



# Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW) KONINKLIJKE NEDERLANDSE AKADEMIE VAN WETENSCHAPPEN

## Provenance report regarding Schild [Shield]

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## Provenance report regarding Schild [Shield]

Klaas Stutje

 <p><i>Photo: Collection Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen. Coll.no. RV-360-1623</i></p>	Custodian	NMVW Museum Volkenkunde
	Current possessor	Dutch State
	Inventory number	RV-360-1623
	Material/technique	Bamboo
	Measurements	103 x 56 cm

### Summary of findings

Object number RV-360-1623 is a shield made of two layers of braided bamboo strips. In 1824, it was donated to the Koninklijk Kabinet van Zeldzaamheden (KKZ) by James du Puy (1792-1881), former resident of Padang on furlough in the Netherlands. In 1883, the KKZ collection was disbanded and a large number of objects, including the shield, was transferred to the Rijks Ethnographisch Museum, Museum Volkenkunde's direct predecessor. Du Puy himself stated that the shield and a few other donated weapons were "made and used by the inhabitants of the interior of Sumatra (Minangkabau)," but on the basis of object analysis later curators of the museum altered the region of origin in the registration systems. The shield was regarded as of Batak cultural origin. Provenance research has not led to object specific information about the shield's origin and way of acquisition by Du Puy.

## Reconstruction provenance

### [no date] - 1824

James du Puy

*NL-LdnRMV, Archief serie 360 (ongeinventariseerd) [not inventoried], documenten 'Serie 360.'*

### 1824 - 1883

Koninklijk Kabinet van Zeldzaamheden

*NL-HlmNHA, 476 Rijksmuseum en rechtsvoorgangers te Amsterdam, inv.no. 854, letter 21 December 1824.*

### 1883 - today

Rijks Ethnografisch Museum (today NMVW Museum Volkenkunde)

*Museum Volkenkunde, inventory card RV-360-1623.*

## Object information

Object number RV-360-1623 is a shield made of two layers of braided bamboo strips. One side is round and the other is straight. The shield can be carried with both sides up. Its size is 103 centimeters in height and 56 centimeters in width.

## Provenance report

According to an inventory card of Museum Volkenkunde in Leiden, this shield was acquired in 1883, with the transfer of the collection of the Koninklijk Kabinet van Zeldzaamheden (KKZ) to the Rijks Ethnografisch Museum, Museum Volkenkunde's direct predecessor.<sup>1</sup> The KKZ was established in 1816 by the Dutch King William I (1772-1843) and consisted of the old stadtholder's collection. In the course of the nineteenth century, this collection grew considerably with historical and ethnographic objects from all parts of the world, mainly from Japan and China, but also from the Netherlands-Indies. In 1883, KKZ was disbanded and its collection was divided between various Dutch museums. Together with thousands of other objects, the shield was transferred to the Leiden museum.

In 1966, the director of Volkenkunde, P.H. Pott (1918-1989), made a schematic reconstruction of the inventory of the old KKZ, based on existing yet fragmentary inventory drafts and KKZ-archive. The reconstruction contained basic information about the donor and year of donation, and according to Pott, numbers 1616 to 1627, which correspond with object numbers RV-360-1616 to RV-360-1627, were donated by Du Puy in 1824.<sup>2</sup> Pott's information based this information on KKZ inventory books, drawn up by David van der Kellen in 1879, and on correspondence in archives of KKZ between the department

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<sup>1</sup> Museum Volkenkunde, inventory card RV-360-1623.

<sup>2</sup> NL-LdnRMV, Archief serie 360 (ongeinventariseerd) [not inventoried], documenten 'Serie 360', no date.

of Education, Arts, and Sciences of the Ministry of Interior Affairs and the director of the KKZ.<sup>3</sup> This correspondence from December 1824, in which the donation of Du Puy is discussed, contains an unsigned and undated list of objects donated by Du Puy. It concerned two rifles, two pikes, two bows and one quiver with arrows, two shields, one walking stick [“rotting”] with golden handle, and two *klewangs* or machetes. Apart from the walking stick that could not be retraced, all the listed objects correspond with object numbers RV-360-1616 to RV-360-1627.<sup>4</sup>

The list also indicates that the rifles, pikes, bows and shields, including shield number RV-360-1623, were “made and used by the inhabitants of the interior of Sumatra (Minangkabau).” The walking stick would have belonged to “chiefs of Sumatra.”<sup>5</sup> This information, probably provided by Du Puy himself, was copied on the first handwritten inventory cards of the Rijks Ethnographisch Museum, after the transfer of the objects from KKZ in 1883. However, in the 1910 catalogue of the Borneo collection of the Rijks Ethnographisch Museum, director H.H. Juynboll (1867-1945) came to different conclusions based on an analysis of the type of objects. According to him, the pikes and *klewangs* were lances and *mandau* (a kind of knife, traditional weapon) from West-Borneo, and one of the shields was from Banjar. Furthermore, he specified that the rifles were from the town of Sirukam in Padang’s hinterland. The region of origin of shield number RV-360-1623 was less obvious, but one curator wrote ‘Batak?’ on the inventory card as a probable region of cultural origin, and as such the shield is registered in today’s museum system.<sup>6</sup> It is good to remark that this alternative attribution to the Bataks is not necessarily in contradiction with Du Puy’s statement that he had acquired the shield in the Minangkabau region, as weapons circulated throughout the region.

### James du Puy

By the time of donation in 1824, James du Puy was on furlough in the Netherlands with his wife Elisabeth Johanna van Groll and young daughter. At 32 years old, he had already seen a turbulent career. Born in 1792 in London, he arrived in Batavia in 1812 to occupy a high position in the British colonial civil service, during a period that became known as the British interregnum of Java between 1811 and 1815. After a few years as a high official in Stamford Raffles’ British colonial government he transferred to the Dutch colonial administration when the Dutch regained full control over Java in 1816.<sup>7</sup> He became resident of Bantam in West Java and three years later, he was sent to Padang to become the first resident for the Dutch in West-Sumatra. After his posting in West-Sumatra, Du Puy continued his career as a high colonial official, ending in an appointment in the Raad van Nederlandsch Indië between 1842 and 1851.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> NL-HaNA, BiZa / Kunsten en Wetenschappen, 2.04.13, inv.no. 1961, inventory KKZ, nr. 1623.

<sup>4</sup> NL-HlmNHA, 476 Rijksmuseum en rechtsvoorgangers te Amsterdam, inv.no. 854, letter of the department of Education, Arts and Sciences of the Ministry of Interior Affairs to the director of the Koninklijk Kabinet van Zeldzaamheden, dated 21 December 1824. Two years later, James du Puy also donated a ‘sort of guitar’, originating from ‘Sumatra’s interior.’ However, we have not been able to locate this guitar: NL-HlmNHA, 476 Rijksmuseum en rechtsvoorgangers te Amsterdam, inv.no. 855, letter of J. Du Puy [?] to the director of the Koninklijk Kabinet van Zeldzaamheden, dated 16 April 1827. The inventory cards of RV-360-1616 and 1617 state that ‘Valentin du Puy’ was the donor. Probably, this name was a composition of the names James du Puy and Valentin Pfeifer who donated objects from California in 1824 and is on the list of Pieter Pott under nrs. 1613-1615.

<sup>5</sup> Ibidem: “gemaakt en gebruikt door de inwoners van het binnenste gedeelte van Sumatra (Maning kabo);” “de opperhoofden van Sumatra.”

<sup>6</sup> Museum Volkenkunde, inventory card RV-360-1623.

<sup>7</sup> A.H. Hubbard, The Java annual directory and almanac for 1816 (Batavia A.H.Hubbard, 1816).

<sup>8</sup> NL-HaNA, Koloniën, 1814-1849, 2.10.01, inv.nr. 3091, Stamboek van Oost-Indische ambtenaren, Folio 351.

The arrival of Du Puy in West-Sumatra in May 1819, along with 150 soldiers and artillery, was part of an active military effort of the newly restored Dutch Indies government to extend its influence to regions outside Java, and to claim larger Sumatra for itself vis-à-vis other imperial powers. It took place between the Anglo-Dutch Treaty of 1814, which had Dutch power over Java restored, and the Anglo-Dutch Treaty of 1824, which determined that Sumatra would fall in the Dutch sphere of influence. Before this second treaty, the Southwest-Sumatran region around Bengkulu was a British colony and the Dutch and British were competing colonial powers on Sumatra's Western coast. In 1819, the British allowed the Dutch to retake Padang, but the Dutch colonial government remained concerned that the British would exploit existing political and religious tensions in the region to their own benefit.

In the region, the power of the traditional Minangkabau aristocracy, the *penghulu*, dwindled with the decline in the trade of locally mined gold. At the same time, a Wahabite Islamic reform movement, the *padri*, gained influence, especially in the mountainous area behind Padang and among the trading classes. Refugee *penghulu* from the highlands living in Padang approached Du Puy to form an alliance against the *padri* and to regain control in the highlands. Du Puy, who feared that the *penghulu* would turn to the British if he refused, began to seek permission from Batavia to occupy an abandoned fortress in Padang's interior. This led to skirmishes with Padri throughout the region and ignited the first phase of the Padri war between 1821 and 1824. By the end of 1823, Du Puy fell ill and requested furlough in the Netherlands.<sup>9</sup>

This turbulent military context permits various possible scenarios for how Du Puy acquired shield number RV-360-1623 and the other weapons. Even though Du Puy was not personally involved in the military campaigns in Padang's highlands, weapons were looted from the battlefield and transported to Padang as war booty. Yet, if the shield was indeed looted from the battlefield, we would probably expect that it was referred to as a '*padri* shield'. Alternatively, the shield could have been presented to Du Puy as a gift in the context of his many negotiations with prominent *penghulu* or with local leaders up and down the coast of Padang. In the context of military violence, local village representatives presented gifts to Du Puy or to military commanders as a gesture of submission and loyalty.<sup>10</sup> Finally, the shield could have been a purchase on the Padang or Batavia market. The shield is not made of a particularly valuable material and does not bear signs of usage. All in all, none of the scenarios could be confirmed or refuted on the basis of archival sources.

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<sup>9</sup> Elizabeth Graves, *The Minangkabau Response to Dutch Colonial Rule in the Nineteenth Century*, 61-62; E.B. Kielstra, "Sumatra's Westkust van 1819-1825," in: *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde van Nederlandsch-Indië* 36 (1887) 23-24, 103.

<sup>10</sup> See for instance: H.M. Lange, *Het Nederlandsch Oost-Indisch leger ter Westkust van Sumatra (1819-1845)*, vol. 1 ('s-Hertogenbosch: Gebr. Muller, 1854), 186.