

## CHAPTER X

# Aceh histories in the KITLV images archive

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In any society, the past is forever being swept aside. Memories fade, records are lost, and those in power manipulate images of the past. In Aceh, survivors of the tsunami have to confront the sudden, massive loss of people and of their history. Material culture, which is the physical record of minds and hands, also vanished beneath the tsunami waves. Loss of material culture destroys evidence of the connections forged between maker and user that knit social classes together. Here, I introduce the Images Archive of the Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies (hereafter: KITLV Images Archive) at Leiden as a repository that offers the possibility of recovering traces of Aceh's past. The archive is also an important source for historians rethinking the history of Aceh within the larger histories of Indonesia.

All visual sources – paintings, portraits, photographs – need a context for their explanation and interpretation. My research method combines the study of document-based histories of Aceh with the study of images. I focus on the content of the photographs. Who or what was considered by photographers to be important to record through the expensive processes of early camera technology? How does a visual record contribute to understanding the past? I also consider the Aceh photographs in comparison with other photographs stored in the KITLV Images Archive that were taken in the same time period at other locations around the archipelago.

Major themes of histories of Aceh are the early seventeenth-century sultanate with its global connections, and the Aceh War, or rather, Aceh wars, over

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the years 1873 to the 1930s. In official histories of the Republic of Indonesia and in popular conception, Aceh is presented as a tenacious opponent of colonial rule and fierce supporter of independence. These themes of power, alienation and resistance in the historiography of Aceh have influenced its visual representation in published collections of photographs and art histories of Indonesia. In them, photographs of soldiers, bivouacs and military infrastructure represent Aceh. An examination of the KITLV Images Archive, however, reveals a great many more facets of Aceh. I will describe the materials in the archive from Aceh, after brief remarks on using photographs as research tools for understanding the region's complex history.

### *Photographs as tools of history*

At its birth, photography seemed to be a tool of science; the images it produced imparted ideals of reality and truth. The Netherlands Indies government quickly grasped the potential of photography and commissioned photographs in 1841 of Borobudur and of other ancient monuments that were being pried loose from their cover of vegetation by amateur archaeologists. Once photographs became reproducible, and supplies of chemicals and paper could be ordered by telegraph from Holland and dispatched promptly by steamer, a new industry established itself in Java. The professional photographer subsequently followed explorers, the colonial army, civil servants and commercial agents across the archipelago, and the camera began to replace pencil and paint in creating official records of Indonesian peoples and places. Amateurs joined the ranks of photographers after the release of the Kodak camera to the public in 1888. They contributed domestic themes and picturesque landscapes to the stock of photographs of Indonesia. Less cumbersome and cheaper photographic equipment with faster operating times meant that in theory, anything at all could be photographed.

Consideration of what actually was photographed obliges us to recognize that photography is not an objective record of peoples, times and places. Photographs are subjected to manipulation through selection, like any other set of documents. They are staged records and products of fleeting relationships between the photographed and the photographer. Anthropologists and historians of photography remind us to examine with care photographs taken by Europeans of colonized places and peoples (Wachlin 1994; Wachlin and Van der Linden 1989).<sup>2</sup> Specialists in colonial photography draw attention to the social distance between the viewer and the viewed, and to the proc-

<sup>2</sup> See also the chapters by E. Edwards, N.J. Bradford, M. Macintyre and M. McKenzie, C. Pinney, J.C. Scherer, and T. Wright in Edwards 1992.

ess of 'othering'. Often, the subjects of photographs are presented as 'native types', made known only by their occupation as cooks, nursemaids, coolies, food-sellers or performing girls. By contrast, usually the personal names of 'European types' – generals, governors, aunts, children – are preserved, so that the viewer perceives the photographed as individuals.

Generalizations about 'othering' should not lead us to overlook cases where Indonesians were photographed as people, not as types, with their personal names recorded in the family albums of the colonizer. An example is the recently published *Het album van Mientje*, assembled in 1862 for Wilhelmina van der Hucht by her relations on the occasion of her marriage (Van den Berg and Wachlin 2005). The Indonesians photographed in it are not anonymous 'types', but named family friends, associates and servants. Several group photographs of the Acehnese and the Dutch in the KITLV Images Archive preserve only the names of the Acehnese, and it is the Dutch who are the nameless 'types', presented as officials, officers, colleagues and wives.

Most published research on colonial-era photography focuses on European photographers and pays little attention to photographs produced by Asian photographers. Indigenous photographers photographed Europeans as well as fellow Javanese (Knaap 1999).<sup>3</sup> Well-to-do Indonesians commissioned photographs for their own family albums, to give to Dutch colleagues in the colonial civil service or to send to the Dutch royals.<sup>4</sup> The photographs of Europeans in Indonesian family albums await analysis. Photographs taken by Indonesians during visits to the Netherlands in the 1920s and 1930s could also serve as a valuable counterpart to studies of how Europeans photographed Indonesians. I would expect to find a similar 'othering' process in photographs that Indonesians made of the Dutch.

### *The KITLV Aceh images: content and context*

The records that make up the Images Archive of the KITLV are stored in Leiden, the Netherlands. The archive has been digitalized, so its contents are available online to anyone anywhere with access to a computer and the internet.<sup>5</sup> Indonesian lives abound in the KITLV Images Archive. In January 2007, it contained 1,053 items stored under the keyword 'Aceh', within a total collection of 43,841 images. Most of the Aceh images are photographs, but

<sup>3</sup> See also photographs in the KITLV Images Archive taken by Chinese and indigenous photographers of Europeans.

<sup>4</sup> See examples of these photographs and their inscriptions in Nieuwenhuys 1973, Wassing-Visser 1995, and in the KITLV Images Archive.

<sup>5</sup> The URL is <http://kitlv.pictura-dp.nl> (accessed 28-1-2010). The photographs discussed here are identified by their archive number.

there are also pencil sketches, watercolours and a few newspaper cartoons. All were made between the years 1873 and 1939.

The earliest photographs taken by Europeans in Aceh date from 1874. They record the second Dutch invasion, termed 'military expedition' in Dutch sources, from the time. At various dates, the Dutch declared the Aceh War to be over. Some historians argue that it never ended, and cite suicide-murders of the 1920s and 1930s as evidence for this claim. The photographs in the KITLV collection therefore cover the time period, considered most broadly, of the Aceh wars.

In this 60-year period (1870s-1930s), numerous wars were fought across the Indonesian Archipelago. Units of the colonial army were dispatched to Bali, Lombok, Sulawesi and Borneo, as well as to Sumatra, to incorporate these regions into the colonial state. It was the era of 'high colonialism', when uniform grids of administration, commerce, education, health and agricultural services were laid down, and when all islands were connected to the colonial capital by steamship services, and postal and telegraph systems. The 1870s-1930s was also the era of *tempo doeloe* – a time recalled in Holland with nostalgia by old-timers and Eurasians, with their memories kept alive through photograph albums of an Indies world that has disappeared. Looking further afield, the period of the Aceh photographic record follows on the Indian Mutiny (or Indian Rebellion) of 1857, which falls within the last years of the Ottoman caliphate and the rise of modern Islamic reform movements.

Many photographs show Aceh as a site of war. The oldest image in the Aceh collection is a coloured lithograph, made in 1873, which gives a bird's-eye view of Aceh from the sea, and of the coastal defensive works that the first Dutch invasion force encountered [51-J-2]. There are photographs of officers and men of the colonial army, Koninklijk Nederlandsch-Indisch Leger (KNIL), in jungle bivouacs [16451], and studio portraits of individual officers [2504] and of Acehnese *panglima* (commanders, district heads) [2508].<sup>6</sup> There are photographs of observation posts [52053], barracks [2663], graves [3415], KNIL's Acehnese auxiliary troops [11783], Acehnese militias [4916] and informants [27130]. All these photographs show how multi-racial and multi-cultural the KNIL was. The photographs exemplify the dominant themes of war and resistance to the Dutch in the published histories of Aceh, and the selections for Aceh made by assemblers of photographic and art books on Indonesia.

Examination of all the Aceh photographs in the KITLV collection, however, reveals that there are also many other subjects of photographs under the key-

<sup>6</sup> Only one example of each topic is given in parentheses here, but the KITLV Images Archive contains numerous examples of each of the topics identified. Each online photograph can be retrieved by entering its number alone into the 'advanced search' function.

word 'Aceh'. Contents of the photographs include the following: landscapes showing the natural beauty of Aceh's mountains, valleys, rivers and waterfalls [18019], the sultan's residence [19261], and grave stones of past sultans [4929] and holy men [4925]. There are photographs of Sultan Muhammad Daud [6583] and members of his family, including wives and princesses [15995], studio portraits commissioned by leading Acehnese figures in the colonial society [6541], and group photographs of Dutch and Acehnese members of the new colonial administration [4907]. There are photographs of residential sections of Kotaraja (former name of Banda Aceh) [4941], and of men and women presented as Acehnese 'types' in elaborate bridal costumes [6517], as market traders [18925] and as villagers [3611]. Photographs were also taken of performers of traditional arts such as *didong* (a traditional genre of poetry recitation) [6190] and *seudati* (a form of traditional Achenese dress) [5269], of craftsmen and craftswomen [4950], and of technicians in modern enterprises [11779]. There are photographs of agricultural machines of local materials and construction [18394], and of Acehnese handicrafts and the Aceh Museum established by the colonial government [35169]. There are examples of 'traditional' Acehnese [2991] and Gayo houses [27356], many of mosques of wood and thatch with tiered roofs [27137], and mosques in the new, Indo-Saracenic style introduced by the Dutch [3997].

Other photographs record roads under construction [26353], bridges and trains [27493], cars [25020], government [4986] and Islamic schools [25151], petroleum drills [16734], dockside coal depots [28445], lighthouses [3275], telegraph transmitters [19246], *kampung* (town quarter, village) street lighting [4939], plantations [18507], and shops operated by Dutch [27597], Acehnese [11761] and Chinese [3170] in Kotaraja.

The camera also recorded local celebrations of important events in the colonial calendar, such as the illumination of the Baiturrahman Mosque in Banda Aceh to celebrate the marriage of Princess Juliana to Prince Bernhard in 1937 [54545] (Illustration 18). Many photographs are of colonial families [25357], both at home [17982] and travelling with armed escort [52072], and of European children barefoot in the garden [17991]. There are photographs of places frequented by Europeans, such as the beach [17975], the Masonic lodge [7531] and clubs [5100]. There are also photographs of the Acehnese playmates of Dutch children [18040].

This great diversity of images suggests topics for social histories of Aceh, to complement the political aspects that have dominated most scholarship to date. Photographs of KNIL and Acehnese militias, of the new infrastructure of bridges, railway lines and roads, of Dutch and Acehnese colonial officials, and of new-style schools, for example, are sources for histories of Acehnese interactions with the Dutch, and with Indonesians from all over the archipelago. Photographs of mosques throughout Aceh, the Indonesian

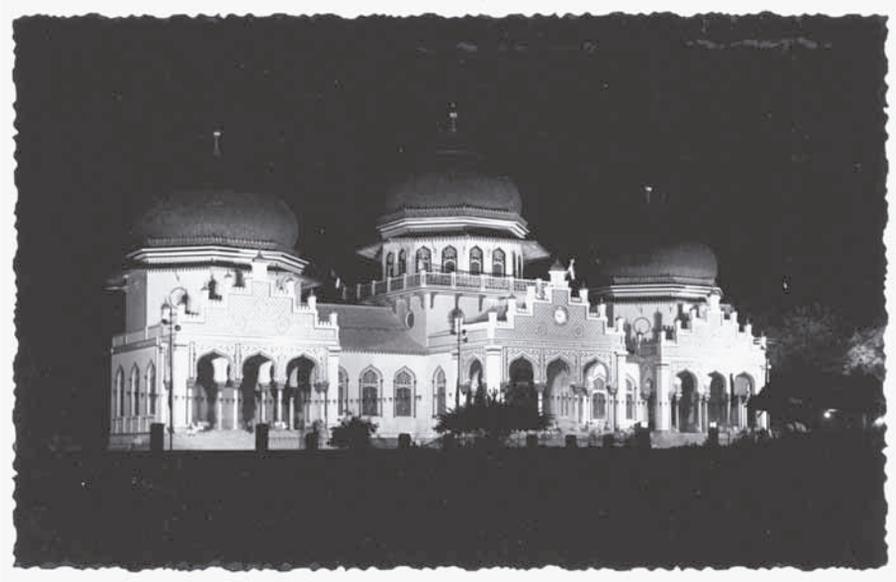


Figure 18. The Baiturrahman Mosque, Banda Aceh, 1937, illuminated in honour of the marriage of Princess Juliana to Prince Bernhard (KITLV 54545)

Archipelago and Malay Peninsula establish the existence of a Southeast Asian style in mosque architecture that is now disappearing. Photographs from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries of new mosques in the major colonial cities demonstrate the role of Dutch money, and of colonial architects, in introducing Indonesians to styles in mosque architecture imported from elsewhere in the Muslim world.

Photographs of the capital can also contribute to developing an urban history of Banda Aceh, and the collection as a whole can be mined to study minorities in Aceh, such as the Minangkabau, the Javanese and the Chinese. Everyday Acehnese economic life can be studied through photographs of houses, villages and markets. The gender division in labour is illustrated through photographs of men slaughtering buffalo, women weavers at their looms and the like. Photographs of Acehnese 'types', such as village inhabitants, *seudati* performers and market sellers, are further sources for consideration of public space and roles for women. Photographs of elite and village women show hair and clothing styles that are quite different from female dress in Java from the same time period, and from female dress required today by Aceh's implementers of Shari'a. The KITLV photographs also record social interactions between Dutch and Acehnese elites. These photographs, when put side by side with *tempo doeloe* photographs from

Java, are source material for a comparative study of colonial societies across the archipelago.

In sum, then, while visual records enrich historical narratives, they also challenge them and suggest new topics for research. I will now briefly survey histories of Aceh, and discuss how their dominant themes of war and resistance have influenced the selection of items for visual representations of Aceh in the photograph and art books of Indonesia. I will then revisit the histories through a consideration of a selection of photographs from the KITLV Aceh collection.

### *Aceh histories in word and image: a sampling*

Today, contrasting versions of Aceh's history by professional and popular historians compete in scholarly publications and websites.<sup>7</sup> At the outbreak of war, P.J. Veth rushed to compile information on Aceh's topography, climate, peoples and customs, impelled, as he stated in his foreword dated 29 April 1875, to help ensure the success of the second invasion force (Veth 1875:5-6). He drew on Malay chronicles, the works of travellers to Aceh, and on earlier scholars, such as the eighteenth-century British colonial officer William Marsden (Marsden 1975). There were patriots such as P. Vergers, who wrote of heroic KNIL forces combating fanatical, opium-addicted Acehnese (Vergers 1875). C. Snouck Hurgronje compiled his two-volume *De Atjehers* from within the occupied capital of Kotaraja itself, in collaboration with two assistants from Aceh's highland Gayo territory (Snouck Hurgronje 1906). For many historians writing since the 1950s, Aceh is important in the narrative of the making of Indonesia. Authors stress that this northern end of Sumatra was the only area of all Indonesia not to be re-occupied by Dutch military and civil administrations during the struggle for independence.<sup>8</sup>

Prior to the settlement in July 2005 between the *Gerakan Aceh Merdeka* (GAM, Free Aceh Movement) and the Indonesian government, there was also

<sup>7</sup> The texts that I have consulted are cited in full. I make no claim that the sampling is exhaustive.

<sup>8</sup> I find it curious that the website of Syiah Kuala University, in its historical section 'Sejarah Singkat Universitas Syiah Kuala', stressed Aceh's 'subjugation' to colonial rule, rather than its resistance. As it states (my translation): '[t]he age of Iskandar Muda represented the great epoch of the Kingdom of Aceh. And yet, over the course of time, its eminence dwindled, as a direct result of the actions and ploys of the enemies, the colonialists, who 'for hundreds of years' [my emphasis] colonized the Land of Iskandar Muda. As a result, Aceh suffered a decline, especially in the field of education. The decline of a state is closely linked to the level of education of its people.' This is quoted from [www.unsyiah.ac.id](http://www.unsyiah.ac.id) (accessed 1-11-2005). The Syiah Kuala University's version of Aceh's history contrasts with the majority view summarized, in Paul van 't Veer's words, as 'last colonised, first free' (Van't Veer 1969:320).

another historical narrative – one that detached Aceh from the story of the making of Indonesia. It stressed Aceh's history as an independent state, and its lack of links with icons of Indonesia's national past, such as Majapahit. This narrative argued that the Dutch should have ceded sovereignty in 1949 to two new nations, one comprising Java and eastern Indonesia, and the other comprising 'Aceh-Sumatra'. This narrative may be found in the writings of Hasan Di Tiro (1986),<sup>9</sup> and in many websites created by GAM members.<sup>10</sup>

Professional historians, that is, historians who document their sources, submit their manuscripts to peer review, and publish these manuscripts in academic journals and presses, focus either on the seventeenth century or on the years preceding Indonesia's independence. Principal topics for seventeenth-century Aceh include pepper, sultans, consolidation and expansion of the sultanate, Aceh's queens, international trade, embassies to Europe and to the Ottomans, wars against the Portuguese, and Aceh's administrative system and its great wealth as counted in elephants and horses (Andaya 2004; Kathirithamby-Wells 1998; Kam Hing Lee 1995; Lombard 1967; Marsden 1975; Hoesein Djajadiningrat 1982/1983; Reid 2005). Historians have shown less interest in the eighteenth century. Instead of making the Acehnese the central focus, studies of the Aceh War recount it as a series of Dutch actions (Bakker 1993; Kempees 1905; Taselaar and Van Santen 1993; Van 't Veer 1969; Zentgraaf 1938). A pattern in Aceh's history seems to be frequent, low-level warfare between the many small territories into which Aceh fragmented following the decline of royal power. The Dutch inserted themselves into internal conflict, but transformed warfare and its outcome in Aceh through the scale of their operations.

The subject of war for Indonesia is perhaps most marked in studies of Aceh. Mention has been made of jingoistic works by civilians, such as Vergers's *De oorlog met Atchin* (Vergers 1875). His call to glory has an interesting counterpart in the 'I was there' journal of the French entrepreneur and adventurer Xavier Brau de Saint Pol Lias (Brau de Saint-Pol Lias 1884). Diary extracts of the half year he spent in Aceh (1880-1881) recounted his advice to the Dutch governor, his business relations with Acehnese district power holders, and his journeys scouting for suitable land leases for coffee plantations and gold mining in the Lohong district, all undertaken during a period when Europeans were supposedly cowering behind defensive fortifications in Kotaraja. E.B. Kieseltra, who was in Aceh with the army corps of engineers, gave detailed accounts of the first and second invasions, the composition of units, critical biographies of

<sup>9</sup> See also Hasan Di Tiro 1984, which covered Tengku Hasan Di Tiro's activities from 4-9-1976 to 29-3-1979, and made the argument that '[w]e have no historic, political, cultural, economic or geographic relationship with them [the Javanese]' (Hasan Di Tiro 1984).

<sup>10</sup> See, for example, [www.AcehKita.com](http://www.AcehKita.com) (accessed 7-10-2005), [www.asnlf.net](http://www.asnlf.net) (accessed 2-12-2005), [www.gimonca.com](http://www.gimonca.com) 'Entry Aceh' (accessed 10-2005), [www.kabar-irian.com/pipermail/kabar-indonesia](http://www.kabar-irian.com/pipermail/kabar-indonesia) (accessed 2-12-2005). See also Hasballah Saad 2000.

their commanders, and maps of major military actions (Kielstra 1883). Three decades later, the KNIL was still fighting in Aceh. J.C.J. Kempees – former aide to Commander G.C.E. van Daalen (1863-1930) – narrated his personal experience of the 1904 ‘Gayo expedition’ (Kempees 1905). H.C. Zentgraaf’s *Atjeh* is different from previous accounts by military men, because this civilian journalist interviewed Acehnese as well as Dutch veterans (Zentgraaf 1938). Paul van ‘t Veer gave a detailed account of the wars, set within contexts of Netherlands and Netherlands Indies politics (Van ‘t Veer 1969). In his recent study of the creation of the border between British Malaya and the Netherlands Indies, Eric Tagliacozzo (2005) provided much information about the meticulous mapping of the Sumatran coast, the new lighthouses, the exploratory journeys up rivers to chart the ‘very hilly and almost wholly unknown’ territory, which Veth described Aceh’s interior.<sup>11</sup> Tagliacozzo showed how, at the same time as the sea border was constructed and patrolled, it was evaded, avoided or transgressed by people carrying opium, textiles and firearms, and the living cargoes of prostitutes, slaves and black marketeers. His monograph, while being a larger study of the border through the Straits of Melaka, provides important material for a new history of the Aceh wars.

Few ethnographers have followed the work of Snouck Hurgronje. James Siegel focused on the matrilineal organization of rural villages (Siegel 1969), while John R. Bowen reminded us, in his studies of the Gayo (Bowen 1991, 1993), that Aceh’s population was not homogeneous. The ‘traditional’ Acehnese house style is drawn and discussed by Peter Nas (2003). Historians of Islam, such as Azyumardi Azra, Michael Laffan and Peter Riddell, emphasized the connections forged between Aceh, Arabia and Egypt by itinerant scholars and jobseekers, and the leading role of the Acehnese ulama in translating important commentaries from Arabic and Persian into Malay (Azyumardi Azra 2004; Laffan 2003; Riddell 2001). Their studies are complemented by specialists in literature and language such as G.W.J. Drewes, James Sneddon and James Siegel (Drewes 1979; Siegel 1979; Sneddon 2003). Hoesein Djajadiningrat compiled an Acehnese-Dutch dictionary (Hoesein Djajadiningrat 1934). Denys Lombard reprinted the first Malay-Dutch word list and set of sample conversations, originally compiled in Aceh by Frederik de Houtman and subsequently published in Holland in 1603 (Lombard 1970).<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> A sketch map of Aceh made by KNIL officers around 1876-1877 shows the same want of exact topographical information as P.J. Veth lamented in his 1875 study. See Kees Zandvliet (2002, plate 176). This map shows the course of the Aceh River, the location of rice fields and the headquarters of Panglima Polem. According to the map’s accompanying note, its information was obtained from ‘Acehnese spies and is therefore unreliable’. Kielstra called Aceh an ‘unknown land’ (Kielstra 1883:1, 84).

<sup>12</sup> The value of Frederik de Houtman’s word list and sample dialogues as a window on the Acehnese world was widely acknowledged. The first translation into English appeared in 1614. See Annabel Teh Gallop 1989.

André Wink and Hugh O'Neill have argued that Aceh's royals were influenced by the courts of Mughal India (O'Neill 1994; Wink 1988), but advance little evidence beyond the adoption of the royal title of *Syah*. Mosque architecture, for example, as recorded in nineteenth-century photographs or in sketches and paintings dating from earlier centuries, shows little affinity with Mughal large-scale buildings, domes and colourful tiles.<sup>13</sup> Robert Wessing's consideration of features of the Gunongan, connected to the residence of Aceh's sultans, led him to classify it as either a Hindu cosmic temple or a symbolic mountain (Wessing 1988). Lack of archaeological evidence means that the nearby *kandang* also defies definition, with suggested uses for this structure ranging from a pleasure garden for royal ladies to a burial enclosure for the graves of former sultans (Wessing 1991). Neither of these remains from the early seventeenth-century sultanate appears to reflect Mughal influence. It is in the 'golden letters' of Aceh's sultans that Mughal (and Ottoman) influence is most apparent. Annabel Teh Gallop reproduced the metre-long letter sent in 1615 by Sultan Iskandar Muda to James I of England, in which the text is framed by foliage and flower motifs, and the paper is covered in gold. She also reproduced images of royal seals modelled on those of Mughal emperors (Gallop 1991:35, 53-4).<sup>14</sup>

There is little agreement on how to characterize the system that evolved as sultans lost their monopoly of political and economic power. Aceh is variously termed feudal or oligarchic by historians, while GAM separatists often characterized Aceh as an egalitarian society, especially in contrast to Java. Otto Syamsuddin Ishak described indigenous society as decentralized, cooperating, non-hierarchical and grounded in Islam, in contrast to Javanese society, which he characterized as centralized, hierarchical and with a submissive population, resulting in aggressive government (Otto Syamsuddin Ishak n.y.:6, 8, 9). Anthony Reid argued against the feudalism characterization, because essential features of feudal societies, that is, independent cities licensed and let alone by lords whose wealth was based on the control of agricultural production, did not emerge in Aceh when royal power declined (Reid 2005:149).

<sup>13</sup> There are many examples of photographs and drawings of mosques from across the Indonesian Archipelago to Terengganu (Malaysia) in characteristic Southeast Asian Muslim-style, that is, constructed from wood, square in shape, and with several layers of roofs rising in a pyramid. See, for example, pencil sketches from 1881-1883 of three mosques in Aceh by O.G.H. Heldring in the KITLV Images Archive, 37B-583, 598, 604. See also a photograph of T. Anjong mosque, 1892, sketches from the seventeenth-century mosques in Demak, Jepara, Kudus, Banten and Aceh in H.J. de Graaff 1963, and photographs of Halmahera and Ternate mosques in Boomgaard and Van Dijk (2001:452-3). In 1861, Adriaan Holle had a mosque built in the Southeast Asian style for the population on his Parakan Salak estate in West Java. A photo of this mosque is in Mientje's album; see Van den Berg and Wachlin 2005:166.

<sup>14</sup> See also James Siegel (1979:23-31) on royal seals of Aceh.

Important themes that stand out in works aimed at popular consumption, particularly for political purposes, and that do not extensively document their sources, concern dating the arrival of Islam in Aceh and the position of Hasan Di Tiro. On the former, authors draw attention to a long history of contacts with western Arabia and Muslim peoples. It is claimed that indigenous Islamic communities already existed in the northernmost part of Sumatra in the eighth century CE, that is, from very shortly after the beginning of Islam itself.<sup>15</sup> Scholars who used the evidence of royal tombstones to date the earliest indigenous Muslim communities were condemned as perpetrators of a Western plot to diminish the importance of Islam in Aceh.<sup>16</sup> On Hasan Di Tiro, there is slippage in website material from that of a descendant of a family 'close to the sultan' to that of a 'descendant of sultans', and hence the title 'Prince' Hasan Di Tiro.<sup>17</sup> There follow stories of signs of peculiar greatness and destiny appearing already in his childhood, for example when the young Hasan was delayed on his way to school by Acehnese anxious to greet him and kiss his hand.<sup>18</sup>

In writings of professional and amateur historians alike, the judgement of 'strongly Islamic' is often applied to Aceh and the Acehnese, although the criteria by which this assessment is made are not spelled out. The judgement makes its way into other kinds of texts too. For instance, in introducing the peoples of Sumatra for the Leo Haks and Steven Wachlin study of Indies postcards (Haks and Wachlin 2004), Diana Darling listed 'the Malay, the Batak, the Lampung, the fiercely devout Acehnese and the famously matriarchal Minangkabau' (Haks and Wachlin 2004:29). Aceh figures strongly in the 'Early Modern History' volume of the *Encyclopaedia of Indonesian heritage* (*Indonesian heritage* 1996-1998), and makes brief appearances in the 'Arts' volumes, but oddly for a place labelled 'strongly Islamic', there is not a single mention of the Acehnese in the *Encyclopaedia of Indonesian heritage's* volume on 'Religion', except for a photograph of the Baiturrahman Mosque in Banda Aceh (*Indonesian heritage* 1996-1998).<sup>19</sup> Only Aceh's Gayo have a paragraph and illustration concerning a folk ritual for welcoming the newborn in the 'Religion' volume. In the new three-volume *Southeast Asia: A historical encyclopedia* edited by Ooi Keat Gin, Aceh has two entries: one a brief political

<sup>15</sup> John R. Bowen discusses claims by Hamka, M. Junus Djamil, Ali Hasymy and Teungku Hasan Basri; see Bowen 1991:248-54.

<sup>16</sup> See, for example, Hill 1963 and Ricklefs 2001.

<sup>17</sup> The genealogy of the sultans of Aceh, constructed by Hoesein Djajadiningrat, ends with Sultan Ibrahim Mansur Syah (r. 1836-1870) (Hoesein Djajadiningrat 1982/1983: Appendix 2).

<sup>18</sup> See, for instance, [www.Acehkita.com](http://www.Acehkita.com), [www.Islamic-paths.org](http://www.Islamic-paths.org), [www.asnlf.net](http://www.asnlf.net), [www.groups.yahoo.com/group/keyakinana/message/426](http://www.groups.yahoo.com/group/keyakinana/message/426) and [www.kabar-irian.com/pipermail/kabar-indonesia](http://www.kabar-irian.com/pipermail/kabar-indonesia) (accessed between 8-2005 and 12-2005).

<sup>19</sup> See Vol. 8 of this series.

history, and the other an outline of the Aceh War (Ooi Keat Gin 2004:118-22, 122-3).

Aceh is little evident in publications on Indonesian arts. There is no example of Acehnese arts in Claire Holt's pioneering *Art in Indonesia* (Holt 1967). While Acehnese history is discussed in the written text accompanying Helen Ibbitson Jessup's *Court arts of Indonesia*, there is only one visual entry, that is, a small photograph of the Gunongan (Jessup 1990:123, plate 88). The decline of royal power, and the destruction caused by fires and centuries of warfare and plunder described in texts such as the *Hikajat Potjut Muhamat* (Drewes 1979) and in the *Bustan al-Salatin* (Hoesein Djajadiningrat 1982/1983:58) account, in part, for this absence of material objects. Further, the lack of cordial relations between Aceh's sultans and the House of Orange-Nassau in the nineteenth century, together with the abolition of Aceh's sultanate by the Dutch in 1874, means that there is barely a representation from Aceh among treasures owned by the Dutch royal family. In Rita Wassing-Visser's (1995) *Royal gifts from Indonesia*, there are only three artefacts representing Aceh amongst the shimmering pages of bejewelled *keris*, sumptuous textiles and Buddhist statues. Two are of Acehnese manufacture, namely, a ribbed betel box worked in gold (176) and an inscribed dagger with sheath (227). The third artefact – a black square of cloth with Qur'anic verses woven into it (104) – is not the product of Aceh weavers, but cut from cloth covering the Kaabah in Mecca and subsequently sold there in pieces as souvenirs to pilgrims. These objects representing Aceh were given to Queen Wilhelmina by administrative heads of Pidie and by Teungku Haji Ismak from Sigli.

Two illustrations from *Nineteenth century prints and illustrated books of Indonesia* represent Aceh (Bastin and Brommer 1979:245 [plate 105], 259 [plate 259]). One is a drawing of a haji in white costume and turban, and the other is an imagined staging of a battle in the Aceh War by L. van Leer – an artist who never left Haarlem.<sup>20</sup> Again, war predominates in images of Aceh in Zandvliet's (2002) *The Dutch encounter with Asia, 1600-1950*. Plates include an early map [#176], captured militia banners [#169, #177], an Acehnese shield [#175], the important naval base at Sabang harbour [#199, #200] and portraits of two generals who commanded KNIL forces in Aceh [#94, #178]. Peter Boomgaard made a selection of 500 photographs from the Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen's vast collection of 150,000 photographs for his *Indië boek* (Boomgaard and Van Dijk 2001:255). Indonesia's past is represented by sections (Sumatra, Java, and so on) divided under headings such as 'Nature',

<sup>20</sup> This picture by L. van Leer illustrates Vergers's *De oorlog met Atchin*. In the centre of another picture by Van Leer, between pages 144-5, a Dutch soldier clubs a prostrate Acehnese. Other Acehnese fighters, dressed in white turbans and clothing, flee from KNIL soldiers, who are armed with bayonets and swords, and wear military caps with neck protectors. Information on Van Leer is from Haks and Maris 1995:167.

'Elite Politics', 'Transport', 'Town', 'Primary Industry' and 'Education'. He selected, for Aceh, photographs of sultans' tombs, the Baiturrahman Mosque, General J.B. van Heutsz, KNIL and Acehnese administrators, but he did not have Aceh represented in the 'Culture and Nature' sections.

Boomgaard included one very rare photograph of an elephant carrying military supplies.<sup>21</sup> In the 1880s, KNIL planners experimented with elephants for moving supplies in Aceh. Buffalo carts were too slow and could only be used on flat ground, while the railway lines built from 1874 connected forts and observation posts in a defensive ring around the capital without reaching into the hinterland or mountains. Due to the earlier collapse of the local industry in capturing and training elephants,<sup>22</sup> KNIL planners turned to Javanese convict labour as the solution to moving supplies for troops and building materials for Aceh's new infrastructure of roads and railways. Twenty-five thousand Javanese served penal sentences in Aceh under conditions so harsh that the death toll of the war years weighed the heaviest on them (Van 't Veer, 1969:311).

The Eurasian photographer Jean Demmeni (1866-1939) was the son of a Frenchman who had risen to the rank of major-general in Aceh. The Indies-born son also joined the army, and, in the course of his military duties and later career in the colonial Topographical Service, crisscrossed the archipelago, amassing an important photographic record. Travelling through Sumatra, Demmeni photographed people in festive dress from Lampung, irrigated rice fields in the Minangkabau valleys, mosques and *madrasa* (Islamic schools) in Padang, dugout canoes in Mentawai, and hillsides stripped bare of jungle cover for commercial plantations along the east coast. However, Demmeni's photographs from Aceh, chosen by Leo Haks and Paul Zach for inclusion in their homage to the photographer, feature mainly military themes – a KNIL unit, a military field hospital, supply wagons drawn by horses and coolies working as porters (Demmeni 1987:88-91). Similarly, a military theme is the choice of J.R. Diessen and R.P.G.A Voskuil in their collection of aerial photographs of the Indies (Diessen and Voskuil 1993). Instead of evidence of urban and rural Acehnese life, there are photographs of military bases, and the allied modern infrastructure of the harbour, railway lines, bridges and supply sheds.

Haks and Wachlin (2004) conceived of assembling a pictorial heritage for today's citizens of Indonesia in *Indonesia: 500 early postcards*. Between 1893

<sup>21</sup> There is a photograph [18017] of two elephants and their driver in the Aceh collection of the KITLV Images Archive. It was taken around 1924.

<sup>22</sup> The industry of capturing and training elephants, and of breeding horses, depended on wealthy patrons; see Boomgaard and Henley 2004. This industry appears to have collapsed in later seventeenth-century Aceh with the decline in royal wealth and power, as did the export trade in these animals. Cattle were not available in sufficient numbers as draught animals in the nineteenth century, because of the decline in the cattle-breeding industry due to warfare and cattle disease (Kielstra 1883:10).

and the 1930s, thousands of photographs were made for picture postcards of Indonesia's towns, landscapes, and ancient and modern architecture, as well as studio portraits of 'Indies' types. These postcards were sent to Holland where they created visual impressions of far-off lands for their recipients and became collectors' items. Aceh is represented in the Sumatra section of this collection by a railway line and five postcards from Sabang – the Dutch suburb that grew up on Weh Island around its strategic harbour, naval base, coaling station, dry dock and lighthouses.<sup>23</sup> The postcards depict street scenes, ships in harbour and the town park.

Rob Nieuwenhuys devoted the fourth volume of his *tempo doeloe* series to Indonesians photographed by Europeans (Nieuwenhuys 1998). His Aceh photographs, chosen mainly from the KITLV archive, are dark; they include convict labourers, grave markers for members of KNIL fallen in battle, mass graves for nameless Acehnese, prisoners of war, and figures of controversy in the conflict, such as Teuku Umar and Cut Nyak Dien.

Books by Holly Smith (1997) and Barbara Leigh (1989) present Aceh's material culture. Coloured plates of ceremonial 'traditional' dress in Smith's book show how recent 'tradition' is; for the *jilbab*, fitted blouses and trousers of today are not to be seen in photographs of women that date from the 1880s. Smith noted weaving patterns that are symmetrical, abstract, geometric and 'nomadic', and the strong red, yellow, purple and black colours of the silks; she also drew attention to decorative elements, such as horns, fishtails, leaves, petals and stars, rows of beadwork, gold and silver embroidery, and Arabic letters woven into textiles and incised on dagger handles. Smith also included photographs of gold, silver and bronze receptacles, jewellery and weapons, and photographs of musical instruments and dance. For a region that had experienced the Aceh wars, Japanese invasion, the Indonesian revolution, Darul Islam, GAM and military occupation, Smith's conclusion, as follows, may be surprising:

Today [meaning before the book's 1997 publication date, JGT], little in Aceh has changed. [...] Along the coastal road are common scenes of Aceh, snapshots of a simple village life that has existed in serenity, and without interruption from time immemorial. (Smith 1997:61-2.)

Leigh's analysis documented differences between coastal and highland arts, and between crafts dominated by men and those that are the speciality of women. She recorded the disappearance of traditional modes of production,

<sup>23</sup> J.B. van Heutsz wanted to turn Sabang into a free port and transit centre to rival Penang. Sabang achieved free port status in 1909. It was the only port in the Dutch colony that was not run by the colonial government (Zandvliet 2002:380).

for example, the replacement of hand embroidery by machine-sewing. Leigh approached each art and craft form by describing how a named individual made the object from start to finish. This approach allows her to establish an ongoing dialogue between the artisan and outside influences. Even the artisan producing 'traditional' arts made changes when copying from mother or father. Leigh saw more Islamic influences in designs in the second half of the twentieth century, such as an increased use of Arabic calligraphy as a decorative element.

Robyn Maxwell's comprehensive survey of Southeast Asian textiles included information on production techniques for Acehese textiles, illustrated by the coloured plates of men's and women's shoulder cloths (Maxwell 2003). She identified models for Acehese forms and motifs in designs on Persian prayer mats and Indian cloths, and in Turkish metallic thread embroidery. The Leigh, Smith and Maxwell studies contrast strikingly with the general absence of Aceh in most art and photograph books on Indonesia, which represent Java, Bali, West Sumatra and other regions with photographs of domestic and palace architecture, textiles woven, batiked and embroidered, elaborate work in gold and silver, and paintings of idyllic villages with the family buffalo, happy workers in the rice field and appealing portraits of mothers and children. There are also images of bare-breasted women and the slim, naked bodies of young boys.

This brief survey of histories, encyclopaedias, websites and art books yields the conclusion that Aceh is rarely shown in dimensions other than war. Somehow, the history of war casts a shadow over how Aceh was and continues to be represented within Indonesia. It seems as if Aceh's function is to be a grim reminder of a colonial past. Indeed, from the time of its incorporation into the Netherlands East Indies, Aceh seems to warrant a photographic record. Brau de Saint Pol Lias, for instance, told us that he learnt how to make photographs in Aceh. He recorded the trials of carrying his photographic and developing equipment with him on his journeys into the Aceh countryside, or rather, the trials of his Javanese man servants who did the actual carrying, and said that the illustrations in his book, *Chez les Atchés*, were paintings he made from the black-and-white photographs that he took there (Brau de Saint-Pol Lias 1884:28). Commercial studio owners based in Java's cities sent photographers to Aceh to record the progress of KNIL forces, while KNIL itself appointed officers as official photographers. Van Daalen instructed a military doctor, H.M. Neeb, to photograph the six Gayo and three Alas villages that were targets of his 1904 raids, providing a precise record of broken village defences and the broken bodies of their inhabitants.

The prominence of photographers in the Aceh wars has continued to attract notice. The Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam drew attention to photography in its 2005 exhibit in the Indies/Indonesia section, which contained a life-sized

model of a blonde photographer, with a tripod and large camera, recording an Indonesian landscape of tropical trees and animals. Eros Djarot, director of the 1988 motion picture *Tjoet Nja' Dhién* filmed a European photographer standing on a hill, again with a tripod and large camera, and with his back to the viewer, in a scene set in 1905.

Aceh was the most photographed of the colonial wars fought in the last 75 years of Dutch rule. Photography did not exist when the Diponegoro War was fought in Java (1825-1830). The daguerreotype had just been invented in 1839, when the Padri War was over. Official photographers accompanied colonial armies to Bali and Lombok. The KITLV Images Archive includes photographs of the *puputan* of 20 September 1906 [10084, 1014]. Dutch authors described *puputan* as '*zelfmoord*' (suicide), which is the same term they used to describe Acehnese and Gayo deaths in battle. And yet, the representation of Balinese in art books and museum collections does not focus on warfare. Instead, what is featured is the beauty of Balinese people and objects. Within a few years of invasion and conquest, Bali and Bali-in-Lombok are represented by photographs of dancers and musicians in rich costumes and elaborate headdresses, jewelled daggers, temples, pavilions and priests making offerings, as well as women with elaborate baskets of fruits and flowers, lots of gold, wealth, and exotic loveliness. Landscape painting features peaceful scenes of Balinese villages and their languorous inhabitants, moonlight over the water, and young men leading their buffaloes home (Spruit 1996).

Published collections of paintings and photographs are the product of their authors' choices. The number of photographs in a book is determined by printing costs. There are hundreds of thousands of photographs on Indonesian subjects, but an author can, at most, select only a few. Selection is based on any number of factors, for example, the aesthetic appeal of a particular image, the wish to make a 'representative' selection, or the weight of knowledge or unconscious influence of received ideas that shape conceptions of places. Here, I think, is the reason why Aceh is so little represented in art books. It is not just that sultans lost the wealth to patronize the arts and finance monumental buildings; Smith and Leigh have shown us there are treasures from Aceh that could be included in art histories alongside those from Java and Bali (Leigh 1989; Smith 1997). Aceh is elusive because it is discussed in histories mainly as a place of war and conflict, so photographs of Aceh's flora and fauna, its landscapes of natural beauty, and so on are not chosen for publication. When Aceh is represented, knowledge of past conflict produces other choices, for example, images of soldiers, forts and the massed dead.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>24</sup> A recent example is James Siegel's analysis of photographs from the Aceh wars of soldiers, forts, weapons, prisoners of war and cemeteries, and of Acehnese men, women and children killed in their villages (Siegel 2005). The theme of war is also dominant in the Aceh photographs in Reed 1991.

*Fifty-six images of Aceh and a commentary*

I will now discuss 56 photographs from the KITLV Aceh collection for closer scrutiny, beginning, as the photographs themselves do, with military topics. There are also examples of what European photographers chose to photograph when they looked at urban and rural landscapes around them. I have selected some photographs that describe stages in introducing Acehnese to the colonial state through schools and Western medicine. Some photographs record the adoption of Western habits by prominent Acehnese, such as commissioning photographs of their own families. Other photographs suggest comparison of the colonial culture planted in Aceh with that of Java. These images are considered in dialogue with the histories discussed above.

Two of the earliest photographs in the KITLV Images Archive are of Sultan Mahmud Syah's official residence [19261, 19242]. These photographs make clear why the Dutch could not find the royal residence on first landing. Not only did dense foliage screen it from view (Kielstra 1883:262), its poor condition, the run-down state of many of the buildings, the sultan's own quarters of wood and thatch, and the small number of people in the compound did not match Dutch preconceived ideas of Aceh's royalty and its powers. The royal compound's swamps, wasteland and neglected graves<sup>25</sup> are a striking contrast with European and Acehnese descriptions of royal grandeur in the seventeenth century. Sultan Iskandar Thani (r. 1637-1641), for instance, set out an inventory of his wealth in a lavishly embellished letter to Stadhouder Frederik Hendrik that listed the contents of his treasury and enumerated his goldmines, elephants, horses, artisans and servants (Gallop 1998:9).

How is the drastic decline in royal wealth explained? Kam Hing Lee dated Aceh's decline to the reign of Sultan Iskandar Muda (1607-1636), who is more usually described as inaugurating Aceh's 'golden age' (Kam Hing Lee 1995:15). Kam Hing Lee cited in evidence Iskandar's wars of expansion as drains on Aceh's economy, particularly the cost of outfitting thousands of fighting men for his attack on the Portuguese in 1629 and the four-month siege of Melaka, and the associated expenses of acquiring ships, supplies and weapons. We could also include the loss of work hours in Aceh itself.

Hoesein Djajadiningrat cited the major fire that destroyed the royal compound during the reign of Sultana Nur al-'Alam Naqiyat al-Din (r. 1675-1678) as a contributing factor in the loss of royal wealth and power (Hoesein Djajadiningrat 1982/1983:57-8).<sup>26</sup> However, the chief reason Hoesein Djajadiningrat gave for Aceh's decline was the half-century of female rule that

<sup>25</sup> Kielstra 1883 includes a map of the compound, drawn in January 1874.

<sup>26</sup> In the *Hikajat Potjut Muhamat*, which described the battles arising from two men claiming to be Aceh's sultan in the years 1726-1735, there are lengthy descriptions of soldiers plundering the palace and marketplace. The sultan refused to aid the Indian ('Kling') merchants, who turned to him for help.

began in 1641. Female rulers, he argued, were restricted to the royal harem; they were obliged to create the position of head of federations of rice- and pepper-producing villages and to appoint local (male) power holders as federation heads, to allow succession to remain with their families. Royal Muslim culture obliged female rulers to handle relations with leading merchants and heads of the federations indirectly through court eunuchs. Opposed by the religious establishment and male members of the royal family alike, and obstructed by district chiefs, female rulers were powerless to prevent encroachment on royal prerogatives. Every man who could seize control of locally-produced pepper became a quasi-independent ruler of his home territory. Known as *ulèëbalang*, they deprived successive Aceh monarchs of income from export taxes by shipping their pepper out of ports under their own control. The most powerful *ulèëbalang* developed into kingmakers; they decided who, from the many claimants in the royal family, should occupy Aceh's throne. Whenever sultans tried to reassert royal monopoly in the eighteenth century, the kingmakers deposed them and appointed weaker men in their stead.<sup>27</sup>

Leonard Andaya argued, by contrast, that the first of Aceh's female rulers, Sultana Safiyyat al-Din Taj-al-'Alam (r. 1641-1675) was respected and secure in her authority (Andaya 2004). Sher Banu Latief Khan also investigated female rule in 'The jewel affair: The sultana, her *orang kaya* and the Dutch foreign envoys' (Chapter VII of this volume). She documented, from contemporary Acehnese and European sources, the lavish spending on precious stones by Sultans Iskandar Muda and Iskandar Thani, which depleted Aceh's treasury. She argued that under Safiyyat al-Din's rule, Aceh's political life resumed its 'normal' pattern whereby the monarch ruled by consent and manoeuvred amongst powerful men. From this perspective, concentration of power in the monarchy under Iskandar Muda and Iskandar Thani was an aberration in Aceh's history.

By the nineteenth century, Aceh supplied half the world's pepper (Reid 2005:338), but pepper profits could not finance or create a united Acehnese opposition to Dutch invasion forces. Veth's (1875) map shows why. Power was, by then, fractured among over a hundred little fiefdoms. All contenders for power, *ulèëbalang* and ulama alike, maintained their own fighting bands. Raids launched on neighbouring fiefs by private militias were regular features of Acehnese life. The revenues earned in the world's pepper markets were spread among many fief-holders and spent on conspicuous consumption, such as silk clothing, gold jewellery and slaves, and on maintaining private militias, while every village barricaded itself against attack behind earthen walls and fences densely planted with bamboo. Consequently, when

<sup>27</sup> An appendix to Lee Kam Hing's *Sultanate of Aceh* gives the reign dates for Aceh's sultans. Some occupied the throne for only a few days before being deposed or assassinated.

the Dutch invaded Aceh, they became caught up in local wars, and had to conduct campaigns in a landscape where villages were already fortified and entry into them could only be gained through combat (Kielstra 1883:9). However, Dutch forces also operated in an environment of shifting allegiances, where Acehnese militias fought alongside the Dutch whenever alliance offered an opportunity for local gain, and fought against the Dutch when this was the best way to preserve their local authority. Photograph 11783, taken around 1894 and captioned 'KNIL officers from the ship *Benkoelen* with Acehnese soldiers near Lhokseumawe', records an instance of military alliance.

Sultan Mahmud Syah (r. 1870-1874) died of cholera during the second invasion. Aceh's kingmakers chose as his successor a 13-year-old boy who took the reign and was named Sultan Muhammad Daud. The Dutch did not acknowledge him and always referred to Muhammad Daud as 'the pretender', because Mahmud Syah had rejected 'offers' to negotiate his entry into the Netherlands East Indies and thereby secure a place for Aceh's sultans within the colony as subsidized, vassal kings. Consequently, Aceh's status within the Netherlands Indies was that of conquered, directly-ruled territory, and sultans were replaced by colonial governors.

The Dutch moved quickly to teach the Acehnese that they were the new rulers by erecting the governor's residence on the very site of Mahmud Syah's demolished private quarters within the royal compound. Photographs 2987 and 2988 show the governor's residence in the capital. These photographs date from 1877, just three years after the abolition of Aceh's monarchy. They illustrate how quickly the Dutch had brought in construction materials and master builders, and the importance of the symbolic statement in establishing colonial rule. The photographs also suggest a wish to give a local, 'oriental' character to the residence in the fretwork of the verandah, rather than the Grecian-style pillared verandah of official residences in Java. The photographer ensured that other symbols of the new power were recorded. The governor's horses and carriage – both shipped into Koetaradja – are drawn up in front of the residence in photograph 2988. Visible in both photographs is the rotunda erected in the former palace grounds to accommodate musicians who performed at official festivities that now marked a colonial calendar.

Colonial power everywhere relied on alliances between the foreign power and local elites. Photograph 3508, taken in 1877, is of Acehnese district heads who had switched allegiance and been confirmed in office by the new administration. To mark their status, the most senior Acehnese and a Dutch official sit on chairs that have been brought outdoors to the photograph site, with lesser men standing behind them. The selection of an outdoors site for the photograph, with no identifying marks of location in the background, suggests an administration not yet rooted in Aceh. An interesting feature of this photograph is that we do not know the name of the Dutch official, but the

name of the senior Acehese dignitary is recorded. The photograph's caption reads: 'A controleur in Kroeëng Raba on the northwest coast of Aceh with several Acehese and (on the right) Teukoe Lampasei, the *ulèëbalang* of Peuet Moekim'. Also noteworthy is the fact that the Dutch did not bring the *payung* (parasol) with them from Java. This Javanese status marker, which had been adopted as an emblem of colonial authority, and which is such a prominent feature in photographs of Dutch and Javanese colonial officials on Java, is absent from all the Aceh photographs, both in the early days of Dutch rule and in subsequent decades, as, for example, in photograph 5951, taken in May 1910.<sup>28</sup>

Occupation introduced Indonesians from other areas of the colony into Aceh. Most of the troops who served in Aceh were Indonesians from Java, Madura, Ambon and Menado, and there was, in the second invasion force, a troop of 180 West African riflemen<sup>29</sup> called '*blanda item*' ('black Dutch') by the Acehese (Van 't Veer 1969:118). The proportion of soldiers recruited from Europe was the highest in the first years of engagement. In 1873, Europeans totalled 1,000 of the 3,000 soldiers; in 1910, European soldiers still numbered 1,000, but Indonesian troops totalled 5,000 (Van 't Veer 1969:234). The Acehese experience of resisting the Dutch therefore entailed fighting men from other parts of the Indonesian Archipelago.

The first invasion force was also accompanied by 220 Javanese and Ambonese women, and by 300 officers' servants, who were Indonesian men whose ethnic origins were not specified (Van 't Veer 1969:51). Two hundred and forty-three women accompanied the second invading force (Van 't Veer 1969:95). Women were cooks and servants, as well as wives and partners to officers and men. The caption to photograph 19278 describes its subject as KNIL artillery specialists near the main entrance to the sultan's residence in 1874, but among the soldiers is one of these Javanese women, identifiable by her *kebaya* and batiked kain. Such photographs document the entry of women from Java into Aceh's history, and compel consideration of gender in the history of mobile labour within the archipelago. Women, as well as men, found an expanded workspace in the colonial state. The photographs hint at conditions of barracks' life for the few women imported to provide domestic services for the troops.

<sup>28</sup> It may be noted that the Governor General who banned Dutch officials from using the *payung* was J.B. van Heutsz – former military and civilian governor of Aceh.

<sup>29</sup> Around 3,000 West Africans served as KNIL auxiliaries during the Aceh wars. They were recruited in the Dutch Elmina base (in today's Ghana), given Dutch names and signed six- or twelve-year contracts with KNIL. The Dutch artist Isaac Israëls painted two West African fusiliers, Kees Pop and Jan Kooij, in 1882, following completion of their military service in Aceh, for which both were decorated. The portraits are reproduced in Zandvliet 2002 (plates 207a and 207b).

The photographs also supply evidence for the proposition that invading armies are agents of cultural transmission. Photograph 12000, dated c. 1900, is captioned 'Batiked *kain* from Aceh showing Javanese influence'. Colonial institutions and career ladders that moved Indonesians around the archipelago heightened awareness of the material culture of other ethnic groups. Textiles such as the one photographed, introduced motifs and patterns typical of Java's Hindu-Buddhist heritage to the Acehnese, along with Javanese techniques of decorating cloth. Photographs 11776 (c. 1894) and 27236 (c. 1910) also provide evidence for KNIL as an agent of transmission of colonial cultures. The caption under the first reads 'Gamelan in the fort at Meulaboh attended by Dutch military' (Illustration 19). It shows a male dancer, performing in East Javanese style,<sup>30</sup> and supported by a band of musicians. The photograph also illustrates that attention was paid to amenities for the armed forces, providing them, in this case, with a performance that was probably familiar to the troops from Java. A close look at the photograph shows Javanese women among the crowd of onlookers. The second photograph, taken around 1910, is of a KNIL music corps (Illustration 20). Here, we see the military brass band, assembled from European and Indonesian soldiers to perform at ceremonies celebrating the might of the colony. Like the gamelan musicians, members of KNIL's brass band introduced into Aceh a new cluster of instruments and new musical sounds, in this case from the Western repertoire.

The colonial army also introduced Javanese convict labourers into Aceh. One thousand accompanied the first force, and 3,280 the second (Van 't Veer 1969:51, 95). Javanese men sentenced to terms of imprisonment longer than twelve months were routinely shipped to Aceh, where they were employed as porters and construction workers. The man squatting at the centre of a jungle bivouac [18031], for example, was a carrier of supplies for troops that patrolled Aceh's mountains. Dutch engineers and Javanese labourers created the first modern infrastructure of Aceh. The second invasion force of 1874 brought narrow gauge rails, 16 train wagons, a complete steam-powered canteen to feed troops, modern water pumps, two iron bridges, a laboratory for testing water and a smith's forge to Aceh (Van 't Veer 1969:93). In order to maintain a toehold in Aceh and to defend themselves from Acehnese attacks, KNIL used convict labour to construct a ring of fortresses in a semi-circle around the capital, of which coast and war ships formed the defensive line of the other half circle. Forts were constructed at intervals of several kilometres and connected by rail. Photograph 19236, captioned 'Bridging the Aceh River', was taken around 1874, and photographs 27493 (1895) and 43052 (c. 1905) of railway lines and trains tell this military history, but they also tell the history of Javanese labourers in Aceh. The photographers did not include, in these

<sup>30</sup> I am indebted to Dr Bambang Purwanto for identifying the style of this dance performance.



Figure 19. Gamelan and dancer perform at the Meulaboh Fort before KNIL soldiers and Javanese wives, c. 1894 (KITLV 11776)

photographs, a recording of the triumph of the modern transport systems, and the men who actually built them. However, the rail system and bridges photographed represent an enormous input of labour. Javanese men, using shovels, dug the deep trenches and moved the earth in baskets; they laid and continuously repaired the rail tracks. They were easy targets for attack by Acehese militias. Sabotage and nature frequently destroyed their work. Construction projects must have created opportunities for women to earn cash from making meals, snacks and drinks for the workers.

Convict workers are either absent from most photographs recording their labour, or are nameless individuals working on roads, railways and docks, and at electrical installations and telegraph offices. Photograph 18021 is unusual in that its caption names the convict men: 'Forced labourers Kantor, Reban and Wongsoetiko as porters for the KNIL on the Gayo highway in Aceh.' The photograph was probably taken by KNIL officer D.P. Ravelli, around 1924. He made a point of noting the names of the Indonesians he photographed, regardless of whether they were his personal household staff or men on work details. By the 1920s, conditions for the Javanese convicts were improving in terms of their diet and the treatment they received. The



Figure 20. The KNIL music corps demonstrates the multi-racial composition of the colonial army, as well as its introduction of new musical instruments and repertoire into Aceh, c. 1910 (KITLV 27236)

photograph documents that by 1924, clothing rations for convicts included footwear.

In the later stages of military operations in Aceh, small KNIL patrols, composed of around 15 Indonesian troops, one European officer, and two or three Javanese convict labourers, were formed to locate militias in their mountain hideouts. Patrols specialized in tracking in jungle terrain and surprise attacks. While some patrols employed Acehnese as guides and informants, most patrols had a core of KNIL regulars who spoke Acehnese, and who were familiar with Acehnese customs and the calendar of rituals that brought militia men out of their forest camps to visit relatives in their home villages. Ordinarily, guerrilla-style tactics precede conventional warfare and military success requires pre-eminence on the battlefield. The Aceh wars present a case of the opposite: the KNIL began with the strategies and tactics of conventional warfare, and then switched to guerrilla warfare in order to subdue Acehnese resistance.

Many questions remain unexamined for this episode in Indonesian histories of warfare. Which men were attracted to join guerrilla bands? I would suggest that they were not recruited from peasants, but were landless men,

who were similar to that detached group on Java that Jan Breman and Daniel E. Valentine described as the labour pool for plantation coolies, and who were available because they were landless (Breman and Valentine 1992). Recruiters found them at Java's ferry crossings, in markets and on the road – anywhere but in the rice fields. Snouck Hurgronje spoke of recruits in Aceh as vagrants (Snouck Hurgronje 1906:176). Siegel said that matrilineal inheritance and matrilocal existence gave Acehese men nothing to do and no stake at home, so they became absorbed into *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools) and the roaming life of the seeker after religious knowledge (Siegel 1969). There are hints in the literature of 'rampok parties', of militias pillaging, of revenge attacks, of betrayals, and of fights over wives and house property. Indigenous beliefs in daggers with magical powers, amulets and the invulnerability of holy men, combined with teachings in texts such as the *Hikajat prang Kompeuni* and the *Hikayat prang sabi*, on the duty of Muslims to kill non-Muslims, probably encouraged some recruits.<sup>31</sup> In local causes and conditions lie explanations on why a man such as Teuku Umar gave up the European comforts of his new house, his newspapers in Dutch and English, and his enjoyment of local girls to endure the hard life of the guerrilla fighter opposing the Dutch for a lengthy period.

Photographs from the KITLV collection suggest additional lines of inquiry. Photograph 4917, taken in 1892, for example, shows a control post in the defensive line that guarded Koetaradja at which Acehese with horse-drawn carts are waiting for clearance to continue their journey. Most people, in Aceh as everywhere, do not join armies or heed the call to war despite the rhetoric of unity of purpose and action. Most Acehese experienced the Aceh wars as civilians caught between a colonial government based in the capital and Acehese militias based in the hills. They paid taxes to the Dutch and taxes to the militias. The new roads and bridges that the Javanese labourers built sped up the movement of KNIL patrols; they were also used by the Acehese to move their goods to markets quickly and conveniently.

The Gayo highway that was completed in 1913 opened the highlands to Minangkabau and European entrepreneurs, who leased land for sisal, hemp and coffee plantations, and imported Javanese labourers to work them. Gayo farmers responded to the new opportunities brought by this road, which connected them to coastal markets and ports, by growing dammar and sugar commercially. Such farmers did not require large amounts of capital; the sugar

<sup>31</sup> In Chapter IX in this volume, 'Exploring Acehese understandings of jihad; A study of *Hikayat prang sabi*', Amirul Hadi argues that the *Hikayat prang sabi* explicated Acehese cultural conceptions of war and peace. Composed during the Aceh wars, the *Hikayat* exists in many written versions. The common assertion is that fighting the Dutch was a defensive war, as the Dutch were intent on destroying Islam, Acehese culture, people and property, and that death in battle ensured martyrdom status.

mill of photograph 18394, taken in 1925, shows use of local materials and engineering in its construction. Another example of local engagement in the colonial economy may be seen in a photograph of a tailor shop. The sewing machine travelled with the Dutch to Aceh. It could be operated by hand or by foot pedal. In the colonial household, it was operated by seamstresses, but in shops in the commercial districts of new towns, it was operated by men, as photograph 40417, taken in 1931, demonstrates.

The itinerant European who photographed Acehnese as nameless 'types' in nameless villages, as in photograph 3611, taken around 1900, was unable to convey the dramatic social changes that colonial rule brought to the lives of his subjects or any clues as to their responses. In comparing this photograph with photographs of villagers from Java from the same time period, I am struck by the absence of mothers with children, by the minimal clothing of the men, which is typical of all the Aceh photos, and by the men's stance. Compared to the neat and orderly appearance Javanese assumed for photographic occasions, the Acehnese are more casual, apparently less concerned about personal appearance. The shoulder cloth and uncovered head of the elderly lady in the right-hand corner mark the degree of change in female costume over the past century.

Other variants of 'ethnographic' photographs are those that display the indigenous in 'traditional' regional or festive costume. Photograph 4902 of a bridal couple in ceremonial dress was taken in 1880, possibly for the postcard trade. It seems likely that the photographer chose the pose for the young couple. In asking the woman to rest her hand on the man's shoulder, the photographer gave visual clues to a European viewer that these people in these costumes were, in fact, celebrating their wedding day. However, even photographs staged with the European viewer in mind do not necessarily only record compliant or passive subjects. Photograph 3868 (taken c. 1935) has standard features of the 'ethnographic type' in its portrait of a bride in elaborate Gayo costume and jewellery, but it also suggests that the subjects of the photograph wished to be seen, for the attendant edges out from behind the bride so that her face, too, is recorded.

Roving photographers and artists were more likely to name places, such as mountains and beauty spots, than people. An example is watercolour 37B-549, titled 'Gle Raja Mountain', painted between 1881 and 1883 by the Dutch artist O.G.H. Heldring. He made many pencil sketches and watercolours depicting the beauties of the Aceh countryside. The KITLV collection also contains numerous sketches Heldring made of sights within and around the former residence of Sultan Mahmud Syah, such as the Gunongan. As one of the few heritage sites surviving from the seventeenth century, it was the subject of many paintings and photographs. Examples include the watercolour Heldring painted between 1875 and 1876 [37-C-185], and a

photograph of it taken around 1874 [19273]. They show that the Gunongan was in poor repair in the late nineteenth century. KNIL soldiers pose as victors on the Gunongan, in both Heldring's painting and the 1874 photograph. Such posing suggests that one function of heritage sites was to demonstrate colonial possession. Later, the Dutch tidied the Gunongan up, whitewashed it, planted a neat lawn around it, and made it a tourist site [25572, c. 1930].

Tombs of Aceh's royals, and those of revered religious teachers, were also in poor condition by the third decade of the nineteenth century, when they became subjects of colonial photographs. Back in the seventeenth century, Sultana Safiyyat al-Din Taj al-'Alam had covered the grave of her father, Sultan Iskandar Muda, in gold and precious stones, and paid 15 women to keep daily attendance by it, praying and burning incense (Andaya 2004). Iskandar Thani (Safiyyat al-Din's husband and the sultan who preceded her as Aceh's ruler) spoke, in his letter to Stadhouder Frederik Hendrik,<sup>32</sup> of the golden tomb already prepared for him. By the late nineteenth century, the gold and jewels were long gone. Photograph 4929 shows the condition of royal tombs in 1892. Their dilapidated state did not prevent their being a site of veneration for the Acehnese. On the contrary, the signs of age perhaps contribute to the sense of spiritual power connected to burial grounds.

Mosques were a popular choice for European photographers of Aceh. A review of photographs under keywords such as 'West Sumatra' and 'Lombok' reveals a far lower percentage. How should this interest be explained? Perhaps the answer lies in the relative paucity of antiquities in Aceh compared to other regions of Indonesia. There seemed little else to photograph. The photographic record makes an important contribution to preserving Aceh's past and Indonesia's Muslim culture, now that Middle Eastern and South Asian Islamic architectural styles are favoured over indigenous styles in the design of mosques.

Aceh's principal mosque was destroyed by fire during Dutch attempts to win control of Sultan Mahmud Syah's compound in 1874. KNIL artillerymen had been unable to place cannons to breach the palace walls, as their view was obscured by thick trees planted along its perimeter. So they first launched attacks on the earthworks surrounding the mosque that were about 300 m in front of the royal compound.<sup>33</sup> Once in control of the capital, the colonial government set aside funds for rebuilding the mosque and hired an Italian architect to design it. It was to be a mosque befitting a seat of government [3997].<sup>34</sup> The Dutch did not replicate the Southeast Asian model, but introduced

<sup>32</sup> See also Gallop (1998).

<sup>33</sup> Kielstra (1883:271, 293) detailed the battle plans and provided maps of stages in the fighting.

<sup>34</sup> O.G.H. Heldring made pencil sketches and watercolours of the 'Missigit Raija' between 1881 and 1883. Examples are sketch 37-B-556 and watercolour 36 D- 451. On the history of the Baiturrahman Mosque, see Van Dijk 2006.

to the archipelago what they considered to be the 'correct' form of Islamic mosque design, that is, with dome, arches and a marble, pillared interior [4405]. Construction of the Baiturrahman started in 1879, just five years after the seizure of the capital. It was officially opened on 27 December 1881. Three other domes were added during renovation and extension in 1936.

The oldest photograph of the mosque in the KITLV collection [3392] was probably taken in 1882. The Western clock over the main entrance can be clearly seen in this photograph. The prominence of the clock suggests that Western time mechanisms can be used as a way of reckoning Islamic time. According to some sources, the strangeness of the building made the Acehnese reluctant to use it initially. Perhaps, its location next to the major KNIL military base was more of a drawback. Photograph 4913, taken in 1892, shows that at least by then, Acehnese commercial life was bustling in the mosque's vicinity.

The Baiturrahman Mosque has become the icon of Aceh. It was one of the first buildings to be repaired following the tsunami of December 2004. Yet, it is quintessentially a colonial building and an innovation. The archive contains many photographs of mosques in Aceh built of local materials and according to local designs. Photograph 18013, taken in 1924, of the mosque at Samalanga, is of particular interest, because it shows incorporation, into the building, of the carved gable that is typical of older styles of Acehnese house architecture (Illustration 21).

The Dutch admired Acehnese wood carving and incorporated it into their own colonial domestic architecture. Photograph 17405, dated July 1923, gives an example of Acehnese carpentry in the residence of a colonial official, and an insight into Dutch responses to Aceh culture (Illustration 22). The photograph also introduces the subject of colonial society transplanted to Aceh. It is captioned 'The Cox family in front of their home in Lhosoekoen. Husband, wife and baby form the family group.' In photographs from the same period in Java, Europeans are usually photographed amidst family retainers hired from residents of Java's villages and towns. Often, the baby is held by a Javanese nursemaid. The photographs also show that many people in European families were of mixed Dutch and Indonesian ancestry. Such photographs suggest links of family and employment that came from the long-term residence of the Dutch in Java, and their interaction with their neighbours. The photograph of the Cox family, and many others like it in the Aceh collection, suggest, by contrast, isolation from the local population.

Many Java-based officials, on receiving transfer to Aceh, sent their wives and children to the Netherlands, fearing for their safety in the newest colonial territory, according to Van 't Veer (1969:295). As a result, many officials lived alone with limited household personnel. Photograph 40833, captioned 'Controleur D.H. Fikkert at his Lhokseumawe residence', taken in 1920, suggests this distance from the local population that continuing hostility to Dutch



Figure 21. Mosque at Samalanga shows an Acehnese variant on Southeast Asian mosque architecture, 1924 (KITLV 18013)

rule in Aceh encouraged. The *tempo doeloe* society, which was rooted deeply in Java, was the product of generations of Dutch children being raised by Javanese nannies and speaking Javanese as their first language. In the Aceh setting, similar social and cultural relations with the region's peoples could not develop.

All the same, some Dutch families did transplant to Aceh, but mostly, as the photographic record shows, they brought their household staff with them from Java. A Javanese nanny holding an infant can be glimpsed in the back row of photograph 41558 of Dutch families taken in Kuala Simpang in 1907. The several couples with their children sit in park-like grounds. The pet dog is there, as in so many photographs from *tempo doeloe* Java. This photograph and others, such as 17997, of Dutch families taking tea after tennis, suggest the beginnings of a settled colonial society in Aceh that modelled itself on Java's. Mrs. A.L.M. Ravelli-van Mosseveld mirrors Javanese manners. Among the tennis group, she wears Western costume; strolling in front of her house in the morning hours, she wears the *kain kebaya* costume [17984], adapted from Javanese women's dress, that was just then (1924) beginning to go out of style for Dutch women in Java. Her family album includes a photograph of the



Figure 22. The Cox family in front of their home in Lhosoekoen, July 1923.

The Cox family had roots in Java's Dutch-Javanese society. The house shows incorporation of Acehese house decoration in the carved gable (KITLV 17405).

Indonesian playmates of her children [18040]. In the album, she has written their names, Marjan and Osman, and the date, June 1924.

Photograph 4946 shows Kotaraja's *Hôtel de l'Europe* in 1892 (Illustration 23). Hotels are constructed when numbers of travellers – entrepreneurs, visitors, tourists – create a demand for accommodation. In 1880, Brau de Saint Pol Lias had complained of the lack of residential facilities for European travellers, although he commented with approval on the telegraph and train services connecting the port of Olehleu (Ulee Lheue) and Kotaraja (Brau de Saint Pol Lias 1884:13, 19). By 1892, at least, such a demand was being met. The photograph is both evidence of the development of the colonial capital of Aceh and a document of colonial society 18 years after the Dutch seizure of Sultan Mahmud Syah's compound. The photograph is a staged representation of the colonial cast of characters, that is, military officers, civilian officials in colonial whites, Chinese and Javanese men, women servants and grounds staff, and the private businessman.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Private entrepreneurs were admitted to the Netherlands Indies following liberalization laws of 1870.



Figure 23. Hotel de l'Europe, Koetaradja, 1892.

This photograph is a staged representation of the cast of characters in a Dutch colonial town (KITLV 4946).

The impact of the Dutch on the Acehnese is also documented in photographs. Acehnese women from elite families took themselves to photographic studios. Studio portrait 28574, taken around 1900, allows a closer look at the clothing and hairstyles of well-to-do women who sought the opportunity of seeing themselves through the camera, and of adding to their own markers of status the modern possession of a photo portrait. In photograph 4915, taken in 1892, wives and children join the family head, Teuku Panglima Maharaja Sjahbandar Tiban Mochamad. They have chosen to wear their embroidered silks for the occasion, and to mark their status by the group of juniors seated on the ground. François Martin, a seventeenth-century visitor to Aceh, had advised that women could not be approached by unrelated men (Reid 1995:58-9). In 1880, Brau de Saint Pol Lias was separated from the women of his host's house in Lohong by a curtain (Brau de Saint Pol Lias 1884:210). The camera brings Aceh women of the upper classes into history.

With so much attention paid to clothing these days, it is instructive to look

at a sequence of photographs of women in Aceh. Photograph 11740 of a wife of Teuku Umar, taken in 1894, shows her in a *baju panjang* (long-sleeved tunic) with uncovered head, and surrounded by female attendants in wraps, a small boy without clothes and a little girl in a Western frock. Studio photographs of ladies show them in draped wraps and uncovered hair, for example, in photograph 28576. Photograph 16652, from about 1900, is interesting for the hairstyle being modelled. We cannot assume that clothes worn for commissioned photographs represented everyday wear, nor do we know the degree to which the professional photographer influenced the clothing choices of ladies who posed in studios. It may be noted, however, that all the photographs of women show them fully clothed, unlike contemporary photographs of women from Bali.

Photographs of ordinary women at work, and as spectators in the street, perhaps give a more reliable image, for dress historians, of the daily wear of Acehnese women. Examples of kampong women bearing loads [4934], a weaver [5692], and female buyers and sellers at the market [28682] suggest that wraps and uncovered hair were everyday wear when these images were taken in 1892, 1900 and 1925, respectively. A photograph from 1930, taken outdoors, of two young mothers with their children shows the adult women in three-quarter-length trousers worn with wraps [4420]. The only photograph I have located that shows a woman fully covered, except for her eyes, is 5268 (Illustration 24). She stands on the viewer's far right watching a street dance performance in 1900; the other women spectators are in *kain kebaya*.

Siegel, studying the Acehnese in the 1960s, said that social practices of sexual segregation made it impossible for him to interview village women. Women's voices are rarely recorded in Aceh's history, although some of the upper classes, such as Cut Meutia and Cut Nyak Dien, have been mythologized in biographies of the nation's heroes (Tamar Djaja 1974:30-6, 67-75)<sup>36</sup> and in film. The colonial-era camera can supply some of this deficiency. Photographs document that girls were amongst the students of the government school at Kuala Simpang in 1935 [4986], and attended the Qur'an school at Takèngèn in 1931 [25151]. Both schools were products of the new colonial order. Government schools were established throughout the archipelago. Incorporation into the colony introduced the peoples of Aceh to modernizing Indonesians such as the Minangkabau. Gayo, especially, were attracted to colony-wide organizations such as the Muhammadiyah; their aspiring religious students travelled via the new colonial steamship services and trains to as far as Surabaya's al-Irsyad schools to further their Islamic studies. In Gayo, new-style Islamic schools with graded classes, modelled on those in Java and West Sumatra, were opened in the teens of the twentieth century. Informants told Bowen

<sup>36</sup> Entries: 'Teungku Cik Ditiro' and 'Cut Nya'din'.



Figure 24. Women watch a street performance, 1900. One of the women is completely covered apart from her eyes, whilst the other female onlookers wear Javanese *kain kebaya* and their heads are uncovered (KITLV 5268).

that Gayo women gave up wearing their distinctive embroidered blouses for costumes they considered modern, Islamic and Indonesian, as a result of this encounter with other parts of Indonesia (Bowen 1991:111). Photograph 25151 shows Gayo girls in this new attire.

Histories of Aceh's encounter with the Dutch and the Indies still focus more on political than social change. Another category of photographs in the KITLV Aceh collection suggests the impact of colonial medicine. They are of eye specialist Dr J. Tijssen and cataract sufferers who sought or accepted his intervention. He set up his surgery in the street using a simple trestle, and operated with the assistance of indigenous medical staff. Photograph 18675 shows him operating in a post office in Bakongan in February 1939 (Illustration 25). Photograph 18673 shows one of his patients, an elderly lady, wearing glasses following successful cataract surgery in December 1932. Other photographs of Dr Tijssen's patients show that the old [18671] and young [18680], and a teacher of religion [18683], regained their sight through cataract surgery and glasses. These photographs can be used as evidence

of the introduction of modern health services by the colonial government, and of the 'benevolent' aspect of maturing colonial rule. However, it is also important to note that the Acehnese were willing to undergo a risky and scary operation – one that was the product of Western medical practice; they were not refusers or rejectors of modern medical achievements. I am most struck by the photographs of young children whose sight has been restored, because here lies evidence that their mothers and fathers were willing to try all possible remedies to save them from the disaster of blindness. It shows the dynamic responses of ordinary people to opportunities.

New work sites and jobs are also recorded in the photographic archive. Hillsides were stripped of native vegetation for coffee and sisal plantations. Commercial agriculture introduced new work regimens as well as new plants into Aceh. Plantations were a magnet for peoples from other parts of Sumatra and Java. They provided opportunities for wage-earning to women [16962] as



Figure 25. Eye specialist Dr J. Tijssen performs cataract surgery in a post office in Bakongan, February 1939 (KITLV 18675)

well as men. Plantation workers became purchasers and consumers of goods, enmeshed in the colonial economy and dependent on global demands for their welfare.

My final selection of photographs illustrates aspects of Aceh's social history in urban centres in the last two decades of colonial rule. Three were taken near Bireuën, in 1930, of the wedding of Ramlan, daughter of Teukoe Tji, *ulëëbalang* of Peusangan, with Teukoe Ali Basyan, *ulëëbalang* of Keureutoë [6194, 6195 and 6196]. The wedding ceremonies are conducted in a richly-decorated room; the walls are hung with expensive textiles and an elaborately-worked cloth or carpet covers the floor. Relatives and the bridal couple have chosen silks with complex designs. The women guests show, through their costumes, that the new Islamic culture of the colony has reached them; gone are the wraps and replacing them are fitted blouses, with some women adopting head coverings] (Illustration 26). In the second photograph, in the same room, the husband and a male guest have changed into the Western suit and tie, worn with the *pici* (cap) that Sukarno promoted as a national symbol. The wedding party is joined, in the third photograph, by Dutch male and female guests. It shows the kinds of mixing at special occasions, which was typical of colonial towns throughout the archipelago.



Figure 26. Wedding celebrations of Ramlan, daughter of the *ulëëbalang* of Peusangan, to Teukoe Ali Basyan, *ulëëbalang* of Keureutoë, 1930, with their Dutch guests (KITLV 6196)

Other photographs of Acehnese men wearing the Western suit and tie also demonstrate the development of what we may call 'colonial urban culture'. They are evidence of Western schooling, jobs and habits – an acculturation made evident in the photographic record of men across the archipelago. They remind us of Sukarno's promotion of Western clothing as the attire of free men, and his labelling of indigenous wraps and sarongs as the dress of servants and the weak (Sukarno 1965:80-1). Biographical notes on photographs sometimes provide clues to social origin and class standing. Photograph 29030, for example, shows Nja Tjaet, son of the Baiturrahman *khatib* (mosque reader), Teungku Syah Brahim, wearing a suit, tie and *pici* in 1920. Nja Tjaet had received a Dutch education at Fort de Kock (Bukittinggi, West Sumatra) and was later appointed by the Dutch as supervisor of indigenous schools. Such photographs record the emergence of an Acehnese urban class that was being integrated into the colony, at a time when the colony was moving towards becoming Indonesia.

### Conclusion

The photographs in the KITLV collection show a multi-faceted Aceh. They show Aceh as a place of natural beauty, of poverty, of change, and of cultural traits that link it into an Indonesia-wide culture. The photographs also reveal telling absences, such as the absence of *payung* (status umbrellas), few nursemaids, few domestic interiors and no idyllic villages. They show the raw beginnings of commercial agriculture in hillsides stripped of forest for plantations, and the overlaying of a web of roads and railways. In the landscapes the Dutch came to know in the 60 years of occupation and rule, there was little visible evidence of a Hindu-Buddhist past. The Dutch could not knit Aceh into a familiar narrative of ancient glories, so they photographed and painted what the Acehnese had, that is, the tiered-roof mosque.

The photographs suggest that a common colonial culture was emerging in Aceh's towns, but it had little time to develop or take root before being cut off in 1942. Snouck said that the Acehnese of the 1880s had lost the cosmopolitanism of their seventeenth-century forebears, in that they were closed-minded and contemptuous of the new and different (Snouck Hurgronje 1906:170). However, photographs from the 1920s and 1930s show that the Acehnese were open to new influences from the Dutch and from other Indonesians, and were willing to embrace new technologies and economic pursuits.

The wars in Aceh that the Dutch fought were recorded extensively in the age of the reproducible photograph. Resistance was a characteristic that could be garnered for the national narrative being constructed by President Sukarno in the 1950s. Wars continued to be fought in Aceh following independence, with

varying degrees of intensity, until the ceasefire between Acehese militias and KNIL's successors, the Angkatan Bersenjata Indonesia (ABRI, Armed Forces of the Republic of Indonesia), in July 2005. In President Suharto's Indonesia, each region was assigned a special part in the grand drama of development. Aceh's was to represent the nation's history of resistance to foreign rule and its devotion to Islam. Photography has helped to foster an identity for Aceh that creates difference and alienation. While Bali's duty is to be exotic and beautiful, Aceh's is to be fierce and menacing. A fresh look at the photographic archive suggests that new histories can be created.

The Acehese came late into the colony, so they had little time to get acquainted with the Dutch or with fellow colonized Indonesians, and little time to embed the new habits and outlooks into Acehese culture. Japanese military occupation ended Dutch rule forever, and sealed Aceh off from the rest of the former colony for the Pacific war's duration. In their short time of getting acquainted with Indies society, the Acehese showed themselves to be reluctant to accept leadership of Indonesians that belong to other ethnic groups. They rejected Muhammadiyah, for instance, because it was, in their experience of it, introduced and led by Minangkabau Muslims. Only the Gayo were enthusiastic for Muhammadiyah, as perhaps for them, membership in Indies-wide organizations offered a means of escape from Acehese domination. As a result of having little experience of interacting with Indonesians from other ethnic groups, and of accepting direction from outsiders, the Acehese found it difficult to live within the Indonesian state, just as many of them had found it difficult to live in the Dutch colonial state. The photographic archive can be an important tool for exploring Aceh's place within Indonesian history. It offers clues for writing social histories to complement the political histories that already exist.

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