



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

Provenance report regarding Miniatuurkoran in messing en foedraal [Miniature Qur'an in brass locket]

Shatanawi, Mirjam

2022

document version

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

document license

Unspecified

[Link to publication in KNAW Research Portal](#)

citation for published version (APA)

Shatanawi, M. (2022). Provenance report regarding Miniatuurkoran in messing en foedraal [Miniature Qur'an in brass locket]. (PPROCE provenance reports; No. 33).

General rights

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the KNAW public portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain.
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the KNAW public portal.

Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

E-mail address:

pure@knaw.nl

Provenance report regarding Miniatuurkoran in messingen foedraal [Miniature Qur'an in brass locket]

Mirjam Shatanawi

 <p>Photo: Collection Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen. Coll.nr. TM-6441-1</p>	Title	Miniatuurkoran in messingen foedraal [Miniature Qur'an in brass locket]
	Custodian	NMVW Tropenmuseum
	Current possessor	Dutch State
	Inventory number	TM-6441-1
	Material/technique	Brass; leather; paper; glass
	Measurements	3.6 x 2.5 x 1.3 cm (Qur'an) 4.7 x 3.1 x 1.8 cm (locket)

Summary of findings

This printed miniature Qur'an was donated to the Tropenmuseum by Pieter Joseph "Joop" Knegt (1927-2013) in 2012. Joop Knegt was a conscripted soldier who was stationed in Java in the years 1948-1950. He took the Qur'an from a trench which had been dug by Indonesian revolutionary fighters probably in a location in West Java. The miniature Qur'an was produced in Glasgow by David Bryce and Sons around 1900. Most of the Bryce Qur'ans seemed to have been imported to Indonesia through trade via Mumbai and as pilgrimage souvenirs from the Arabian Peninsula.

Reconstruction provenance

After 1895 – before 1908

David Bryce & Sons, Glasgow, manufacture of Qur'an
Myrvold, Kristina. "Mite Qur'ans for Indian Markets: David Bryce in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century." *Postscripts* 9, no. 2–3 (2013): 169–93.

After 15 February 1948 – February 2012

Pieter Joseph Knegt
Staat van dienst Pieter Joseph Knegt. Archives Ministry of Defence, no inventory number.
Schenkingsformulier, Tropenmuseum archives (lange lijst).

February 2012-present

NMVW Tropenmuseum
Schenkingsformulier, Tropenmuseum archives (lange lijst).

Introduction and context

This miniature Qur'an, printed in Glasgow by David Bryce and Sons, was selected for provenance research because it was acquired during the Indonesian War of Independence. The Bryce Qur'ans were produced in tens of thousands of copies and many of them ended up in museums and libraries. Several museums have Bryce Qur'ans that were acquired in Indonesia. In the Netherlands, the Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen has two (this one and TM-687-49) and the Wereldmuseum has one copy from Indonesia (WM-72111, plus another one, WM-60575, acquired in an unknown location). The Vatican Museum in Rome also has a copy that was acquired in Indonesia. Most of the Bryce Qur'ans seemed to have been imported to Indonesia through trade via Mumbai and/or as pilgrimage souvenirs from the Arabian Peninsula.

Object information

This miniature Qur'an was printed by the Scottish company David Bryce and Sons from Glasgow. Bryce was known for his miniature books for which he used the newest techniques in photolithography (a type of photo reduction using electroplates) to reduce larger volumes to the smallest imaginable size.¹ Bryce produced over 40 miniature titles, including dictionaries and a miniature Bible. The miniature Qur'an was a photo reduction of an Ottoman Qur'an. The certificate printed on one of the last pages attested that it was an authoritative facsimile of the manuscript recorded in 1683 AD by the calligrapher Hafiz Osman and approved by the sultan and Muslim authorities.² It is uncertain where the original Qur'an was sourced from — possibly a manuscript from the Bodleian Library of the University of Oxford. The Bryce Qur'ans were printed in several editions. The first edition was printed in 1896; a second edition followed in 1899; and he continued producing his miniature Qur'ans until at least 1907.³

The Qur'an is printed on ultra-thin opaque sheets called India paper, which enabled the production of extremely small text blocks. The bindings of Bryce Qur'ans were richly gilt-stamped with vegetal motifs in red, green, brown or black morocco (a fine-grained goatskin leather originally made in Morocco) with gilt edges. The present copy has a red morocco binding; pieces of the leather are torn off. Another trademark of the Bryce Qur'ans are the metal lockets. Bryce provided a locket with a magnifying glass with most of the miniature books he produced. This copy has an embossed brass locket, of which the metal is very worn, with a magnifying glass and a small ring on the top to attach it to clothing or for it to be hung around the neck.



Photo: Collection
Nationaal Museum
van Wereldculturen.
Coll.no. TM-6441-1

¹ Louis W. Bondy, *Miniature Books: Their History from the Beginnings to the Present Day* (London: Sheppard Press, 1981), 103–16.

² Kristina Myrvold, "Mite Qur'ans for Indian Markets: David Bryce in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century," *Postscripts* 9, no. 2–3 (2013): 181. <https://journals-equinoxpub.com/OLDPOST/article/view/35863/36039>

³ Myrvold, 177–80.

Since the miniature Qur'an was a photo reduction of an Ottoman Qur'an which was distributed through a transnational network (discussed below), there was confusion about the exact origin; it was often thought that it was printed in Turkey or India – trustworthy places in the eyes of the Muslim community. For example, collector Willem Stammeshaus noted that in Aceh the Bryce Qur'an was known as *koran Estambon* (Istanbul Qur'an).⁴

Western sources often repeat stories about the Bryce Qur'ans being used as charms and talismans. Such stories exist in relation to the famous Lawrence of Arabia, who allegedly saw an Arab warrior wearing one, and this supposedly led to Muslim soldiers fighting on the British side during WW I being issued Bryce Qur'ans in order to be used as amulets.⁵ Regarding Java, civil administrator Daniël Hendrik Meijer noted that criminals (allegedly) used "miniature Qur'ans from Constantinople, with metal locket which have a magnifying glass on the front. These booklets were hung in incense smoke to achieve invisibility. The booklets do not contain any special texts."⁶ Based on such stories, the Bryce Qur'ans in Dutch museums were registered as Qur'an-amulets. Some were even presumed to be handwritten; only in 2012, after the donation by Knecht, did curators discover that they were actually printed Qur'ans that were produced in Glasgow. Nevertheless, it is certainly possible that some Indonesians wore the Qur'ans for protective purposes.

Provenance report

The Qur'an was donated to the Tropenmuseum by Joop Knecht in 2012. Joop was born into a working class family in Vlaardingen. His father was a factory worker and a labourer in the harbour of Rotterdam. Locally, the Knecht family is known for the fact that during WW II they hid four Jews in their small home. During the Indonesian War of Independence, Joop was conscripted into the army. He was a member of the socialist youth organisation, Arbeiders Jeugd Centrale (AJC), which was sending packages to him during his stay in Indonesia.⁷

Before the donation, the museum inquired about the provenance of Qur'an, and Joop's wife, Petronella Grada Knecht-Lens, provided some information in a letter.⁸ She wrote that it was still difficult for her husband to speak about several instances (*verschillende momenten [zijn] nog steeds niet bespreekbaar*), but they would try to inform the museum to their best ability:

"My husband was stationed at the Huzaren van Boreel in Amersfoort. Being a conscripted soldier, he had to go to the Indies in 1948 and was assigned to the volunteers of 6 esk PAW.⁹ Almost the entire period of his service he had been walking across half of Java. Out on patrol, he thinks near Tasikmalaja, they drove and nearly walked into a deep trench that was probably dug by extremists who wanted to get back at their enemies (what the Dutch were to them, in fact). After inspecting the trench, he saw the booklet and took it, dirty and filthy [as it was]. Given the damage it had been in the ground for a long time. After his return in 1951 we kept the booklet in a small box."¹⁰

⁴ Memoirs F.W. Stammeshaus, part I, p. 94. Stammeshaus archives, Stammeshaus family collection.

⁵ Myrvold, "Mite Qur'ans for Indian Markets: David Bryce in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century," 183–86.

⁶ D.H. Meijer, "Bijgeloof in dienst van de politie en de misdadigers," *Djawa* 15 (1935): 122.

<https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.56427/page/n131/mode/2up>

⁷ Herman van de Lee, *De Arbeiders Jeugd Centrale in Vlaardingen*, 2004. <https://www.hvv-vlaardingen.nl/upload/Jaarboeken/JB%202004%20De%20arbeiders%20Jeugd%20Centrale%20in%20Vlaardingen%20-%20Herman%20van%20de%20Lee.pdf>

⁸ Letter P.G. Knecht-Lens to J.H. van Brakel, head of collections Tropenmuseum, 30 November 2011. Archives Tropenmuseum (lange lijst).

⁹ 6e Eskadron Pantserwagens.

¹⁰ "Mijn man was gelegerd bij de Huzaren van Boreel in Amersfoort. In 1948 moest hij als dienstplichtig soldaat naar Indie en werd ingedeeld bij een ploeg vrijwilligers 6 esk PAW. Vrijwel de gehele diensttijd heeft hij lopende half Java doorkruist. Op een patrouille volgens hem bij Tasikmalaja reden en liepen ze bijna in een diep gegraven geul, waarschijnlijk gegraven door extremisten die hun vijanden (wat Nederland in feite voor hen waren) een hak wilde zetten. Na bezichtiging van de geul zag hij het boekje liggen en heeft het vies en vuil

Apparently, Tropenmuseum staff had raised the issue of repatriation, because she added: “to be honest, we secretly hoped that it had [monetary] value. But we are at peace with this, and if Indonesia is happy with it, we agree, on the condition that we know where it will stay.”¹¹

The archives of the Dutch Ministry of Defence confirm the information in the letter.¹² Joop Knegt was conscripted on the 9 April 1947 and assigned to the Huzaren van Boreel, a regiment of which the most important role is armoured reconnaissance.¹³ For several months, Knegt trained to be a scout at the base in Amersfoort. On 15 February 1948, he arrived in the Indonesia, and returned to the Netherlands on 19 April 1950 (not 1951, as indicated in the letter). His *staat van dienst* (military service records) is incomplete and gives no information about what happened during the period in between. A glimpse of information can be found in the memorial book that was published on the occasion of the two-year anniversary of the 6^e Eskadron Pantserwagens (6th Squadron Tanks). It mentions that on 1 March 1948 a supplementary detachment arrived and that they were able to form a support platoon (*ondersteuningspeloton*). The platoon consisted of 20 men, and Knegt was part of the second section of five men.¹⁴ This information supports the letter, which describes a reconnaissance mission that indeed could have been carried out by the platoon.



Commemorative cloth of the Regiment Huzaren van Boreel, 6^e Eskadron Pantserwagens. Photo: Collection Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen Inv.no. TM-2903-9.
<https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/93630>

The logbook of the 6e Eskadron Pantserwagens Regiment Huzaren van Boreel is kept in the National Archives, but most of the information deals with events in 1946 and 1947 and no mission in or near Tasikmalaya is mentioned after 1947.¹⁵ The same applies to the reports and squadron history summaries that are present at the NIMH (Nederlands Instituut voor Militaire Historie).¹⁶ From web sources, a general timeline for 1948-1950, when Knegt was in Java, can be made. During the spring of 1948, the tanks were repaired and the squadron was given infantry duties in West Java (Sindang Laut, Ciledug) and Central Java (Subah, Ketanggungan).¹⁷ During Operation Crow (*operatie Kraai*, 19 December 1948-5 January 1949), the squadron pulled up from Semarang to Ceput. After that, the squadron was split up in several detachments that were stationed in different locations in Central Java, such as Pati, Japara, Kudus, Purwodadi, Juwana and Rembang. Later it was involved in fighting

meegenomen. Gezien de beschadiging had het al lang in de grond gelegen. Na z'n thuiskomst in 1951 is het boekje bij ons in een doosje bewaard gebleven.”

¹¹ “Eerlijk gezegd hadden we een stille hoop dat het iets waard zou zijn. Maar hier hebben we ook vrede mee, en als Indonesië hier blij mee is vinden we het goed, onder voorbehoud dat we wel willen weten waar het verblijft.”

¹² Staat van dienst Pieter Joseph Knegt. Archives Ministry of Defence, no inventory number.

¹³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Regiment_Huzaren_van_Boreel

¹⁴ J.M.P. Joncheere and J.M.J.G. Balendong, *Gedenkboek uitgegeven ter gelegenheid van het twee jarig bestaan van het 6e Eskadron Pantserwagens Regt. Huzaren van Boreel*, 1948, 13; 59.

¹⁵ NL-HaNA, Inventaris van de collectie archieven Strijdkrachten in Nederlands-Indië 2.13.132/3114 and 3310.

¹⁶ NIMH, Dekolonisatie van Nederlands-Indië (1945 - 1950), 509/1425 and 1426. 6e Eskadron Pantserwagens (6 ESK. PAW).

¹⁷ <https://proxy.archieven.nl/0/B9FD2DDD5ED341C8A14DBDFE5CF21E5E>

¹⁷ <http://www.indie-1945-1950.nl/web/6eskpaw.htm>

in Surakarta. By the end of 1949 the squadron reunited in Semarang. Therefore, if the information in the letter is correct and the Qur'an was found near Tasikmalaya, it most likely happened in March-May 1948 when the squadron operated in West Java. In those months the Siliwangi division of the Republican armed forces had been forced to retreat from the area, but a number of Islamic militias, such as the Hizbullah and Sabilillah, remained active.¹⁸

There are several sources giving evidence that fighters of the Islamic militias, as well as those of the Indonesian armed forces, frequently made use of protective rituals and amulets, believing that they would protect them, or even render them invulnerable.¹⁹ Such amulets ranged from a small slip of paper issued by local *'ulama* (Islamic scholars), sometimes wrapped in a belt around the waist, to a strip of fabric worn across the forehead into battle, to an heirloom *keris* dagger, blessed by an Islamic leader and imbued with power.²⁰ The Bryce Qur'an could also have been used for such purposes. Since protective objects and Qur'ans were carried by fighters of all Indonesian factions, and the precise location where it was found is unknown, it cannot be established which faction the owner belonged to.

Although it is not known who owned the Qur'an before it was taken by Joop Knecht, it is possible to make some general remarks about how Qur'ans like this copy arrived in Indonesia. David Bryce and Sons, the publishing company that issued it, exported the miniature Qur'ans through an international network. From the firm's correspondence it can be seen that the books were sold to a Mumbai-based bookseller named D.B. Taraporevala Sons & Co., from where they were shipped to various countries in Asia and Africa and sold to a Muslim clientele.²¹ Given the omnipresence of Mumbai-printed Islamic books in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Indonesia, and therefore the existence of a trade network, it is very well possible that Java was one of the regions to which the books were distributed. Another route may have been through Mecca. The newspaper *Lincolnshire Echo* wrote in 1913 that "the trade in miniature 'Korans' is, it appears, at its highest during the season when pilgrims from every part of the East undertake their annual visit to Mecca, and ten thousand other copies are to be shipped to Bombay in the course of the next few weeks."²² The Tropenmuseum collection contains a copy of a David Bryce miniature Qur'an (TM-687-49) that has a more detailed provenance. It was given as a present to collector Willem Stammeshaus in 1921. Three years before that, in 1918, it was bought in Mecca by an Acehese woman called Cut Peudada while she was on hajj.²³ She brought it to Aceh and probably gave it as a present to Habib Uma, who donated it to Stammeshaus. From these sources it appears that David Bryce Qur'ans were among the souvenirs Indonesian pilgrims brought with them from the hajj.

¹⁸ Chiara Formichi, *Islam and the Making of the Nation: Kartosuwiryo and Political Islam in Twentieth-Century Indonesia* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2012), 110. <http://booksandjournals.brillonline.com/content/9789004260467>

¹⁹ Kevin W. Fogg, *Indonesia's Islamic Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 79–93; Jean-Marc de Grave, "Javanese Kanuragan Ritual Initiation: A Means to Socialise by Acquiring Invulnerability, Authority, and Spiritual Improvement," *Social Analysis: The International Journal of Social and Cultural Practice* 58, no. 1 (2014): 47–66.

²⁰ Kevin W. Fogg, "Decolonisation and Religion: Islamic Arguments for Indonesian Independence," *Leidschrift* 31, no. 3 (2016): 119.

²¹ Myrvold, "Mite Qur'ans for Indian Markets: David Bryce in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century," 177–79.

²² Quoted in Myrvold, 183.

²³ Memoirs F.W. Stammeshaus, part I, p. 94. Stammeshaus archives, Stammeshaus family collection.