothing of the men, which is typical of all the Aceh photos, and by the men's stance. Compared to the neat and orderly appearance Javanese assumed for photographic occasions, the Acehnese are more casual, apparently less concerned about personal appearance. The shoulder cloth and uncovered head of the elderly lady in the right-hand corner mark the degree of change in female costume over the past century.

Other variants of 'ethnographic' photographs are those that display the indigenous in 'traditional' regional or festive costume. Photograph 4902 of a bridal couple in ceremonial dress was taken in 1880, possibly for the postcard trade. It seems likely that the photographer chose the pose for the young couple. In asking the woman to rest her hand on the man's shoulder, the photographer gave visual clues to a European viewer that these people in these costumes were, in fact, celebrating their wedding day. However, even photographs staged with the European viewer in mind do not necessarily only record compliant or passive subjects. Photograph 3868 (taken c. 1935) has standard features of the 'ethnographic type' in its portrait of a bride in elaborate Gayo costume and jewellery, but it also suggests that the subjects of the photograph wished to be seen, for the attendant edges out from behind the bride so that her face, too, is recorded.

Roving photographers and artists were more likely to name places, such as mountains and beauty spots, than people. An example is watercolour 37B-549, titled 'Gle Raja Mountain', painted between 1881 and 1883 by the Dutch artist O.G.H. Heldring. He made many pencil sketches and watercolours depicting the beauties of the Aceh countryside. The KITLV collection also contains numerous sketches Heldring made of sights within and around the former residence of Sultan Mahmud Syah, such as the Gunongan. As one of the few heritage sites surviving from the seventeenth century, it was the subject of many paintings and photographs. Examples include the watercolour Heldring painted between 1875 and 1876 [37-C-185], and a

photograph of it taken around 1874 [19273]. They show that the Gunongan was in poor repair in the late nineteenth century. KNIL soldiers pose as victors on the Gunongan, in both Heldring's painting and the 1874 photograph. Such posing suggests that one function of heritage sites was to demonstrate colonial possession. Later, the Dutch tidied the Gunongan up, whitewashed it, planted a neat lawn around it, and made it a tourist site [25572, c. 1930].

Tombs of Aceh's royals, and those of revered religious teachers, were also in poor condition by the third decade of the nineteenth century, when they became subjects of colonial photographs. Back in the seventeenth century, Sultana Safiyyat al-Din Taj al-'Alam had covered the grave of her father, Sultan Iskandar Muda, in gold and precious stones, and paid 15 women to keep daily attendance by it, praying and burning incense (Andaya 2004). Iskandar Thani (Safiyyat al-Din's husband and the sultan who preceded her as Aceh's ruler) spoke, in his letter to Stadhouder Frederik Hendrik,[32] of the golden tomb already prepared for him. By the late nineteenth century, the gold and jewels were long gone. Photograph 4929 shows the condition of royal tombs in 1892. Their dilapidated state did not prevent their being a site of veneration for the Acehnese. On the contrary, the signs of age perhaps contribute to the sense of spiritual power connected to burial grounds.

Mosques were a popular choice for European photographers of Aceh. A review of photographs under keywords such as 'West Sumatra' and 'Lombok' reveals a far lower percentage. How should this interest be explained? Perhaps the answer lies in the relative paucity of antiquities in Aceh compared to other regions of Indonesia. There seemed little else to photograph. The photographic record makes an important contribution to preserving Aceh's past and Indonesia's Muslim culture, now that Middle Eastern and South Asian Islamic architectural styles are favoured over indigenous styles in the design of mosques.

Aceh's principal mosque was destroyed by fire during Dutch attempts to win control of Sultan Mahmud Syah's compound in 1874. KNIL artillerymen had been unable to place cannons to breach the palace walls, as their view was obscured by thick trees planted along its perimeter. So they first launched attacks on the earthworks surrounding the mosque that were about 300 m in front of the royal compound.[33] Once in control of the capital, the colonial government set aside funds for rebuilding the mosque and hired an Italian architect to design it. It was to be a mosque befitting a seat of government [3997].[34] The Dutch did not replicate the Southeast Asian model, but introduced

32 See also Gallop (1998).

33 Kielstra (1883:271, 293) detailed the battle plans and provided maps of stages in the fighting.

34 O.G.H. Heldring made pencil sketches and watercolours of the 'Missigit Raija' between 1881 and 1883. Examples are sketch 37-B-556 and watercolour 36 D- 451. On the history of the Baiturrahman Mosque, see Van Dijk 2006.

to the archipelago what they considered to be the 'correct' form of Islamic mosque design, that is, with dome, arches and a marble, pillared interior [4405]. Construction of the Baiturrahman started in 1879, just five years after the seizure of the capital. It was officially opened on 27 December 1881. Three other domes were added during renovation and extension in 1936.

The oldest photograph of the mosque in the KITLV collection [3392] was probably taken in 1882. The Western clock over the main entrance can be clearly seen in this photograph. The prominence of the clock suggests that Western time mechanisms can be used as a way of reckoning Islamic time. According to some sources, the strangeness of the building made the Acehnese reluctant to use it initially. Perhaps, its location next to the major KNIL military base was more of a drawback. Photograph 4913, taken in 1892, shows that at least by then, Acehnese commercial life was bustling in the mosque's vicinity.

The Baiturrahman Mosque has become the icon of Aceh. It was one of the first buildings to be repaired following the tsunami of December 2004. Yet, it is quintessentially a colonial building and an innovation. The archive contains many photographs of mosques in Aceh built of local materials and according to local designs. Photograph 18013, taken in 1924, of the mosque at Samalanga, is of particular interest, because it shows incorporation, into the building, of the carved gable that is typical of older styles of Acehnese house architecture (Illustration 21).

The Dutch admired Acehnese wood carving and incorporated it into their own colonial domestic architecture. Photograph 17405, dated July 1923, gives an example of Acehnese carpentry in the residence of a colonial official, and an insight into Dutch responses to Aceh culture (Illustration 22). The photograph also introduces the subject of colonial society transplanted to Aceh. It is captioned 'The Cox family in front of their home in Lhosoekoen. Husband, wife and baby form the family group.' In photographs from the same period in Java, Europeans are usually photographed amidst family retainers hired from residents of Java's villages and towns. Often, the baby is held by a Javanese nursemaid. The photographs also show that many people in European families were of mixed Dutch and Indonesian ancestry. Such photographs suggest links of family and employment that came from the long-term residence of the Dutch in Java, and their interaction with their neighbours. The photograph of the Cox family, and many others like it in the Aceh collection, suggest, by contrast, isolation from the local population.

Many Java-based officials, on receiving transfer to Aceh, sent their wives and children to the Netherlands, fearing for their safety in the newest colonial territory, according to Van 't Veer (1969:295). As a result, many officials lived alone with limited household personnel. Photograph 40833, captioned 'Controleur D.H. Fikkert at his Lhokseumawe residence', taken in 1920, suggests this distance from the local population that continuing hostility to Dutch

Figure 21. Mosque at Samalanga shows an Acehnese variant on Southeast Asian mosque architecture, 1924 (KITLV 18013)

rule in Aceh encouraged. The *tempo doeloe* society, which was rooted deeply in Java, was the product of generations of Dutch children being raised by Javanese nannies and speaking Javanese as their first language. In the Aceh setting, similar social and cultural relations with the region's peoples could not develop.

All the same, some Dutch families did transplant to Aceh, but mostly, as the photographic record shows, they brought their household staff with them from Java. A Javanese nanny holding an infant can be glimpsed in the back row of photograph 41558 of Dutch families taken in Kuala Simpang in 1907. The several couples with their children sit in park-like grounds. The pet dog is there, as in so many photographs from *tempo doeloe* Java. This photograph and others, such as 17997, of Dutch families taking tea after tennis, suggest the beginnings of a settled colonial society in Aceh that modelled itself on Java's. Mrs. A.L.M. Ravelli-van Mosseveld mirrors Javanese manners. Among the tennis group, she wears Western costume; strolling in front of her house in the morning hours, she wears the *kain kebaya* costume [17984], adapted from Javanese women's dress, that was just then (1924) beginning to go out of style for Dutch women in Java. Her family album includes a photograph of the

Figure 22. The Cox family in front of their home in Lhosoekoen, July 1923. The Cox family had roots in Java's Dutch-Javanese society. The house shows incorporation of Acehnese house decoration in the carved gable (KITLV 17405).

Indonesian playmates of her children [18040]. In the album, she has written their names, Marjan and Osman, and the date, June 1924.

Photograph 4946 shows Kotaraja's Hôtel de l'Europe in 1892 (Illustration 23). Hotels are constructed when numbers of travellers – entrepreneurs, visitors, tourists –create a demand for accommodation. In 1880, Brau de Saint Pol Lias had complained of the lack of residential facilities for European travellers, although he commented with approval on the telegraph and train services connecting the port of Olehleu (Ulee Lheue) and Kotaraja (Brau de Saint Pol Lias 1884:13, 19). By 1892, at least, such a demand was being met. The photograph is both evidence of the development of the colonial capital of Aceh and a document of colonial society 18 years after the Dutch seizure of Sultan Mahmud Syah's compound. The photograph is a staged representation of the colonial cast of characters, that is, military officers, civilian officials in colonial whites, Chinese and Javanese men, women servants and grounds staff, and the private businessman.[35]

[35] Private entrepreneurs were admitted to the Netherlands Indies following liberalization laws of 1870.

Figure 23. Hotel de l'Europe, Koetaradja, 1892.
This photograph is a staged representation of
the cast of characters in a Dutch colonial town (KITLV 4946).

The impact of the Dutch on the Acehnese is also documented in photographs. Acehnese women from elite families took themselves to photographic studios. Studio portrait 28574, taken around 1900, allows a closer look at the clothing and hairstyles of well-to-do women who sought the opportunity of seeing themselves through the camera, and of adding to their own markers of status the modern possession of a photo portrait. In photograph 4915, taken in 1892, wives and children join the family head, Teuku Panglima Maharaja Sjahbandar Tiban Mochamad. They have chosen to wear their embroidered silks for the occasion, and to mark their status by the group of juniors seated on the ground. François Martin, a seventeenth-century visitor to Aceh, had advised that women could not be approached by unrelated men (Reid 1995:58-9). In 1880, Brau de Saint Pol Lias was separated from the women of his host's house in Lohong by a curtain (Brau de Saint Pol Lias 1884:210). The camera brings Aceh women of the upper classes into history.

With so much attention paid to clothing these days, it is instructive to look

at a sequence of photographs of women in Aceh. Photograph 11740 of a wife of Teuku Umar, taken in 1894, shows her in a *baju panjang* (long-sleeved tunic) with uncovered head, and surrounded by female attendants in wraps, a small boy without clothes and a little girl in a Western frock. Studio photographs of ladies show them in draped wraps and uncovered hair, for example, in photograph 28576. Photograph 16652, from about 1900, is interesting for the hairstyle being modelled. We cannot assume that clothes worn for commissioned photographs represented everyday wear, nor do we know the degree to which the professional photographer influenced the clothing choices of ladies who posed in studios. It may be noted, however, that all the photographs of women show them fully clothed, unlike contemporary photographs of women from Bali.

Photographs of ordinary women at work, and as spectators in the street, perhaps give a more reliable image, for dress historians, of the daily wear of Acehnese women. Examples of kampong women bearing loads [4934], a weaver [5692], and female buyers and sellers at the market [28682] suggest that wraps and uncovered hair were everyday wear when these images were taken in 1892, 1900 and 1925, respectively. A photograph from 1930, taken outdoors, of two young mothers with their children shows the adult women in three-quarter-length trousers worn with wraps [4420]. The only photograph I have located that shows a woman fully covered, except for her eyes, is 5268 (Illustration 24). She stands on the viewer's far right watching a street dance performance in 1900; the other women spectators are in *kain kebaya*.

Siegel, studying the Acehnese in the 1960s, said that social practices of sexual segregation made it impossible for him to interview village women. Women's voices are rarely recorded in Aceh's history, although some of the upper classes, such as Cut Meutia and Cut Nyak Dien, have been mythologized in biographies of the nation's heroes (Tamar Djaja 1974:30-6, 67-75)[36] and in film. The colonial-era camera can supply some of this deficiency. Photographs document that girls were amongst the students of the government school at Kuala Simpang in 1935 [4986], and attended the Qur'an school at Takèngën in 1931 [25151]. Both schools were products of the new colonial order. Government schools were established throughout the archipelago. Incorporation into the colony introduced the peoples of Aceh to modernizing Indonesians such as the Minangkabau. Gayo, especially, were attracted to colony-wide organizations such as the Muhammadiyah; their aspiring religious students travelled via the new colonial steamship services and trains to as far as Surabaya's al-Irsyad schools to further their Islamic studies. In Gayo, new-style Islamic schools with graded classes, modelled on those in Java and West Sumatra, were opened in the teens of the twentieth century. Informants told Bowen

36 Entries: 'Teungku Cik Ditiro' and 'Cut Nya'din'.

Figure 24. Women watch a street performance, 1900. One of the women is completely covered apart from her eyes, whilst the other female onlookers wear Javanese *kain kebaya* and their heads are uncovered (KITLV 5268).

that Gayo women gave up wearing their distinctive embroidered blouses for costumes they considered modern, Islamic and Indonesian, as a result of this encounter with other parts of Indonesia (Bowen 1991:111). Photograph 25151 shows Gayo girls in this new attire.

Histories of Aceh's encounter with the Dutch and the Indies still focus more on political than social change. Another category of photographs in the KITLV Aceh collection suggests the impact of colonial medicine. They are of eye specialist Dr J. Tijssen and cataract sufferers who sought or accepted his intervention. He set up his surgery in the street using a simple trestle, and operated with the assistance of indigenous medical staff. Photograph 18675 shows him operating in a post office in Bakongan in February 1939 (Illustration 25). Photograph 18673 shows one of his patients, an elderly lady, wearing glasses following successful cataract surgery in December 1932. Other photographs of Dr Tijssen's patients show that the old [18671] and young [18680], and a teacher of religion [18683], regained their sight through cataract surgery and glasses. These photographs can be used as evidence

of the introduction of modern health services by the colonial government, and of the 'benevolent' aspect of maturing colonial rule. However, it is also important to note that the Acehnese were willing to undergo a risky and scary operation – one that was the product of Western medical practice; they were not refusers or rejectors of modern medical achievements. I am most struck by the photographs of young children whose sight has been restored, because here lies evidence that their mothers and fathers were willing to try all possible remedies to save them from the disaster of blindness. It shows the dynamic responses of ordinary people to opportunities.

New work sites and jobs are also recorded in the photographic archive. Hillsides were stripped of native vegetation for coffee and sisal plantations. Commercial agriculture introduced new work regimens as well as new plants into Aceh. Plantations were a magnet for peoples from other parts of Sumatra and Java. They provided opportunities for wage-earning to women [16962] as

Figure 25. Eye specialist Dr J. Tijssen performs cataract surgery in a post office in Bakongan, February 1939 (KITLV 18675)

well as men. Plantation workers became purchasers and consumers of goods, enmeshed in the colonial economy and dependent on global demands for their welfare.

My final selection of photographs illustrates aspects of Aceh's social history in urban centres in the last two decades of colonial rule. Three were taken near Bireuën, in 1930, of the wedding of Ramlan, daughter of Teukoe Tji, *ulèëbalang* of Peusangan, with Teukoe Ali Basyan, *ulèëbalang* of Keureutoë [6194, 6195 and 6196]. The wedding ceremonies are conducted in a richly-decorated room; the walls are hung with expensive textiles and an elaborately-worked cloth or carpet covers the floor. Relatives and the bridal couple have chosen silks with complex designs. The women guests show, through their costumes, that the new Islamic culture of the colony has reached them; gone are the wraps and replacing them are fitted blouses, with some women adopting head coverings] (Illustration 26). In the second photograph, in the same room, the husband and a male guest have changed into the Western suit and tie, worn with the *pici* (cap) that Sukarno promoted as a national symbol. The wedding party is joined, in the third photograph, by Dutch male and female guests. It shows the kinds of mixing at special occasions, which was typical of colonial towns throughout the archipelago.

Figure 26. Wedding celebrations of Ramlan, daughter of the *ulèëbalang* of Peusangan, to Teukoe Ali Basyan, *ulèëbalang* of Keureutoë, 1930, with their Dutch guests (KITLV 6196)

Other photographs of Acehnese men wearing the Western suit and tie also demonstrate the development of what we may call 'colonial urban culture'. They are evidence of Western schooling, jobs and habits – an acculturation made evident in the photographic record of men across the archipelago. They remind us of Sukarno's promotion of Western clothing as the attire of free men, and his labelling of indigenous wraps and sarongs as the dress of servants and the weak (Sukarno 1965:80-1). Biographical notes on photographs sometimes provide clues to social origin and class standing. Photograph 29030, for example, shows Nja Tjaet, son of the Baiturrahman *khatib* (mosque reader), Teungku Syah Brahim, wearing a suit, tie and *pici* in 1920. Nja Tjaet had received a Dutch education at Fort de Kock (Bukittinggi, West Sumatra) and was later appointed by the Dutch as supervisor of indigenous schools. Such photographs record the emergence of an Acehnese urban class that was being integrated into the colony, at a time when the colony was moving towards becoming Indonesia.

Conclusion

The photographs in the KITLV collection show a multi-faceted Aceh. They show Aceh as a place of natural beauty, of poverty, of change, and of cultural traits that link it into an Indonesia-wide culture. The photographs also reveal telling absences, such as the absence of *payung* (status umbrellas), few nursemaids, few domestic interiors and no idyllic villages. They show the raw beginnings of commercial agriculture in hillsides stripped of forest for plantations, and the overlaying of a web of roads and railways. In the landscapes the Dutch came to know in the 60 years of occupation and rule, there was little visible evidence of a Hindu-Buddhist past. The Dutch could not knit Aceh into a familiar narrative of ancient glories, so they photographed and painted what the Acehnese had, that is, the tiered-roof mosque.

The photographs suggest that a common colonial culture was emerging in Aceh's towns, but it had little time to develop or take root before being cut off in 1942. Snouck said that the Acehnese of the 1880s had lost the cosmopolitanism of their seventeenth-century forebears, in that they were closed-minded and contemptuous of the new and different (Snouck Hurgronje 1906:170). However, photographs from the 1920s and 1930s show that the Acehnese were open to new influences from the Dutch and from other Indonesians, and were willing to embrace new technologies and economic pursuits.

The wars in Aceh that the Dutch fought were recorded extensively in the age of the reproducible photograph. Resistance was a characteristic that could be garnered for the national narrative being constructed by President Sukarno in the 1950s. Wars continued to be fought in Aceh following independence, with

varying degrees of intensity, until the ceasefire between Acehnese militias and KNIL's successors, the Angkatan Bersenjata Indonesia (ABRI, Armed Forces of the Republic of Indonesia), in July 2005. In President Suharto's Indonesia, each region was assigned a special part in the grand drama of development. Aceh's was to represent the nation's history of resistance to foreign rule and its devotion to Islam. Photography has helped to foster an identity for Aceh that creates difference and alienation. While Bali's duty is to be exotic and beautiful, Aceh's is to be fierce and menacing. A fresh look at the photographic archive suggests that new histories can be created.

The Acehnese came late into the colony, so they had little time to get acquainted with the Dutch or with fellow colonized Indonesians, and little time to embed the new habits and outlooks into Acehnese culture. Japanese military occupation ended Dutch rule forever, and sealed Aceh off from the rest of the former colony for the Pacific war's duration. In their short time of getting acquainted with Indies society, the Acehnese showed themselves to be reluctant to accept leadership of Indonesians that belong to other ethnic groups. They rejected Muhammadiyah, for instance, because it was, in their experience of it, introduced and led by Minangkabau Muslims. Only the Gayo were enthusiastic for Muhammadiyah, as perhaps for them, membership in Indies-wide organizations offered a means of escape from Acehnese domination. As a result of having little experience of interacting with Indonesians from other ethnic groups, and of accepting direction from outsiders, the Acehnese found it difficult to live within the Indonesian state, just as many of them had found it difficult to live in the Dutch colonial state. The photographic archive can be an important tool for exploring Aceh's place within Indonesian history. It offers clues for writing social histories to complement the political histories that already exist.

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Appendices

These appendices employ the following editorial conventions:

[maka]	reliable restoration
[maka?]	unreliable restoration
maka[?]	uncertain reading
ma(ka)	text added by editor
{maka}	text found in the original but deemed redundant by editor
{...}	text obliterated/damaged in original

Notes on orthography:
There is remarkable consistency in all three letters, with several archaic orthographical features noted in other old manuscripts from Aceh found in all the letters, for example, the form *mengempukan*. The *r* of the suffix *ber-* is omitted in words like *bepermata*, *belazuardi*, *behalap* and *beniaga* (see Teuku Iskandar 1958:14; Siti Hawa Haji Salleh 1992:xlviii). The form *menyunjung* for *menjunjung*, which occurs in A2 and A3 is also noted in Teuku Iskandar (1958:12) and Siti Hawa Haji Salleh (1992:xlvii). A clear distinction is always made between *fa* (one dot) and *pa* (three dots); *ga* always has three dots underneath, and the final *nya* always has three dots underneath.

Appendix A

TEXTS, TRANSLITERATIONS AND TRANSLATIONS OF THE LETTERS DISCUSSED IN 'GOLD, SILVER AND LAPIS LAZULI; ROYAL LETTERS FROM ACEH IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY'

Annabel Teh Gallop

1 Letter from Sultan Perkasa 'Alam (Iskandar Muda) of Aceh to King James I of England, 1024 (May 1615). Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS Laud Or.Rolls b.1.

The following transliterations and English translations are reproduced from Shellabear (1898:126-30). The spelling has been updated, and any changes from Shellabear have been noted.

1a Malay text

Huwa Allah ta'ala

Surat daripada Seri Sultan Perkasa Alam johan berdaulat, raja yang beroleh martabat kerajaan, yang dalam takhta kerajaan yang tiada terlihat oleh penglihat, yang tiada terdengar oleh penengar, yang bermaligai gading, berukir berkerawang, bersendi bersindura, bewarna sadalinggam, yang berair mas, yang beristana sayojana menentang. Yang bersungai berikat batu pelinggam, yang upama cermin sudah terupam, yang berpancuran mas bepermata beberapa daripada pancuran perak; raja yang mengampukan perbendaharaan daripada seni mas, dan seni perak, dan daripada kelian[1] *mas yang dalam negeri Priaman pada gunung negeri Salida; yang mengampukan permata sembilan jenis, yang berpayung mas bertimbalan yang beratnya beratus kati; yang berpeterana mas, yang berciu mas; raja yang mengampukan kuda yang berpelana mas, yang berumbai-rumbaikan mas, yang beratnya beratus kati, yang berkekang mas bepermata; raja yang berzirah suasa, dan berketopong suasa, dan yang bergajah bergading mas, berkumban perak, bergenta suasa, yang berantai suasa; raja yang bergajah berengka tinggi suasa, dan yang berprisai suasa, dan yang berlembing suasa, dan yang istinggar suasa, dan yang berkuda yang berpelana suasa, dan yang bergajah kursi perak, dan yang berkop perak, dan yang bergong suasa, dan yang beralat mas dan suasa dan perak, dan yang bertimba mas bepermata; raja yang menyenggerahakan nisyan diri daripada nisyan mas, yang bergelar Makota*[2] *Alam, yang turun-temurun daripada raja bernisyan suasa; raja yang mengampukan raja-raja yang beratus-ratus daripada pihak mashrak, yang dalam negeri yang takluk ke Deli, dan yang dalam negeri yang takluk ke Batu Sawar; dan daripada pihak maghrib,*

1 Shellabear: *galian*, but spelled clearly k.l.y.n in all three letters presented here.
2 Shellabear: *Megat*.

yang dalam negeri yang takluk ke Priaman, dan ke Barus; raja yang memuat gajah peperangan tujuh puluh dari laut, dan beberapa daripada segala pakaian, dan persenggrahan yang indah-indah, dan daripada segala senjata yang mulia-mulia; raja yang beroleh kelebihan daripada limpah kelebihan Tuhan seru alam sekalian dalam takhta kerajaan Aceh, Dar al-Salam, iaitu raja yang netiasa mengucap puji-pujian akan Tuhan seru alam sekalian daripada dilimpahkannya kelimpahan karunianya pada menyerahkan negeri daripada pihak masyrak seperti Lubok dan Pedir dan Samarlanga[3] *dan Pasangan dan Pasai dan Perlak dan Basitang dan Tamiyang dan Deli dan Asahan dan Tanjung dan Pani dan Rokan dan Batu Sawar dan segala negeri yang takluk ke Batu Sawar dan Perak dan Pahang dan Inderagiri, maka daripada pihak maghrib seperti negeri Calang dan Daya dan Barus dan Pasaman dan Tiku dan Priaman dan Salida dan Inderapura dan Bengkulu dan Salibar dan Palembang dan Jambi; datang kepada raja yang di negeri Inggeris yang bernama Raja Yakub, yang mengampukan negeri Britani dan negeri Fransi dan negeri Irlandia. Dikekalkan Tuhan seru alam sekalian jua kiranya kerajaannya, dan ditolonginya jua kiranya ia daripada segala seterunya.*

Setelah itu barang tahu kiranya raja bahawa hamba terlalu sukacita menengar bunyi surat yang disuruh raja persembahkan kepada hamba itu. Maka ada tersebut dalamnya bahawa raja mohonkan barang dapat orang Inggeris beniaga dalam negeri Tiku dan Priaman, dan barang dapat orang itu duduk beniaga di sana, seperti pada zaman Paduka Marhum Said al-Mukammal itu. Maka titah hamba bahawa orang Inggeris yang seperti dikehendaki raja itu tiada dapat kita beri beniaga di negeri Tiku dan Priaman, dan tiada dapat duduk beniaga di sana, kerana negeri itu negeri dusun, lagi jauh daripada kita. Jika dianiaya orang Tiku atau orang Priaman akan orang itu, niscaya keji bunyi kita kepada Raja Yakub itu. Dengan anugeraha Tuhan seru alam sekalian, jika hendak orang Inggeris yang hamba pada raja itu beniaga, maka beniagalah ia dalam negeri Aceh; dan jika ia hendak mengantarkan peturnya beniaga, dalam negeri Aceh dihantarkannya; supaya barang siapa berbuat aniaya ke atasnya segera kita pereksai, dan kita hukumkan dengan hukuman yang adil, daripada bahawa ia hamba pada raja yang berkirim-kirimkan surat dengan kita itu. Disejahterakan Tuhan seru alam jua kiranya Raja Yakub dalam tahta kerajaan Inggeris itu selama-lamanya.

Adapun surat ini disurat dalam negeri Aceh pada bilangan Islam seribu dua puluh empat tahun.

1b English translation

A letter from His Excellency Sultan Perkasa Alam, the Sovereign Champion,[4] the king who possesses kingly rank, who is upon the throne of a kingdom which (human) vision cannot cover nor (human) hearing fully comprehend, whose palace is of ivory, engraved with network, with joints of red-lead, of the colour of vermilion and gilt; whose palace front extends as far as the eye can reach, whose river is enclosed with marble rocks, like unto a polished mirror, who has water pipes of gold set with jewels and many water pipes of silver. The king who holds in his possession treasuries of gold dust and silver dust, and of gold mines in the country of Priaman in the Salida Mountain; who holds in his possession nine kinds of jewels, who has umbrellas of gold, one carried on each side of him, weighing hundreds of catties, whose throne is of gold, whose cushions are of gold. The king who holds in his possession a horse with a golden saddle, with golden trappings weighing hundreds of catties with a golden

3 Shellabear: *Semerlang*.

4 Shellabear: Johan the Majestic.

bit set with jewels; The king whose coat of mail is of gold alloy, and whose helmet is of gold alloy, and whose elephant has golden tusks, a frontlet of silver, bells of gold alloy, with a chain of gold alloy. The king whose elephant has a high howdah of gold alloy, and whose shield is of gold alloy, and whose spear is of gold alloy, and whose matchlock is of gold alloy, and whose horse has a saddle of gold alloy, and whose elephant has a seat of silver, and whose howdah roof is of silver, and whose gong is of gold alloy, and whose implements are of gold and gold alloy and silver, and whose bathing bucket is of jewelled gold. The king who has provided for his own monument with a monument of gold, styled Makota Alam, descendant of the kings with monuments of gold alloy. The king who holds in his authority hundreds of kings of the eastward side, in the countries which are subject to Deli, and in the countries which are subject to Batu Sawar, and on the westward side in the countries which are subject to Priaman and Barus. The king who equips 70 elephants of war on the sea coast, and store of all garments, and beautiful country seats, and magnificent weapons. The king who has received superiority from the abundance of the superiority of the Lord of all the universe, on the throne of the kingdom of Aceh, the abode of peace; who is the king who continually gives praise to the Lord of all the universe for the abundance of His grace which He has abundantly supplied in giving over to him the countries on the eastern side, such as Lubok and Pedir and Samarlanga and Pasangan and Pasai and Perlak and Basitang and Tamiyang and Deli and Asahan and Tanjong and Pani and Rokan and Batu Sawar and all the countries subject to Batu Sawar and Perak and Pahang and Inderagiri, and on the western side, such as Calang and Daya and Barus and Pasaman and Tiku and Priaman and Salida and Inderapura and Bengkulu and Silebar and Palembang and Jambi.

To the king of England, named King James, who holds in his authority Britain and France and Ireland. May the Lord of all the universe perpetuate his kingdom, and also assist him against all his enemies.

After that, be it known unto the king that I was very much pleased to hear the words of the letter which the king ordered to be presented to me. Now it is stated therein that the king requests that the English people may trade in Tiku and Priaman, and that they may settle there to trade, as in the time of His Highness the late Saidu 'l-Mukammal. Now it is my decree that the English people cannot, as desired by the king, receive my permission to trade in Tiku and Priaman, and cannot settle there to trade, for those countries are wild, and moreover are distant from us. If the people of Tiku or Priaman should molest them, we should certainly get an infamous report with King James. By the grace of the Lord of all the universe, if the English people who are servants of the king desire to trade, let them trade in Aceh; and if they desire to send their factors to trade, let them send them to Aceh, so that whoever shall molest them we may quickly make inquiry and punish with a just punishment, since they are the servants of the king who is in correspondence with us. May the Lord of all the universe give peace to King James on the throne of the kingdom of England for ever.

This letter was written in Aceh in the year 1024 of the Islamic calendar.

2 Letter in Malay from Sultan 'Ala' al-Din Mughayat Syah (Iskandar Thani) of Aceh to Prince Frederik Hendrik of Orange, August/ September 1639. Leiden University Library, Cod.Or.4818a.I.3.

2a Malay text

Huwa Allah ta'ala
Seal: *Seri [Sultan Ala]al-Din [Mughayat Syah]* {…} // {...}

Surat yang menyampaikan tulus daripada hadrat paduka seri sultan al-mu'azzam wa'l-khaqan al-mukarram Paduka Seri Sultan Ala[al-Din Mughayat Syah Johan Berdaulat zill Allah fi'l-'alam; ialah khalifat Allah yang zatnya upama matahari yang betuk pada ketika duha, lagi raja] zill Allah yang sifatnya upama bulan purnama; ialah raja yang pilihan Allah yang perangainya upama bintang thuraiya; ialah raja yang raja al-diraja anak cucu raja Iskandar Zulkarnain; ialah raja yang akalnya upama daerah yang buntar, lagi raja yang fikirnya upama laut yang dalam; ialah raja yang mengempukan makam[5] *yang awani,*[6] *lagi raja yang empunya hal yang a'la; ialah raja yang menyatakan perangai Allah takhalluquwa*[7] *[bi-akhlaq Allah, lagi raja yang* {...} *yang* {...} *ialah* {...} *hadratnya mengelenggarakan?] segala bala tentaranya; ialah raja yang gunawan pengasih lagi dermawan; ialah raja yang adil lagi fadil upama Nusyirwan Adil pada menyatakan adil Allah, lagi raja yang terlebih murah upama Hatim Tai pada menyatakan karam Allah; ialah raja yang karunia Allah ta'ala mengempukan kelian mas kudrati yang cemerlang cahayanya, lagi raja yang mengempukan masjid suasa gilang gemilang diyanya; [ialah raja yang* {...} *yang bertatahkan ratna mutu manikam; ialah] raja yang mengempukan gajah putih kedua matanya cemerlang seperti bintang timur, dan gajah bergading empat, dan gajah merah, dan gajah warna lembayung, dan gajah borek, dan gajah sauk, dan gajah bangkun berkenah,*[8] *dan gajah khuntha; ialah raja yang karunia Allah ta'ala mengempukan gajah berpakaian mas bepermata belazuardi dan beratus-ratus gajah daripada gajah perang yang [berbeluhan besi dan behalap*[9] *gading besi malila dan berkaus besi dan tembaga; ialah raja yang karunia Allah ta'ala mengempukan] kuda berpakaian mas bepermata belazuardi, berkaus mas dan suasa dan beratus-ratus kuda tizi daripada kuda perang yang seru jenis, daripada jenis Arabi dan Iraqi dan Rumi dan Turki dan Kuci dan Belaqi dan Lahur dan [Abaya] dan Tongkin dan Gudh; ialah raja yang mengempukan kerajaan di barat dan di timur, lagi raja yang ngurniai*[10] *kesukaan akan yang dikasihinya dan kedukaan akan yang [dimarahinya; ialah raja yang menyatakan kenyataan seru bagi 'azmat Allah ta'ala, lagi raja yang] menyatakan kenyataan pelbagai kibriya' Allah ta'ala, sampai kepada Kapten Apris Andrik, yang gagah lagi berani pada melawan seterunya, ialah yang amat setiawan pada segala yang dikasihinya, lagi yang amat bijaksana pada merintahkan segala pekerjaan, ialah yang mengempukan beratus-[ratus kapal peperangan yang mustaid dengan segala] alat senjatanya, dikekalkan Tuhan seru alam sekalian jua kiranya menda(pat) bahagia Kapten dengan sempurna sejahteranya.*

5 m.q.a.m, 'resting place, place of residence, dwelling' (Steingass 1996:1289); probably to be taken in its more usual Malay meaning of 'tomb', by analogy with its mention in Iskandar Muda's letter of his tombstone (*nisan*) of gold.

6 a.w.n.y; from Pers./Ar. *aun* (a.w.n), 'quiet, peace, tranquillity' (Steingass 1996:122).

7 t.kh.l.q.w.a, fully pointed with *fathah* over *t* and *kh* and *sukun* over *w*; from *takhalluq* (t-kh-l-q), i.a. kindness (Steingass 1996:288).

8 b.ng.k.w.n b.r.k.n.h

9 b.h.a.l.p. Wilkinson (1985:31) has under *alap* (a-l-p), *mengalap*, 'to pick fruit by cutting the stalks with a knife fastened at the end of a long pole'. By analogy, *alap* (= *halap*) could mean a knife or other sharpened point attached to the end of an elephant's tusks like a bayonet. That such weapons may have been in use in Aceh in the early seventeenth century is apparent in a battle scene in the *Hikayat Aceh* describing a fight between two elephants: '*Maka Nelita itupun ditikam Ratna Mutu Manikam terus kumbanya. Maka Nelita itupun lari*' (Nelita was stabbed by Ratna Mutu Manikam right in her forehead, whereupon Nelita took flight) (Teuku Iskandar 1958:177).

10 '.r.n.y.a.y.

Adapun [bahwa dinyatakan Tuhan seru alam sekalian kepada {…} kita bahwa Kapten] Apris Andrik itu amat sangat berkasih-kasihan, daripada masa paduka marhum Makuta Alam datang kepada masa kita menyunjung khalifat Allah, tiada jua berkeputusan tali rantai muhabbat dan mudat antara Kapten dengan hadrat kita,{...} [yang lagi kita pun demikian jua.

Dan barang diketahui Kapten bahwa kita menitahkan Seri Bija Pekerma?] {...} ala Syaraf dan Maharaja Perbuana dan Seri Bija Indera dan Tun Ratna al-Diraja ke Jayakarta mendapatkan Kapten Gurnadur Jeneral Anton pan Diman karena kita hendak menyakiti Melaka itu dan menyerang dia dan menahan segala orang yang membawa makanan ke Melaka. Kemudian daripada angkatan Orang Kaya-Kaya Maharaja Seri Maharaja, maka kita titahkan empat [buah khorab dengan segala banting dan penjajab? {...} akan {...} yang membawa makanan] ke negeri Melaka; dengan anugerah Tuhan seru alam, apakala kembali angkatan itu maka kita titahkan pula angkatan yang lain, hingga tiada berkeputusan dengan hal yang demikian itu, jadi sangatlah kesakitan orang Melaka, supaya dengan mudahnya diserahkan Tuhan seru alam sekalian Melaka itu kepada kita. Karena adat raja-raja menyerang negeri hendaklah dengan perkasyanya, [negeri yang diserang] pun mau alah, rakyat yang menyerang pun jangan binasa. Tetapi jikalau tiada dahulu dibinasakan yang menolong orang Melaka itu niscaya adalah kita mengadap dua tiga pekerjaan, karena [orang] Johor itu sudah bersumpah setia dengan raja Portekal akan bersuatu senjata dengan orang Melaka, [dan menyuruh] ia ke Siam dan ke Patani dan kepada [segala negeri? yang hampir kepadanya akan membantu Melaka itu?

Adapun negeri] Pariaman dan Bandar Khalifah[11] *dan Inderapura, pada masa dahulu beniaga ke negeri itu daripada Perangsis dan Inggris dan Dinmar dan yang lainnya pun, maka adat hasil daripada segala mereka yang beniaga itu akan kita pada setahun kimat sebahara emaslah kita hilangkan maka pada masa sekarang ini daripada kasih [kita akan orang Holanda suka {...} beniaga dalam negeri ini.*

Syahadan akan segala kapal yang] beniaga ke Aceh Dar al-Salam yang ada surat sembah mereka itu ke bawah duli kita, seperti kapal Gujerat dan kapal Masulipatan dan Benggala dan Dabul dan Kerapatan dan barang sebagainya, maka janganlah dicabul orang Holanda akan segala mereka yang tersebut itu.

[Dan dipohonkan Kapten Kurnadur Jeneral Anton pan Diman ke bawah duli kita dagangan dalam negeri Pahang itu {...} sebahagi] akan Kapten beniaga dan sebahagi lagi akan orang yang lain, maka itupun kita kurniai akan dia.

Adapun kiriman kita akan Kapten Apris Andrik bata mas kudrati dua buah dan guliga empat buah dalamnya beserta buah. Wa'l-salam bi'l-khayr.

2b English translation

He [is] God the Exalted

A letter conveying sincerity from the presence of His Majesty the great sultan and the illustrious king, His Majesty Sultan 'Ala' al-Din Mughayat Syah, the Sovereign Champion, the shadow of God on earth; he is the viceroy of God, whose essence is like the scorching midday sun, and also the king, the shadow of God, whose qualities are like the full moon; he is the king chosen by God, whose disposition is like the Pleiades; he is the king of a royal line of kings descended from King Alexander the Great; he is the king whose understanding is like a round globe, and the king whose counsel is like the deep sea; he is the king who possesses a tranquil resting-place, and the king

[11] That is, Tiku.

who enjoys the most exalted position; he is the king who bears witness to the kindly nature of God {...} commands his armies; he is the king with magic powers, loving and charitable; he is a king who is as just and virtuous as Nusyirwan the Just in bearing witness to the justice of God, and a king of utmost liberality, like Hatim Tai, in bearing witness to the benevolence of God; he is the king granted by God the Exalted the possession of mines of fine gold which glitters and gleams, and the king who possesses a mosque of gold alloy which shines out bright; he is the king who {...} studded with precious jewels; he is the king who possesses a white elephant whose two eyes shine like the morning star, and elephants with four tusks, and red elephants, and purple elephants, and speckled elephants, and [lassoed?] elephants, and {…} elephants and hermaphrodite elephants; he is the king granted by God the possession of elephants caparisoned in gold studded with jewels and lapis lazuli, and hundreds of elephants for use in war with steel-framed howdahs, their tusks sheathed and tipped in steel and their feet shod in steel and copper; he is the king granted by God the possession of horses caparisoned in gold studded with jewels and lapis lazuli, with horseshoes of gold and gold alloy, and hundreds of swift horses for use in war, of all kinds of stock, Arab and Iraqi and Byzantine and Turkish and Cochin and [Balkan?] and Lahur and Abaya and Tongkin and Gudh; he is a king who possesses kingdoms in the west and the east, and a king who dispenses good fortune to those he favours and misfortune to those who have incurred his wrath; he is a king who bears witness to the {...} of God the Exalted, and a king who bears witness to the manifest power of God the Exalted, to Captain Prince Hendrik, who is brave and fearless against his foes; who is most loyal to those he loves, and most wise in all his undertakings; and who possesses hundreds of fully-armed men-of-war; may the Lord of all the universe preserve the Captain in good fortune and perfect peace.

The Lord of all the universe has revealed {...} to us the loving and friendly nature of Captain Prince Hendrik, and from the time of his late majesty Makota Alam until the time that we were appointed as God's viceroy, never have the chains of love linking the Captain and our royal presence been broken, and it is our hope that long may this continue [?].

May it please the Captain know that we are sending Seri Bija Pekerma {...} Syaraf and Maharaja Perbuana and Seri Bija Indera and Tun Ratna al-Diraja to Jayakarta to meet Captain Governor General Antonio van Diemen, because we're really going to make that Melaka suffer, besiege it and seize all those supplying food to Melaka. As for the fleet under *Orang Kaya-Kaya* Maharaja Seri Maharaja, we have sent four galleys together with other smaller boats to {…} who have supplied provisions to Melaka; by the grace of the Lord of the universe, when the fleet returns we will send another expedition, thus keeping up the attack without rest; in this way the people of Melaka will suffer greatly, and so they should be delivered with ease by the Lord of all the universe into our hands. For according to royal custom, when we attack other states we should fight with great valour, forcing our foe to surrender, but aiming to spare our own forces from decimation. But if we do not first wipe out Melaka's allies we will certainly have two or three problems on our hands, because those Johor people have sworn an oath of allegiance with the king of Portugal to take up arms alongside the people of Melaka, and they have sent to Siam and Patani and all neighbouring countries for assistance for Melaka.

As for Pariaman and Bandar Khalifah and Inderapura, in the past, the French and English and Danes and others too came there to trade, and the levies and dues from

all this trade amounted to an estimated one *bahar* of gold per year, which we have now forfeited because of our affection for the Dutch, who desire {...} trade in this country.

As for the ships who come to Aceh Darussalam to trade who have presented their letters of obeisance to our royal person, namely ships from Gujerat and Masulipatan and Bengal and Dabul and Kerapatan and others, we request that the Dutch should desist from interfering with all these as listed above.

Furthermore, as for Captain Governor General Anton van Diemen's request to our royal person regarding trade in Pahang {...} he is granted a share of the trade, the remainder being shared amongst others; this we have granted him.

Our gift to Captain Prince Hendrik is two ingots of rock gold and four bezoar stones, with their [fruit?]. With peace and goodwill.

2c Contemporary Dutch translation
Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, VOC 11264, published in Banck (1873:76-8)

De Koning van Atchin aan Prins Frederik Hendrik

Desen brieff compt uyt een suyver gemoet van den hoochsten Paducka, Sery, Sultan, Nelmolam, Welgaka, Nelmock, Aron, Adin, Magaitcha, Jouhender, Doulet, Liloula, fil, Coninck van de gantsche werelt, die gelyck eenen Godt daer over is, glinsterende als de son op den middach, een coninck, die syn schynsel gelyck de volle maen geeft, van Godt uytvercoren, waerdich gehouden te werden, soo als men de Noortstar doet, wesende van coninckIycke afcomste ende geslachte des grooten Alexanders, vol verstandt gelyck eenen ronden cloot, die hem heen ende weder rolt, connende soo veel gissing maken als de zee diep is; oock een coninck die alle gestorvene heyligen haere begraeffenissen heeft verbetert, synde soo rechtvaerdich als Godt is, ende soo groot van vermogen dat al myne slaven onder myn vleugelen connen schuylen, ben van een verstandige resolutie, omme alle myn onderdanen te beschermen, Jangh, Goenawan, Penassy, Lagie, Dermawan, een coninck, die in alles goet recht doet, gelyck als den ouden coninck heeft gedaen, den liberaelsten boven alle coningen, een dien Godt almachtich verleent heeft plaetsen, daer men van Godts gemaeckt goudt can graven, die de Sawasse of half goudt ende coopere kerck heeft, sittende op een throon van fyn goudt, gemaeckt, verciert, vol van allerhande costelycke gesteenten, die den witten oliphant heeft, wiens oogen glinsteren gelijck als de morgensterre, oock oliphanten met vier tanden, roode, purpere ende bonte oliphanten, Sawach, mitsgaders Benloena ende Queen oliphanten, daer toe my Godt almachtich oock heeft verleent soo veel diverse goude cleeden, geesmalteert, ende met allerhande gesteente versiert, tot dracht van geroerde oliphanten, bovendien noch soo veel honderden oliphanten om in den oorloch te gebruycken met ysere schootvrye huysjens, die haere tanden met stael ende de hoeven van coper overslagen syn, oock soo veel honderden paerden, die haere cleedinge insgelycx van gout geesmalteert, ende vol gesteenten, mitsgaders haere hoeffyzers van gout, oock half gout ende coper syn, met noch soo veel honderden groote paerden, om ten oorloge te gebruycken van allerhande slach, namentlijck Arabise, Arrackie, Rooms, Turckse, Ballacky, Lochoofz., Tongansz., ende Gootsz.; ben een coninck, die 't gouverno heeft van 't Oosten tot het Westen, ider gevende contentement die mijn gonst winnen, ende laete integendeel de qualyckdoenders mynen toorn gevoelen, can oock Godes macht ende alles verthoonen, wat Godt almachtich geschapen ende gemaeckt heeft.

Gaende desen brieff aen Syne Hoochheyt ende vorstelycke genade Frederick Hendrick by der gratie Godts prince van Orangien, grave van Nassau, ens., die wegens syne cloecke daden tegen desselfs vyanden, in den oorloge seer vermaert is, onderhoudende daer toe oprechtelyck alle gemaeckte contracten, met de geene hem ter contrarie geen rechtveerdige oorsake geven, synde seer verstandig in alle saecken, hebbende soo veel honderden oorlogschepen, die altyt

met behoorlycke gereetschappen bereyt liggen, welcke ick bidde den grooten Godt tot afbreuck van Syne Hoochheits vyanden, soo wel laeten continueren, mitsgaders Syne Hoochheyt in alle desselfs aenslagen geluck ende victorie geven.

Is al de werelt ende my wel bekent wat vrindelycke correspondentie Uwe Hoogheyt met mynen voorsaet den oude coninck Paducka, Mochom, Mascatta, Alem heeft gehouden tot huyden desen tyt, dat my Godt almachtich als coninck hebbe vercoren, welcke vrintschap tusschen ons beyde oock soo onverbreeckelyk moet wesen ende blyven als een gouden ketting in den anderen geschakelt, waer toe van myner syde niets gebreecken sal.

Syn Hoochheyt gelieve verders te weten dat ick hebbe gesonden Siribiedie, Packerma, Malyckjsaraff, Maradia, ende Bowanna, Siry, Biedia, Endra ende Timradt Nude Radja aen den gouverneur generael Antonio van Diemen tot Batavia, om de Portugiese stadt Malacca in de uytterste ellende te brengen, die te belegeren ende all volckeren te verbieden, dat se daar geen fictualie brengen, naer het versenden van de vloote, onder mijnen oversten Maradea, hebbe ick uytgeset 4 galeyen, nevens alle de bantings ende champans, zynde vaertuygen, omme de plaetsen Rahan ende Sia (die Malacca toevoer doen) nevens alle andere welcke sulcx onderleggen, te verdistrueeren, ende als het Godt almachtich gelieft, dat de gemelte vloot wederom comt, sal ick daer datelyck een ander nae toe senden, om dier vouge Malacca tot het uyterste te benauwen, als wanneer verhope Godt almachtich my die stadt met hulpe der Nederlanden, seer gevouchlyck sal laten overwinnen, wesende een costume van alle coningen, die eenige plaetsen willen belegeren, dat se eerst goede ondersouckinge doen van alles, om sonder verderf haerer onderdanen, meester van de vyanden te werden. Ingevalle ick nu niet eerst verdistruere alle de gene, die Malacca assisteren, soo sal ongetwyffelt, wanneer de saecke aenvang eenigen tyt werck vinden, alsoo die van Johoor belooft hebben Malacca met vivres ende wapenen te assisteren, mitsgaders oock naer Siam Petany, ende alle de landen daer bij gelegen om assistentie gezonden.

In de landen van Priaman, Bander, Galiffa ende Indrapoura, daer in ouden tyden alle luyden quamen handelen te weten alle jaeren meer heeft opgebracht als 360 pondt gouts, hebbe ick de Nederlanders alleen vergunt te negotieren, sulcx dat daer door een goet gedeelte van myn encomste come te missen. Des is myn begeeren dat de Nederlanders de vreemdelingen die tot myn conincklycke stadt Atchin comen, als namentlyck van Gouseratte, Masalipatan, Bengalen, Debril, Carrapatta, ende van alle andere plaetsen ongemolesteerd sullen laten varen.

Voorders hebbe aan den Nederlandschen gouverneur generael op zyn versouck oock vergunt den vryen handel in 't rycke van Pahangh, nevens andere vreemdelingen elck de helft.

Tot vernieuwing van de onverbreeckelycke vruntschap tusschen de croone van Atchin ende Uwe Hoochheyt sende desen twee minerael steenen uyt myn goutmynen daer het gout om ende deur wast, ende nevens dien noch vier Besar steenen, waer van den eenen vry groot is, welcke rariteyten, Uwe Hoochheyt in danck gelieve te accepteren, sonder soo seer te sien op de waerdigheyt van 't present als wel op het genegenheit van den sender. Godt beware ende zegene Uwe Hoocheyt lange jaeren.

2d English translation of the contemporary Dutch translation above[12]

This letter comes from a pure heart from the highest *Paducka*, *Sery*, *Sultan, Nelmolam*, *Welgaka*, *Nelmock*, *Aron*, *Adin*, *Magaitcha*, *Jouhender*, *Doublet*, *Liloula*, *fil*, king of the whole world, who is like a god over it, shining like the sun at midday, a king whose radiance gleams like the full moon, chosen by God and worthy to be esteemed as the North Star;

12 I am extremely grateful to Dr Marijke Klokke for her assistance with this translation; any shortcomings in its subsequent reworking are entirely my responsibility.

being of royal origin and descended from Alexander the Great; full of wisdom like a round globe which rolls him to and fro[?]; capable of as many conjectures as the sea is deep; also a king who has restored all the graves of the saints who have passed away; being as righteous as God; and with such great riches that all my slaves can shelter under my wings; having made a wise resolution to protect all my subjects; *jangh goenawan penassy lagie dermawan*; a king who always dispenses justice just as the old king did, the most liberal of all kings; one to whom Almighty God has granted places where gold created by God can be mined; who possesses a mosque of *sawasse* or half gold and copper; being seated on a throne made of fine gold, decorated all over with all sorts of costly precious stones; who possesses the white elephant, whose eyes shine like the morning star, also elephants with four tusks, red, purple and spotted elephants, *Sawach* elephants, and *Benloena* and 'Queen' elephants, for which Almighty God has also granted me so many gold cloths of different sorts, enamelled and encrusted with various precious stones, to dress these elephants, as well as so many hundreds of elephants to use in war, with armoured howdahs, whose tusks are covered with steel and whose feet with copper; also so many hundred horses, their clothing likewise of gold, enamelled and studded with precious stones, with horseshoes of gold, and of half gold and copper, as well as so many hundreds of large horses to use in war, of all kinds of stock, namely *Arabise*, *Arrackie*, *Rooms*, *Turckse, Ballacky*, *Locfoorz.*, *Tongansz.*, and *Gootsz.*; being a king who reigns from the East to the West; pleasing those who win my favour, and, on the contrary, letting the ill-disposed feel my wrath; who can also reflect God's might and everything that Almighty God has shaped and made.

Thus wends this letter to His Highness and Royal Grace Frederick Hendrick, by the grace of God Prince of Orange and Count of Nassau, etc., who due to his brave deeds against his enemies is renowned in battle, maintaining therefore sincerely all the contracts with those who on the contrary have no righteous cause, being very wise in all matters, possessing so many hundreds of men-of-war, always kept fully equipped, and I beg the great God for the ruin of His Highness's enemies, and for the continuation of his wellbeing, and to grant success and victory to His Highness in all his campaigns.

To the whole world and myself it is well known what a friendly correspondence Your Highness had held with my forefather, the former king *Paducka*, *Mochom*, *Mascatta*, *Alem*, [which has lasted] up to the present time when Almighty God has chosen me as king, which friendship between us both should be like and remain as indissoluble as a golden chain, linking each to the other, which from my side will never be severed.

May it further please His Highness to know that I have sent *Siribiedie*, *Packerma*, *Malyckjsaraff*, *Maradia*, and *Bowanna*, *Siry*, *Biedia*, *Endra* and *Timradt Nude Radja* to the Governor General, Antonio van Diemen, in Batavia; to bring the Portuguese town of Malacca into utter distress, to besiege it and to prohibit all people from bringing food there, for sending my fleet under my representative *Maradea*, I have launched(?) four galleys, together with all the *banting* and *champan*, being vessels to destroy *Rahan* and *Sia* (which supply Malacca) as well as all other [places] which do so, and if it pleases Almighty God that the above-mentioned fleet returns, I will immediately dispatch another one there, to reduce that foul Malacca to the utmost misery; thus, we hope, Almighty God will let me completely conquer that city with the help of the Dutch; it being a custom of all kings, who intend to besiege certain places, that they first investigate everything thoroughly, in order to overcome their enemies without decimating their [own] subjects. If I do not first destroy all those who help Malacca,

there is no doubt that this situation will last for some time(?), for the people of Johor have promised to assist Malacca with (men?) and weapons, and [they] will also send for assistance to Siam Petany and all the lands situated there.

In the lands of *Pariaman*, *Bander*, *Galiffa* and *Inderapura*, where in the past all people would come to trade, namely French, English and Danish, and according to my reckoning bring in 360 pounds of gold each year, I have permitted only the Dutch to trade, so that I have come to forfeit a large part of my income thereby. It is my wish that the Dutch should leave unmolested the foreigners who come to my royal capital of Aceh, namely, those from *Gouseratte*, *Masalipatan*, *Bengalen*, *Debril*, *Carrapatta*, and all other places.

Furthermore, the request of the Dutch Governor General has been granted for a permit for free trade in the kingdom of Pahang, alongside other foreigners, each [party] having half.

To the renewal of the indissoluble friendship between the crown of Aceh and Your Highness, we are sending two mineral stones from my goldmines since the gold is fine there, and in addition four Besar stones, one of which is very large, which rarities may it please Your Highness to accept gratefully, without considering so much the worth of the gift but rather the affection from the sender. God preserve and bless Your Highness for many years.

3 Letter from Taj al-Alam Safiyyat al-Din Syah of Aceh to King Charles II of England, 1661 (Private Collection)

3a Malay text

Sitemi yang maha mulia daripada paduka seri sultan al-muazzam wa'l-khaqan al-mukarram Taj al-'Alam Safiyyat al-Din Syah berdaulat zill Allah fi'l-'alam yang di atas singgahasana takhta kerajaan negeri Aceh Dar al-Salam, ialah khalifat Tuhan seru alam sekalian yang zatnya upama matahari yang betuk pada ketika duha, lagi raja zill Allah yang sifatnya upama bulan purnama, ialah raja yang pilihan Allah ta'ala yang perangainya upama bintang thuraiya, ialah raja al-diraja anak cucu a(l)-Sultan Iskandar Zulkarnain, ialah khalifat Allah lagi raja yang menyatakan hikmat Allah yang ghaib, ialah raja yang melimpahkan syara' Allah, lagi yang men {...} *kan segala yang musykil[?], ialah raja yang akalnya upama daerah yang buntar, lagi raja yang fikirnya upama laut yang dalam, ialah raja yang mengempukan makam yang awani dan hal yang a'la, ialah raja yang nur* {...} *nya menilik kepada jamal Allah dan basarahnya*[13] *menilik kepada jalal Allah, ialah raja yang menyeru segala hamba Allah kepada jalan Allah, dan ialah raja yang menilik kepada khalk Allah dengan tilik rahmat dan syafakat, lagi ialah raja yang menyatakan hikmat Allah dengan keramatnya, lagi raja yang menyatakan 'adil Allah dengan siasatnya, ialah raja yang menyatakan takhalluq bi-akhlāq Allah, ialah raja yang menutup segala yang bercela lagi yang mengampun segala yang berdosa, dan ialah raja yang terdiri[?] [panja* {...} *bung] segala hambanya, lagi raja yang sempurna bicaranya pada mengelenggarakan segala bala tentaranya, ialah raja yang gunawan pengasih lagi dermawan, ialah raja yang adil lagi fadil upama Sultan Ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz pada menyatakan adil Allah, lagi raja yang terlebih murah pada menyatakan karam Allah, lagi yang mengitarkan segala bau-bauwan kemurahannya pada segala tepi langit takhta kerajaan, ialah raja yang mengempukan kelian mas kudrati yang merah mutunya, lagi yang mengempukan masjid suasa yang diperbuat daripada raja mas kudrati, dan ialah raja yang karunia Allah ta'ala mengempukan gajah yang*

[13] From b.ṣ.r, Ar. 'sight, vision' (Steingass 1996:190).

putih matanya cemerlang seperti bintang timur, dan gajah bergading empat, dan gajah merah, dan gajah borek, dan gajah sauk, dan gajah bangkun berkenah[?], dan gajah khuntha, ialah raja yang karunia Allah ta'ala mengempukan gajah berpakaian mas belazuardi yang ma {...} *dan beratus gajah peperangan, ialah raja yang karunia Allah ta'ala mengempukan kuda berpakaian mas bepermata belazuardi dan beratus2 kuda tizi peperangan yang seru jenis daripada jenis Arabi dan Rumi dan Turki dan Kuci dan Lahur dan Abaya dan Tongkin dan Gudh, dan ialah raja yang mengempukan kerajaan barat dan timur, lagi raja yang menyatakan kenyataan seru bagi 'azmat,*[14] *dan karunia Allah ta'ala dalam takhta kerajaan negeri Aceh Dar al-Salam, datang kepada Sultan Karulus Sikundus yang kerajaan dalam negeri Inggeris yang makmur, ialah sultan yang perkasa lagi bijaksana lagi yang mengempukan negeri Britan Besar dan negeri Ingglan dan negeri Sekotlan dan negeri Feransia dan negeri Irlan.*

Adapun barang tahu Sultan Karulus Sikundus maka tatkala terdengarlah kepada sam'[15] *cermin kalbu kita akan khabar Sultan Karulus Sikundus sudah menyunjung anugerah Tuhan seru alam sekalian mengantikan*[16] *takhta kerajaan ayahanda dan menyunjung makota yang turun temurun daripada silsilah raja yang tua2 itu, maka terlalulah kesukaan kita, lalu berkehendaklah kita menyuruh mengantatkan*[17] *sitemi kita yang maha mulia ini kepada guburnur kompeni yang besar, supaya disampaikan oleh guburnur kompeni kepada Sultan Karulus Sikundus kitabat kita yang mulia serta bingkis yang tuhfat2, akan menagihkan segala perjanjian anak Aceh Dar al-Salam dengan anak Inggeris seperti zaman yang dahulu kala pada masa paduka marhum Makota Alam yang dimuliakan Tuhan seru alam sekalian. Maka jangan kiranya berputusan kapal dari negeri Inggeris yang makmur itu ke bandar Aceh Dar al-Salam yang mulia, supaya berkekalanlah kasih kedua buah negeri itu seperti adatnya yang dahulu kala.*

Sebermula Andrik Kehari yang telah {dalam} dalam bandar kita dulapan belas bulan lamanya ialah kita kurniai berusaha gudang dalam bandar kita, dan beberapa daripada rakyat Sultan Karulus Sikundus itu kita kurniai beniaga ia dalam bandar Aceh Dar al-Salam. Dan lagi pula kita kurniai pada tiap2 tahun tiga buah kapal anak Inggeris mengu {...} *dan Sulibar [?].*[18] *Maka yang kehendak kita akan anak Inggeris beniaga dalam segala negeri yang takluk ke bawah duli kita, maka ditahaninya oleh Wolanda yang celaka itu, sebab itulah maka tiadalah beroleh anak Inggeris beniaga dalam segala negeri itu. Maka hendaklah sangat2 bicara Sultan Karulus Sikundus akan ihwal yang demikian itu, supaya jangan kesakitan atas segala anak Inggeris yang beniaga itu. Lagi pula barang beroleh anak Inggeris beniaga dalam segala negeri itu karena si celaka itu sangat makar dan pencurian sehingga anak Inggeris pun kesukaran karenanya. Maka dari karena inilah kita memberi khabar dengan kitabat yang ikhlas ini kepada Sultan Karulus Sikundus.*

Bahwa hadiah kita akan Sultan Sikendus khalambak beratnya empat tahil tujuh dinar,[19] *dan gaharu beratnya sekati dua belas tahil tiga dinar, dan 'anbar beratnya empat belas dinar, dan geliga landak satu beratnya sepuluh dinar, dan peti Jipun berperawis*[20] *gewang*[21] *dan*

14 '.ṭ.m.h, '*atlamat*, Ar., 'greatness, majesty, awe-inspiring', pron. *adhmat* (Wilkinson 1985:438).
15 Ar. s.m.', 'hearing' (Steingass 1993:509).
16 m.ng.n.t.y.k.n, that is, *menggantikan*.
17 m.ng.n.t.t.k.n, that is, *mengantarkan?*
18 s.w.l.y.y.r.
19 This use of *dinar* as a measure of weight is very unusual, and is not mentioned at all in the *Adat Aceh*.
20 '*Perawis*, ingredients, factors, materials' (Wilkinson 1985:455).
21 'A shell-fish (unidentified)' (Wilkinson 1985:586).

bermelamang[22] *panjangnya tiga jengkal sebuah, iaitu akan tanda tulus dan ikhlas jua adanya, tamat al-khayr.*

3b English translation

A most honoured missive from Her Majesty, the great sultan and the illustrious king [sic], Taj al-'Alam Safiyyat al-Din Syah, the Sovereign One, the shadow of God on earth, who is on the throne of the kingdom of Aceh, Abode of Peace; she is the vicegerent of the Lord of the whole world, whose essence is like the scorching midday sun, and also the queen who is the shadow of God, whose qualities are like the full moon; she is the queen chosen by God the Exalted whose disposition is like the Pleiades; she is the queen from a long line of kings descended from Sultan Alexander the Great; she is the vicegerent of God and the queen who bears witness to the mysterious secret wisdom of God; she is the queen who spreads all around her the law of God, and who {...} the difficulties; she is the queen whose understanding is like a round globe, and the queen whose counsel is like the deep sea; she is the queen who possesses a tranquil resting-place, and an exalted position; she is the queen whose [sight?] is focused on the beauty of God and whose vision is focused on the majesty of God; she is the queen who calls all God's servants to the path of God, and the queen who gazes on the creatures of God with a gaze of mercy and sympathy; she is the queen who bears witness to the secret wisdom of God and His holy places, and the queen who metes out the justice of God and His punishments; she is the queen whose manners bear witness to the virtues of God; she is the queen who silences those who complain and who forgives those who have sinned, and she is the queen who {...} all her servants, and the queen who shows perfect judgement in the organizing of her troops, she is the queen with magic powers, loving and charitable; she is the queen who is as just and virtuouous as Sultan Ibn Abd al-Aziz in dispensing the justice of God, and the queen of utmost abundance in bearing witness to the generosity of God, and who spreads the perfume of her liberality to all corners of the skies above her throne and kingdom; she is the queen who possesses mines of rock gold of red quality, and who possesses a mosque of gold alloy made from the king of rock gold, and she is the queen who through the grace of God the Exalted possesses a white elephant whose eyes shine like the morning star, and elephants with four tusks, and red elephants, and speckled elephants, and elephants for lassoing, and {...} elephants, and hermaphrodite elephants, she is the queen who through the grace of God the Exalted possesses elephants caparisoned with gold and lapis lazuli {...} and hundreds of war elephants; she is the queen who through the grace of God the Exalted possesses horses caparisoned with gold studded with lapis lazuli and hundreds of swift horses of all kinds of stock, Arab and Byzantine and Turkish and Cochin and Lahur and Abaya and Tongkin and Gudh, and she is the queen who possesses kingdoms in the west and the east, and the queen who bears witness to the evidence of the majesty (of God), and who through the grace of God the Exalted is on the throne of the kingdom of Aceh, Abode of Peace, to Sultan Charles the Second who reigns in the prosperous kingdom of England, he is the sultan who is valliant and wise and who posseses the states of Great Britain and England and Scotland and France and Ireland.

[22] b.r.m.l.m.', that is, *bermelambang*?, from '*melambang*, a broad flat-bottomed native boat' (Wilkinson 1985:654).

Wherefore this is to inform Sultan Charles the Second that when the news reached the mirror of our heart that Sultan Charles the Second had borne upon his head the favour of the Lord of all worlds and had taken the place of his father on the throne of the kingdom and had placed on his head the crown descended from the kings of yore, we were overjoyed. Therefore we commanded that this our most honoured missive be sent to the Governor of the great company in order that the Governor of the company could convey to Sultan Charles the Second our honoured letter together with the accompanying precious gifts, in order to reaffirm all the agreements between the people of Aceh, Abode of Peace, and the English, just as in the olden days during the time of the late Makota Alam, who is honoured by the Lord of all worlds. And so please never cease from sending ships from the prosperous country of England to the honoured port of Aceh, Abode of Peace, for the sake of the lasting friendship between our two countries, as was the case in the past.

As for Henry Gary who has been in our port for eighteen months, we have allowed him to construct a warehouse in our port, and we have allowed several subjects of Sultan Charles the Second to trade in the port of Aceh, Abode of Peace. And furthermore we have granted permission for three English ships a year to [visit {...}] and Sulibar, for it is was our wish that the English should trade in all countries that form part of our dominions, but they have been apprehended by the accursed Dutch, and that is why the English are unable to trade in these dominions. And so we beseech Sultan Charles the Second to do something about this state of affairs, in order to safeguard the English traders from harm. For whatever the English do manage to acquire through trade in these dominions [is at risk] because the scoundrels are up to treachery and theft, and the English are suffering; this, therefore, is why we are sending news in this sincere letter to Sultan Charles the Second.

Our gift to Sultan (Charles) the Second is camphor weighing four *tahil* seven *dinar*, and agila weighing one *kati* twelve *tahil* three *dinar*, and ambergris weighing fourteen *dinar*, and one bezoar stone from a porcupine weighing ten *dinar*, and a boat-shaped Japanese chest inlaid with shells three hand-spans in length, as signs of our honesty and sincerity; the end, with goodwill.

3c Contemporary English translation, 1661.[23] British Library, India Office Records, MSS.Eur.Photo 149/8, f.156

Paaducka Sirie Sultan Queene over many Kings sole Mistress of Sumatra feared in her kingdoms and honoured of all bordring nations, in whom there is the true image of a prince, and in whome raignes the true method of Goverment formed as it were of the most pure mettall and adorned with the most finest coulours, whose seate is high and most compleate like unto a Christall river, pure and cleare as Christall itselfe, from whom floweth the pure streame of Bounty and Justice whose presence is as the finest Gold, Queene of Priaman and of the mountains of Gold, viz. Salida, Pidier and Nelabow, lady of nine sorts of precious stones, whose vessells of bathing are all of pure gold, her sepulcher of the same mettall, Crowne of the Universe and maintainer and Defendresses of the faith of the Musslemins or true beleivers etc.

[23] Abbreviations have been written out in full.

This great Queene sendeth her letter of salutations unto his Majesty of great Britaine Charles the Second King of England, Scotland, France & Ireland, Deffender of the Faith of that great prophett Issah, or Jesus Christ etc.

Wherein wee cannot sufficiently express most puissant Prince the Joy that wee received when wee were made acquainted with the happy tydings of your Majesty's safe returne into your owne country, and that divine providence had restored you to your Crowne and kingdomes and seated you upon your Majesty's ffather (of blessed memory) his throne, neither could wee doe less then manifest the same by these our congratulatory lines which wee much desire may communicate the ardency of our desires for the continuance of that ancient league, amitie and friendship with your Majesty our ancesters ever kept and maintained with the kings of that your most glorious monarchy which the intercourse of letters between us may conserve, unto your Majesty's subject viz. Henry Gary who lately hath setled a factory on this our court of Acheene, wee have in the behalfe of his employers the English East India Company granted free trade and custome for as many ships as shall of theires come to this our port, the 1/5 of three shipps customes that shall come every monsoone bringing freight goods belonging to moores merchants, is alsoe freely granted allowed and given them with many other libertys all which in regard hee hath desired our licence for his departure to Surratt, wee have ratified unto Francis Cobb /f.156v/ in the behalfe of the said Company. Wee would have granted them many more munityos and priviledges then they already enjoy, especially to have had the free trade of Tecco and Priaman, etc., other ports on the west side of this island which they much endeavoured to obtaine, did not that insulting nation, the Hollanders impeede it, who appropriate to themselves the trade of all this part of the world not permitting any merchants whatsoever to trade to any place, But our confidence is that your power great Sire will make them sensible of the extraordinary insolencys they soe constantly committ, they practising nothing else, than how to live by vapine and violence haveing already deprived many princes in these southerne parts of theire lawfull possessions and inheritances, haveing also by their great force att sea constrained us to yield, and submitt to subscribe to conditions both very dishonourable and prejudiciall unto us, and know not how soone they may molest us againe, if not timeley by your Majesty's great prudence and benignity towards us, suppresssed and restrained, how much theese theire hostile and insolent proceedings are unpleaseing to God, and disonant to his most sacred Lawes, your Majesty well understands, and wee hope will take it into consideration.

It is much our desire that your Majesties subjects vissitt this our port often, bringing with them yearly the commodities of other countryes in lieu whereof they may exchange for such as this our kingdome affords. And now because that this our letter may safely come to your Majesty, wee have appointed the Governor of the honorable English East India Company to deliver it into your Majesty's hands, as our own Ambassador, and for its more safe conveyhance it is now sent unto the President of your nation in Surratt by the hands of Oran Kaya Puttee Henry Gary, your Majesty's most faithfull subject who hath resided at this our Court 18 months unto whose care and custody is alsoe committed viz. one piece of garoo or lignum Aloes, one piece of Salumbark, one piece of Amber grease, one besar stone of a Porcupine, and a Japon sowetowe, which wee send unto your Majesty as a Pledge of our affections, and honour, and the continuance of our League, soe many yeares since begunn betweene yours and ours predecessecers, soe wee wish your Majesty a prosperous reigne, tranquillity within your kingdomes and victory over all your enemys.

Given at our Pallace of Achiene the twenty-eighth day of the moone Safferr and of the Hegira 1072 w[hich] according to the Julian acco[unt] is 12 October *anno domini* 1661.[24]

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[24] 28 *Safar* 1072 H is equivalent to Sunday 23 October CE 1661 in the Gregorian reckoning.

Appendix B

TEXTS, TRANSLITERATIONS AND TRANSLATIONS OF THE LETTERS DISCUSSED IN 'WRITING HISTORY: THE ACEHNESE EMBASSY TO ISTANBUL, 1849-1852'[1]

Ismail Hakkı Kadı, Andrew Peacock and Annabel Teh Gallop

1 Mansur Syah's Malay letter to Abdülmecid, 15 Rabi' al-Awwal 1265/8 February 1849 CE (B.O.A, İHR 66/3208, [6])

Great seal of Sultan Mansur Syah:

Paduka Seri Sultan 'Ala' al-Din Mansur Syah Johan Berdaulat zill Allah fi al-'alam// ibn Sultan Jauhar al-'Alam Syah/ibn Sultan Muhammad Syah/ibn Sultan Mahmud Syah/ibn Sultan Johan Syah/ibn Sultan Ahmad Syah/ibn Sultan Taj al-'Alam/ibn Sultan Makota Alam/ibn Sultan Sayyid al-Mukammal

sign manual: al-Sultan al-Mansur Syah

1a Malay text

Bismillah al-rahman al-rahim

Al-hamd li-llah rabb al-'alamin wa-al-'aqiba li-l-muttaqin wa-al-salat wa-al-salam 'ala sayyidina Muhammad sayyid al-anbiya' wa-al-mursalin wa-'ala alihi wa-sahbihi ajma'in. Amma ba'da adapun kemudian daripada itu maka inilah warkat al-ikhlas wa-tuhfat al-ajnas yang termaktub dalamnya dengan beberapa sembah salam takzim dan takrim yang keluar daripada kalbi yang nurani dan fuad yang haqiqi dan sirr yang khafi dan rahasia yang terbuni yaitu ialah yang datang daripada pihak hamba anak emas yang hina dina lagi fana lagi tiada menaruh daya dan upaya serta dengan tiada mengetahui adat dan majlis lagi daif dengan miskin, yaitu yang bernama Sultan Mansur Syah ibn al-marhum Sultan Jauhar al-'Alam Syah yang ada hayyat duduk dengan duka percintaan dan kesukaannya yaitu yang memerintahkan hukum dan adat dalam daerah negeri Aceh bandar dar al-salam. Maka barang disampaikan Allah subhanahu wa-ta'ala datang mendapatkan ke bawah kadam tapak kauh[2] *duli hadrat*

1 Arabic loan words in Malay are given in standard Malay spelling.

2 Spelled very clearly as k.a.w.h, perhaps reflecting the Acehnese form of *kauth*, k.a.w.th, or *kaus*, 'shoe, boot'. I am grateful to Jan van der Putten for this suggestion.

penghulu hamba yang maha mulia lagi 'ala dan fadli yang telah dikurniai daripada Tuhan yang bernama rabbikum al-a'la yaitu sayyidna wa-mawlana Paduka Seri Sultan 'Abd al-Majid Khan ibn al-marhum Sultan Mahmud Khan Johan Berdaulat zill Allah fi al-'alam yang tahta kerajaan daripada emas kudrati yang sepuluh mutu lagi yang bertatahkan ratna[3] *mutu ma'nikam daripada intan dikarang dan zabarjad yang telah terseradi dalam daerah negeri Rum Qustantih*[4] *bandar dar al-ma'mur wa-al-mashhuriah yang memerintahkan amr bi-al-ma'ruf wa-al-nahy 'an al-munkar pada sekalian alam dunia laut dan darat dengan sangat adilnya serta dengan gagah dan kuat pada memegang syariat Muhammad ahl al-sunnah wa-al-jama'ah dalam daerah negeri Makkah al-musharafah dan Madinah al-munawwarah dan negeri yang lain jua adanya.*[5] *Maka tiadalah patik berpanjangkan kalam melainkan sekadar patik mangadukan hal dengan ihwal yang maksud sahaja, amin.*

Syahdan patik beri maklumlah ke bawah kadam tapak kauh duli hadrat adapun karena tantangan patik yang di negeri Aceh sungguhlah anak emas duli hadrat daripada zaman dahulu hingga sampai zaman sekarang tiadalah menaruh lupa dan lalai akan duli hadrat daripada tiap2 kutika dan masa pada siang dan malam pada pagi dan petang. Adapun karena hal ihwal surat ini patik mengkirimkan ke bawah duli dari karena tatkala dahulu negeri Jawi sekaliannya orang Muslimin dan kuatlah dengan berbuat ibadah dan tetaplah agama Islam dan senanglah kehidupan segala orang fakir dan miskin dan lainnya. Dan sekarang sudahlah binasa negeri karena sudah masuk orang kafir Belanda pada satu pulau Jawa dan serta dengan pulau Bugis dan pulau Bali serta dengan pulau Burniu dan serta dengan pulau Aceh yang setengah sudahlah diambil oleh orang Belanda. Dan serta dengan raja Minangkabawi sudah ditangkapnya dan sudahlah dibawa' ke negeri dianya pada tarikh sanat 1253. Dan sampailah surat kepada patik ke negeri Aceh daripada segala ulama dan orang besar2 Minangkabau dia minta tolong bantu kepada patik. Dan patik berpikirlah dengan segala hulubalang dan orang besar2 yang dalam negeri Aceh pasal hal itu, maka berkatalah segala hulubalang kepada patik: 'Adapun sekarang ini karena kita hendak berlawan perang dengan orang Belanda karena Belanda itu adalah kapal perang, karena <kita>[6] *kurang daripadanya dan lagi pula karena kita ini di bawah perintah sultan Rum, sekarang barang2 hal pekerjaan wajiblah tuanku kirimkan suatu surat kepada penghulu kita sultan Rum, dan hendaklah kita minta' tolong bantu padanya, lagi serta dengan kita minta' kapal perang barang berapa yang memadai serta laskar dalamnya orang Teruki.'*

Sudah itu maka patik kirimlah suatu surat kepada duli hadrat pada tarikh sanat 1253 dan adalah khabar dalam surat itu patik mangadukan sekalian hal ihwal orang Belanda yang dalam negeri Jawi dan hal ihwal orang Muslim dan yang membawa surat itu orang Marikan namanya Kapitan Tuan Dansart[7] *dengan persembahan tanda yakin patik akan duli hadrat lada putih adalah lima ribu ratal*[8] *dan kemunyan putih adalah tiga ribu ratal dan gaharu adalah*

3 r.q.n.a.

4 q.s.t.n.t.y.h.

5 Mansur Syah's Malay letter to the French king, Louis Phillipe, written on the same day, opens with very similar compliments (see Reid 2005:191-3). The key differences are that in the letter to Sultan Abdülmecid, Mansur Syah describes himself as *anak emas*, and the Ottoman ruler is accorded the sovereign titles *Johan Berdaulat zill Allah fi al-'alam*, and is honoured as custodian of the two holy cities.

6 Inserted above the line.

7 t.w.n d.a.n.s.r.t.

8 *Ratl, ritl* – a unit of measure, equivalent, in Baghdad, to a weight of 12 oz or a pint in capacity according to Lane's *Arabic dictionary*, with differing values in Bombay (*ratal*) and in the Red Sea (*rottolo*) (Hughes 1999:535).

dua ribu ratal dan kapur adalah dua ratus ratal dan lainnya pasal kain2 adalah dua tiga helai karena patik orang miskin, dan patik nantilah datang perintah dan wasitah daripada duli hadrat hingga sampai empat tahun lamanya.

Sudah itu maka patik kirim pula suatu lagi surat kepada duli hadrat pada tarikh sanat 1257 dan adalah khabar dalamnya seperti yang telah tersebut dahulu itu jua, patik kirimkan pada orang Peransih surat itu namanya Kapitan Bangin[9] *dan serta dengan persembahan tanda yakin akan duli hadrat lada putih adalah empat ribu ratal dan kemunyan putih adalah dua ribu lima ratus ratal dan gaharu adalah seribu tujuh ratus lima puluh ratal dan kapur adalah seratus lima puluh ratal dan lainnya pasal kain2 adalah dua tiga helai karena patik orang miskin, dan patik nantilah pula datang perintah dan wasitah daripada duli hadrat hingga sampai empat tahun lamanya.*

Sudah itu maka patik kirim pula suatu lagi surat kepada duli hadrat pada tarikh sanat 1261 dan adalah khabar dalamnya seperti yang telah tersebut dahulu itu jua, dan yang membawa' surat itu orang Peransih namanya Kapitan Estilung[10] *dan serta dengan persembahan tanda yakin akan duli hadrat lada putih adalah tiga ribu lima ratus ratal dan kamunyan putih adalah dua ribu ratal dan gaharu adalah seribu lima ratus ratal dan kapur adalah seratus ratal dan lainnya pasal kain2 Aceh adalah dua tiga helai karena patik orang miskin lagi hina, dan patik nantilah pula datang perintah dan wasitah daripada duli hadrat hingga empat tahun lamanya, maka tiadalah datang perintah dan wasitah daripada duli hadrat.*

Sudah itu maka patik berpikirlah dengan segala hulubalang dan segala orang yang besar2, 'Bagaimanalah kita ini tiadalah datang perintah dan wasitah daripada penghulu kita di negeri Rum? Adapun karena negeri Rum terlalu sangat jauh, barangkali tiada sampai surat yang kita kirim ke bawah duli hadrat syah alam. Sekarang baiklah kita kirim satu orang Aceh ke negeri Rum, kita suruh nyatakan surat yang dahulu ada sampai ke bawah duli atawa tiada'. Maka ialah pada tarikh sanat 1265 pada lima belas hari bulan Rabiulawal pada hari Khamis, pada dewasa itulah patik berbuat surat sekeping kertas ini tawakkul yakin patik ke bawah lebu kadam tapak kauh duli hadrat.

Amma ba'da ampun tuanku sembah ampun, ampun beribu kali ampun, patik anak emas tuanku Sultan Mansur Syah ibn al-marhum Sultan Johar al-'Alam Syah memohon ampun ke bawah kadam duli hadrat yang maha mulia yaitu Sultan 'Abd al-Majid Khan ibn al-marhum Sultan Mahmud Khan. Syahdan patik beri maklumlah ke bawah kadam duli hadrat adapun karena patik sekarang ini sangatlah masyghul dan serta kesukaran karena sebab negeri Jawa dan negeri Bugis dan negeri Bali dan negeri Burniu dan negeri Palembang dan negeri Minangkabau sudahlah dihukumkan oleh orang Belanda, dan sangatlah susah segala orang yang Muslim lagi sangatlah kekurangan daripada agama Islam karena sebab keras orang kafir Belanda itu. Dan muafakatlah segala orang yang besar2 serta segala rakyatnya yang dalam negeri semuhanya itu hendak melawan dia lagi hendak memukul dia, maka dikirimlah surat daripada tiap2 orang yang besar2 dalam negeri semuhanya itu kepada patik ke negeri Aceh, karena negeri Aceh yang dalam pegangan perintah patik belumlah dapat oleh Belanda segala negeri dan sekalian bandar. Dan sekarang orang Belanda hendak memeranglah kepada patik ke negeri Aceh dan sudahlah siab[11] *dianya dan patik pun 'ala kull hal siablah akan melawan dia dan segala hulubalang dan orang yang besar2 pada negeri yang sudah dihukum oleh Belanda sudah sampai surat kepada patik ke negeri Aceh. Dan muafakatlah dianya dengan patik lagi satu batin dengan patik semuhanya orang itu, apabila bangkit perang orang Belanda itu*

9 ba.n.g.y.n.
10 a.s.ti.l.w.ng.
11 s.y.b.

maka segala orang Islam pun bangkitlah melawan dia lagi memukul dia tiap2 negeri yang telah tersebut itu, karena segala orang yang sudah diperintah oleh Belanda pada tiap2 negeri semuhanya menanti titah daripada patik di negeri Aceh, dan tantangan patik pun menanti titah dan wasitah <daripada> duli hadrat yang di negeri Rum. Ampun tuanku beribu kali ampun kurnia sedekah duli hadrat kepada patik ke negeri Aceh kapal perang al-qadar dua belas serta dengan laskar dalamnya barang berapa yang memadai dalam kapal itu dan tantangan belanja laskar dan belanja kapal sekaliannya di atas tanggungngan[12] *patik jika sudah sampai ka negeri Aceh adalah dengan ikhtiar patik semuhanya itu dan hendaklah dengan izin duli hadrat kepada patik dan lainnya hendak memerang kafir Belanda itu pada tiap2 negeri dan tiap2 bandar, dan hendaklah sedekah duli hadrat surat tanda alamat duli hadrat kepada kami semuhanya yang dalam negeri Jawi kalahum ajma'in supaya sukalah kami mati syahid.*

Itulah ihwalnya dan yang lain tiadalah patik sebutkan dalam warkat ini melainkan duli hadrat pariksa pada orang yang membawa surat ini karena dianya hulubalang patik lagi tabah dengan patik, namanya Muhammad Ghauth ibn Abdul Rahim, karena dianya amanah patik lagi badan ganti patik berjalan menjungjung ke bawah kadam duli hadrat ke negeri Rum, dan apa2 khabarnya sungguhlah khabar patik dan pekerjaannya pun sungguh pekerjaan patik, dan hendaklah dengan segera2 titah duli hadrat akan Muhammad Ghauth kembali ke negeri Jawi. Dan tiadalah tanda hayyat patik melainkan ampun beribu2 kali ampun. Tammat kalam sanat 1265.

1b English translation

In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful.
Praise be to God, Lord of the worlds; the hereafter belongs to the pious. Prayers and blessings upon our lord Muhammad, lord of the prophets and the messengers, and also on all his family and companions. After that, this is a sincere letter and gift of sorts which contains within it obeisance and greetings of respect and esteem which issue forth from a heart enlightened and true and a breast full of secrets and hidden mysteries, which comes from your born slave, who is mean, humble and soon to perish, who is without means or resources, who is deficient in knowledge of social customs and formal governance, who is frail and impoverished, namely Sultan Mansur Syah, son of the late sultan Jauhar al-'Alam Syah, who currently dwells in the sorrow of his yearnings and affections, and who exercises the rule of both (sharia) law and customary law in the lands of the state of Aceh, in the port of the abode of peace. May it be conveyed by God, may He be praised and exalted, to arrive beneath the soles of the shoes of the honoured presence of our lord, His Exalted and Excellent Majesty, who has been graced by the God who is named Our Lord the Highest, namely our lord and our master His Majesty Sultan Abdülmecid Khan, son of the late sultan Mahmud Khan, the Sovereign Champion, the shadow of God on earth, whose royal throne is made of pure gold of the highest grade, which is studded with precious stones of all kinds, clustered with diamonds and scattered with emeralds, in the lands of the state of Rum in Constantinople, the port which is the abode of prosperity and fame, who issues commands to do what is right and who prohibits what is wrong with utmost justice, all over the world both at sea and on land, and who vigorously and strongly upholds the law of Muhammad and of the people of the path and the congregation in the lands of Mecca the exalted and Medina the illustrious and in other lands as well. It

12 t.ng.g.w.ng.ng.n.

is not my intention to prolong these words; rather I wish to bring to your attention the immediate matter at hand, amen.

Therefore I would like to make known to beneath the soles of the shoes of the illustrious presence [, that is, Your Majesty] our position, that we in the land of Aceh have truly been the born slaves of Your Majesty from ancient times to the present day, and we have never forgotten or neglected Your Majesty at any time or moment, whether day or night, whether morning or evening. The reason for my sending this letter to Your Majesty is that in the past the Jawi lands were all occupied by Muslims, who faithfully performed their religious obligations and firmly upheld the religion of Islam, and all the poor people and mendicants and others were able to lead comfortable lives. But now the country is in ruins due to the coming of the infidel Dutch; they came first to the island of Java, then to the island of the Bugis and the island of Bali and the island of Borneo, and then on to the island of Aceh, which is now partly occupied by the Dutch. They captured the ruler of Minangkabau and carried him off to their capital in 1253 (1837/1838 CE), and I received a letter in Aceh from the religious leaders and nobles of Minangkabau, asking for my help and assistance. So I conferred with all the (war) commanders and nobles of Aceh on this matter, and the commanders said to me:

> At the present time we are on the brink of war with the Dutch, yet the Dutch have warships while we have none, and furthermore because we are under the rule of the Sultan of Rum, before we do anything at all it is essential that Your Highness should send a letter to our lord the Sultan of Rum and we should ask for his assistance, and we should ask for an adequate number of warships manned by Turkish troops.

I therefore sent a letter to Your Majesty in the year 1253 (1837/1838 CE), and in the letter I laid forth all our grievances about the Dutch who had come into the Jawi lands and the problems facing the Muslims. And the person who carried the letter was an American named Captain Mr Dansart [d.a.n.s.r.t], and it was accompanied by offerings as a sign of our confidence in Your Majesty: five thousand *ratal* of white pepper, and three thousand *ratal* of white benzoin, and two thousand *ratal* of agila wood, and two hundred *ratal* of camphor, and furthermore as for cloth there were but two or three pieces because I am but a poor man. And then I waited for the arrival of orders or an envoy from Your Majesty, until four years had passed.

I then sent another letter to Your Majesty in the year 1257 (1841/1842 CE), and the contents of the letter were the same as stated above, and I sent this letter via a Frenchman named Captain Bangine [ba.n.g.y.n], together with offerings as a sign of our confidence in Your Majesty: four thousand *ratal* of white pepper, and two thousand five hundred *ratal* of white benzoin, and one thousand seven hundred and fifty *ratal* of agila wood, and one hundred and fifty *ratal* of camphor, and furthermore as for cloth there were but two or three pieces because I am but a poor man. And then I waited for the arrival of orders or an envoy from Your Majesty, until four years had passed.

I then sent another letter to Your Majesty in the year 1261 (1845 CE), and the contents of the letter were also the same as stated above, and this letter was sent via a Frenchman named Captain Estilung [a.s.ti.l.w.ng], together with offerings as a sign of confidence in Your Majesty: three thousand five hundred *ratal* of white pepper; and two thousand *ratal* of white benzoin, and one thousand five hundred *ratal* of agila wood, and one hundred *ratal* of camphor, and furthermore as for Acehnese cloth there

were but two or three pieces, for I am but a poor and humble man. And so I waited for the arrival of orders or an envoy from Your Majesty for four full years, but no orders or envoys arrived from Your Majesty.

After that I conferred with my commanders and nobles, 'What should we do now, as no orders or envoys have arrived from our lord in Rum? As the country of Rum is so very far away, maybe the letters that we sent to His Majesty the Lord of the World never arrived. Now perhaps it would be better if we were to send a man from Aceh to Rum, in order to ascertain whether or not the earlier letters to His Majesty have arrived.'

Therefore, in this year of 1265, on the fifteenth day of Rabi al-Awwal (8 February 1849), on Thursday, at this moment, I prepared a letter on this sheet of paper, as a sign of my trust and confidence, addressed to the dust beneath the soles of the shoes of your illustrious presence.

And so: we beg your pardon, Your Highness, obeisance and pardon, pardon and a thousand more pardons, I, Your Highness's born slave, Sultan Mansur Syah, son of the late sultan Jauhar al-'Alam Syah, extends pardons to beneath the feet of Your Illustrious Majesty, Sultan Abdülmecid Khan, son of the late sultan Mahmud Khan. And then I wish to make known to beneath the feet of Your Majesty that I am currently in very sorrowful and difficult circumstances because the lands of Java and Bugis and Bali and Borneo and Palembang and Minangkabau are already under Dutch rule, and all the Muslims are in great distress, and the religion of Islam has been greatly suppressed because of the harshness of those infidel Dutch. And all the nobles and the people of those countries have come to an agreement to rise up against them [, that is, the Dutch] and to fight them, and so all the nobles of those countries have sent letters to me in Aceh, because Aceh is still under my control and all its lands and ports are not yet in the hands of the Dutch. And now the Dutch are about to attack me in the land of Aceh, and they are ready to strike, and we are also in all aspects ready to fight them. And all the commanders and nobles of the countries that have fallen under Dutch rule have sent letters to me in Aceh, and we have agreed that we are all of one spirit, and that when the Dutch declare war then all the Muslims will rise up against them and fight them in all the countries mentioned above. And all the people who are currently being ruled by the Dutch in all the different lands are waiting for instructions from me in Aceh, and my position is that I am in turn waiting for a royal order and envoy from Your Majesty in Rum. Pardon, Your Highness, a thousand more pardons, may Your Majesty grant your supplicants in Aceh, if possible, twelve warships manned with an appropriate number of troops, and as for the cost of all the troops and the ships it will be fully my responsibility; and when they reach Aceh they should all be under my direct command – as long as I have your permission granted to me for this – in order to fight the infidel Dutch in all lands and in all harbours. And may Your Majesty grant your supplicants a letter as a manifest symbol of Your Majesty, addressed to all of us in the Jawi lands, all together, so that we may be willing to die a martyr's death.

That is the substance of the matter, and I will not prolong this letter further with other affairs, but Your Majesty may interrogate the person who carries this letter, because he is my commander and utterly steadfast to me; his name is Muhammad Ghauth, son of Abdul Rahim; for he is my trusted envoy and takes my bodily place in journeying to pay obeisance to beneath the feet of Your Majesty in the land of Rum, and the news he brings is truly my news, and his affairs are truly my affairs. And we further beg that Your Majesty may swiftly order Muhammad Ghauth to return to the

Jawi lands. And there is no token of affection from me save pardons and a thousand more pardons. The end of the words. The year 1265.

2 English translation of Mansur Syah's Arabic letter to Sultan Abdülmecid, 3 Jumada al-Awwal 1266/17 March 1850 (B.O.A, İ.HR 73/3511, [2])

O God, our hearts do not cease to raise sincere prayers and our tongues speak in a state of both secrecy and openness, and we ask with the tongue of submission and the heart of contrition, speading out the hands of humbleness and neediness, that you aid us by granting the head of this fortunate, sultanic Ottoman state more loftiness and power, and that you realize our hopes of it in raising the exalted word of God and establishing the pillars of religion and suppressing the wiles of the infidel unbelievers. For it is the state which is free of deviation and wrongdoing and is safe from the tyrants of the pen and the sword, especially His Majesty the great sultan, the glorious *khaqan*, heir of the caliphate, the sultanate and kingship, sultan of Arabs, Persians and Turks who raises the banners of the faith and suppresses opponents of the nation of Muhammad, victor of Islam and belief, the spreader of the carpet of safety and security, His Majesty our lord Sultan Abdülmecid Khan, may God Exalted make his sultanate and his reign eternal and make the entire world subject to him and part of his kingdom. May the banner of his justice remain spread until the day of resurrection, by the grace of Taha the trustworthy [, that is, the Prophet Muhammad] (peace be upon him and his family and companions). Amen.

After kissing the Exalted Threshold which is the refuge of those seeking favours and the place of nobility which never disappoints he who seeks it out, may your noble hearing and merciful sentiments know that: we, the people of the region of Aceh, indeed all the inhabitants of the island of Sumatra, have all been considered subjects of the Sublime Ottoman State generation after generation, since the time of our late lord Sultan Selim Khan son of the late Sultan Süleyman Khan son of the late Sultan Selim Khan Abu'l-Futuhat – may God's mercy and favour be upon them. That is proved in the sultanic record-books. This great, long island contained a number of regions each of which had a governor subject to the Sublime Ottoman State, although every governor had the title of sultan and king according to their custom, seeing as each one was independent in governing the people of his region, in which no one opposed him. Their affairs were in order because of His Late Excellency the vizier Sinan Pasha who settled the sultan of each region in rule of its people. Half of the eastern region consisted of a group of large and small islands, among them our island of Sumatra, the island of Borneo, the island of Sunda which is also called Jawa and the island of Bugis. Each of these islands contains various regions and each region contains ports on the shore of the salt sea and many towns on the land. God willed what he willed and the Christian group known as the Hollanda or Flemenk came and entered the island of Sunda and took up residence there with the consent of its sultan in exchange for an agreed proportion of revenue every year, until gradually by cunning and deceit they gained power over it. Every year [the Dutch] diminished [the Javanese] more and more until they had taken the entire island along with the remaining regions of it. They also seized its sultans, and those who obeyed them in everything they allowed to remain over their kingdoms with a salary from them [the Dutch], but without any rights to judge over their people at all, and imposed them on their subjects out of contempt for the latter and to subjugate them to hard labour all day long. If anyone rebelled against

them, he was exiled to a distant place and they put one part of the people in control of the rest until they had humiliated all the people of the whole island. They made some of [the people] soldiers, some of them bearers, and some, men and women, were subjugated to hard labour in agriculture and clearance work. They fined each one of them a specified amount and prevented them from the pilgrimage and coming to the Two Holy Shrines. If anyone wants to make the pilgrimage they would not allow him unless he hands over fifty Maria Theresa thalers. If someone refuses to pay it and goes on the pilgrimage in secret, on his return they put chains on him. They prevented scholars from occupying themselves with noble learning and have made them more lowly than slaves. This is what they have done on the island of Sunda, called Java, and they have made their capital in the port of Batavia, which is the residence of the governor general, as their permanent and eternal right. They have seized the port of Pontianak and Banjar and Sambas from Borneo, and the port of Makassar from Bugis and Palembang from Sumatra, and they have seized their sultans and exiled them and have taken possession of the people and treated them with contempt. In Sumatra, they have also seized Padang, Bankahulu, Pariaman and Natal. The aforementioned ports have a sultan called maharaja, and their capital is a place called Pagar Ruyung. They made a trick to get to the aforementioned sultan by correspondence and presents until they reached him. They became friends as a prelude to their cunning and deceit until they gained the upper hand, when they took the sultan to Batavia. They killed the ulama and prevented scholars from occupying themselves with learning and they took [important] people's sons and ordered them to learn their books and gave them a desire for monthly allowances. They subjugated the rest to hard labour, men, women and children, without any payment, and had intercourse with prostitutes in the open and showed contempt for Muslim men and women. Their aim with regard to the Muslims was nothing less than taking them away from the religion of Islam for once and for all. This is what they did in the region of Minangkabau. They desired too to make preparations against us in the region of Aceh – may God protect us from them – because of the remains of the gifts of our late lord, Sultan Selim Khan, through the late vizier Sinan Pasha, may God have mercy on both of them. We were vigilant and wished to mobilize against them in revenge for the sultan they had exiled, for that sultan was from the family of our maternal uncle and a single grandfather joins us and that sultan. We must ask permission from the Sublime Ottoman State for we are considered to be its subjects. We wrote a letter in 1253 which we sent to Istanbul in the company of the American captain [?Tuan], [thinking] perhaps we would be given a [positive] reply, for when our ancestors sent a letter to the the Sublime State, they got a reply; but we did not. In 1257 we wrote another letter [sent] with the French captain Ba.ni.q.y.n, and got no reply, and then in 1261 we sent [another] with the French captain Us.ti.lun and got no reply. On each occasion, the letter was accompanied by presents in accordance with the importance of the affair, not that of the person for whom they were destined. We then sent a group of our men led by Muhammad Ghauth with a letter from us, and we intended that they should make for Istanbul to kiss the Exalted Threshold, going by way of the Two Holy Shrines to make the pilgrimage and paying their respects to the Prophet, before going to Istanbul. This was in 1265. To this date we have received no knowledge or news of them, and we do not know whether they arrived or not. We therefore had this letter too written and sent it by steamer to Mecca. Perhaps it will reach Istanbul that your noble knowledge may encompass what has been done to the Muslims by these Dutch Christians. What is desired from the mercy

of Your Majesty is that you grant us a sultanic commission to which we could gather the Muslim elders of our people that they might agree to starting jihad in God's path and to expelling those Christian infidels. For if we do not expel them from the Muslim lands we fear all the people of the island will apostacize and leave Islam once and for all; we take refuge in God that this does not happen. [Please] send the commission to our man Muhammad Ghauth or to His Excellency the governor of Mecca and from him to the noble shaykh Isma'il b. 'Abdallah al-Khalidi who, God willing, will take responsibility for sending it onto us. This is the extent of what we hope from the mercy of Your Majesty Abdülmecid, even if we exceed the bounds of politeness in that. We ask God the Merciful, the Compassionate, through His Prophet our lord Muhammad Ra'uf the Compassionate, to prolong the life of our sultan, most glorious of kings in power and fate, most glorious of sultans in origin and in epoch, protector of the Two Shrines, supporter of the divine law, lord of the universe, our lord the sultan son of the sultan son of the sultan our lord, Sultan Abdülmecid Khan, son of the late Sultan Mahmud Khan son of the late Sultan Abdülhamid Khan, may God grant him victory, lengthen his days and open his standards with the winds of victory. Amen by the grace of the trustworthy Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him. Written on 3 Jumada al-Awwal 1266.

Sultan Mansur Syah
With the blessings of Shaykh Ma'ruf al-Karkhi

3 Muhammad Ghauth's Arabic letter to Hasib Pasha, Ottoman Governor of the Hijaz, Jumada al-Awwal 1266/March-April 1850 (B.O.A, İHR 66/3208, [4]).

We ask you, God who answers the destitute if he calls on You, who does not disappoint the hopes of he who calls on you, to preserve the fortune of the vizier, the counsellor who is consulted, he on whom the state constantly relies, who unites the virtues of courage and generosity, who gives justice to the oppressed, who succeeds in undertaking all the tasks, both religious and worldly, in the inviolate Sanctuary, on account of his struggle to renew the blessings [every] trace of which has disappeared and been destroyed, His Excellency al-Sayyid Muhammad Hasib Pasha, may God bring him whatever benefits he desires in this world and the next.

May your noble hearing and merciful sentiments know that: the kings of Islam and governors of the God's sacred land still rejoice in those who come to them as envoys and are concerned to meet the aims of those who come to them seeking [assistance]. [The authorities] consider that an honour and are immortalized by them in fame. It is no secret to Your Excellency that I have been sent by your obedient servant, my lord Sultan Mansur Syah, son of the late Jauhar Alam Syah, lord of the land of Aceh and dependencies, which is one of the regions of the island of Sumatra. [He has sent me] on an important mission to Istanbul – may it remain God-protected and defended – and has entrusted me with written and oral[13] instructions. Their content is that the aforementioned island is a great long island in the middle of the [Indian] Ocean, which comprises a number of regions, each one of which contains towns and ports on the shore of the [Indian] Ocean. Each region is under an independent sultan who has a free hand there. All of them are monotheistic believers, belonging to the *madhhab* of the

13 Literally, *mahfuza* or 'memorized'.

Imam al-Shafi'i. One of the largest territories is that of Minangkabau which has a sultan who looks after the affairs of the people called Sultan Maharajadiraja, whose capital is called Pagar Ruyung. They say his origin is from Rum and one of the ancestors of the aforementioned lord [Mansur Syah] is descended from the same line as this sultan. His kingdom consists of large and small towns and ports. The largest ports are Padang, Bengkulu, Pariaman, Natal and so on. The second territory is Palembang, which has an independent sultan who has a free hand over his people. He is a monotheist believer and a Shafi'i. The third territory is Aceh which is under the authority of our lord the aforementioned Sultan Mansur Syah. The entirety of the aforementioned island of Sumatra used to be subject to the jurisdiction of the Sublime Ottoman State, and has been obedient to it since the time of our late lord Sultan Selim Khan son of the late sultan Süleyman Khan son of the late sultan Selim Khan Abu'l-Futuhat, the conqueror of Egypt and the Two Holy Shrines, may God cover him with mercy and favour. The reason for this is that in the time of one of the ancestors of my lord [Mansur Syah], Sinan Pasha came to Aceh with war-boats, a large number [of men] and [military] equipment and the sultan of Aceh ruling at that time met him and honoured him exceedingly. He committed to him his kingdom and put himself in obedience to Sinan Pasha. He blessed him [Sinan Pasha] with glorious gifts and abundant presents, and security and peace spread in the entire region. Copper was found in Aceh, and the pasha ordered cannons and many rifles to be made from that copper. They inscribed on them the date they were cast, the name of the caster, the name of our lord Selim Khan and that of the ruler of Aceh. He ordered the people of Aceh to learn the art from them, and they too cast many cannon. The late Sinan Pasha took control of the whole island of Sumatra and its regions. He entrusted each region to a sultan, each one of whom he established in his kingdom. Then he returned, making for the Two Holy Shrines, and since that time the entire island has been subject to the jurisdiction of the Sublime Ottoman State and obedient to it, generation after generation until today. Its affairs went very well until the accursed Christian infidels called the Hollanda or Flemenk came. They entered the ports of Padang and Palembang and other ports of the island of Sumatra, and demanded of the sultan of each region permission to have authority in the ports only in order to buy and sell, and they set up their flags [there]. They remained there a while in this manner until the opportunity presented itself. When they got power, they betrayed the sultans of the people of Minangkabau and Palembang and exiled them to a distant land, and established themselves as rulers over all the people [imposing] every spiritual and material hardship. They subjugated them, both men and women, to hard labour, and prevented religious scholars from learning, both in terms of teaching and studying. The [Dutch] say that if they study, when they have acquired knowledge they will find in it that strength and jihad in the path of God is an obligation on them. So they stopped the people from coming to the Two Holy Shrines because they feared for themselves from the pilgrims. Everyone who wants to go on the holy pilgrimage must now hand over fifty Maria Theresa thalers. Anyone who goes secretly on the pilgrimage and returns to his family afterwards is pursued for fifty thalers. They claim that they have not taken anything from Muslim countries except by the exalted order of the Sublime Ottoman State. Previously they have seized all the islands, large and small, except the island of Sumatra, among them Borneo which is a large island, larger than Sumatra, although it is round. Other [islands they have seized] are Sunda, called Java, and the Bugis islands. Whenever they seize countries or ports, they treat the people with a complete and

unbearable contempt, and will not leave them alone unless they wear European-style hats, which some of them do – may God save us from that, for to Him we belong and return. They have desired time after time to take the territory of Aceh, but they have not been able to because of the number [of men] and military equipment in terms of large and small copper guns they saw there. [There are] more than 400 guns, some cast by the late Sinan Pasha, some by the people of Aceh who had learned from them [, that is, Sinan Pasha's men] the art of casting. They cast many large and small ones and in 1253 H – the year in which the sultan of Minangkabau was seized and exiled – my lord [Mansur Syah] wished to make preparations against those Christians. He had sufficient money, men, numbers and equipment and lacked only warships. At that time my lord made a petition brought by Captain [?Tuan] the American, and a present of the five substances mentioned in the list; this was during the time of the Sublime Reign of Mahmud, but he did not receive a reply. Then in 1257 H, he sent a second petition and present with the French Captain Ba.ni.q.y.n, at the beginning of the Sublime Reign of Abdülmecid – may it remain God-protected. Then in 1261 H, he sent a third petition with the French Captain U.s.ta.lu.ng along with present mentioned in detail in the list, and he got no response. My lord did not know whether the goods and presents had reached the Istanbul or not. For that reason he sent me to Istanbul to find out whether the aforementioned [goods and presents] had arrived or not. God Exalted granted that I reached the Holy Sanctuary of Mecca and to conduct the pilgrimage to his noble House and relieved me of every care and weakness. I had the honour of reaching your Exalted Threshold [Mecca] and you indicated to me that Your Excellency would ensure that my lord's petition and instructions brought by my hand would reach Istanbul without me going there, may God reward you and make you a refuge from every evil. Therefore I have written everything in this petition that my lord entrusted me with. It is in truth a summary of what is in the petition. My lord's desire from the mercy of His Majesty Sultan Abdülmecid – may he remain safe and God-protected – is that he should issue an imperial, sultanic order and an effective imperial decree to the Dutch consuls present in Istanbul that they should all leave the island of Sumatra and leave all the towns and the harbours to their people, obediently and without fighting. It is necessary for them to obey when they have established themselves over a Muslim people subject to the jurisdiction of the Sublime Ottoman State. If they do not obey the sultan's order and effective imperial decree, my lord's desire of the mercy of His Majesty Sultan Abdülmecid is the appointment of a sultanic commission to my lord, with a noble imperial order [*firman*] and an exalted imperial command and to grant noble, victorious [Ottoman] banners, and a warship with three masts and instructions to my lord and every one in Sumatra to fight in God's path a true jihad with their lives and possessions to exalt God's sublime word. My lord would not have dared to ask for the *firman* for a commission and the victorious banners and the sultanic warship were it not for his aim to be blessed by that and that it might appear to all the Powers that my lord and all the people of the island of Sumatra enjoy the protection of the Sublime Ottoman State and are attached to it. This is a summary of what my lord entrusted me with, and it is requested from Your Excellency to expedite the arrival of this petition to Istanbul – may it remain God-protected – while I await the answer in God's Holy Shrine that I may return swiftly with it to my lord, your obedient servant [Mansur Syah]. This is what needs to be explained and expounded to Your Excellency. Your opinion on it is more valuable, your consideration of it more appropriate, and the command is yours, my lord. Written down in Jumada al-Awwal 1266.

Your slave who calls upon you *hajji*
Muhammad Ghauth subject of your obedient servant
Sultan Mansur
Syah may God forgive Him Amen.

4 Translations of the envelopes

Cloth Envelope of Mansur Syah's Malay letter to Abdülmecid (in Arabic) (B.O.A, İ.HR 66/3208)

By His bounty, exalted is He, 2 4 6 8. May it reach sublime Istanbul and enjoy the favour of kissing the feet of our great sultan and glorious *khaqan*, our lord the victorious sultan our lord Sultan Abdülmecid son of the late sultan Mahmud Khan, may God Exalted preserve him.

Cloth envelope of Mansur Syah's Arabic letter to Abdülmecid (B.O.A, İ.HR 73/3511)[14]
By His bounty, exalted is He, 2 4 6 8. May it reach sublime Istanbul – may it remain safe and God-protected – and enjoy the favour of kissing the Exalted Threshold – may it remain protected by the grace of the best of mankind, upon him may there be the best of prayers and purest of men Amen. By the grace of Shaykh Ma'ruf al-Karkhi.

Paper envelope of Mansur Syah's Arabic letter to Abdülmecid (B.O.A, İ.HR 73/3511)
By His bounty, exalted is He, 2 4 6 8. May it reach sublime Istanbul – may it remain safe and God-protected – and enjoy the favour of kissing the Exalted Threshold – may it remain protected by the grace of the best of mankind, upon him may there be the best of prayers and purest of men Amen. By the grace of Shaykh Ma'ruf al-Karkhi. By the grace of *ya buduh* 2 4 6 8. Dated 1266. Amen.[15]

5 Letters of credit from Mansur Syah for his envoy

Accompanying the Malay letter of 8 February 1849 (B.O.A, İ.HR. 66/3208, [5])
I, Sultan Mansur Syah, son of the late Jauhar Alam Syah, who recognizes his own sins and faults, say: when it was Thursday 15 Rabi' al-Awwal 1265 we sent the venerable respected Shaykh Muhammad Ghauth to Mecca and Medina, and to other places in the lands of the Arabs and non-Arabs, or the lands of the English or French, and other

[14] The Arabic letter to Abdülmecid was enclosed in two envelopes, the outer one of cloth, illustrated in Illustration 15, the inner one of paper, with slightly different inscriptions on each as translated here.

[15] The talismanic numbers 2 4 6 8 derive from the famous 3 x 3 magic square, comprising the numbers 1 to 9 arranged in three rows and three columns in the order 4 9 2 / 3 5 7 / 8 1 6, the sum total in any direction being 15. The four numbers at the corners of the square – 2 4 6 8 – were believed to have especially auspicious properties, and when these numbers are replaced with letters of the Arabic alphabet according to their *abjad* values, b d w h, this yields the artificial talismanic word *buduh*. Both the numbers 2 4 6 8 and the word *buduh* were used throughout the Islamic world as amulets for the safe delivery of letters (MacDonald 1981). Another epistolary amulet, but this time found only in Southeast Asia, is the name of the Sufi saint Ma'ruf al-Karkhi, always written in 'disconnected letters', a common device in Islamic magic for enhancing the esoteric qualities of a word (Gallop 2002: 228-37).

friends of ours, merchants, skippers or pilgrims from Aceh or others. If he requires help from you with money or provisions, it is hoped that you will help him with a sum that will meet his needs, even if it is 2,000 or 3,000 [Maria Theresa] thalers. Have an IOU written and charge it to us, and if God wills, the day the IOU reaches us we shall hand over to you a sufficient sum to cover the IOU in full, so do not worry about that. For [Muhammad Ghauth] is one of our men, a trusted envoy [we have sent] on an important mission. This letter with our seal is proof of that. Reliance is in God and our lord Muhammad the unlettered Prophet and his family and companions. Written down on 15 Rabi' al-Awwal 1265 [8 February 1849].

Accompanying the Arabic letter of 17 March 1850 (B.O.A, İ.HR 73/3511, [3])
I, Sultan Mansur Syah son of the late sultan Jauhar 'Alam Syah son of the late sultan Muhammad Syah, say: when it was Thursday 15 Rabi' al-Awwal 1265 [8 February 1849], we sent our dear, revered servant, Muhammad Ghauth Sayf al-'Alam Syah, to the Two Holy Shrines and then to other countries, Arab, non-Arab, Turkish, English, French and so on with whom we have relations and friendship, and especially the merchants, skippers and pilgrims from Aceh. We entrust you with the aforementioned [Muhammad Ghauth] with regard to everything he may need in terms of money and food to the extent that will suffice him, even if it be 2,000, 5,000 or 10,000 [Maria Theresa] thalers or more. Help him and give him what he wants sufficiently and write a document to his and our account with witnesses. As soon as the document reaches us, we shall hand over to you the sum explained in it, and do not fear anything, for he is our man and envoy on a very important mission [going] in an important direction. We have therefore affixed our seal which we use only on important business, not on every letter. Blessings upon the Prophet Muhammad and his family and companions all together.

6 The Acehnese gifts to the Ottoman sultan (B.O.A, İHR 66/3208, [7])

List of the goods and presents which were presented to Istanbul by my lord Sultan Mansur Syah b. the late Sultan Jauhar 'Alam Syah b. the late sultan Muhammad Syah. In the days of the Sublime Reign of Mahmud in 1253 H [the following were sent] with the American Captain T.w.n:
Agila wood: 2,000 *ratl*
Excellent white bezoin incense: 3,000 *ratl*
Excellent white camphor: 200 *ratl*
White pepper: 5,000 *ratl*
Excellent silk cloth from Aceh: three pieces

At the beginning of the Sublime Reign of Abdülmecid in 1257, a petition and the following goods were sent with the French Capain Ba.ni.q.y.n.:
Agila wood: 1,750 *ratl*
Excellent white bezoin incense: 2,500 *ratl*
Excellent white camphor: 200 *ratl*
White pepper: 4,000 *ratl*
Excellent silk cloth: three pieces

In 1261, a petition and the following goods were sent with the French Capain U.s.tu. lun:
Agila wood: 1,500 *ratl*
Excellent white bezoin incense: 2,000 *ratl*
Excellent white camphor: 200 *ratl*
White pepper: 3,500 *ratl*
Excellent silk cloth: three pieces

Total of the three missions:
Agila wood: 5,250 *ratl* (52 *qintar*)
Excellent white bezoin incense: 7,500 *ratl* (75 *qintar*)
Excellent white camphor: 550 *ratl* (5 *qintar*)
White pepper: 12,500 *ratl* (125 *qintar*)
Excellent silk cloth: nine pieces.

7 Translation of the map of Sumatra and surrounding islands sent to the Ottoman sultan by Mansur Syah

Key to Illustration 27:
The romanized version of the map presented here includes the names of major islands, all ports said to be the seat of a *wazir* (appointed representative) of Mansur Syah, and ports under foreign jurisdiction. All other place names – nearly all of which are prefaced *bandar* or 'port' – are given in the accompanying table.

Sumatra

1.	Selun
2.	Daya
3.	Teluk Kerut
4.	Patik
5.	Teluk Kelumpan
6.	Rigas
7.	Sabi
8.	Tenom
9.	Woyla
10.	Bubon
11.	Melaboh
12.	Tanakan
13.	Kuala Batu
14.	Susoh
15.	Mankinan
16.	Labuan Haji

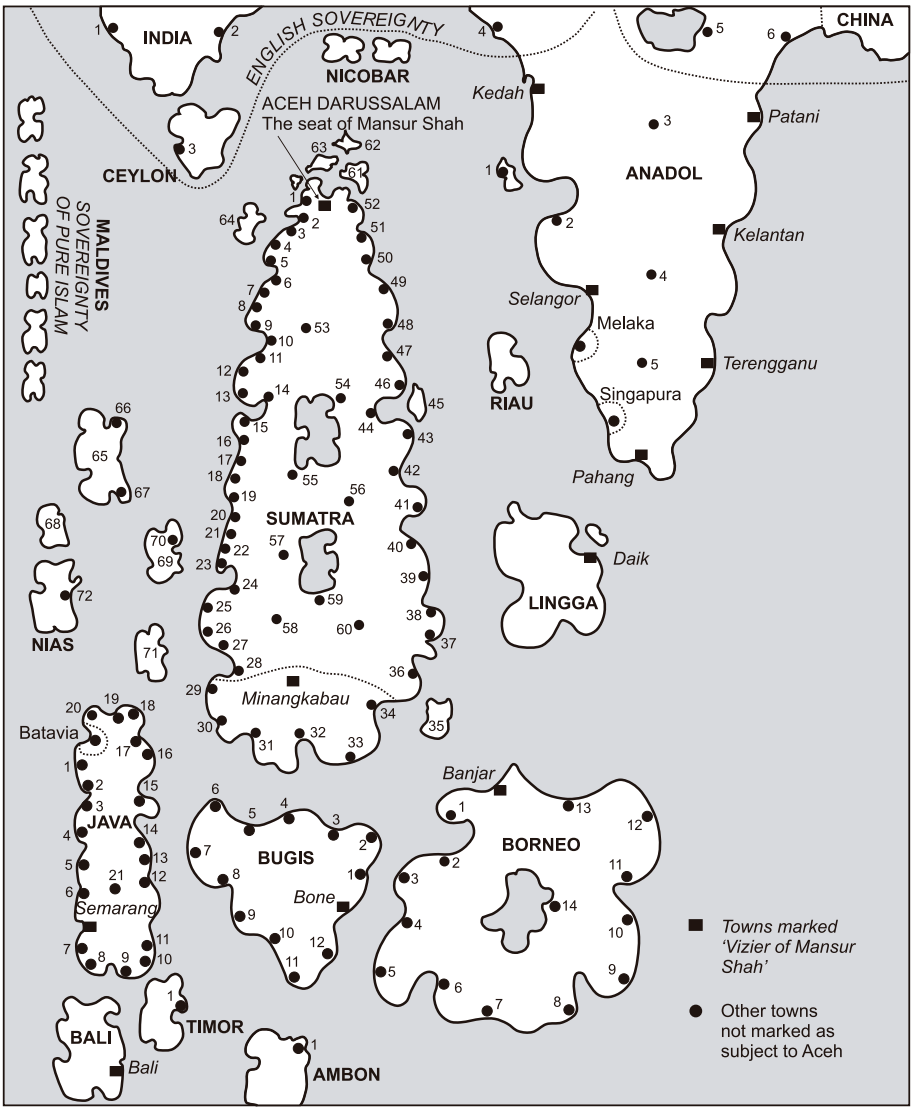

Figure 27. Translation of the map of Sumatra and surrounding islands sent to the Ottoman sultan by Mansur Syah

17.	Mekik
18.	Samadua
19.	Tempat Tuan that is, Tapak Tuan
20.	Terebangan
21.	Senbu’
22.	Rasin
23.	Asahan
24.	Kelut
25.	Bakongan
26.	Trumon
27.	Bulusama
28.	Singkil
29.	Barus
30.	Natar, that is, Natal
31.	Padang
32.	Bengkulu
33.	Lampung
34.	Palembang
35.	Bangka
36.	Jambi
37.	Inderagiri
38.	Pelalawan
39.	Siak
40.	Asahan
41.	Batu Bahara
42.	Serdang
43.	Deli
44.	Tamiang
45.	Pulau Sampai
46.	Perlak
47.	Sumatera, that is, Samudra
48.	Teluk Semawai
49.	Pasangan
50.	Samalanga

51.	Meureudu
52.	Pidir, that is, Pidië
53.	Parik
54.	Kayu
55.	Laut Tua
56.	Bukit
57.	Isak
58.	Alah
59.	Batak
60.	Korinci
61.	Pulau Weh
62.	Pulau Rondo
63.	Pulau Beras, that is, Pulau Breueh
64.	Raya
65.	?Nujil
66.	Simalur
67.	Sekuli
68.	Babi
69.	Banik
70.	Tuanku
71.	?Masla
72.	Sitoli

Asian mainland

1.	Kulum
2.	Kayalpatnam
3.	Colombo
4.	Rangoon – Pegu *Kafir*, that is, infidel Pegu
5.	*benua* Siam, that is, territory of Siam
6.	Siam *majusi*, that is, fire-worshipper

Malay Peninsula (Anadol)

7.	Pulau Pinang
8.	Perak
9.	Melayu
10.	Rambawi, that is, Rembau
11.	Johor

Java

1.	Cirebon
2.	Darmayun, that is, Indramayu
3.	Tegal
4.	Batang
5.	Kalunkan, that is, Pekalongan
6.	Kendal
7.	Demak
8.	Jepara
9.	Kudus
10.	Sumenep
11.	Mandura
12.	Wates
13.	Mantaram
14.	?Kunanaba
15.	?Fenir
16.	Ambar, that is, Ambal
17.	Telacap, that is, Cilacap
18.	Banyumas
19.	Bandung
20.	Sundah
21.	Solo

Bugis

1.	Sumbawa
2.	Bima

3.	Butu’
4.	Mandar
5.	Bugis
6.	Ujung Pandang
7.	Mengkasar
8.	Pumpanun, that is, Pampanua?
9.	Sinjai
10.	?Santini
11.	Wajo’
12.	Soppeng

Borneo

1.	Sambas
2.	Pontianak
3.	Burnu, that is, Brunei
4.	Suluk
5.	Malimdanau, that is, Maguindanau
6.	Berau
7.	Dayak Kecik
8.	Bulungan
9.	Kutai
10.	Pasir
11.	Mankalan, that is, Mengkalang?
12.	Pagatan
13.	Kotaringin
14.	Dayak

Timor

1.	Bantan

Ambon

1.	Buton

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Glossary

The terms below are from Indonesian/Malay except where specifically noted as Acehnese (Ac); Arabic (Ar); Dutch (D); Gayo (Gy); Javanese (Jv); Portuguese (Pr); Tamil (Tm); or Ottoman Turkish (OT).

adat	local custom
agha	Persian nobleman
akhira (Ar)	the hereafter
al-janna (Ar)	heaven
al-nar (Ar)	hell-fire
amas sungei-abu	alluvial gold
arkan (Ar)	'pillars' [of Islam]
Asan-Usén (Ac)	the first month of the Islamic calendar (*Muharram*)
Ashura (Ar)	the tenth day of the month of *Muharram*, commemorating the martyrdom of Muhammad's grandson Husayn
Atjeh moord (D)	suicidal attack
Babuali (OT)	'Sublime Porte'; used in reference to the Ottoman government
bafta neale	blue calico
bahar	measure of weight equal to approximately 400 lbs.
bahasa Jawi	Malay written in the modified Arabic script
balai	audience hall
batu Aceh	a distinctive type of Muslim grave marker

bendahara	vizier
bey	sub-governor
blanda item (Ac)	'Black Dutch'
buduh (Ar)	3x3 'magic square' talisman with the value 2 4 6 8
capado (Pr)	eunuch
chap	stamped seal
daerah istimewa	special region
Dalam	sultan's court
dar al-harb (Ar)	'abode of war', term used to refer to areas under non-Muslim rule
Darussalam (Ac)/ dar al-salam (Ar)	'abode of peace'
da'wa (Ar)	Islamic religious propagation
defterdar (OT)	finance director
dhikr (Ar)	'remembrance' of God through the ritual recitation of particular texts
didong (Ac/ Gy)	a traditional genre of poetry recitation
dinar (Ar)	a unit of currency used in early Islamic history, derived from earlier Greek and Roman coinage (δηναριον/ *denarius*)
donanma-i humayun (OT)	imperial navy
emin (OT)	custom officer
Estado da Índia (Pr)	Portuguese imperial possessions in Asia
firman (OT)	decree of the sultan
gamelan (Jv)	percussion orchestra
gampong (Ac)	village

ghazal (Ps/Ar)	a poetic form of rhymed couplets
Gompeuni (Ac)	The Dutch East India Company (VOC)
Gunongan	artificial mountain located in the inner precincts of the sultan's palace in Banda Aceh
gurush (OT)	an Ottoman unit of currency in silver alloy coin
hadith (Ar)	'reports' of the words and deeds of the prophet Muhammad
hikayat	a traditional genre of Malay prose
ijtihad (Ar)	independent jurisprudential reasoning
jihad (Ar)	'struggle' in the way of God
kafir (Ar)	unbeliever
kandang	enclosure
kanji Acura (Ac)	a porridge prepared for the observance of *Ashura*
kaphé (Ac)	unbeliever; from Ar. *kafir*
kebaya	women's blouse traditionally worn with a sarung
kecamatan	sub-district
kepala surat	the heading, or opening, of a Malay letter
keris (also Jv)	double-bladed dagger, often worn for ceremonial purposes
keuchi (Ac)	village head
khatib (Ar)	mosque preacher who delivers the Friday sermon
laksamana	admiral
madrasa (Ar)	Islamic school
Majlis-i Vukela (OT)	Ottoman Council of Ministers
malikai (Tm)	palace or temple
maradia (Ac)	title of Acehnese court nobility

mufti (Ar)	scholar of Islamic law qualified to issue fatwa
Muharram (Ar)	the first month of the Islamic calendar
mukim (Ar)	parish; in Aceh a territorial unit of a few villages
nisan	Muslim grave marker; tombstone
oke (OT)	traditional measure of weight used in Ottoman lands
orang kaya	merchant aristocrat
panglima	chief
pantun	a traditional genre of Malay poetry
payung	parasol
pesantren (Jv)	Islamic boarding school
plang pleng (Ac)	an early form of Muslim grave marker in Aceh
prang sabi (Ac)	war in the path of God
puji-pujian	a formal section of 'compliments' in a traditional Malay letter
qadi (Ar)	an Islamic-law judge
rafidi (Ar)	heretic
raja Rum	lit. King of Rome; used to refer to the Ottoman sultan
ratal, ratl (Ar)	a unit of measure, equivalent, in Baghdad, to a weight of 12 oz or a pint
reis (OT)	captain
rentjong (Ac)	a traditional Acehnese dagger
sagi (Ac)	district of Greater Aceh Besar (lit. corner)
salat	the performance of obligatory daily prayers
sanjak (Ac)	a traditional metre of Acehnese poetry
sarakata (Ac)	royal edict
seudati (Ac)	a form of traditional Acehnese dress

shahid (Ar)	martyr
suasa	gold-copper alloy
syahbandar	port official
sya'ir	a traditional genre of Malay poetry
teungku (Ac)	religious village head
thail	a unit of weight and a monetary unit used in China, Japan, Tonkin, Cambodia, Siam, Aceh and Makassar
ulama (pl. of Ar. *'alim*)	learned in Islam, Islamic scholar; religious teacher
ulèëbalang (Ac)	lit. war-leader (Malay *hulubalang*); Aceh territorial chief
undang-undang	traditional Malay language-law code
ureueng tuha (Ac)	elder; 'man of wisdom'

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