

Provenance report regarding Grafsteen [Gravestone] – Batu Aceh

Mirjam Shatanawi

 <p><i>Photo: Collection Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen. Coll.no. RV-3600-594</i></p>	Custodian	NMVW Volkenkunde
	Current possessor	Dutch State
	Inventory number	RV-3600-594
	Material/technique	Sandstone
	Measurements	H 103.5 × W 27.5 × D 24 cm

Summary of findings

The research shows that this gravestone, along with seven others, was found in Great Aceh in 1901 by Royal Netherlands East Indies Army (KNIL) officer George Nijpels (1859-1950), who removed it and shipped it to the Netherlands. Nijpels applied for permission to do this from the (military) authorities in charge. The collection took place at the request of the Royal Netherlands Military Academy (KMA). Research in the archive, which also included documents from Nijpels, showed that the gravestones came from Lhoknga (formerly Lho-Nga) and that they were removed in order to construct a racecourse. The inscriptions on the gravestone contain no historical information, such as the name of the deceased or date of death, meaning that it is impossible to trace which graves they came from. This applies to all of the eight gravestones taken by Nijpels. The precise location of the cemetery is also unknown.

Provenance timeline

Sixteenth century - early eighteenth century

Manufacture of gravestone

After Sixteenth century – before 1901

Cemetery in Lho-Nga

Postcard from George Nijpels to Hoofdcursus Kampen], 12 April 1902. Not found in the Justinus van Nassau Museum / Royal Netherlands Military Academy archive. Transcribed by Pauljac Verhoeven in 1997-1999.

1901

George Nijpels

Postcard from George Nijpels to Hoofdcursus Kampen, 12 April 1902. Not found in the Justinus van Nassau Museum / Royal Netherlands Military Academy archive. Transcribed by Pauljac Verhoeven in 1997-1999.

1902

Shipped from Aceh to the Netherlands by George Nijpels.

Letter from George Nijpels to J.M. Somer, 27 October 1937. Unnumbered archive of Justinus van Nassau Museum / Royal Netherlands Military Academy.

1902-1923

Hoofdcursus [officer training school] of the Royal Netherlands Military Academy in Kampen

NL-LdnRMV, Justinus van Nassau archive A16, inv. no. 1, inventory book of Justinus van Nassau Museum / Royal Netherlands Military Academy.

1923-1956

Ethnographic Museum of the Royal Netherlands Military Academy in Breda

NL-LdnRMV, Justinus van Nassau Museum archive A16, inv. no. 1, inventory book of Justinus van Nassau Museum / Royal Netherlands Military Academy.

J.M. Somer, *Gids voor den bezoeker van het Ethnografisch Museum te Breda, Kasteelplein 13* (Breda: Ethnographic Museum, 1940), 8.

1956-present

's Rijks Ethnografisch Museum (today NMVW Volkenkunde)

National Museum of World Cultures (NMVW), inventory card for object RV-3600-594, digitalised in TMS.

Introduction and context

This gravestone belongs to a series of eight gravestones from Aceh (RV-3600-589 to 596, inclusive) in the collection of the 's Rijks Ethnografisch Museum (National Museum of Ethnology) in Leiden. Provenance information is only included on the inventory cards of two of the gravestones, and at the start of the research it was uncertain whether the eight gravestones had the same provenance history. Of RV-3600-594 it was known only that the object had come from the collection of the Royal Netherlands Military Academy (KMA) in Breda. The gravestone is one of the objects selected by the National Museum of World Cultures (NMVW) for research under the Pilot Project Provenance Research on Objects of the Colonial Era (PPOCE).

Gravestones are among the oldest relics in Aceh from the Islamic period. Research into the gravestones began in the colonial period (late nineteenth century) and initially centred on the gravestones as a historical source for the history of Islam in Aceh. More recently (twenty-first century), there is also art historical research being conducted into the gravestones. There is keen interest in such gravestones in Aceh, as is evidenced for example by an association of volunteers who maintain the gravestones and lobby the government for their management and preservation. Aceh still has thousands of gravestones in situ. Only a small number of gravestones are in museums in the Netherlands and Indonesia: the gravestones are heavy and transferring them was a considerable operation for private collectors of objects from Aceh. As far as is known, there are 33 Acehnese gravestones and tomb ornaments in Dutch collections (including two in Museum Bronbeek, and the remainder at NMVW). Nineteen of these stones were collected by Willem Stammeshaus and eight by George Nijpels.

Object information

Gravestone RV-3600-594 is made of yellow sandstone and has a curved shape. The top, middle, and foot all bear calligraphic inscriptions in Arabic script. The texts are written in panels, including the central panel which contains four lines of text. The inscriptions on the gravestone contain no historical information, such as the name of the deceased or the date of death, to indicate the date of the stone or the location of the cemetery. They are generic texts, similar to the *shahada*, the Islamic profession of faith. The texts are poorly legible due to weathering of the sandstone. The gravestone features vegetal motifs and spirals on all four sides. On one side, a large piece has broken off the foot.

This type of gravestone is known as *batu Aceh* (Aceh stones) and dates back to gravestones from Cambay (Gujarat, India). During the Samudera Pasai Sultanate (thirteenth century) in North Aceh, these marble gravestones were imported from Gujarat for the graves of the sultan's family. The subsequent Aceh Sultanate (1496–1903), whose capital was Kuta Raja (present-day Banda Aceh), started to see the use of sandstone for the local manufacture of Gujarat-style gravestones. This led to the development of a distinctive Acehnese style.¹

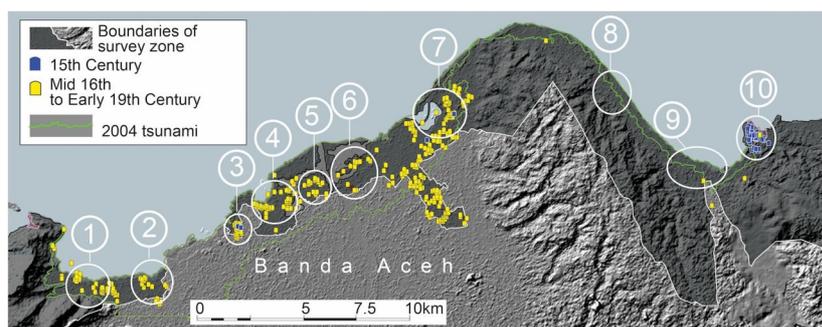
The batu Aceh were used for the graves of prominent people, such as members of the sultan's family and other aristocrats, possibly also prosperous merchants. The graves either had a single gravestone at the head end or else the grave consisted of a cenotaph with identical gravestones at the head and foot end, with the deceased buried in the ground underneath. Men and women had differently shaped gravestones, with stones for women having a winged shape. It is therefore clear that gravestone RV-3600-594 was used for a man's grave. Batu Aceh were made in vast numbers, and thousands have survived.

The shape of the batu Aceh consists of three parts: an upper part (head or crown), a middle part, and the base (foot). The ornamentation on the stones features shapes including mountains, lotuses and other flowers, vegetal motifs, and cobwebs. In many cases, the stones bear Arabic calligraphic inscriptions in various styles of script. In the case of most of the gravestones, including this one, these are generic inscriptions from the *shahada* (Islamic profession of faith) or texts from the Koran, or even pseudo-inscriptions. Various typologies have been created based on the form and ornamentation of the batu Aceh. A recent typology has been done by the French historian Daniel Perret, who dates

¹ Daniel Perret, 'Some Reflections on Ancient Islamic Gravestones Known as Batu Aceh in the Malay World', *Indonesia and the Malay World* 35, no. 103 (2007): 313–40, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13639810701677092>.

gravestone RV-3600-594 in the collection of the National Museum of Ethnology as sixteenth century-early eighteenth century, the period in which this type of gravestone was made.² More specific dating is not possible, in his view.

The yellow sandstone for the gravestones came mainly from the islands of Pulau Breueh and Pulau Batee, to the northwest of Aceh. The stones were processed in Meuraksa, a subdistrict of Banda Aceh.³ Gravestones of yellow sandstone are found in various parts of Great Aceh, but primarily in Banda Aceh and the surrounding area.⁴ A survey along 40 kilometres of the coastline of North Aceh in 2015-2017 found 5,800 gravestones.⁵ The majority of these had generic inscriptions, with only relatively few having specific inscriptions including name and date.



Recent survey of gravestones on the north coast of Aceh.⁶

The current research found that the eight gravestones in the museum depot had been labelled incorrectly; as a result, the object photos in TMS had also been switched. In addition, two of the eight gravestones, which had been registered as missing, were found under different object numbers (RV-03-394 and RV-03-395). The photo of the researched gravestone RV-3600-594 had previously been assigned to RV-3600-592.

Provenance report

History from 1896 to 1923

The gravestone is from the collection of the Royal Netherlands Military Academy (KMA) in Breda. From 1905 this training institute amassed and curated a collection of Indonesian objects to use in the instruction of soldiers being sent out to Indonesia.⁷ The collection was displayed in a dedicated museum. In addition to the KMA in Breda, there was another military training institute, which was based in Kampen and operated under the name *Hoofdcursus* (main training school). The *Hoofdcursus* in Kampen started a collection of objects in 1900, which was transferred to the KMA in Breda in 1923 because the training course in Kampen was being disbanded. In 1956 the care of the KMA collection was handed over to the National Museum of Ethnology.

² Email from Daniel Perret, 5 October 2020.

³ Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje, *The Achehnese*, vol. I (Leiden; London: Late E.J. Brill; Luzac & Co., 1906), 431.

⁴ Perret, "Some Reflections on Ancient Islamic Gravestones Known as Batu Aceh in the Malay World," 317.

⁵ Patrick Daly et al., "Archaeological Evidence That a Late 14th-Century Tsunami Devastated the Coast of Northern Sumatra and Redirected History," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 116, no. 24 (2019): 11679–86, <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1902241116>.

⁶ Daly et al.

⁷ S.H. Spoor, "Het Ethnografisch Museum van de Koninklijke Militaire Academie en den voormaligen Hoofdcursus te Breda," *Indische Gids* 60 (1938): 328–32.

One important source for research into this gravestone is the archive of the Ethnographic Museum of the KMA, which is housed in the National Museum of Ethnology.⁸ The archive is ordered but not inventoried. In addition, the research saw the retrieval of part of the archive which the museum had forgotten existed; this part is not numbered and does not currently belong to the registered archive. The deficient information regarding the archive meant that the research took longer than expected.

The gravestone belongs to a series of eight gravestones from Aceh (RV-3600-589 to 596, inclusive). The 'spat number' of the gravestone is 4859f; the other gravestones in the series are numbered 4859a to g (they are RV-3600-589 to 595, inclusive) and 4883 (RV-3600-596).⁹ 'Spat numbers' were introduced by Claas Spat (1865-1931), who was in charge of the KMA collection in Breda from 1905 to 1921. The KMA/Justinus van Nassau register lists object inv. no. 4859 as '*steen en grafmonument*' [stone grave monument].¹⁰ A loose page in a different inventory book states that (spat) numbers 4668 to 5099 had come from the Hoofdcursus.¹¹ This means that within the KMA collection the gravestone, like the other seven gravestones in this series, had come from the Hoofdcursus in Kampen. Neither the KMA nor the Ethnographic Museum of the KMA in Breda produced annual reports before the 1950s.¹² While there are some commemorative books that mention a number of gifts, none of these include ethnographic objects. The Hoofdcursus in Kampen did produce annual reports (known as yearbooks); in 1901 these also began to devote a chapter to the ethnographic collection.

The inventory books of the Hoofdcursus Kampen are also held in the archive of the Ethnographic Museum of the KMA in the National Museum of Ethnology.¹³ The inventory of the Hoofdcursus is organised by region (with dedicated sections for various regions), subdivided according to the 12-group system.¹⁴ The Hoofdcursus initially followed its own numbering system, based on function (i.e. objects with the same function were assigned the same serial number). In addition to object information, the inventory books also contain information on provenance and acquisition. The volume *Atjeh met de Gajoe en Alaslanden* [Aceh with the Gayo and Alas Lands] lists the gravestones under group XII with inv. nos. 7/1-7 as "*manlijke grafstenen*" [male gravestones] and 7/8 as "*vrouwelijke grafsteen*" [female gravestone], and states the provenance as Great Aceh. According to this inventory book, all eight gravestones were acquired from "Kapt. Der Gen. Staf G. Nijpels"¹⁵ [Captain of the General Staff G. Nijpels].

The inventory card for RV-3600-594 in TMS does not include any information on acquisition; that is only the case for the inventory cards for RV-3600-589 and 590 (spat numbers 4859a/b, Hoofdcursus numbers 7/1 and 7/2); according to the cards those gravestones were acquired from "Kapt. Der Gen. Staf J. Nijpels" [Captain of the General Staff G. Nijpels]. The name J. Nijpels on the (typed) cards is incorrect; according to the database of officers' names, there was only an officer named G. Nijpels during this period.¹⁶ The KNIL service records in the National Archives of the Netherlands confirm that

⁸ NL-LdnRMV, Justinus van Nassau archive A16.

⁹ National Museum of World Cultures, inventory cards RV-3600-589/594, digitalised in TMS.

¹⁰ NL-LdnRMV, Justinus van Nassau archive A16, inv. no. 17, register of Justinus van Nassau Museum / Royal Netherlands Military Academy.

¹¹ NL-LdnRMV, Justinus van Nassau archive A16, without inv. no., register of Justinus van Nassau Museum / Royal Netherlands Military Academy. This book of acquisitions was compiled by Sjoerd Nauta in 1949.

¹² Verbal report from Stan Wulffaert, chairman of the historical collection of the KMA, 11 Sept. 2020.

¹³ NL-LdnRMV, Justinus van Nassau archive A16, inv. nos. 6/7 and 14/15, inventory book of Hoofdcursus Kampen / Royal Netherlands Military Academy.

¹⁴ This was a classification system based on function used by various ethnographic museums.

¹⁵ NL-LdnRMV, Justinus van Nassau archive A16, inv. no. 14, inventory book of Hoofdcursus Kampen / Royal Netherlands Military Academy.

¹⁶ Nederlands Militair Erfgoed [Dutch military heritage website], nlme.nl. Database of information from the Nationaal Militair Museum and the Nederlandse Defensie Academie [Netherlands Defence Academy] (formerly KMA).

this was George Nijpels (1859-1950).¹⁷ The *Nederlandsche Staatscourant* [official gazette] of 9 December 1902 mentions a gift from G. Nijpels, captain of the General Staff, to the Hoofdcursus of (“*eene collectie wapens en eene collectie voorwerpen tot huishoudelijk gebruik*”) [a collection of weapons and a collection of objects for domestic use].¹⁸

The Hoofdcursus yearbook describes the gift as follows: “*deze oudleerling, aan wien de verzameling reeds zooveel dankt, zond tal van voorwerpen van Atjeh, t.w. potten en pannen, huisraad, wapenen, grafstenen, vlecht- en borduurwerk, te veel om op te noemen, terwijl door zijn bemiddeling Notaris Meeter te Koeta Radja een mooie collectie zijden kleedingstukken schonk.*¹⁹ *Neemt men daarbij in aanmerking dat genoemde kapitein binnen één jaar tijds twee maal werd gewond, dan mag men zijne toewijding zeker eenig noemen*”²⁰ [This alumnus, to whom the collection is already so much indebted, sent numerous items from Aceh, namely pots and pans, household goods, weapons, gravestones, wickerwork and embroidery, too much to mention, while Notary Meeter in Koeta Radja sent a beautiful collection of silk garments thanks to his mediation. Considering, furthermore, that this captain was wounded twice within the space of one year, then his dedication may certainly be said to be unique]. The RV-3600 series (the KMA collection) cannot be accessed by provenance (“*ex-collectie*” [‘ex collection’]) in TMS; only objects found by chance during previous research are linked to George Nijpels. In addition to the two gravestones, these are two cannons (RV-3600-599 and 609, both with spat number 4861) and a bed canopy (RV-3600-607, spat number 4858), but there are definitely more objects which were gifted by Nijpels in 1902.²¹

George Nijpels (born Maastricht 1859 - died The Hague 1950) was an officer in the Royal Netherlands East Indies Army (KNIL).²² He started his career in the Dutch Army in 1877, serving for six years before transferring to the KNIL. His first tour of the Dutch East Indies was in 1884. He distinguished himself in battles in Aceh and was made a Knight in the Military Willems Order. From 1889 to 1891 he was seconded to the Hogere Krijgsschool [Higher Military School] and from 1891 he was a teacher at the KMA. In 1896 he applied to serve in Aceh again.²³ This was initially denied but in December 1896 he set sail for the Dutch East Indies, after all. He was stationed with the General Staff in Batavia and it was September 1901 before he eventually left for Aceh.²⁴ In 1902, he returned to the Netherlands after being wounded. Two years later he was granted an honourable discharge from the KNIL on account of his injuries.²⁵ During the First World War he was once again mobilised in the Dutch Army (1914-1919), rising to the rank of major general (1940, titular).

Having reached the Dutch East Indies, in 1900 George Nijpels met Hendrik Theodorus van IJsseldijk (1862-1916), the upcoming curator of the collection of the Hoofdcursus in Kampen.²⁶ Van IJsseldijk

¹⁷ NL-HaNA, War / Service records of Royal Dutch Army officers, 2.13.04, inv.no. 407/410/629/675/678.

¹⁸ *Nederlandsche Staatscourant* [official gazette of the Netherlands], 9 December 1902.

<https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=MMKB08:000177725:mpeg21:a0008>

¹⁹ Ydo Meeter (?-1913). Nationaal archief. “2.10.36.22 Inventaris van het archief van het Ministerie van Koloniën: Stamboeken Burgerlijke Ambtenaren, 1836-1936.” https://www.nationaalarchief.nl/onderzoeken/archief/2.10.36.22/invnr/947/file/NL-HaNA_2.10.36.22_947_0265

²⁰ *Jaarboekje van den hoofdcursus te Kampen* (Kampen: Ph. Zalsman, 1903), 184.

²¹ National Museum of World Cultures, inventory cards RV-3600-589/590/599/607/609, digitalised in TMS.

²² NL-HaNA, War / Service records of Royal Dutch Army officers, 2.13.04, inv.no. 407/410/629/675/678.

²³ “Atjeh,” *Het nieuws van den dag: kleine courant*, 6 May 1896, Morning edition, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010092405>.

²⁴ “Passagiers,” *Het nieuws van den dag voor Nederlandsch-Indië*, 13 September 1901, Morning edition, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010133026:mpeg21:a0006>.

²⁵ Extract from the military record of G. Nijpels. Nederlands Instituut voor Militaire Historie, Koloniale eeuw Nederlands-Indië [Netherlands Institute for Military History, Colonial era in Dutch East Indies] (1814-1941), 543, inv. no. 72.

²⁶ Spoor, “Het Ethnografisch Museum van de Koninklijke Militaire Academie en den voormaligen Hoofdcursus te Breda,” 330. Letter from George Nijpels to J.M. Somer, 27 October 1937. Unnumbered archive of Museum Justinus van Nassau Museum / Royal Netherlands Military Academy.

asked him to collect objects.²⁷ Van IJsseldijk subsequently headed for the Netherlands and took a job as teacher at the Hoofdcursus, where he started a collection of ethnographic objects in order to better prepare recruits for their duties with the KNIL. Visual instruction in regional geography and ethnography held an important place in his educational view, and Nijpels was one of the main contacts in the Dutch East Indies who were to help him build the collection. The KMA archive contains little correspondence from the Hoofdcursus and I found no correspondence regarding Nijpels' assignment or the gift of the gravestone in 1902.²⁸ The inventory card for RV-3600-594 refers to an 'enveloppe' [envelope]; this was not found in the archive.

This correspondence did exist, according to Pauljac Verhoeven, who transcribed parts of the correspondence in the period 1997-1999.²⁹ His notes read as follows:

14. Postcard from Nijpels, 12 April 1902

"[]Van Notaris meeters heb ik Atjehsche kleeren gekregen, van een grafheuvel, die ten behoeve der nieuwe renbaan afgegraven moest worden, een 8tal grafstenen, []" [[]From Notary Meeters (sic) I received Acehnese clothes, from a burial mound, which had to be excavated to make way for the new racecourse, eight gravestones, []]

13, letter from Nijpels, K.R. 30 April 1902:

"[] zend ik je een nieuw bewijs mijner herleefde ambitie [], Daarin vind je 1. de grafstenen [] 4. eenige Atjehse wapens, w.o. een achterlaadkarabijn. (Niet alle wapens zijn ingepakt, de 3 mooie, nieuwe kocht ik op vendutie, ik weet nog niet precies wat ze kosten andere oudere zijn bij abuis niet mee ingepakt, ik zend ze dus later) [[] I am sending you fresh evidence of my renewed ambition [], Herein you will find 1. The gravestones [] 4. several Acehnese weapons, including a breech-loading carbine. (Not all of the weapons have been packed up, the three new fine ones I bought at public auction, I am not yet sure of their exact price other older ones were not packed up along with the others by mistake, so I will send these later)]

The archive was found to contain correspondence about the gravestones from a later period. On 27 October 1937 George Nijpels wrote to curator J.M. Somer:

"Zoo kon ik, toen ik op inspectie der *pradjoerits* (soldaten) in Bantam was, daar de instrumenten bijeenbrengen gebruikt voor de inlandsche zijde-nijverheid. Overigens zond ik ethnografica van meer gewone aard. Kort nadien naar Atjeh vertrokken, bleef ik actief en verzond de grafteekens die buiten Atjeh misschien unique zijn, na alle betrokken autoriteiten hierin te hebben gekend. Tot hetgeen ik zond behoorde ook een Atjehsche vlag met Arabisch opschrift, waarvan mij destijds de beteekenis is medegedeeld"³⁰ [During my inspection of the *pradjoerits* (soldiers) in Bantam, I was therefore able to collect the tools used in the local silk industry. Incidentally, I sent ethnographica of a more ordinary nature. Having left for Aceh shortly after, I remained active and sent the grave markers which are perhaps unique outside Aceh, having notified all the relevant authorities. Amongst the items which I sent was an Acehnese flag with Arabic writing, the meaning of which was imparted to me at the time.]

It is clear from the quote that the gravestones were made available to Nijpels not long after his arrival in Aceh; this must have been between September 1901 and April 1902. He does not write who granted him permission to take the stones, but the research showed that civil governor P.A.H. Heldens was involved. It is noteworthy that he says that he notified "*alle betrokken autoriteiten*" [all the relevant

²⁷ Marie-Antoinette Willemsen, *Volkenkunde in Breda: van Indische verzameling tot Rijksmuseum Justinus van Nassau en de Vereniging voor Volkenkunde* (Breda: Bureau Cultureel Erfgoed, Directie Ruimtelijke Ontwikkeling, Gemeente Breda, 2011), 16.

²⁸ NL-LdnRMV, Justinus van Nassau archive A16, inv. no. 36, correspondence from Ethnographic Museum of the Royal Netherlands Military Academy.

²⁹ Email from Pauljac Verhoeven (head of Museum Bronbeek), 21 January 2021.

³⁰ Letter from George Nijpels to J.M. Somer, 27 October 1937. Unnumbered archive of Justinus van Nassau Museum / Royal Netherlands Military Academy. The letter is also cited in Willemsen, 2011, 16.

authorities] in the decision to ship the gravestones to the Netherlands. We can only guess as to what he means by this; in any case they must have included the army command (in the period 1897-1904 J.B. van Heutsz was military and civil governor of Aceh) and possibly also the Bataviaasch Genootschap [Royal Batavian Society of Arts and Sciences].³¹ With the government's support the Batavian Society sought to secure for itself as many of the items as possible which had been collected by government officials, including military personnel.³² The personal archive of J.B. van Heutsz is held in the National Archives of the Netherlands but contains no correspondence from 1901-1902.³³

In his postcard Nijpels reports that the gravestones are from Lho-Nga (present-day Lhoknga). The Hoofdcursus inventory book states the provenance as "Groot-Atjeh" [Great Aceh]. This was a department under the Dutch administrative system to which Lho-Nga did indeed belong.

Nijpels further reports that the gravestones were moved in order to construct a racecourse. A racecourse was indeed taken into use in Lhoknga in October 1901.³⁴ According to Henri Damsté, this racecourse was an initiative of Louis Constant Westenenk (1872-1930), a controller in Great Aceh and a great lover of horse racing.³⁵ But Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje reports that the initiator was a civil governor who he describes as "*een groot paardenliefhebber onder de officieren*" [a great horse-lover among the officers] as well as the founder of Renvereniging Atjeh [the Aceh horse-racing club].³⁶ The Regeeringsalmanak (government almanac) of 1901 shows that Petrus Antonius Hubertus Heldens (1861-1934) was the aforementioned civil governor in Lhoknga at that time.³⁷ Heldens was married to Maria Lena van Heutsz, daughter of J.B. van Heutsz, the governor of Aceh. In the absence of a wealthy European population in Aceh, Van Heutsz decided to finance the racecourse largely from funds which had been earmarked for the road network.³⁸ In addition, Acehnese officials were also persuaded against their will to contribute to the racing club.³⁹ The racecourse was not a success and was hardly used at all. In 1902 Westenenk took the initiative to build a new racecourse, this time in Kuta Radja (present-day Banda Aceh).⁴⁰

The eight gravestones taken by Nijpels have different shapes. Two are shaped similarly to RV-3600-594 but have slightly different ornamentation. None of the gravestones has inscriptions containing historical information. Despite the stylistic differences, the eight gravestones could have come from the same location; it is not unusual for a cemetery to have gravestones of different types.⁴¹ Because the racecourse was only in use for such a short period of time, it is difficult to trace its location. As far as is known, the racecourse is not marked on maps and no photographs of it were found during this research.

³¹ The minutes of the Bataviaasch Genootschap for the period 1901-1902 make no mention of any correspondence with Nijpels.

³² Pieter ter Keurs, "Collecting in the Colony," *Indonesia and the Malay World* 37, no. 108 (2009): 154, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13639810902979321>.

³³ Nationaal archief. "2.21.008.79 Inventaris van het archief van J.B. van Heutsz, 1882-1935." <https://www.nationaalarchief.nl/onderzoeken/archief/2.21.008.79>

³⁴ "Atjeh," *Bataviaasch nieuwsblad*, 19 November 1901, Morning edition, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:011032403:mpeg21:a0059>.

³⁵ H.T. Damsté, *Louis Constant Westenenk (2 februari 1872-2 mei 1930)*, undated.

³⁶ Emile Gobée and Cornelis Adriaanse, eds., *Ambtelijke adviezen van C. Snouck Hurgronje 1889-1936*, vol. 1 (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1957), 339. Letter from C. Snouck Hurgronje to J.B. van Heutsz, 2 October 1903.

³⁷ *Regeeringsalmanak Voor Nederlandsch-Indie* (Batavia: Landsdrukkerij, 1901), 223, https://digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/werkansicht?PPN=PPN75220758X&PHYSID=PHYS_0023&DMDID=DMDLOG_0001.

³⁸ Gobée and Adriaanse, *Ambtelijke adviezen van C. Snouck Hurgronje 1889-1936*, 1:339-41.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Kees van Dijk, 'Atjeeërs houden niet van paarden: de paardenrenbaan in Azië', in *Het verre gezicht: politieke en culturele relaties tussen Nederland en Azië, Afrika en Amerika. Opstellen aangeboden aan Prof. Dr Leonard Blussé*, ed. J. Lindblad and A. Schrikker (Franeker: Van Wijnen, 2011), 301-16; Damsté, *Louis Constant Westenenk (2 februari 1872-2 mei 1930)*; Gobée and Adriaanse, *Ambtelijke adviezen van C. Snouck Hurgronje 1889-1936*, 1:340.

⁴¹ See for example the cemetery in Pande, just outside Banda Aceh. Archnet.org. "Kandang Aceh." <https://archnet.org/sites/4006>.

Archive documents of George Nijpels are also held in the Nederlands Instituut voor Militaire Historie [Netherlands Institute for Military History].⁴² These include a diary for the period 1897-1902, during which he served as an officer in Aceh. The diary contains a wealth of political and military details, but little personal information. This is connected to the position that Nijpels held: according to his service record, he worked for the General Staff in Batavia from 1897 to 1901.⁴³ As such he concerned himself, from a distance, with events in Aceh and wrote reports which were based on reports by others. No information about the collection of objects or visits to cemeteries was found in the diary. There are occasional remarks about material culture; for example, on 15 September 1899 Nijpels wrote that gold had been found close to “Sikaenjoeng in de Aloeë Patjikan.” In 1901, by which time he had been posted to Aceh, he described how the residents of six houses were chased out of their homes because the KNIL wanted to establish a bivouac there: “zij lieten keukengerei, bakjes en potjes en eeuwige voorraden achter, maar droegen overigens kleeding, huisraad, sieraden weg. Niemand had geen pakje” [they left behind kitchen utensils, bowls and jars and endless supplies, but otherwise took with them clothing, household goods, jewellery. No one was without a package]. It is noteworthy that Nijpels seldom mentions the capture of weapons, something that must have happened frequently and was usually recorded in patrol reports. Probably the captured weapons were not among the matters reported at General Staff level. George Nijpels himself had a substantial weapon collection, which he gifted to the KMA in 1937, and the gift in 1902 also comprised weapons.⁴⁴

History after 1923

After the collection was transferred from the Hoofdcursus in Kampen in 1923, the gravestones ended up in Breda, where they went on display. The visitor’s guide of 1926 mentions a display of objects from Northern Sumatra in the vestibule, including “langs de muur en in de gang eenige uit Groot-Atjeh afkomstige grafsteenen, w.o. één onvoltooid”⁴⁵ [along the wall and in the corridor are several gravestones from Great Aceh, one of which is unfinished]. In 1940 at least three of the eight gravestones were placed in the garden of the Ethnographic Museum of the KMA in Breda.⁴⁶ Photographs from 1960 show this arrangement, meaning that the stones were in the garden for at least 20 years.⁴⁷ In 1956 the curation of the KMA collection was handed over to the National Museum of Ethnology. Initially, the collection remained in Breda and the National Museum of Ethnology also took over the management of the museum, which was renamed the Museum Justinus van Nassau. In the end this museum in Breda had to close its doors in 1993 and the ethnographic collection was transferred to Leiden.

⁴² Nederlands Instituut voor Militaire Historie, *Koloniale eeuw Nederlands-Indië* [Netherlands Institute for Military History, Colonial era in Dutch East Indies] (1814-1941), 543, inv. no. 72.

⁴³ NL-HaNA, War / Service records of Royal Dutch Army officers, 2.13.04, inv.no. 407/410/629/675/678.

⁴⁴ NL-LdnRMV, Justinus van Nassau archive A16, inv. no. 36, correspondence from the Ethnographic Museum of the Royal Netherlands Military Academy. A.o. photograph of Nijpels’ weapon collection Collection of the National Museum of World Cultures inv. no. RV-11996-2.

⁴⁵ Koninklijke Militaire Academie, *Leidraad voor den bezoeker van het ethnografisch museum van de Koninklijke Militaire Academie en den hoofdcursus* (Breda: De Koninklijke Militaire Academie, 1926), 4.

⁴⁶ J.M. Somer, *Gids voor den bezoeker van het Ethnografisch Museum te Breda, Kasteelplein 13* (Breda: Ethnografisch Museum, 1940), 8.

⁴⁷ Collection of the National Museum of World Cultures, inv. nos. RV-12127-21/22/23.



*Gravestones from the Nijpels gift (RV-3600-592 and 596) in the garden of the museum of the KMA, 1960.
Collection of the National Museum of World Cultures, inv. no. RV-12127-22.*