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A Crazy State*

Violence, Psychiatry, and Colonialism in Aceh, Indonesia, ca. 1910–1942

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Abstract

This article investigates the ways in which the Dutch colonial state dealt with a phenomenon known as the *Atjeh-moorden* ('Aceh murders'), the persistent suicide-attacks directed at the lives of Dutch residents, committed by Acehnese hoping to become *syahid* (martyrs to the Islamic faith). Concentrating on the development of colonial psychiatry, and its influence on colonial discourses and practices, I show how Dutch dealings with the *Atjeh-moorden* were, simultaneously, part and parcel of the construction of an Acehnese subject, and indicative of the administrative ambivalence found in the approach of the colonial state toward violence and criminality.

Keywords

Aceh – colonialism – psychiatry – violence – Islam

Introduction

In July 1933, Dutch military officer Captain Ch.E. Schmid was murdered in Lhoksukon, a town on the North coast of Aceh. The perpetrator, an ordinary

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Acehnese villager called Amat Leupon, was also killed in the attack.¹ The murder was covered in the Dutch press across the Netherlands Indies, and became an archetypical example of a phenomenon known among the Dutch as the *Atjeh-moorden* ('Aceh murders'). During the last three decades of Dutch colonial rule, this was a common colloquial term for the persistent suicide-attacks directed at the lives of Dutch residents, committed by Acehnese (both men and women) hoping to become *syahid*, martyrs to the Islamic faith. According to the *Deli Courant*, the major newspaper in North Sumatra, 'nothing had ever occurred between [Captain Schmid] and his assailant. The attack was entirely unexpected and did not seem to follow from any direct pretence. [...] Of course, it will turn out that the murderer holds some kind of perkara [case] against others, as a result of which he chooses a European as his victim, in the wrong opinion that [...] he will ascend into heaven'.² The *Java-Bode*, one of the largest Dutch language newspapers in Indonesia, also reported on the incident, calling it a 'typical *Atjeh-moord*'.³

For many Acehnese, the struggle against colonial domination, which began with the Dutch invasion of Aceh in 1873, was a 'holy war' (*perang sabil*), in which those who were killed automatically earned a place in heaven.⁴ The *Atjeh-moorden* were seen by the Dutch as a phenomenon that was related to, but also distinct from, the Aceh war. Their perception was informed by a conviction that the war had come to an end around 1910, after the last remaining centres of organized resistance were crushed. From this moment onwards, the pacification of Aceh was to be continued through civil rather than military means. In theory, this meant that the individual attacks on Europeans could no longer be categorized as 'acts of war'. Instead, they were registered as separate incidents, in need of an alternative explanation. Although some administrators regarded the ongoing attacks as a logical result of the social and psychological exhaustion caused by the war, an increasing number were unconvinced. Frustrated that the attacks continued to occur, even though the political and economic situation in Aceh was clearly improving, they accentuated the more 'primordial'

Rossum, Annemarie Samuels, Fenneke Sysling, and two anonymous reviewers from BKI, for their critical comments and suggestions.

- 1 Military report, Lho' Soekon, 15-7-1933, Mailrapport No. 918X33, Nationaal Archief, Den Haag (NA), Ministerie van Kolonieën (Kol), Geheime Mailrapporten, serie AA, 1914-1952, nummer toegang 2.10.36.06 (Geheime Mailrapporten), inventarisnummer (inv. nr.) 117.
- 2 'Moordaanslag in Atjeh', *Deli Courant*, 10-7-1933.
- 3 'Atjeh-moorden', *Java-Bode*, 12-7-1933.
- 4 For a discussion of the Acehnese conception of *Perang Sabil*, see Alfian 1987, especially pp. 105-43.

traits of the Acehese race. This included a supposed inclination to lunacy. In 1923, a mental asylum was built on the island of Sabang, just off the coast of Aceh. The institute was prompted by the *Atjeh-moorden*, and, in subsequent decades, grew to become the largest of its kind in the Netherlands Indies.

The *Atjeh-moorden* must be viewed in a global context of increasing hegemony of non-Muslim powers in the Muslim world. Analogous situations can be found in other Muslim contexts, such as Malabar (India) and Mindanao (the Philippines) (Dale 1988). According to Dale, anti-colonial suicide attacks marked a shift from armed resistance under the banner of *jihad* to a strategy of terrorizing Europeans through martyrdom. In the Philippines, local insurgents engaged in a form of 'suicide warfare' categorized by the Spanish as *juramentado* (literally 'those who took the oath'). After carrying out particular rites associated with the Holy War, the *juramentados* 'rushed the enemy, trying to kill as many of them as possible, until they themselves were killed'.⁵ The Dutch in Aceh experienced similar, coordinated assaults throughout the colonial period, albeit with fluctuating intensity. What connects all of these cases is the general inclination of European colonizers to qualify these attacks as instances of 'irrational' or 'indiscriminate' brutality. What set the *Atjeh-moorden* apart, however, at least in the eyes of the Dutch, was the fact that they appeared to be a more individual, and therefore less 'war-like', affair.

The murder of Captain Schmid was investigated by J. Jongejans, acting head of the North coast district, and later Resident of the Province of Aceh. 'Of course, the first question that comes to mind', he began his report to the governor, 'is whether we are dealing with an ordinary "Atjeh-moord", committed because of some deviant mental condition [...], or whether this act derives from some circumstance or dissatisfaction'.⁶ The latter was not unthinkable, for the district where Amat Leupon lived, Keureutoe, was a place with an 'infamous' reputation, which had been turbulent moreover because of a recent conflict between local chiefs. However, Jongejans could not discover evidence for a connection between the incident and local political disturbances. Instead, he focused on the perpetrator's personal background. Amat Leupon, he found out, had a bad reputation among his fellow villagers. According to his former *man-*

5 Dale 1988:51. According to Majul (1973:301, cited in Dale 1988), the *juramentados* 'took it as a matter of individual duty to expel the Spaniards' (see Gowing 1983:94–100). There is some evidence for a direct connection between the *jihad* fought by the Acehese and Muslim Filipinos (the Moros). For example, copies of Acehese war poems (the *Hikayat Prang Sabil*, 'Stories of the Holy War') have been found in Mindanao. Dale 1988:52; see Rixhon 2000.

6 Jongejans, 'Nota, Lho' Soekon, 11-7-1933, Mailrapport 873X33, Na, Kol/Geheime Mailrapporten, inv. nr. 117.

doer (foreman), he was known to be troublesome and lazy. He was also caught up in all kinds of personal affairs. His marriage was problematic, and there were debts. However, wrote Jongejans, these facts alone could not explain his terrible deed. Other factors were at work. Amat's father had been known as an 'eccentric (*oereueng poengo* [literally "crazy person"])', who had squandered his possessions, and decided to become 'moslimin' (a fighter in the holy war). He was killed when Amat Leupon was ten or twelve years old. His mother and her younger sister (whose husband had lived in a leper community for many years) were also known to be 'abnormal'. Clearly, Amat Leupon himself 'could not have been a normal type'.

Jongejans' report seems hesitant. In the end, it fails to answer the question posed at the beginning. Although concluding that, apparently, 'we are dealing with a real *Atjeh-moord*', he admitted that, 'perhaps, this solution seems too easy'. Investigations should continue, he argued, because of the 'tidings and silly rumours that are going around here, often without any ground'. Local officials and police officers were requested to collect more information, and spies were sent to the area.⁷ Curiously, Jongejans deemed a psychiatric investigation both 'necessary' and 'impracticable'. In fact, such internal contradictions were a common feature of the Dutch responses to the *Atjeh-moorden*, as well as anti-Dutch violence elsewhere on the colonial frontier. But as Ann Stoler (1992, 2009) has argued in her work on violence and colonialism in North Sumatra, these inconsistencies were filtered out, gradually, by the archival and epistemic logic (or 'hierarchies of credibility'), through which colonial knowledge was produced and reproduced. This layered process opened considerable space for rumour and speculation. In the expansive, inhospitable, and difficult to control area that comprised the Deli plantations, '[r]umor, more than first-hand observation, shaped people's fears and armed responses' (Stoler 1992:179). In the reproduction of Dutch colonial discourse, these rumours were either discarded, or turned—selectively—into 'facts' about the natives and colonial society at large. A similar logic applies to the vast and thinly populated territories which, after their 'pacification', became the newly formed 'province of Aceh'. Like the violence against Europeans in North-Sumatra (Stoler 1992:158–59), or that committed by the *jurementados* in Mindanao (Dale 1988:53), the *Atjeh-moorden* were committed mostly by people from a marginalized section of society. Many of the perpetrators had suffered, physically, financially, or otherwise, from the ongoing disruption caused by the colonial presence. While the

7 Jongejans, 'Vervolgrapport', Sigli, 14-7-1933, Mailrapport No. 898X33, NA, Kol/Geheime Mailrapporten, inv. nr. 117.

Dutch recognized this factor, in their explanation for the violence it played an increasingly insignificant role. Over time, colonial discourse about the *Atjeh-moorden* was concerned less and less with political struggle. Instead, it became dominated by ideas about the Acehnese 'mind'.

This article investigates the Dutch dealings with the *Atjeh-moorden*, in the context of the construction of an Acehnese subject. It concentrates on the development of colonial psychiatry as a discipline, and its influence on the practices of the colonial state. I follow Stoler's argument that, in order to get a sense of the complexity of the social realities, a historian must deconstruct the hierarchies of credibility, sifting through (and taking seriously) the inconsistencies of colonial reporting in order to unravel the 'shifting plots' that are subdued by the logic of the archive. However, while Stoler's analysis remains limited, largely, to the revealing and obfuscating qualities of colonial discourse itself, I intend to explore more explicitly the relationship between colonial discursive formation and the practices of state surveillance on the ground. Thus, in the following pages I will explore, on the one hand, the way in which the colonial encounter created a discourse of Acehnese exceptionalism, which has been reproduced, in various forms, up until the present (see Kloos 2013; forthcoming), and, on the other hand, the practices, effectiveness, and limits of the colonial state at large.

So far, historians have understood Dutch engagement with the Acehnese predominantly in non-ideological terms (see for example Reid 1979:7–37; Van 't Veer 1980). The consensus seems to be that, as long as 'risky' or 'unpredictable' elements in Acehnese society were seen by the Dutch as 'non-political' in nature (in other words, not directed at organized resistance), matters of law and discipline were left to local Acehnese chiefs. This article challenges this image of passiveness. In the course of the 1920s and 1930s, the civilian government in Aceh gradually developed a system of state repression, cultural imperialism, and an active meddling in 'indigenous' matters, which was increasingly conservative and paternalistic in nature. This system consisted of a discursive element, based on a continuous reproduction in political and popular imagery of the Acehnese 'degenerated' mind, as well as a more practical element of disciplining through a set of repressive state instruments, which included (but was not limited to) the asylum on Sabang. By this, I do not mean to argue that the colonial state in Aceh was all-powerful, or that its agents were aware, at all times, of the effects of their actions. Colonial policies in the Netherlands Indies were directed at maintaining order and security, and to protect Dutch economic interests. But the ways in which these policies were implemented were often ambiguous. The key question regarding the *Atjeh-moorden*, and to which colonial administrators returned again and again, was whether the

perpetrators should be put in hospital or in prison. This dilemma reflected a fundamental uncertainty on the side of the Dutch. Should these incidents be seen as acts of resistance, or rather as the tragic outcome of decades of warfare? The fact that this dilemma was never really solved shows that the Dutch struggled with the Acehnese context, that the transition from military rule to civil rule was far from complete, and that the colonial state was both repressive and vulnerable at the same time.

This article is divided in five sections. I start with some brief theoretical and conceptual considerations regarding the relationship between colonial domination and psychiatric knowledge production. The second section provides context, exploring how ideas about race, religion, and the indigenous 'mind' informed local governance in Aceh. The third and fourth section deal, respectively, with official investigations of the *Atjeh-moorden* and the creation of the asylum on Sabang. In the fifth part I shift the discussion by investigating how racial and medical notions interacted with the practices of state surveillance developing on the ground. In the conclusion I return to the problem of Acehnese exceptionalism and its relation to the changing nature of the colonial state.

Violence, Psychiatry, and Colonial Domination

In the mid-nineteenth century the Dutch colonizers in Indonesia started a large-scale process of expansion into the so-called *Buitengewesten* ('Outer Regions'). Autonomous kingdoms were subjected, annexed, invaded, or otherwise 'pacified'. In places where Dutch power rested largely on superficial contracts and agreements with local rulers, colonial authority was more directly established. A similar development took place in the adjacent British territories. One central element in this process was the attempt by colonial governments to draw, strengthen and maintain borders (Tagliacozzo 2005). The strength of the colonial state depended to a large extent on the ongoing act of subjecting 'unchartered' space to colonial control, with the bureaucratic state seeking to distribute political control evenly over its territory. As a result, traits and characteristics of peoples and places were re-imagined, and rendered increasingly static and inflexible. Measures and techniques involved in the process of subjecting frontier regions to state control included practices such as mapping and other forms of 'objectifying' space.⁸ It also involved a range of

8 See for example Allina-Pisano 2003; Winichakul 1994; Vumlallian Zou and Kumar 2011.

administrative tools and scientific innovations related to the need for colonial states to gather knowledge about their subjects, ranging from technologies in intelligence gathering, to the formation of extensive ‘government statistics’, to the emergence of biosciences such as physical anthropology and colonial psychiatry.⁹ Such knowledge was crucial for the state to maintain at least the suggestion of order.

The connection between colonial psychiatry and racial discourse was not, of course, unique to the Netherlands Indies. In recent decades, a significant body of literature has emerged around the topic of colonial psychiatry as a specific locus for the study of the relationship between scientific knowledge and discourses of colonial domination. Psychiatric traditions in British and French colonial contexts were ‘allied [...] closely to civilizing missions as [they] assembled knowledge about “indigenous psychologies” that facilitated rule’ (Keller 2001:296–97). Transnational psychiatric theory was informed by an overriding emphasis on race as an explanatory model, and in all these different colonial contexts psychiatrists provided scientific justifications for racist policies (Keller 2001:298). The bulk of this research, however, focuses on the history of institutions and medical knowledge production.¹⁰ Few authors have investigated the relationship between psychiatry as a discipline and colonial practice more broadly, paying explicit attention to social and political contexts.¹¹ This is a shortcoming, for concerns of order and security, the fear for native violence directed against Europeans, the scholarly and popular typologies of native peoples and regions, and racially determined psychological knowledge were all closely interrelated domains of colonial analysis.

One of the first to make explicit the connections between colonial violence, mental illness, and the political nature of modern psychiatric theories was

9 See for example Bayly 1996; Cohn 1996; Hirschman 1987; Scott 1998; Sysling 2012; Yundra Zara 2010. Kapil Raj (2007:12–13) has argued against the notion of ‘colonial science’ or ‘colonial knowledge’ (defined as the ‘classificatory and delineating discursive practices of European colonists relating to indigenous populations, languages and objects in regions which they had come to dominate, practices that rendered colonial rule possible’). According to Raj, the development of modern science must be located in the cultural encounter that resulted from colonialism, and which led to the ‘co-production’ of scientific knowledge. I agree to a large extent with Raj’s argument. Nonetheless, it is clear that psychiatry, despite the contributions of Indonesian professionals, worked to advance the Dutch colonial project. Therefore, in my view the term ‘colonial psychiatry’ remains analytically useful.

10 See for example Bégué 1996; Bell 1991; Ernst 1991; Mahone and Vaughan 2007; McCulloch 1995.

11 See for example Keller 2007; Mahone 2006; Sadowsky 1999.

Frantz Fanon.¹² In his view, the colonial world was a Manichean world: a dual cosmology that separated the colonizers from the colonized in every aspect of human existence, from built environment to everyday language to ideas about psychic condition (Fanon 2008 [1967]). In Algeria, the practice of psychiatry developed in close connection to colonial stereotypes about the natives' 'born' tendency to criminality and a thirst for blood (Fanon 2001 [1965]:240). Psychiatric observations were extrapolated, moreover, to make statements about the North African 'race' more generally. According to the Algerian school of colonial psychiatry, then, the North African was 'incapable of self-discipline or of canalizing his impulses', a condition linked to the supposedly limited development of their cortex. Such theories were not without their internal contradictions. For example, one of the problems French psychiatrists in Algeria struggled with was the question why 'melancholic' Algerians, contrary to Europeans, had a tendency to commit violence against others rather than to commit suicide. In order to solve such questions, Fanon argued, French psychiatrists reverted to a 'tautological' logic of turning political motives into issues of moral consciousness, stating that 'the precariousness of [the Algerian's] consciousness and the feebleness of his moral sense are well known' (Fanon 2001 [1965]:241).¹³ Fanon's analysis offers an important starting point for analyzing the political purchase of psychiatric theory. At the same time, his observations were presented as part of a distinct agenda of radical decolonization, glossing over, firstly, the fact that colonial psychiatry developed in the context of a cultural and political encounter in which both 'sides' of the Manichean divide had stakes, and secondly, that colonialism itself was 'a psychological state rooted in earlier forms of social consciousness in both the colonizers and the colonized' (Nandy 1983:2).

In fact, colonialism represented a cultural domain in which elites from both sides found common ground in their views on the world, their future aspirations, and their moral judgments. At the same time, colonial domination,

12 Frantz Fanon was born in the French colony of Martinique, and received medical and psychiatric training in Lyon. During the Algerian war of independence (1954–1962) he treated both French and Algerian patients, who developed trauma and other mental health problems as a result of the war. This experience (and especially the impact of the structural use of torture on the part of the French army) had a lasting impact on his thought.

13 At the time, melancholia was seen as by definition 'an illness of the moral conscience'. As Fanon (2001 [1965]:242–42) wrote, killing oneself implied 'looking at oneself, [...] practicing introspection'. However, according the Algerian school of psychiatry, there was 'no inner life where the North African is concerned. On the contrary, the North African gets rid of his worries by throwing himself on the people who surrounded him'.

including the promise of violence, had strong psychological bearings. 'Particularly strong', writes Ashis Nandy, 'is the inner resistance to recognizing the ultimate violence which colonialism does to its victims, namely that it creates a culture in which the ruled are constantly tempted to fight their rulers within the psychological limits set by the latter' (Nandy 1983:3). Of course, colonial psychiatry was deeply involved in this process. An important question to consider, thus, is the emergence on the scene of indigenous professional psychiatrists. In his famous essay about Girindrasekhar Bose (1886–1953), India's 'first non-western psychoanalyst', Nandy (1995:83) argued that the latter's approach [to psychology] 'was shaped by the psychological contradictions that had arisen in Indian culture due to the colonial impact and by the cultural contradictions within psychoanalysis itself'. As we shall see in the sections to follow, native-born psychiatrists in Indonesia, including the director of the asylum on Sabang, were confronted with similar questions and challenges.

Fanon and Nandy both emphasized the connections between colonial violence and the general atmosphere of cultural and political change in which psychological knowledge was produced. In her analysis of the co-called 'mania of 1911' in colonial Kenya, Sloan Mahone (2006) explicitly addressed these issues as part of an assessment of the nature of colonial domination more generally. Around the turn of the twentieth century, British colonial administrators registered and documented what they perceived as an outbreak of 'remarkable psychical disturbances of a religious character' that passed 'like epidemics over the Kamba country' and were 'triggered by the sight of a European wearing a pith helmet' (Mahone 2006:243). According to Mahone, these 'epidemics' were movements of dissent, instigated or catalyzed by religious leaders who were regarded by their social environments as prophets or visionaries. While some of these prophets were revered for championing explicit political goals, by the colonial authorities they were increasingly diagnosed as maniacs, and treated on the basis of special lunacy laws (Mahone 2006:247). According to Mahone, the reason psychological explanations were so attractive was not just because 'political' explanations were unavailable, or deliberately denied, but rather because African prophetic movements defied British conceptual categories. Thus, the psychological assessment of prophets and their followers 'came naturally to the colonial mindset'. A similar logic informed Dutch experiences in Aceh. Before we finally move to the Acehnese case, however, I should briefly discuss the early development of psychiatry in the Netherlands Indies.

From the early days of the Dutch presence in the Indonesian archipelago, care for the mentally ill was associated with concerns about security and criminal behaviour (Porath 2008:502). The professional development of psychiatry did not begin before the second half of the nineteenth century, and resulted

from changes in the treatment of the mentally ill in Europe. In the Netherlands, medical institutions increasingly combined incarceration with ‘therapy’, a collection of treatments with strong moral underpinnings aimed to heal, or at least diminish, psychic and behavioural disorders. In the Netherlands Indies, public concerns about madness led to an official mental health census in 1862. Two decades later, a critical report about the treatment of mentally ill led to the establishment, instigated by the Dutch government, of the first mental hospital (*krankzinnigengesticht*) in Buitenzorg (Bogor) in 1882 (Porath 2008:505; Pols 2006:363–64). More institutions followed in Semarang, Surabaya, and Malang. Contrary to conventional hospitals, these asylums catered to all people regardless ethnicity. According to Porath (2008:508), ‘[i]t is uncertain how prevailing ideas about race manifested themselves in these asylums, but [citing Gouda 1995 and Pols 2007] we can presume that the late nineteenth-century colonial understanding of natives as childlike and backward was at work, not just in hospital conditions, but also in the rhetoric used to describe these patients.’¹⁴

Just like other disciplines concerned with the construction of the colonial subject, such as ethnography or the study of customary law (*adat*), colonial psychiatry was marked by an inherent tension between the construction of a ‘native’ (or ‘oriental’, versus ‘European’) mind on the one hand, and an emphasis on local (for example Acehnese, Minangkabau, or Batak) ‘mental’ traits on the other. However, it was the former view which, in the early twentieth century, gained the upper hand among Dutch psychiatrists. This trend was connected both to the maturation of colonial psychiatry as a scientific discipline, and to its political context. Although general ideas about the ‘native’ or ‘Malay’ mind had been common-place for many decades, the views of psychiatrists gained particular significance in the context of Dutch concern over the emergence of the Indonesian nationalist movement (Pols 2007). According to leading psychiatric theories, Indonesian natives differed from Europeans and other races (like the Chinese) in being particularly emotional, impulsive, superstitious, and ‘suggestible’. Because of these traits, Malays and other native races were thought to be less susceptible than Europeans to illnesses such as depression and melancholia, but more susceptible to typical ‘Malay’ syndromes such as

14 In the late nineteenth century it was ‘very common for European intellectuals to compare non-Western “primitive” adults to European children’ (Bhatia 2002:382) and Europeans living in Indonesia were no exception. See Nandy (1983) on the ‘homology’ in colonialism between childhood and the ‘state of being colonized’. Van Loon, one of the most important Dutch psychiatrists in the Netherlands Indies, also thought of the Malay psyche as child-like. See Pols 2007.

latah or *amok*, mental disorders both described as ‘emotional acute states of confusion’. One of the most important psychiatrists working in the Netherlands Indies, P.H.M. Travaligno, thought that ‘the [native] population had to be guided by a strong fatherly hand which would not hesitate to castigate its subjects when the circumstances required it’. He argued that indigenous individuals, being guided primarily by their emotions, could be easily misled by political radicals, while the latter should be seen as ‘sparks flying around barrels of dynamite’ (Pols 2007:172–76).

Terms like *latah* and *amok* have specific genealogies, and the colonial state exerted a strong influence on the changing discourses surrounding such notions. Generally speaking, shifts in the meaning of these terms reflected the ‘secularization and rationalization process’ (Peletz 1996:178) that political systems, including those in Southeast Asia, were going through in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. *Latah* is a ‘cultural elaboration of the startle reflex found among all humans’, which has been used throughout the Malay world to denote particular behavioural disorders among (mainly) elderly women. In contrast to pre-modern times, it is ‘no longer viewed in relation to the world of spirits or anything else bearing on the realm of the sacred’, having turned instead into a rationalized, though culturally circumscribed, medical condition (Peletz 1996:177–78). *Amok* (‘frenzied, indiscriminate, homicidal aggression’; Spores 1988:139), before the advent of the modern colonial state, was used as a slogan or battle cry for mobilizing collective, organized (and therefore: rational) resistance.¹⁵ In the (late) nineteenth and twentieth century, colonial authorities and psychiatrists became obsessed with the term, as a result of which its meaning changed into a psychiatric condition causing solitary, ‘irrational’ and ultimately ‘mysterious’ acts of violence.¹⁶ In colonial discourse, the term *amok* was used to explain disruptive violence committed by native colonial subjects, either rendering irrelevant or plainly ignoring the possibility of political motives. In general, colonial authorities and medical practitioners saw the *Atjeh-moorden* as the symptom of a condition that was comparable, ‘a form of’, but not simply interchangeable with the term *amok*. Contrary to *amok*, the *Atjeh-moorden* were perceived as a conscious act, committed by people who, in the words of Jongejans (1939:321), worked ‘eclectically, choosing [their] victim

15 For discussions of *amok* as a ‘martial’ category in the early modern period, see Spores 1988:20–27; Dale 1988; Murphy 1971; Winzeler 1990. More recently, Van Rossum (2013) has shown how Balinese sailors used ‘amok’ as a slogan during a large mutiny aboard the VOC ship ‘De Mercur’ in 1782.

16 See Williamson 2010. For a discussion of madness, the condition of *amok* and subjectivity in contemporary Indonesia, see Good, Subandi and Good 2007.

and choosing [their] location'. While the perception of this particular kind of violence was connected to general theories about the 'native mind', in practice it came to stand for a specific Acehnese condition, which was thought to have developed in relative isolation from the wider cultural and political context of the Netherlands Indies or the Malay world.

Dutch responses to the *Atjeh-moorden* cannot be understood without taking into account the emergence of colonial psychiatry as a politically significant approach to violence. As a discipline, psychiatry exerted political influence in different ways: directly, through the involvement of professional psychiatrists in government investigations and institutions of medical and political surveillance (the most important being the asylum in Sabang), and indirectly, through its contribution to the production of a colonial discourse about the Acehnese mind. The direct influence of the psychiatric discipline on Acehnese society was limited, even though the Sabang asylum turned out to be a flexible (and thus, very useful) instrument for incarcerating subversive individuals. The discursive impact of psychiatry, however, should not be underestimated. Again, it is useful to refer to the work of Stoler (1992). In her account of the gruesome murder of a Dutch planter's family in North Sumatra, she demonstrated how the production of colonial discourse systematically privileged references to the 'hotblooded' character of Malays over the informed analysis of a local administrator, Carl Valck, who typified the situation on the Deli estates as one in which 'cruelty breeds cruelty' (Stoler 1992:164). Valck's stinging critique of Dutch atrocities was effectively erased from the colonial narrative, and failed to become a part of official Deli histories. In a similar way, discussions of the *Atjeh-moorden* were caught up in a dominant discourse that reifies and exceptionalizes (in racial or cultural terms) the 'typical' Acehnese response to Dutch colonialism.¹⁷

The Conquest of Aceh

The authority of the Dutch colonial state rested for an important part on violence and intimidation (Schulte Nordholt 2002). Nonetheless, modern state institutions were directed simultaneously at containing violence through routine practices of order keeping and the development of a modern legal system. As Marieke Bloembergen (2009) has shown in her study of the colonial

17 See for example Alfian 1987; Jongejans 1939; Reid 1979; Siegel 1979, 2000 [1969]; Snouck Hurgronje 1893–95.

police force, one of the main problems was that the expansion of state control appeared to generate the use of violence instead of making it disappear. Rather than describing a progressive process of modern state disciplining on the basis of the gathering of knowledge, Bloembergen pointed out the dilemma's which confronted police officers in their daily practices. 'The question', she stated, 'is not how the colonial state gained authority because of the police, but how she was able to maintain this despite the police' (Bloembergen 2009:21–2). Like Tagliacozzo (2005), Bloembergen argued to move away from the view of the late colonial state in Indonesia as an all-powerful disciplining force, and focus instead on its fundamental weaknesses (see Barker and Van Klinken 2009). The frontier produced its own particular dilemmas. In Terengganu, British colonization (which began as late as 1919) constituted, simultaneously, a technocratic project aimed at shaping and governing borders and landscapes, and a 'biopolitical' project aimed at producing new subjects on basis of racial identity and colonial citizenship (Malhi 2011; see also Wyrzten 2011). Like the British, the Dutch in Aceh underestimated the complexity of this enterprise. Until the late nineteenth century, administrative routines were based primarily on control over Java, the spice islands of Maluku and a limited number of strategic outposts. At the frontier, existing colonial practices were tested and challenged. A colonial bureaucracy was established in a much shorter period than elsewhere in the archipelago, and against the backdrop, moreover, of a devastating war.

The official rationale for the invasion of Aceh was to eradicate piracy in the Straits of Malacca. Today, the enterprise is generally regarded in a broad context of imperial conquest.¹⁸ The 1871 Anglo-Dutch treaty 'allocated' the Sumatran sphere of influence to Dutch sovereignty. Thereafter, the region was to be integrated, politically and economically, into the Dutch empire (Reid 1969). The Sultan of Aceh was not consulted for the 1871 treaty, and sought allies in Turkey, France, and America, to no avail. What seemed to become an easy conquest, however, turned into the longest and bloodiest war ever fought by the Dutch in Indonesia. In his study of the Dutch perception of the Aceh war, Paul van 't Veer (1980) has convincingly argued that the war never really came to an end, as outright hostilities continued up until the expulsion of the Dutch at the hands of the Japanese in 1942.

18 Dutch historians, like Schöffner (1978) and Wesseling (1978), have long maintained that Dutch imperialism was 'reluctant' or 'reactive' in nature (that is, rather than ideological or virulent). Others, like Kuitenbrouwer (1985), Locher-Scholten (2004), and Tarling (2001) have argued against this view, pointing out the similarities between, and relatedness of, the Dutch and other European colonial projects.

Up until the 1890s, the Dutch army was able to control only a small territory, the so-called 'geconcentreerde linie' (line of concentration), comprised of a number of defensive works on the coast connected by a tramline. Around the turn of the twentieth century, the momentum of the war changed. In 1891, the Dutch orientalist Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje spent nine months in Aceh, during which he discovered that Acehnese fighters perceived the struggle as a Holy War. He learnt that, behind the line of concentration, a bitter conflict over arms, resources, and authority had emerged between representatives of the traditional aristocracy (the *uleebalang*) and a group of religious scholars (the *ulama*). He also observed that it was the *ulama*, rather than the *uleebalang*, who led the Acehnese in war, and thus gained unprecedented popular authority among the Acehnese population. Snouck Hurgronje advised the Dutch generals to openly support the *uleebalang*, and at the same time ruthlessly persecute the *ulama* and their followers. In 1903, after thirty years of war, the Dutch finally succeeded in forcing the surrender of the Sultan, Muhamad Daud Syah. In subsequent decades, the remaining bands of guerrilla fighters were unremittingly chased. Armed confrontations persisted, especially on the West coast, with peaks in the mid-1920s and mid-1930s.

If the war turned out to be a grave problem for the Dutch, for the Acehnese it was simply devastating. The attack was total. Acehnese leaders were co-opted or killed, and the areas brought under the control of the Dutch were fundamentally reshaped. The Dutch army attacked not only the port city, the palace of the Sultan, coastal fortifications and other strategic places, but also, from the very outset, the villages of the interior (Reid 1969). The population was decimated. Thousands fled to the Malay Peninsula (with thousands more becoming internal refugees). Complete villages, rice fields, and irrigation channels were destroyed, and the pepper production—one of the Acehnese' main sources of income—collapsed. In brief, this was a period 'in which one out of eight Atjehnese was killed or displaced and in which the economic base of Atjehnese society was drastically altered' (Siegel 1979:229; see Kreike 2012).

In the early twentieth century, Snouck Hurgronje's advice was turned into a political doctrine, called by a succession of administrators the *Atjeh-politiek* ('Aceh Policy'). The Aceh Policy was comprised of three elements. Firstly, the *uleebalang* were granted the right to reign over their respective territories, and to deal with local issues of order and security on customary law (*adat*), in return for their loyalty to the Dutch. Secondly, the military was gradually replaced with Dutch civil servants, who were expected to modernize Acehnese society, and develop the economy by implementing modern education and improving infrastructure. Thirdly, the Aceh-policy meant continuous and uncompromis-

ing military crackdown on all (armed) groups challenging colonial authority. Thus, Dutch military police (the *marechaussée*) continued to patrol remote areas, and to chase down small, persevering bands of armed rebels through the forests and mountains until the very end of Dutch colonial rule. At the same time, however, the development of civil instruments in order-keeping formed an intrinsic part of the state building project. In its qualities, the Aceh Policy was closely related to the 'civilizing offensive' characterizing Dutch rule in the post-Ethical Policy era, stipulating that progress, modernity, and the state civilizing missions were as important to the realization of order and peace as military discipline (Bloembergen and Raben 2009).

In this ideological context, the colonial project was associated increasingly with ideas about the Acehnese 'race'. Practices of objectification and surveillance were connected to a scholarly discourse of racial degeneration, built, for an important part, on the work of Snouck Hurgronje. Moral judgments often coloured his analyses, with both Islamic law and European values serving as reference points. In the original Aceh-report, in which he formulated his political advice during the war, Snouck Hurgronje referred to the Acehnese literary tradition in order to argue that *kafir*-hatred was a general characteristic of the Acehnese mentality, and was only intensified with the coming of the Dutch (Gobée and Adriaanse 1957–65: I.52–54). According to Snouck Hurgronje, the Acehnese were inherently intolerant and fanatical about their faith. Of these characteristics, the hatred for the Dutch was simply the most visible expression. In his view, the temperament of the Acehnese had suffered badly from the continuous social, economic, and political decline in the centuries before the Dutch presence. J. Kreemer, the head of the Atjeh Institute in Banda Aceh and author of the massive encyclopaedic work *Atjeh* (1922–23)—the most exhaustive work ever to appear on Aceh in the Dutch language—referred to Snouck Hurgronje when he claimed that, in the years before the Dutch conquest, Aceh was characterized by 'complete anarchy, legal insecurity, bad governance, terrorism, arbitrariness, and horrible suppression'. In this apparent absence of justice, the land suffered from an explosion of violence and revenge. In Kreemer's words, it was this internal political condition which had originally given rise to a 'decisive fold' to the Acehnese temperament, which subsequently functioned as fertile soil for the Acehnese' increasingly immoral passions before, during, and after the Dutch conquest (Kreemer 1922–23: I.230). Snouck Hurgronje and Kreemer were quoted repeatedly by Dutch government officials, as well as the psychiatrists who investigated the Acehnese minds more than 30 years later.

Of course, the Aceh War was by no means the first Dutch encounter with religiously inspired resistance. One could say that every single peasant uprisings

on Java (of which there were many in the nineteenth and twentieth century) had a religious component (Kartodirdjo 1972; see Ota 2003). At the basis of the Java war (1825–30) stood a pious movement consisting of *santri* (students of *pesantren*, or traditional Islamic educational institutions), led by the Yogyakarta prince-mystic Pangeran Dipanegara (ca. 1785–1855). Some years earlier, the Dutch had become involved in a violent conflict in West Sumatra between the local aristocracy and a populist faction of radical scripturalist reformers known as the Padris.¹⁹ Both experiences contributed greatly to the Dutch concern with Islamic ‘fanaticism’. There are some important differences, however, between these clashes and the war in Aceh. In the nineteenth century, Dutch colonial agents increasingly invested in the idea that Islam was essentially ‘alien’ to authentic Javanese culture. Administrators worried about the subversive qualities of Sufi orders (*tarekat*), supposedly expanded and popularized by the growing influx of pilgrims returning from Mecca, and infusing Indonesian societies with religious radicalism and glorification of the Holy War. Although it is probably true that the ‘Holy War’ idea became more important as a motivational element in Javanese peasant rebellions since the mid-nineteenth century, the Dutch almost certainly overstated and oversimplified the influence of radical hajis on local events (Laffan 2003:37–39; Ricklefs 2007:60–64). At the same time, Dutch political and scholarly discourses increasingly worked to eliminate Islam as a meaningful element of local culture and history.²⁰ This was the case even in places like Banten and West Sumatra, which had been long renowned for their pious populations. In Aceh, Islam was never framed as an ‘alien’ element, but treated instead as a central component of local culture and indigenous mindsets. As we shall see, this contrast is important for understanding the Dutch approach to the *Atjeh-moorden*.

Confronting the Acehnese ‘Psyche’ (1): Investigations

In 1918, A.G.H. van Sluys was installed as the first non-military governor of Aceh in almost thirty years.²¹ In his final report, he warned his successors that,

19 See Dobbin 1983; Hadler 2008; Laffan 2011:40–46. According to Laffan, the emergence of these ‘pious’ resistance movements were connected to the vigorous expansion from the late eighteenth century onwards of the *pesantren* network, which connected pious Muslims to important political and intellectual developments in the Hijaz, a factor largely absent from the analysis of Kartodirdjo (1972).

20 See for example Florida 1995; Laffan 2011; Pemberton 1994.

21 Two subsequent civil governors were installed in the 1880s, but these were followed by

even though Aceh was now effectively ‘conquered’, it was not ‘satisfied’ yet. The unpredictable *Atjeh-moorden* constituted a particularly frightening sign. What Aceh needed, after years of war and destruction, was ‘peace, and again, peace’. For his successors, this message became an adage: it would be quoted again and again in political reports. But Van Sluys also made another observation, namely that the *Atjeh-moorden* seemed to be committed mostly by ‘mental inferiors’. In the governor’s view, the dissatisfaction among the Acehnese functioned only as ‘fertile soil for the growth of such excesses.’²² Since 1910, the (attempted) assaults had been registered, but not systematically investigated. In order to learn more about their causes, Van Sluys ordered two separate investigations. In September 1920 he asked F.H. van Loon, the most prominent psychiatrist in the Netherlands Indies, to investigate ‘the number of lunatics who should be admitted into an Asylum’, and to ‘collect data which would lead to a proper solution of the problem of lunacy in [Aceh]’ (Van Loon 1920:3).²³ One year later, the Advisor on Native Affairs, R.A. Kern, was asked to carry out an exhaustive investigation into ‘the indirect causes of the still periodically occurring assaults on Europeans.’²⁴ I will discuss both investigations in turn.

When Van Loon arrived in Aceh, he was provided with a nominal list of around 1100 individuals, ‘reported as being lunatics’ (Van Loon 1920:5). The list was compiled by the Governor’s office, on the basis of information provided by the *uleebalang*, who had drafted known cases from their respective districts. Van Loon found it difficult to make a credible estimation of the total number of lunatics in Aceh. On the one hand it was possible that only the ‘apert-lunatics’ were registered, and that weaker cases—which, in practice, probably meant the least troublesome elements—were not included. Thus, there was reason to believe that the actual number might in fact be much higher. On the other hand, there was a possibility that the *uleebalang* reported certain individuals

a succession of ‘civil-military’ commanders after the Dutch position deteriorated again. In contrast to other regions in the Netherlands Indies, military rule in Aceh was never completely abolished. Up until the Japanese occupation in 1942, a number of regencies remained to be placed formally under military command (see for example Van der Doel 1994).

22 Bestuursmemorie A.G.H. van Sluys, pp. 3–8, Archief van het Koninklijk Instituut der Taal-, Land-, en Volkenkunde (KITLV), Collectie-Kern, H.797.

23 This article by F.H. van Loon contains an English translation. Direct quotes are taken from the English text.

24 R.A. Kern, ‘Onderzoek Atjeh-moorden’, 16-12-1921, p. 2, NA, Kol, Politieke Verslagen en Berichten uit de Buitengewesten, nummer toegang 2.10.52.01 (Politieke Verslagen Buitengewesten), inv. nr. 6.

unjustly, only to get rid of them. Because of these reservations, Van Loon requested that the alleged lunatics be gathered at specific locations, so that he could examine a relatively large number, quickly and in person (Van Loon 1920:1–9). He ultimately managed to investigate 215 cases. In each case, he recorded gender, race, approximate age, and, if possible a short description of conspicuous behaviour, a diagnosis, and a risk-assessment. His list included men as well as women (slightly more men), and Acehnese as well as people from other ethnic backgrounds. However, even after correcting his findings with the ethnic composition of the various regions he visited, he concluded that ‘by far the largest numbers [of lunatics] were provided by the purely Achinese population of the North coast and “Great-Acheen”’ (Van Loon 1920:31).

Van Loon concluded that almost all of the people investigated could be diagnosed as ‘lunatic’. Extrapolating from the list, he argued that in Aceh there were ‘at least 1100 lunatics’, and probably many more. With the nominal list alone pointing at a percentage of lunatics similar to that of Europe, namely two per cent, he concluded that Aceh must indeed have a problem with lunacy (Van Loon 1920:31; emphasis in the original). About the *Atjeh-moorden*, however, his investigation had little to say. Of the several (potentially) violent individuals investigated by Van Loon, only three had ever threatened to ‘kill a kafir’ (Van Loon 1920:43). These were also the exceptions, however: they could not be diagnosed as mad. Although Van Loon agreed with Van Sluys that the problem of lunacy could lead to a risky situation, he contended that it was not just religious motivations which caused the problem. He placed the problem of lunacy in line with a number of other medical challenges, including the ‘four plagues’ of malaria, leprosy, syphilis, and yaws, as well as the abuse of alcohol and opium (Van Loon 1920:39, 41). Even though he did not show a direct connection between the *Atjeh-moorden* and the problem of lunacy, he concluded that, ‘it is most certain that part of the murderous attacks, not only on Europeans, but also on people of their own race, are committed by such psychically non-valeurs. And it is also very well possible and even probable that now and then such a person, who easily follows suggestions is instigated to commit a murder, especially in Acheen, where the idea of the “prang sabil” (holy war) and the murder of “kafirs” (unbelievers, Christians) is, one might say, still in the air. The Dutch “kafir” is still hated and despised especially by part of the older persons and the old women, who constitute the most conservative element of the population. Of course under those circumstances not much is wanted to instigate murder into sickly brains’ (Van Loon 1920:41).

When Kern started his investigation into the *Atjeh-moorden* one year later, in 1921, he was not primarily interested in lunatics, but in the assaults themselves. Just like Van Loon, Kern was provided with a list. Since officials had started to

register the *Atjeh-moorden*, there had been a total number of 79 assaults, resulting in 12 people dead and 87 wounded. All of the victims were non-Muslims, most of them European, and in a few cases Chinese and (Christian) Ambonese serving in the Dutch military. The assaults had taken place throughout Aceh, but numbers were above average in Pidie and North Aceh (where the resistance during the Aceh war had been fiercest) and, more surprisingly, in the scarcely populated highlands of Alas. The overall trend in numbers of cases in the period 1910–1920 was a slow decrease.²⁵

In his report, Kern explained that the investigation served a ‘practical goal’. His task was to uncover the motives of the perpetrators, argue whether or not these could be attributed to administrative measures, and offer some suggestions to bring the assaults to a halt.²⁶ Determining motives was difficult, because most of the perpetrators were dead before they could be questioned by the police or the *musapat* (the indigenous courts). Apart from the few available interrogations, Kern had to rely on the reports of indigenous leaders (mainly *uleebalang* and *ulama*). Taking up the issue of lunacy, he referred to Van Loon’s study, agreeing that only very few *Atjeh-moorden* related to lunacy.²⁷ The same could be said of ‘religious fanaticism’. According to Kern, the tradition of Holy War and kafir-hatred, internalized by generations of Acehnese, may explain why the assaults took a similar shape, but not why particular individuals acted on it. ‘These terms’, he wrote, ‘conceal what lies behind’.²⁸ Scrutinizing all the cases containing information on specific motivations, Kern distinguished four broad categories, namely ‘*levensmoeheid*’ (a state of ‘being tired of life’) (23 cases), revenge (14 cases), incitement (6 cases), and ‘religious mania’ (3 cases).²⁹ Each category in turn comprised varying motivations. ‘Incurable disease’ and ‘shame’, for example, were grouped under *levensmoeheid*. Abuse of local rulers fell under ‘revenge’.

Kern concluded that the rate of Aceh-murders might decrease once ideas such as the Holy War and kafir-hatred became less influential. But he also

25 Kern, ‘Onderzoek Atjeh-moorden’, p. 3, NA, Kol/Politieke Verslagen Buitengewesten, inv. nr. 6.

26 Kern, ‘Onderzoek Atjeh-moorden’, p. 6, NA, Kol/Politieke Verslagen Buitengewesten, inv. nr. 6.

27 Kern, ‘Onderzoek Atjeh-moorden’, p. 6, NA, Kol/Politieke Verslagen Buitengewesten, inv. nr. 6.

28 Kern, ‘Onderzoek Atjeh-moorden’, p. 9, NA, Kol/Politieke Verslagen Buitengewesten, inv. nr. 6.

29 Kern, ‘Onderzoek Atjeh-moorden’, Bijlage III, NA/Kol, Politieke Verslagen Buitengewesten, inv. nr. 6.

proposed some pro-active measures, including a renewed institutionalization of religious authority in Acehese society. With regard to the motivations of the perpetrators, Kern emphasized that these often appeared in combination, and that the most constructive attitude would be to try and distinguish between the causes the government could do something about, and the causes on which they had little or no influence. He wrote: 'Most [causes] are beyond the power of the government, only obstruction and abuse of power of the chiefs are within its reach'.³⁰ Kern did not believe there was a 'universal cure' for the *Atjeh-moorden*. Nor did he blame the government. The solution would have to be a 'harmonious development of society'. The *uleebalang* should be educated in order not to become corrupted, the mass would have to 'lift itself from its depression' (through education, economic development, better living standards, organizational life, and lasting peace), and the *ulama* should be re-aligned through a renewed institutionalization in the courts, the educational system, and a recently established advisory council. The issue of lunacy was relegated to one of fifteen recommendations (entitled 'reduction of lunacy and other popular diseases'). The issue of religious fanaticism was addressed only indirectly, through recommendations dealing with religious education, the position of the *ulama*, and the barring of Christian missionaries.³¹

The impact of these reports lay as much in the way in which they were read and used, as in their actual contents. Though prompted by the same problem, Van Loon and Kern came up with entirely different analyses and recommendations. Van Loon, in his emphasis on the mutually advantageous relationship between psychiatric research and administrative practice, clearly was more sympathetic toward the views and the policies of the government. Kern took a more critical perspective, and his views may be seen as a clear stance against some of the central elements of the Aceh Policy (and thus, the views of Snouck Hurgronje). In particular, Kern rejected the unquestioned support by the colonial government of the indigenous chiefs, a situation which, in his view, could lead to a dangerous alienation between local authorities and the majority of ordinary Acehese villagers. What the reports held in common, however, is that both of them concluded, albeit from two very different angles, that a simple causal relation between the *Atjeh-moorden* and lunacy did not hold. Van Loon saw many madmen, but no murdering madmen. Kern saw many murderers, but no mad murderers. What they did see was a particular

30 Kern, 'Onderzoek Atjeh-moorden', p. 17, NA, Kol/Politieke Verslagen Buitengewesten, inv. nr. 6.

31 Kern, 'Onderzoek Atjeh-moorden', pp. 32–56, NA/Kol, Politieke Verslagen Buitengewesten, inv. nr. 6.

susceptibility for ‘unbalance’ in the Acehnese mentality. Van Loon was most articulate about this. While Kern emphasized the political background of the problem of the *Atjeh-moorden*, Van Loon’s analysis was framed squarely in the particularities of the Acehnese mind and its connection to the degeneration of the Acehnese ‘race’. In the years to come he would be generously quoted by a generation of administrators, journalists, and scholars.

Confronting the Acehnese ‘Psyche’ (2): The Asylum on Sabang

Already before these two investigations were ordered, governor Van Sluys had decided that Aceh needed an asylum. Despite his finding that there was little connection with the *Atjeh-moorden*, Van Loon agreed with Van Sluys that many ‘potentially very dangerous’ lunatics roaming freely in a recently pacified and still troublesome province formed both a danger and a nuisance to society, and thus required the construction of a mental institution to be built as soon as possible. Of course, Van Loon was a psychiatrist, and there is little surprise in a psychiatrist making a case for an asylum. More interesting, is that Van Sluys, despite the findings of Van Loon and Kern, remained unchanged in his opinion that the *Atjeh-moorden* and the problem of lunacy were inextricably related:

It has sometimes been said in a jesting way: if a murder is committed in Aceh, the perpetrator is always crazy. But: in its deepest core this is true. It is usually the people whose mental capabilities falter who decide to kill a European. And of such lunatics in Aceh there are so many! [...] Dr. Van Loon [...] has concluded that the lunatics of Aceh were the most obvious objects for committing murder on Europeans, [...] because in the psyche and the mentality of the Acehnese people this hatred [for Europeans] takes such a prominent place. The lunatics of Aceh, they are the instruments, utilized, one could say, for the committing of such murders, and it is these instruments which need to be removed, or at least withdrawn from society.³²

32 ‘Gouverneur Van Sluys over Atjeh’, *Indische Gids* 45, 1 (1923), 256–262, p. 259. Later in the interview, the journalists asked: ‘Do you believe that the murders on Europeans originate in large measure from this lunacy?’ Van Sluys replied: ‘Yes [...], and again I draw attention to the report of Van Loon mentioned earlier’. p. 260. Subsequently he complained that the asylum, for which he had been asking the central government for three years in a row, had still not been realized.

Although the *Atjeh-moorden* were seen as a ‘typical post-war phenomenon’, they continued to be regarded, simultaneously, as a psychological condition. More than ten years later, Jongejans wrote (in relation to the murder of Captain Schmid), that the Acehnese were ‘emotional’, ‘irritable’, promptly ashamed, and ‘easily thrown off balance’: ‘Only rarely the religion alone appears to bring the Acehnese to the act of murdering a kafir’. A cure, therefore, should involve both education and ‘control’ over the problem of lunacy (Jongejans 1939:327–29).

The institute on Sabang opened in 1923. Initially, it had a capacity of a few hundred patients. Within ten years, however, the number of patients had grown to 1400, of which more than 600 came from Aceh. It was now the largest mental institution in the Netherlands Indies. In the end, however, it seems that the Sabang asylum treated very few perpetrators of *Atjeh-moorden*, and perhaps even none at all. Still, Dutch administrators thought of it as an important addition to the state apparatus. Jongejans (1939:317–18) argued that, before there was an asylum, the Acehnese had no other way of protecting themselves against their own lunatics than to lock them in stocks. The idea that the asylum was actually in the interest of the Acehnese themselves was not new. Van Loon had already written that it was not only the *Atjeh-moorden* which formed a risk, but also the violence committed, by psychiatrically inferiors, against people ‘of their own race’. ‘By eliminating all those unaccountable and thus untrustworthy elements from the community, the pacification will certainly be promoted; then one will be able to keep a closer watch on the remaining unreliable elements, who are psychically normal. There are, besides murders committed by fanatics, other kind of murder in Acheen. [...] [Such] cases seem to occur pretty frequently—and besides physical ailments also emotional conditions (as f.i. such which are caused by disappointments in love-affairs) lead to such reaction’ (Van Loon 1920:43).³³ Thus, the asylum was, from the

33 It would be interesting, as one of the anonymous reviewers of this article suggested, to explore the political and intellectual connections between the Sabang asylum and other sites of incarceration located—literally and intentionally—on the fringe of the colonial empire (such as Boven-Digoel, the prison camp in Papua, which was built in response to the communist uprising of 1926). I did not find any direct connections in the sources. However, it is important to note that the choice for Sabang was made for security reasons (namely to ‘isolate’ the mentally ill) and not because of medical reasons. In fact, the government’s medical advisers had argued *against* the location of Sabang. Latumeten himself stated that, if it had been his decision to make, he certainly would not have chosen to build an institute of this size on Sabang, for the island was small, and clean water was sparse. It was also hot, while asylums on Java were all located in a moderate, cool climate. See Zentgraaff 1928:273–74.

very beginning, part of a larger project in advancing security and ‘normalcy’ in Acehese society. In this respect, the role of at least some of the more influential *uleebalang* cannot be underestimated. Van Loon stated that, when the chiefs heard about the plans for an asylum, they were very enthusiastic. It would be a great relief for the common people, they argued, if they were freed from the pressure and the strain caused by the many lunatics (Van Loon 1920: 33).

The first director of the asylum was a Dutch physician, Dr. Heuvel. In 1926 he was succeeded by J.A. Latumeten, an Indonesian psychiatrist from Ambon, who had worked as an assistant for Travaligno before completing his doctoral degree in the Netherlands in 1924, and who led the institute between 1926–1935 (Jongejans 1939:318; Pols 2007:194, n. 41). Besides improving security by removing potentially violent types, the institute also took in ‘a-social’ and other subversive elements. According to Latumeten, among the ‘dementia praecox’-sufferers there were those who had committed to religious exaltation, claimed to be a prophet, showed recalcitrant behaviour in front of chiefs, went roaming, expressed threats, or were simply a-social (Zentgraaff 1928:268–69). Because of their basic unreliability, the dementia praecox sufferers formed a ‘constant danger’, making ‘early intake’ necessary. Then there were the psychopaths, who in some cases may be ‘very gifted’, but ‘lacked moral hesitation’. The asylum was not just an instrument of repression, however. It was also a part of the Dutch concern with modernization, and in this sense similar to other healthcare programs. It treated mental illnesses and prepared cured patients for the return to their homes (Jongejans 1939:319; Zentgraaff 1928:271–72). Even so, it seems that the Dutch administration increasingly acknowledged the possibilities it offered. In the late 1920s, Latumeten had only 168 patients. In the late 1930s, the institute had 1400 patients, and 248 staff (Jongejans 1939:318–19).

In 1933, after having investigated the murder of Captain Schmid, Assistant-Resident Jongejans sent a copy of his report to Latumeten, with a request to interpret this case, as well as the ‘phenomenon of the kaphe-murder’ more generally, ‘from a psychiatric point of view’.³⁴ In response, Latumeten wrote an essay based on his ‘psychiatric study of this typical Acehese phenomenon’, which was sent to the governor, and subsequently to the Governor-General in Batavia. The essay starts with a compliment to Jongejans for emphasizing both the ‘inherited personality of the object under study’ and ‘his characteristic responses to environmental factors and living conditions’, an approach

34 Van Aken, ‘Moord op Kapitein Schmid’, 28-1-1934, Mailrapport No. 240x34, NA, Kol/ Geheime Mailrapporten, inv. nr. 117.

Latumeten deemed 'scientifically imperative'.³⁵ However, he rejected 'the notion that the judgment of the Atjeh-moord, at least in the cases in which the perpetrator is *not* insane [...] should belong solely to the domain of the Psychiatrist [emphasis in the original]'. Latumeten struggled, apparently more than Van Loon, with the fact that the perpetrators examined in his hospital did not actually seem to be mad. 'It is clear', he continued, 'that lunacy may lead to unpredictable acts of violence'. However, 'it is also plausible that difficulties in personal life, of course strongly stimulated by associated emotional complexes', even of those who appeared as 'mentally normal', might lead in the long run to 'catastrophic consequences'. It was this category in which Latumeten thought to situate (on the basis of Jongejans' report) the murderer of Schmid, Amat Leupon.

From here, Latumeten went on to describe a more general theory of the *Atjeh-moorden*. 'Much more difficult to understand', he continued, 'is why psychic moments (intense sadness, maloe-feelings [feelings of shame], etc.) might strike an otherwise healthy and normal person off his balance'. One may imagine, he argued, that 'the sum of psychic conflicts, experienced as unbearable at a certain moment, can cause the maximal "mental elasticity" to be broken'. What happened in the mind at such a moment, was regression from 'rational, moral, and intellectual' to 'iterative, impulsive, and explosive' principles. This, in turn, could lead to the sudden use of violence.³⁶ This observation did not yet make the murders on Europeans 'typically Acehnese'. What did, Latumeten called the 'kaphé-complex', defined as 'the sum of feelings of displeasure which, powerfully religious-affectively coloured, can blossom into formal obsessions [and] with all related consequences, run like a red thread through the colourful and unpredictable expressions of many psychoses'.³⁷ By means of illustration, Latumeten pointed at the hatred and contempt directed at his staff in the institute, expressed through offensive behaviour such as insulting gestures, swearing, spitting, and sometimes violence. In its most serious form, the kaphé-complex came with confusion, obsessive behaviour, paranoia and

35 Dr. J.A. Latumeten, 'Kanttekeningen op het rapport van den wd. Assistent-Resident der Noordkust van Atjeh betreffende den moord op Kap. Schmid', Sabang, 9-12-1933, Mailrapport No. 240x34, NA, Kol/Geheime Mailrapporten, inv. nr. 117.

36 Dr. J.A. Latumeten, 'Kanttekeningen op het rapport van den wd. Assistent-Resident der Noordkust van Atjeh betreffende den moord op Kap. Schmid', Sabang, 9-12-1933, p. 4, Mailrapport No. 240x34, NA, Kol/Geheime Mailrapporten, inv. nr. 117.

37 Dr. J.A. Latumeten, 'Kanttekeningen op het rapport van den wd. Assistent-Resident der Noordkust van Atjeh betreffende den moord op Kap. Schmid', Sabang, 9-12-1933, p. 9, Mailrapport No. 240x34, NA, Kol/Geheime Mailrapporten, inv. nr. 117.

religious excitement. The kaphé-complex, in the psychiatrist's view, was a popular condition manifesting itself explicitly in the behaviour of the psychologically distressed. More importantly, it was typically Acehnese. Most Acehnese, Latumeten thought, were able to contain their primary instincts because of their strict cultural rules and prescriptions. But 'if we compare the general picture of the Acehnese lunatics with those elsewhere, it is conspicuous that the religious emotion is expressed much more forcefully in the first'.³⁸ The implication of Latumeten's theory, if correct, was as amazing as it was frightening, for ultimately it meant that every single Acehnese was potentially a murderer.

Over the years, a consensus had formed among the Dutch that the *Atjeh-moorden* were committed deliberately, in 'cold blood' (see Stoler 1992), and thus 'rationally'. At the same time, the fact that the phenomenon was consistently discussed in a medical context made this nuance almost completely worthless. Latumeten himself blurred the distinction by concluding that even assaults by 'psychiatrically normals' were committed in a state of religious ecstasy, or a sort of 'temporary' craziness. Some of his colleagues elsewhere in the archipelago discarded even this nuance. In 1934, Mohamed Amir, head of the Clearing House in Medan, discussed the *Atjeh-moorden* in an article about 'indigenous psychopaths' in the Netherlands Indies (Amir 1934). Amir was an ethnic Minangkabau from West-Sumatra, who had studied psychiatry both in Batavia and in the Netherlands. Like Latumeten he was politically engaged.³⁹ In Medan, Amir investigated 'criminal psychopaths' from various ethnic backgrounds, who were kept in three prisons in or close to Batavia. Primarily interested in forensics, he compared ethnicity with the type of crimes committed. In the category 'violent crimes', the Acehnese topped the list. While Amir briefly mentioned possible external influences such as 'prosperity' and 'development', he was clearly much more interested in racial explanations to advance his study of 'geographical pathology'. This idea of the Aceh-murderer as a psychopath is important, particularly with regard to the popular understanding of the phenomenon. In Amir's explanation, psychopaths were fundamentally different from psychotics or neurotics. While psychosis and neurosis had their roots in

38 Dr. J.A. Latumeten, 'Kanttekeningen op het rapport van den wd. Assistent-Resident der Noordkust van Atjeh betreffende den moord op Kap. Schmid', Sabang, 9-12-1933, p. 13, Mailrapport No. 240x34, NA, Kol/Geheime Mailrapporten, inv. nr. 117.

39 Mohamed Amir (who was married to a Dutch woman) would serve briefly as a minister in Sukarno's cabinet in 1945. Later, he became an advocate of local (North Sumatra) autonomy, a decision which alienated him from the central Republican government. See Reid 1971.

a disruption of social relationships, or ('as Freudians see it') in particular experiences in childhood, psychopathy was thought of as a hereditary condition. Thus, the psychopath's handicap was primarily grounded in his passions, his 'temperament' or 'character' (Amir 1934:853–54).⁴⁰ In keeping with the critical view of his Indonesian peers, this character was approached on the basis of local particularities. The Acehnese, in other words, had always been a violent race.⁴¹

Latumeten and Amir were part of a group of nationalist Indonesian physicians who were highly critical of the conservative ideas of Travaligno and Van Loon (see Pols 2007:178–79). Latumeten was a co-author of an anonymous pamphlet directed against the 'political', 'polarizing', and 'un-scientific' (because not objective) nature of Van Loon's statements about the 'native mind' (Pols 2007:183, 194). These critics rejected the generalizations that pitted the (negative traits of the) 'native' against the (positive traits of the) 'western' mind. Instead, they pointed at the enormous variety in ethnic and linguistic groups in the Indonesian archipelago (or in Europe, for that matter). Dutch psychiatrists, they argued, did not speak local languages, and had only very limited knowledge of locally specific customs and histories, something which must undoubtedly compromise the accuracy of their findings (Pols 2007:184–85). Thus, although Latumeten found the Acehnese people to be fanatical in their faith and inherently conservative, he also thought that they harboured 'sufficient mental and intellectual capacity for development, implying certain promises for the future' (Latumeten quoted by Zentgraaff 1928:275). This did not mean, however, that they negated the need for developing a psychiatry of the Indonesian people. According to Pols, '[t]he project of developing a psychology of Indonesians was not dismissed as an oppressive colonial tool. It was instead taken as an argument for the development of Indonesian scholars and physicians and the creation of research facilities in the Indies to be staffed by Indonesians'. This was 'an argument for the modernization of Indonesia', in tune with the nationalist cause that many of them (including Latumeten) supported (Pols 2007:188).

More importantly, it seems clear that the 'clash' between Dutch and Indonesian psychiatrists was much less marked in Aceh than in Batavia. In Aceh, (Dutch) colonial and psychiatric discourse had been focused on local peculiarities from the start. Thus, while Van Loon had engaged, in Batavia, in a project to

40 See Peletz 1996 on the dichotomous construction of 'reason' and 'passion' in Malay society.

41 Amir wrote: 'It need moreover not be unbelievers. Did the Acehnese not kill before the Compagnie arrived on the stage? The chronicles certainly teach us differently!' (Reid 1971:858).

theorize the nature of the ‘native’ mind, in Aceh his investigation was directed squarely at the Acehnese ‘race’. And although Latumeten was prepared—much more than Van Loon—to emphasize the political situation and the impact of the war, in practice ‘Dutch’ and ‘Indonesian’ psychologies of Aceh turned out to be mutually reinforcing in their reification of the Acehnese mind. Finally, while both Latumeten and Amir argued, at least implicitly, to un-pathologize the phenomenon of the *Atjeh-moord*, in effect their views further solidified existing Dutch views about the ‘fanatical’ character of the Acehnese ‘race’.

From 1920 until the late 1930s, Dutch officials in Aceh consistently spoke of a decline in the rate of *Atjeh-moorden*. This is interesting, for the statistics show neither a general decrease nor increase, but a fluctuation throughout this period.⁴² The only clear trend can be seen in the last few years of colonial rule, when the rate was significantly lower. Often, however, individual cases proved more powerful than statistics. The benchmark year was 1933, when five assaults succeeded each other during a relatively brief period. This year, the problem began to receive special attention in the larger Indies newspapers, such as the *Java Bode* and the *Deli Courant*. This was connected to the details, such as the identity of the victims (one was a brave military captain—Captain Schmid—, another one was a woman, yet another a ten year old boy), and the particularly disconcerting factor that three of the five assaults had taken place in the provincial capital Koetaradja (Banda Aceh), on the doorstep of Dutch gubernatorial power. The murder of Captain Schmid in particular turned into the case around which the debate about the *Atjeh-moorden*—both in (secret) administrative correspondence and in public discourse—revolved. The influential *Deli Courant*, in a follow-up after the first report, stated that the murder of Schmid ‘aroused strong emotions, both within and outside Aceh.’⁴³ A local Aceh newspaper, in a lengthy feature reporting on the Captain’s funeral, quoted Governor Van Aken, who promised in his speech ‘not to rest, before I have the firm conviction that no one, who is guiltier than the man who took your life, will walk in freedom.’⁴⁴

Official investigations and medical attention were not the only domains in which the Dutch laboured for more control, however. One factor that merits particular attention in the remainder of this article is the juridical sphere. In her work on the Terengganu frontier, Amrita Malhi (2011) traced how everyday state surveillance in British Malaya built on a system of ‘universally’ valid

42 The most recent list I know can be found in Jongejans 1939:331.

43 ‘De moord op Kap. Schmid’, *Deli Courant*, 11-7-1933.

44 ‘Kapitein Schmid te Lho Soekon vermoord’, *Nieuwsblad voor Atjeh en Onderhoorigheden*, 12-7-1933.

code of laws. The Netherlands Indies were different in the sense that the Dutch never insisted on a system of universal law. Instead, they relied on a 'baroquely complex legal system', allowing indigenous law and a variety of colonial jurisdictions to exist next to one another (Cribb 2011:35). As we shall see in the next section, this made the attempts to control the phenomenon of the *Atjeh-moorden* into a particularly ambiguous affair.

From Military to Civil Rule: Practices of Discipline and the Adaptation of Customary Law

In mid-1919, J.M.L. Swaab, head of the North Aceh district, was facing a dilemma. Earlier that year, two Acehnese men had been arrested and detained, separately, for threatening to kill a European. Under the Dutch laws on self-governance, these men should be tried before the *musapat*. However, Swaab was told by the local *uleebalang* that this was impossible because there were no provisions in *adat* law for acts not actually committed yet.⁴⁵ At the same time, neither Swaab nor the *uleebalang* was eager to set both men free, for the obvious reason that they could still commit the murders of which they were accused of planning. A solution suggested by the *uleebalang* was to try these men, not for threatening to kill Europeans, but for lunacy (which they argued was possible), and then have them locked up in a mental institution, perhaps for six months or one year, preferably on Java (the Sabang institute did not exist yet). The problem with this solution was that, according to a medical examination, these men 'did not show any symptoms of lunacy'. Their threats originated from 'religious convictions, combined with hatred against the suppressor in general', not madness. So Swaab proposed another solution, namely to put both men on an island without Europeans, under the surveillance of the natives, 'until we are convinced that they have given up their dangerous plans'. One could even hope, he argued, that they would eventually get attached to their new home, and decide not to return.

What is interesting about this case is not so much the question whether or why the Aceh-murders were connected to lunacy, but what kind of juridical debate the problem ignited. Swaab, not sure what to do with this case, asked the governor for instructions. The governor, in turn, asked the Governor-General in Batavia to expand his government's juridical powers, arguing that, with regard

45 Letter of J.M.L. Swaab to the Governor of Aceh, Lho' Seumawe, 21-7-1919, NA, Kol/Politieke Verslagen Buitengewesten, inv. nr. 6.

to the 'deviant mental condition' of the Acehnese, his government did not possess sufficient instruments 'to protect the Europeans against the deeds of these mentally inferiors'.⁴⁶ At the core of the juridical debate which followed were three articles in separate bodies of legislation. Article 153 of the Atjeh-reglement (the 'special regulation' on the governance of Aceh) on 'bad conduct' did not suffice, wrote Swaab, because it did not apply to the indigenous administration of justice (that is, the *musapat*). The second provision, article 336 of the (general) penal code, included a punishment for threat, but this particular regulation required clarity about the individuals threatened, which was not the case. Finally, there was Article 47 of the Regeeringsreglement (the general Regulation on Government of the Netherlands Indies). It was this article which Swaab referred to when he suggested to send the suspects to an island.

The governor agreed with Swaab about the nature of the problem, but he was more sceptical about the proposed solution. Using article 47, he thought, would just relocate the problem. The murder may simply be committed elsewhere. Clearly, something more permanent had to be thought of. The governor requested further instructions from Batavia. In a separate advice, the Attorney-General argued that the offence had its origin in 'peculiar specific Acehnese popular attitudes' and thus were essentially a case for the indigenous courts. If, according to the *uleebalang*, there were not yet provisions for such crimes in *adat* law, then 'indigenous law itself would have to react against that [...] [and] start considering such threats as a criminal offence'.⁴⁷ In other words: indigenous law would have to be adapted to the situation by the indigenous chiefs themselves. In the meantime, he suggested, Article 47 of the Regeeringsreglement may be used as a temporary solution. The Director of Justice agreed with the Attorney-General, but added that this 'development of indigenous law' would need some help of the Dutch administration. His argument was that, although strictly speaking the Atjeh-reglement did not apply to the indigenous courts, there was reason to doubt 'whether such a strict interpretation was really necessary'. Alternatively, he suggested that the indigenous judges were granted permission to use a loose interpretation of the Atjeh-reglement, allowing them to regard the planning of a murder in itself as 'evil and excessive behaviour', and punish accordingly.⁴⁸

46 Letter of the Governor of Aceh, A.G.H. van Sluys, to the Governor-General of the Netherlands Indies, Koeta Radja, 2-6-1920, NA, Kol/Politieke Verslagen Buitengewesten, inv. nr. 6.

47 Advice of the Attorney-General, Uhlenbeck, to the Governor-General of the Netherlands Indies. Weltevreden, 7-7-1920, NA, Kol/Politieke Verslagen Buitengewesten, inv. nr. 6.

48 Advice of the Director of the Justice Department, F.W. Filet, to the Governor-General of the Netherlands Indies. 21-10-1920, NA, Kol/Politieke Verslagen Buitengewesten, inv. nr. 6.

The Council of the Netherlands Indies was also critical about the use of article 47 of the Regeeringsreglement. Its main contention was that, 'generally, amongst the Acehnese, it is unusual that, when [...] they consecrate themselves to death with in mind a wish to kill a European (kafir), they inform friends or acquaintances. [...] So when particular individuals inform the administration about similar intentions of a fellow countryman, in Aceh—the land of false accusations par excellence—we are required to be extremely cautious with regard to their reliability.' For this reason, the Council advised explicitly against the application on a wide scale of 'Article 47'. 'Only if evidence of the existence of such an intention [namely to kill a European] has been indisputably shown, further acting is justified. Statements only are not enough.'⁴⁹ In its advice, the Council appeared to take a more moderate view than the government in Aceh, the Attorney-General, and the Director of Justice. It did agree, however, with the arrest of suspects on the basis of intention, and most importantly, on giving the *uleebalang* the power to do so.

Clearly, 'Article 47' is not the most relevant regulation here, because it was seen by all parties involved as a temporary makeshift rather than a permanent solution. Much more important is the fact that this debate shows how flexible both 'Dutch' and '*adat*' law were in the eyes of the Dutch, if the situation asked for it. At stake were the jurisdictions of 'Dutch' civil law and *adat*, which were both 'officialised' in 1881. Non-indigenous citizens fell under the 'Atjeh-reglement', while the indigenous population was administered on basis of the so-called 'Moesapat-ordonnantie' (Musapat-ordinance) (Kreemer 1922–23:II.282). In this particular case, the Dutch officials agreed that the two men would have to be tried by the indigenous chiefs under *adat* law, the jurisdiction of which would simply be extended, without much further ado, with some extra instruments from the Atjeh-reglement. With regard to this particular offense (murder), these instruments, which made it possible to persecute on the basis of 'intention' only, were much more repressive in character than indigenous law, at least if we believe the *uleebalang* account.⁵⁰

In the following decades, this trend continued. Van Sluys' successors, O.M. Goedhart and A.H. Philips, emphasized that trust in the judiciary was one of the most important elements of the struggle to 'change the inner conviction of the Acehnese with regard to us in a favourable direction'.⁵¹ Taking into account

49 Advice of the Council of the Netherlands Indies, issued in the meeting of 5-11-1920 (released 10-11-1920), NA, Kol/Politieke Verslagen Buitengewesten, inv. nr. 6.

50 I searched the Dutch sources for provisions in Acehnese *adat* law concerning 'intention', but could not find any.

51 Memorie van Overgave van O.M. Goedhart, aftredend Gouverneur van Atjeh en Onder-

the Acehese conservative mindset, however, ‘much water would have to find its way through the Aceh river to the ocean’ before this would happen. What Aceh needed in the meantime was a combination of security and patience. This, I think, formed the core ambiguity of Dutch intervention in Acehese society. According to Goedhart, the Dutch would have to constrain themselves in their interference with the intimate lives of the Acehese in order to respect their conservative character. A ‘rigorous application of warrants, provisions and regulations etc.’ should not be tolerated, so that the Acehese were left ‘free to manage their lives as they themselves see fit’.⁵² But paradoxically, it was the focus on security which probably affected the Acehese’ daily lives most directly. For example, both Goedhart and Philips claimed that, especially during the Muslim fasting month, the interference should be reduced to the most essential (since ‘the people and chiefs are at that time particularly irritable’). This did not count, however, for the ‘*poesasacirculaire*’, the traditional practice of increased security patrolling during the fasting month, which was to be continued unabatedly.⁵³ With regard to the problem of lunacy, and the function of the mental institute on Sabang, Philips stated that ‘the asylum [...] is not only there for the intake of lunatics, but can also be used to take those suspected of lunacy into observation’. Although he wrote that the reason for this was to prevent their ‘observation’ in jails (places ‘unsuitable’ for them), it also gave the government and the chiefs a powerful new instrument for pre-emptive action against undesirable types.⁵⁴

As I have mentioned, Latumeten’s 1933 report about lunacy constituted a radicalization of earlier views, in the sense that it attributed to all Acehese, without exception and irrespective of individual thoughts and behaviour, with a killer complex. In fact, this went too far for the next governor, A.Ph. Van Aken (1932–36), who argued that ‘the pure Quranic doctrine condemns the waging of “Holy War” under present conditions [in Aceh]’ and ‘certainly would not categorize the perpetrators of the *kaphe*-murderers as heroes of the faith’. He

hoorigheden, Koeta Radja, 30-5-1929, pp. 6–9, NA, Kol/Memories van Overgave, 1849–1962, nummer toegang 2.10.39 (MvO), inv. nr. 158.

52 Memorie van Overgave van O.M. Goedhart, aftredend Gouverneur van Atjeh en Onderhoorigheden, Koeta Radja, 30-5-1929, pp. 6–9, NA, Kol/MvO, inv. nr. 158.

53 Memorie van Overgave van O.M. Goedhart, aftredend Gouverneur van Atjeh en Onderhoorigheden, Koeta Radja, 30-5-1929, p. 43, NA, Kol/MvO, inv. nr. 158; Memorie van Overgave van A.H. Philips, aftredend Gouverneur van Atjeh en Onderhoorigheden, 31-5-1932, p. 19, NA, Koloniën/MvO inv. nr. 159.

54 Memorie van Overgave van A.H. Philips, aftredend Gouverneur van Atjeh en Onderhoorigheden, 31-5-1932, p. 19, NA, Koloniën/MvO inv. nr. 159.

believed that the majority of the Acehnese population knew that the kafir-murders were not really a part of their teachings, and that the latter should therefore be seen as 'attempts at indirect suicide'.⁵⁵ Nonetheless, even Van Aken maintained that the combination of the Acehnese mentality and the problem of lunacy made people extra susceptible to the influence of such ideology. His approach to the sudden increase of Aceh-murders in 1933 was twofold. Firstly, he postponed the planned reduction of the Dutch military in Aceh. Secondly, he approached some of the most prominent *uleebalang* to give him advice on the matter.⁵⁶ Van Aken was told that, according to *adat* and *hukum* (Islamic law), the *wali* of a family (the first male relative) should be held responsible for the violent behaviour of family-members. Before the arrival of the Dutch, usually a *diat* (blood money) was paid in such cases. In order to prevent trouble (and payment), risky types were usually 'locked in stocks'. The *uleebalang* argued that, since the Dutch had objected to this practice, it was now up to the family to either guard their mentally unstable relatives themselves, or have them be locked up in an asylum. Van Aken agreed with this 'solution', arguing that it would result in better surveillance of the 'unbalanced' types who could be expected to slide into 'abnormal behaviour'. Keeping the family accountable thus contained a considerable advantage. The disadvantage was the possibility that these 'unbalanced' types were too eagerly forwarded to Sabang. This, however, could be accepted simply as 'part of the deal'.

The sudden outburst of *Atjeh-moorden* in 1933 was not the only problem for Van Aken. In a regency called Lhong, on the west coast just south of Aceh Besar, resistance had flared up again as a band of fourteen men had devoted themselves to the Holy War.⁵⁷ The resistance was crushed by the Dutch within one month, in an operation which saw most of the Acehnese fighters killed. While the Dutch side counted only one casualty (who was killed in friendly fire), the incident made a big impression on the Dutch. Both problems, the flaring up of tension in Lhong and the sudden increase of *Atjeh-moorden*, needed an explanation. In Lhong, the local chiefs appeared to have lost touch with, and thus control over, their population. With regard to the *Atjeh-moorden*, Van Aken argued that there was probably a big influence from the economic crisis, since 'kafir-murderers' almost always came from poor environments. Still, he thought

55 Van Aken, 'Moord op Kapitein Schmid', Koetaradja, 28-1-1934, Mailrapport 240x34, NA, Kol/Geheime Mailrapporten, inv. nr. 117.

56 Interview with Van Aken, *Deli Courant* 29-6-1933. The *uleebalang* mentioned by Van Aken were T. Teunga of the regency Meurassa en T. Tjih Peusangan.

57 Van Aken, Politiek Verslag Atjeh 1933, pp. 3-4, NA, Kol/Politieke Verslagen Buitengewesten, inv. nr. 7.

that the problems were closely related, and that the root cause was caused by the 'kafir-complex'. The only real difference was that the 'kafir-murderers' were often 'mentally weak', and the fighters in Lhong were not. In Van Aken's view, revival of the Holy War became urgent when religious incitement got hold of the population. The solution lay in a reinvigorated application of the Aceh Policy, with the *uleebalang* being forced to keep their people under control. With regard to the *Atjeh-moorden*, better analysis was needed. Since Latumeten had complained about a shortage of research material, Van Aken ordered that all cases were to be extensively reported to the psychiatrist. 'Possible perpetrators or suspects' should be sent to Sabang for inspection before their persecution. The statistical registration of all cases, unjustly neglected in recent years, was to be reinvigorated.

Despite Van Aken's remarks about the difference between the two forms of violence, and the suitability of either a prison or an asylum to lock up risky elements, the preventive measures taken for both problems showed increasing resemblance. In 1934, a group of six villagers were arrested and sentenced by the *musapat* in Calang (West Aceh) to a few years of prison for 'walking around with "prang sabil" plans'.⁵⁸ In Langsa (East Aceh), the *uleebalang* had 'to act against a religious movement, which in its roots was innocent in nature, but which [...] could easily grow out to a fanatical eruption'. Such groups were no longer seen as war-parties, but tried before the *musapat* for 'conspiracy against the authority of the adat'.⁵⁹ Their leaders faced sentences of up to ten years in prison. At the same time, those suspected of planning an *Atjeh-moord* were 'removed'. In Idi, a man was arrested because of his 'peculiar attitude and inquiries about the captain [of the local military]', and 'taken into observation'.⁶⁰ In 1935, various individuals were accused of glorifying the holy war, and sentenced to long sentences of jail, again up to ten years. In two separate cases, individual men, accused of planning to attack a Dutch soldier or official, were sent to the asylum in Sabang for observation.

58 Van Aken, *Politiek Verslag 1934, 20-2-1935*, p. 1, NA, Kol/Politieke Verslagen Buitengewesten, inv. nr. 7. See Alfian 1987 for similar cases.

59 Van Aken, *Politiek Verslag 1935, 7-2-1936*, pp. 1-4, NA, Kol/Politieke Verslagen Buitengewesten, inv. nr. 7.

60 As referred to at the beginning of this article, the Dutch authorities disposed over an extensive network of spies. These were expected to pick up signs of potential outbreaks of religious fanaticism, but also (like elsewhere in Indonesia), to follow and investigate (alleged) communists and representatives of newly emerging, and potentially subversive, civil associations (see Shiraiishi 1997).

Atjeh-moord, religious mania, kafir-complex, mentality and lunacy remained sister conceptions in the Dutch administrative vocabulary until the end of the colonial period. In the late 1930s the Dutch observed that ordinary villagers increasingly joined in the pre-emptive removal of deviant figures. Resident J. Pauw reported in 1938:

A case of religious mania, though without serious consequences, occurred in the sub-regency Idi, when a religious fanatic Acehnese, together with two followers, used lances and klewangs [swords] to resist against their arrest. It is cause for joy, that the general police of Langsa, reinforced by the local police and armed volunteers from the village population [...] arrested them, without causing casualties. That the great support for this arrest from the side of the ordinary kampong [village] population may be experienced as a proof of a changing mentality with the present generation!⁶¹

This example shows that the instalment and development of civil rule was accompanied by the use of increasingly repressive disciplinary instruments in political, legal and medical spheres. One could even say that, from the mid-1930s onwards, military and civil operations fused, with the symbolic culmination of ordinary villagers joining in the pre-emptive arrest of 'deviant' citizens.

Conclusion

In 1938, Jongejans was promoted to the office of Resident (of Aceh).⁶² One year later, he published *Land en volk van Atjeh* ('Land and people of Aceh'), a descriptive and richly illustrated work intended for a broad public, with chapters ranging widely from history to economy, from ethnography to administration. One chapter stands out. It is titled, simply, 'Atjeh-moorden' (Jongejans 1939:316–31). In this chapter, Jongejans describes in some detail the case of Captain Schmid. Amat Leupon, he explains, used to wander, commit thefts, and was even imprisoned once for attacking someone with a sword. At the time he attacked Schmid, he was caught up in a range of marital and financial difficulties. 'This is when he started brooding. He ate little and apparently he had said that, in case he

61 J. Pauw, *Politiek Verslag 1938, 31-5-1939*, p. 6, NA, *Kolonieën/Politieke Verslagen Buitengewesten*, inv. nr. 7.

62 Due to an administrative change, this was now the highest office in Aceh. Van Aken was the last Governor.

could not get back his child, he would remarry his first wife, who, in the meantime, had divorced her second husband. [...] This was just before the assault and his death' (Jongejans 1939:325). Amat, Jongejans concluded, had been tired of life. Infused with the memory of the Holy War against the Dutch, and the strong hatred for *kafirs*, he had reverted to the murder of a Dutchman, in the hope of becoming a martyr. But there was more to it: his father was known as a 'very eccentric' man who had died, at the hands of the Dutch, in front of Amat's eyes. His mother was also an 'odd type', 'a woman with somewhat weak mental capabilities'. Shortly before her death, it was said, she had become 'completely insane'. Her sister was also 'completely insane' (Jongejans 1939:323–24).

Jongejans' story, and the differences with his original report, illustrates the direction in which colonial discourse about the *Atjeh-moorden* developed during the final decades of Dutch colonial rule. While Jongejans mentions the war, the chapter about the *Atjeh-moorden* is framed almost entirely in psychological terms. It is preoccupied with the asylum on Sabang, the work of psychiatrists, the difference between the *Atjeh-moorden* and ('the psychosis') *amok*, and the psychological burden placed on the population by disease. 'Often', Jongejans wrote, 'the attempted murders of Europeans [...] are connected to the issue of pacification. Yet in a direct sense it has nothing to do with this. Once the attacks become part of the past, the animosity against us may continue to exist' (Jongejans 1939:330). The hesitation expressed in his earlier report is gone, and the readers are presented with a clear view of the need to keep the troubled Acehnese under close surveillance.

The *Atjeh-moorden* were more than a 'danger' or a 'nuisance' to the Dutch. In search of an explanation, Dutch administrators increasingly accentuated the 'primordial' traits of the Acehnese character, such as religious fanaticism, conservatism, primitiveness, rebelliousness, stubbornness, and untrustworthiness. As a result, the phenomenon gradually turned into a vivid and terrifying means of shaping, and re-generating 'Aceh' as a racial and psychological category. Through this mechanism, the *Atjeh-moorden* became a political currency in the hands of those administrators supporting, consciously or unconsciously, a harsh, paternalistic and racist line. Lunacy, perceived as a popular ailment aggravated by the war, but grounded in the primordial character of a degenerate mind, proved a highly useful, as well as flexible conception. The Dutch aimed to discipline the Acehnese mind through education, economic development, and the co-optation of indigenous authority, but also through a set of repressive instruments related to the security apparatus, institutionalized health services, and an active adaptation of indigenous law. As the primary symbol of these interrelated domains, a massive and expensive mental asylum

was built in one of the most faraway corners of the Netherlands Indies. All this was set, moreover, in the gloomy context of a militarized society. While this may lead to a more cynical view of Dutch colonial rule in Aceh than we are used to, the Aceh Policy as a political doctrine must be placed explicitly in this context. Dutch attitudes toward order and security were not dictated by a blind trust in modernization. They were equally influenced by an ideological mindset which increasingly required Acehnese society to be purged from the deviances that were thought to cause violent behaviour toward the colonial state.

In the 1920s and 1930s, the mantra of the unstable Acehnese mind informed a number of practical measures aimed at disciplining and domesticating the Acehnese, and to enforce upon them a measure of colonial morality. In the political strategies of the Dutch government, which were based partly on experiences elsewhere in the archipelago, and partly on local circumstances and interactions with Acehnese traditional elites, the pacification of wild spaces and wild 'minds' were thoroughly conflated. The ideological context of this process was increasingly conservative, as political control was equated with (a sense of) security. As a result, agents of the colonial state were increasingly willing to lock up and examine all the surviving perpetrators, and even the suspects, of the cases officially defined as 'Atjeh-moord', thereby treating them as mentally ill, or as products of a 'degenerated' race. There is no doubt, in this respect, that the asylum on Sabang was an important judicial sphere, which was based, moreover, on a cultural construction of moral dominance (see Foucault 1973 [1965]:269–70). It would be wrong, however, to place this development in a rigid Foucauldian framework, that is, to regard it as a relatively coherent institutional assault by Reason on social actors glossed by the state as moral 'errors'. In reality, the surveillance of the 'Acehnese mind' was a complicated affair, and colonial practices remained ambiguous, and subject to doubt, until the very end of the Dutch colonial period. Although colonial administrators were directed at the idea of restoring 'normality' (whatever that may be) to Acehnese society, they were often quite uncertain how to pursue this goal. In particular, it remained unclear throughout the colonial period whether these violent types, the perpetrators of *Atjeh-moord*, belonged in hospital, or in jail. Thus, Dutch attempts to find a solution for the *Atjeh-moorden* cannot be understood without acknowledging the administrative ambivalence found at the interstices of violence, criminality, and judicial routines.

After the Japanese occupation (1942–1945), the Dutch never returned to Aceh (with the exception of Sabang, which remained in Dutch hands during the first years of the Revolution). Still, the pervasive discursive construction that pictures the Acehnese, stereotypically, as rebels and religious 'fanatics', remains. The same is true for the phrase 'crazy Aceh(nese)' (A: *Aceh pungo*),

although it is interesting to note that this expression has long been appropriated by the Acehnese themselves to express a variety of (both positive and negative) meanings (see for example Taufik al-Mubarak 2009). Given the fact that such strong opinions exist about Aceh and the Acehnese, it is strange that, so far, relatively little has been written about the colonial period. Perhaps the changes that have taken place in recent years, after the destructive tsunami of December 2004 and the signing of the peace agreement between the Indonesian government and the Gerakan Aceh Merdeka (Aceh Independence Movement, GAM) in August 2005 will lead to a renewed interest for scholars, inside and outside Aceh, to critically engage with, and deconstruct, static expressions of Acehnese exceptionalism and uncover a more dynamic past. I hope that this article can contribute to this process.

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