

COLONIAL COLLECTIONS COMMITTEE

RECOMMENDATION

Object	Qur'an WM-74931
Current owner	The Municipality of Rotterdam
Custodian	Wereldmuseum Rotterdam
Application for restitution from	The Republic of Indonesia successively represented by <i>Tim Repatriasi Koleksi Asal Indonesia di Belanda</i> ¹ and <i>Tim Repatriasi Objek Pemajuan Kebudayaan Dan Pengembalian Cagar Budaya Yang Berada Di Luar Wilayah Republik Indonesia Ke Dalam Wilayah Republik Indonesia</i> ² (each hereinafter referred to as: Tim Repatriasi)
Date of application for restitution	1 July 2022
Recommendation number	ID-2025-2
Date of recommendation	17 October 2025
The Colonial Collections Committee ³ consisting of	Lilian Gonçalves-Ho Kang You (chair), Laura van Broekhoven, Remco Raben, Alicia Schrikker (members)
Secretariat	Jona Mooren, Liesbeth Ouwehand

1. The application

On 1 July 2022 the Republic of Indonesia submitted an application to the Dutch State Secretary for Education, Culture and Science for restitution of the printed qur'an from Aceh, described in the

¹ *Tim Repatriasi Koleksi Asal Indonesia di Belanda* consisted of Nadiem Anwar Makarim, Retno Marsudi (leaders/directors), Hilmar Farid (person responsible), I Gusti Agung Wesaka Puja (chair), Bonnie Triyana (secretary), Oman Faturrahman, Sri Margana, Junus Satrio Atmodjo, Ninie Susanti Tedjowasono, Gabriel Roosmargo Lono Lastoro Simatupang, Irmawati Marwoto, Bondan Kanumoyoso (members), Sadiyah Boonstra (external adviser).

² *Tim Repatriasi Objek Pemajuan Kebudayaan Dan Pengembalian Cagar Budaya Yang Berada Di Luar Wilayah Republik Indonesia Ke Dalam Wilayah Republik Indonesia* consists of Fadli Zon (adviser), Endah T.D. Retnoastuti (person responsible), Ismunandar (chair), Masyitoh Annisa Ramadhani Alkatiri, Anindita Kusuma Listya, Basuki Teguh Yuwono, Agus Aris Munandar, Oman Faturrahman, Bambang Sunarto, Suryadi, Ninie Susanti, Putu Supadma Rudana (members), Raden Usman Effendi (coordinator), Anton Wibisono, Andhini Widyasari, Khanifudin Malik, Fatwa Yulianto (secretary).

³ The Advisory Committee on the Restitution of Cultural Objects from a Colonial Context (in short: the Colonial Collections Committee) was established on 6 September 2022 by the Dutch State Secretary for Education, Culture and Science.

application as “*koran van Teuku Umar, 1896, (...) Coll. Wereldmuseum Rotterdam inv.nr. 74931*” [Qur’an of Teuku Umar, 1896, (...) Wereldmuseum Rotterdam Coll. inv. no. 74931] from the collection of the Municipality of Rotterdam, which is in the custody of Wereldmuseum Rotterdam.

2. The object

The Qur’an is printed in black ink on paper. The colophon states that the book was printed in February 1879 (1269 AH) by publishing company al-Hasaniyya in Bombay (now Mumbai) in India, based on calligraphy by Muhammad Sammah transferred to lithography.⁴ It is bound in red leather with a folding flap. The leather is decorated with silver stamping. Lithographed Qur’ans such as this one were produced on a large scale in India in the second half of the 19th century and exported to Indonesia, and several Qur’ans to which this applies can be found in Dutch collections.

The Qur’an that is the subject of the present application for restitution is registered at the Wereldmuseum Rotterdam under inventory number WM-74931.

3. The policy framework

The assessment of the application for restitution took place within the framework of the *Policy vision on collections from a colonial context* of the Dutch Minister of Education, Culture and Science.⁵ The Policy vision is based on the Council for Culture report *Colonial Collection, a Recognition of Injustice*.⁶ Applications for restitution of a cultural object may be made by states where the Netherlands exercised colonial rule or by countries that were colonised by other powers.

The assessment framework set out in the Policy vision can be summarised as follows:

First the Colonial Collections Committee (hereinafter referred to as: the Committee) determines whether the provenance research is sufficient.

Then the Committee establishes whether involuntary loss of possession occurred. To this end it assesses whether it can be established with a reasonable degree of certainty that a country where the Netherlands exercised colonial rule involuntarily lost possession of the cultural object whose restitution is requested and that the cultural object subsequently came into the possession of the Dutch State. If it is established that this is the case, the Committee will recommend unconditional restitution of the cultural object.

If it cannot be established from the provenance history whether involuntary loss of possession occurred, and to the extent that the cultural objects in question are of particular cultural, historical or religious significance for the country of origin, then the Committee will consider the interests involved, whereby the importance of restitution for the country of origin shall be weighed against other relevant interests based on reasonableness and fairness.

⁴ The provenance report mistakenly states 1269 AH instead of 1296 AH.

⁵ Policy vision, 29 January 2021, <https://committee.kolonialecollecties.nl/documents/2021/01/01/policy-vision-on-collections-from-a-colonial-context>

⁶ Report of 7 October 2020, <https://www.raadvoorcultuur.nl/documenten/adviezen/2021/01/22/colonial-collection-and-a-recognition-of-injustice>

Relevant interests may include the cultural importance of the cultural object to the country of origin, the communities involved both in the countries of origin and in the Netherlands, the significance to the Netherlands Collection, future storage conditions and public access. Objects may be significant for national and regional traditions as well as for the identity of a country, people, community or individual. A colonial cultural object will often be of different importance to the Netherlands than to the country of origin. Colonial cultural objects in Dutch museums may also be of special significance to Dutch citizens with roots in the countries of origin.

If the object whose restitution is requested originates from a country formerly colonised by another power, then the Committee will similarly consider the interests involved, thereby weighing the importance of restitution for the country of origin against other relevant interests based on reasonableness and fairness. Rectifying injustice must, however, be the basic premise in this assessment. In such a case, whilst the Netherlands did not cause the injustice, as the current holder of the objects only it is in a position to rectify that injustice.

If the Committee recommends restitution to the applicant state then the transfer of title procedure for public collections shall be observed – in accordance with the Dutch Heritage Act and the *Policy vision on collections from a colonial context* of the Minister of Education, Culture and Science – and the Committee's recommendation shall also be regarded as a recommendation on the indispensability and irreplaceability of the object in the sense of article 4.18 of the Dutch Heritage Act.

4. The procedure

On 1 July 2022 the Republic of Indonesia submitted an application to the Dutch State Secretary for Education, Culture and Science for restitution of the qur'an described in section 1 above.

The letter to Parliament regarding the implementation of the Policy vision states emphatically that the restitution procedure is accessible to other (public) owners, subject to their consent. Because this application for restitution concerns an object that is not part of the Dutch national art collection but is held in the collection of the Municipality of Rotterdam, the ministry of Education, Culture and Science enquired whether the municipality consented to the application being considered in accordance with the aforementioned policy framework. In a letter dated 30 May 2023 the municipal executive of Rotterdam communicated that it wished to present the application to the Committee for a binding opinion.

The custodian of the qur'an, Wereldmuseum Rotterdam, commissioned research into the item's provenance history. The museum released a provenance report to the Committee on 20 December 2022.

The Committee posed a number of supplementary questions to the custodian. It requested an explanation of the fact that there are several qur'ans which have been linked to Teuku Umar. In response, the custodian provided an insight into the various qur'ans that are held in the museum which have been linked to Teuku Umar. This information was also shared with Tim Repatriasi.

At the Committee's request, the custodian also conducted further research into uncertainty surrounding the qur'an's transfer from the Landbouwhogeschool (now Wageningen University & Research) to the Stedelijk Gymnasium secondary school in Schiedam; it was not fully clear from the sources whether it was a gift or a loan. The Wereldmuseum therefore asked whether Wageningen University & Research has any supplementary documents that provide clarity. The university subsequently communicated by letter of 23 October 2024 that it had no further documentation and

that, in the event the university was the owner, it would relinquish ownership of the qur'an. This information was incorporated in the provenance report that was sent to the Committee on 12 December 2024. An English translation of the provenance report was shared with Tim Repatriasi on 15 April 2025.

At a meeting on 26 May 2025 Tim Repatriasi announced that it had no further questions or comments regarding the provenance report. After discussing the restitution application on 17 October 2025 the Committee resolved to recommend as stated below.

5. The provenance research

The provenance research was conducted by the independent provenance researcher Mirjam Shatanawi at the behest of the Wereldmuseum and was edited by Tom Quist, provenance researcher at the Wereldmuseum. The provenance report forms an integral part of this recommendation (*appendix 1*).

In the report the researcher provides the following summary of the findings.

According to the application for restitution the qur'an belonged to the property of Teuku Umar (1854-1899). He was one of the most important resistance leaders during the Dutch war of conquest, known as the Aceh War, and was made a National Hero of Indonesia in 1973.⁷ Teuku Umar turned against the Dutch in March 1896, after which he was pursued by the Royal Netherlands East Indies Army (KNIL) for several years before being killed in 1899. An attack was mounted on Teuku Umar in Lampisang from 23 to 25 May 1896.⁸

According to an inscription on the book's flyleaf dated 6 June 1896, the qur'an was captured on 25 May 1896 by lieutenant quartermaster Ferdinand Kenninck: 'On the 25th of May 1896 (Whit Monday) this qur'an was captured by the undersigned at the home of Teuku Umar at Lam Pisang. Kuta Raja 6 June '96, signed F. Kenninck. 2nd Lieut. Qrnr'.⁹

Kenninck worked for the KNIL military administration in Kuta Raja, Aceh, from March 1895 to August 1896. Kenninck was present as a quartermaster during the attack on Teuku Umar. Various sources describe the looting of Teuku Umar's home by KNIL troops. Shortly after the attack the newspaper *De Locomotief* gave the following account of the events:

'Without encountering any further resistance, the fifth [battalion] reached Umar's house, which was occupied first by a company led by Captain Linck. The Acehnese had been so kind as to leave the main door open, and furthermore our men found most of the contents still in their place. The rumours that Umar had taken his best furniture to Lepong and had left behind only the inferior items, turned out to be untrue. ... The furniture was also such as to provoke jealousy in many a person. An abundance of rocking chairs, chairs with carved foliage, tables with barley twist legs, large mirrors and beautiful cabinets were present. Such a shame that not much will come of so many fine things. I at least saw the fusiliers already busy examining with expert eyes the various items that they had found, and conferring amongst themselves as to what "the lot" might be worth. But still, *à la guerre comme à la guerre*, and our brave boys deserve a little windfall. (...) Friendly Acehnese and Arabs could be seen wandering about

⁷ [National Hero of Indonesia - Wikipedia](#), consulted on 14 October 2025.

⁸ Appendix 1, pp. 3, 4.

⁹ 'Op den 25en Mei 1896 (tweede Pinksterdag) is deze Koran door ondergeteekende buit gemaakt in het huis van Teukoe Oemar te Lam Pisang. Koeta Radja 6 Juni '96, w.g. F. Kenninck. 2e Luit. Kwmr'. Appendix 1, p. 4.

among the furniture that had belonged to Umar, by now smashed to pieces, here and there picking up and taking an item of value – to them at least! And outside a few covered jinrikshaws stood waiting patiently until they received cargo to take to the more peaceful Lam Jamu.¹⁰

The next day Teuku Umar's house was set alight. It emerges from several sources that at least four qur'ans were stolen from the house during the two-day period, including the qur'an seized by Ferdinand Kenninck.¹¹

Acehnese sources indicate that the house where the qur'ans were captured was the residence of Teuku Umar, his wife Cut Nyak Dhien (1848-1908) and their extended family. This makes it plausible that there were several qur'ans in the house.¹²

After its arrival in the Netherlands the qur'an took a circuitous route, from relatives of Ferdinand Kenninck's, via a bequest to the Ministry of Colonies, a donation to the Colonial Institute, a purchase by the Landbouwhogeschool of Wageningen, a probable loan to the Stedelijk Gymnasium in Schiedam to a donation to the Museum voor Land- en Volkenkunde (now Wereldmuseum Rotterdam).¹³

6. Assessment of the restitution application

6.1 Admissibility of the application

First of all, the Committee examined whether the application by the Republic of Indonesia was admissible. The application for restitution was submitted by a state where the Netherlands exercised colonial rule. In this case, the owner of the object whose restitution is requested is not the Dutch State but the Municipality of Rotterdam. The letter to Parliament regarding the implementation of the Policy vision states emphatically that the restitution procedure is accessible to other (public) owners, subject to their consent. The Municipality of Rotterdam consented to the application for restitution being presented to the Committee for a binding opinion. The Committee therefore concludes that the application is admissible.

6.2 Policy framework

¹⁰ 'Zonder verder eenigen tegenstand te ontmoeten bereikte het vijfde [bataljon] Oemar's huis dat het eerst bezet werd door een compagnie onder kapitein Linck. De Atjehers waren nog zoo beleefd geweest de hoofddeur open te laten en behalve dat vonden onze mannen het meeste huisraad nog op haar plaats. De praatjes, dat Oemar zijn beste meubelen naar Lepong had gebracht, en alleen het mindere spul had achtergelaten, bleken niet waar te zijn. ... Ook het meubilair was van dien aard dat menigeen er jaloersch van zou worden. Wipstoelen, stoelen met lofwerk, tafels met gedraaide pooten, groote spiegels, prachtige kasten waren te kust en te keur aanwezig. Bepaald jammer dat van zooveel fraais niet veel te recht zal komen. Ten minste ik zag de fuseliers al druk bezig het een en ander dat zij gevonden hadden, met kenners-oogen te bekijken, en onder elkander overleggen wat "het boeltje" wel waard zou zijn. Enfin, a la guerre comme a la guerre, en een buitenkansje is onzen dapperen best gegund. (...) Bevriende Atjehers en Arabieren zag men tusschen de inmiddels stukgeslagen meubels van Oemar doorwandelen, en hier en daar nog een voorwerp van waarde - althans voor hen! - oppakken en medenemen. En buiten stonden eenige juiirikshaws met hun bespanningen geduldig te wachten, totdat zij een vracht kregen naar het meer vreedzame Lam Djamoë.' Appendix 1, p. 5.

¹¹ Appendix 1, p. 5.

¹² Appendix 1, p. 6.

¹³ Appendix 1, pp. 7-9.

The application for restitution concerns a cultural object from a colonial context. The application therefore falls within the scope of the restitution policy, and the *Policy vision on collections from a colonial context* is applicable.

6.3 The provenance research

In order to assess the application for restitution it is important whether the provenance research is sufficient. The Committee is of the opinion that the research was conducted properly and provides sufficient information for a recommendation to be issued. Thorough source research was undertaken, and a critical evaluation was made of the existing information.

6.4 Substantial assessment

Next, the Committee assessed whether it has been demonstrated with a reasonable degree of certainty that the loss of the cultural object whose restitution is requested was involuntary.

The provenance research shows that an attack took place on the Acehese resistance leader Teuku Umar at Lampisang from 23 to 25 May 1896. During the attack his home was looted and destroyed by KNIL soldiers, who then set the house alight.¹⁴ Colonial sources speak of at least four qur'ans being looted from the house in May 1896. According to the provenance report the question of whether it is plausible that several qur'ans were captured at the same house – and therefore whether the qur'an whose restitution is requested can indeed be linked to Teuku Umar and his family – can be answered in the affirmative.¹⁵ The Committee notes that the inscription on the flyleaf of the book confirms that the qur'an was captured at the home of Teuku Umar on 25 May 1896 by lieutenant quartermaster Ferdinand Kenninck.¹⁶ The provenance research shows that after arriving in the Netherlands the qur'an took a circuitous route, which included for example Ferdinand Kenninck's family, before ending up in the collection of the Wereldmuseum Rotterdam.¹⁷

On the foregoing grounds the Committee established that at least four qur'ans were taken from the home of Teuku Umar and his wife Cut Nyak Dhien in May 1896, including the qur'an that is the subject of the present restitution application. Based on the facts in the provenance report it is not possible to establish whether this qur'an belonged to Teuku Umar himself or to one of his relatives. However, this is not relevant to answering the question of whether involuntary loss of possession occurred.

Conclusion

Based on the aforementioned facts and circumstances the Committee is of the opinion that it is sufficiently plausible that possession of the qur'an that is the subject of the present restitution application was lost involuntarily.

The Committee recommends unconditional restitution of the qur'an.

The Committee is furthermore of the opinion that the metadata, such as archive materials, correspondence and other contextual documentation, should also be put at the disposal of the Republic of Indonesia in the context of rectifying injustice.

The Committee was asked to advise on the application of article 4.18 of the Dutch Heritage Act in the event its recommendation means that the requested object must be restituted. It is the opinion of

¹⁴ Appendix 1, pp. 4, 5.

¹⁵ Appendix 1, p. 6.

¹⁶ Appendix 1, p. 4.

¹⁷ Appendix 1, pp. 7-9.

the Committee that rectification of past injustice prevails in this case and that article 4.18 of the Heritage Act is therefore not applicable.

7. The recommendation

The Committee has assessed the application for restitution and recommends that the municipal executive of Rotterdam proceed with the unconditional restitution to the Republic of Indonesia of the qur'an with inventory number WM-74931 and that the metadata associated with the object be placed at the disposal of the Republic of Indonesia.

This recommendation was adopted by the Colonial Collections Committee on 17 October 2025.

Chair

Secretariat

Lilian Gonçalves-Ho Kang You



Jona Mooren, Liesbeth Ouwehand

Appendix

1. Report on provenance research conducted by Mirjam Shatanawi, 20 December 2022, final edit by Tom Quist, 12 December 2024. Wereldmuseum.

Research report

Author: Mirjam Shatanawi
 Subject: Qur'an WM-74931
 Date: 20 December 2022; last edited by Tom Quist on 12 December 2024

	In care of	Wereldmuseum
	Current owner	Rotterdam City Council
	Inventory number	WM-74931
	Material/technique	Paper; black ink; lithography
 <p><i>Photos: Wereldmuseum. Coll.no. WM-74931</i></p>	Dimensions	24.5 x 17.5 cm

Summary of research results

The Qur'an became part of the collection of the Wereldmuseum in 1997 when it was donated by the Stedelijk Gymnasium high school in Schiedam. Prior to that it had spent many years moving around the Netherlands, changing ownership several times. According to an inscription in the book, the Qur'an was looted from Teuku Umar's home in Lampisang on 25 May 1896 by lieutenant quartermaster Ferdinand Kenninck (1868-1915). This information is corroborated by other sources found during the provenance research on the Qur'an. Teuku Umar (1854-1899) was one of the most important resistance leaders during the Aceh War. He is a national hero in Indonesia. Colonial sources refer to at least four Qur'ans that were looted from his home in May 1896, besides two that were looted from other locations. Sources in Aceh indicated that the house from which the Qur'ans were looted was inhabited by Teuku Umar, his wife Cut Nyak Dhien (1848-1908) and their extended family. It is therefore likely that the Qur'an WM-74931 once belonged to Teuku Umar and/or his relatives.

Reconstructed provenance

February 1879

Qur'an produced at al-Hasaniyya publishing house in Bombay (now Mumbai, India)

Colophon in qur'an WM-74931.

25 May 1896

Ferdinand Kenninck, looted from home of Teuku Umar in Lampisang (Aceh)

Note in qur'an WM-74931.

August 1896

Ferdinandus Josephus Ludovicus Kenninck and Cornelia van Hert of Den Helder

Java-bode: publication containing general news, trade news and advertising for the Dutch East Indies, 17 September 1896.

? - 1939

Margaretha Catharina Kenninck of Utrecht

NL-UtrHUA, Bisschoppen van Deventer, 86-2, inv.no. 295.

1940

Ministerie van Koloniën (Ministry of Colonies), bequest of Margaretha Catharina Kenninck

NL-UtrHUA, Bisschoppen van Deventer, 86-2, inv.no. 295.

NL-HaNA, KIT-Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen, 2.20.69, inv.no. 7498.

1940-1948

Koloniaal Instituut (now Wereldmuseum Amsterdam), donated by Ministerie van Koloniën

NL-HaNA, KIT-Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen, 2.20.69, inv.no. 7498.

Inventory card TM-1378-1, digitalised in TMS.

1948-voor 1962

Landbouwhogeschool (Agricultural College, now Wageningen University and Research),
purchased from Indisch Instituut (formerly Koloniaal Instituut)

NL-HaNA, KIT-Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen, 2.20.69, inv.no. 4402.

Before 1962-1997

Stedelijk Gymnasium Schiedam, on loan from Landbouwhogeschool

NL-RtdWMR, Collectiearchief Wereldmuseum, Aanwinstenlijst 2000-2004: Afrika, Amerika, Azië.

1997-present

Museum voor Land- en Volkenkunde (now Wereldmuseum Rotterdam), donated by Stedelijk
Gymnasium Schiedam

NL-RtdWMR, Collectiearchief Wereldmuseum, Aanwinstenlijst 2000-2004: Afrika, Amerika, Azië.

Introduction and research context

This research was conducted in connection with a request of July 2022 from the Republic of Indonesia for restitution of the qur'an that once belonged to Teuku Umar. Two of the six qur'ans with a connection to Teuku Umar were investigated in connection with this request. The two qur'ans are in the collection of Wereldmuseum Amsterdam (TM-H-2089) and Wereldmuseum Rotterdam (WM-74931). A third qur'an (TM-1482-1) had already been investigated as part of the Provenance Research on Objects of the Colonial Era Pilot Project (PPROCE, 2019-2022) run by the NIOD Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies and Rijksmuseum Amsterdam.¹ A fourth qur'an at Leiden University Libraries was only indirectly involved in this research. The whereabouts of the two other qur'ans are unknown.

Several experts in Indonesia were consulted for the purposes of this report: historian Yudi Andika (head of the heritage department at the Bureau of Culture and Tourism, Banda Aceh), manuscript expert Dr. Nurdin AR (Ar-Raniri State Islamic University of Banda Aceh), Hafnidar (former curator at Aceh Museum) and Salya Rusdi (of the Centre for the Preservation of the Cultural Heritage of Aceh, Ministry of Culture). On 2 November 2022 a visit, under the guidance of Mr Rusdi, was made to Rumah Cut Nyak Dhien in Lampisang, Aceh. Dr. Ali Akbar was consulted on the object description; he is a researcher associated with BRIN (Badan Riset dan Inovasi Nasional) in Jakarta and an expert on printed qur'ans in Southeast Asia.

Introduction and object context

This printed qur'an was donated to the Koloniaal Instituut (Colonial Institute, of which today's Wereldmuseum Amsterdam formed part) in 1940 as having come from the home of Teuku Umar (1854-1899), the famous resistance leader from Aceh, for decades regarded as the main opponent of the Dutch there. He came from the lower nobility (*hulubalang*) and his family were indirectly related to the sultan of Aceh. Between 1884 and 1896 Teuku Umar switched between being an ally and enemy of the Dutch army. In 1893 he was given command of a legion of soldiers that fought alongside the Koninkrijk Nederlandsch-Indisch Leger (Royal Netherlands East Indies Army, KNIL). In March 1896 he turned against the Dutch once more, which led to him being pursued by the KNIL for many years and, ultimately, to his death in 1899.

During the colonial period objects belonging to Teuku Umar were in great demand with museums and private collectors. It was a matter of pride and prestige to own items attributed to him. There are therefore several such objects at museums in the Netherlands. To date, eleven objects at NMVW have been described as originating with Teuku Umar. Other museums in the Netherlands, including the Wereldmuseum and Museum Bronbeek, also possess items that are said to have belonged to Teuku Umar.² It is not certain that all of these items actually did belong to Teuku Umar, as donors and sellers may have had reason to attribute objects to him in order to inflate their value. Not all the Teuku Umar objects in Dutch museum collections were looted; some were purchased or gifted by Teuku Umar or his relatives.

¹ Mirjam Shatanawi, *Provenance Report Regarding Handgeschreven Koran Met Rijk Versierde Folio's [Qur'an Manuscript]*, PPROCE Provenance Reports 18 (Amsterdam: NIOD, Rijksmuseum, Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen, 2022).

² For a provisional list of Teuku Umar objects in public collections in the Netherlands, see Appendix A in: Caroline A. Drieënhuizen, 'Koloniaal collecties, Nederlands aanzien: De Europese elite van Nederlands-Indië belicht door haar verzamelingen, 1811-1957' (Universiteit van Amsterdam PhD thesis, 2012).

Lithographed qur'ans imported from India were common in Indonesia in the second half of the 19th century.³ They were produced on a large scale (30,000 copies in 1871) and could be bought cheaply (in India).⁴ There are therefore several qur'ans that were printed in India and came from Indonesia in Dutch museum collections: Wereldmuseum Amsterdam and Wereldmuseum Leiden have fifteen and Wereldmuseum Rotterdam has four.

Object information

On the final page of the qur'an there is a colophon which states that the book was printed in the month of rabi' al-awwal 1269 AH (February AD 1879) by the al-Hasaniyya publishing house in Mumbai, on the basis of calligraphy by Muhammad Sammah. This calligraphy in the naskh script was transposed to a lithograph. The binding is of red leather, and has a protruding cover. Silver decorations are embossed into the leather; they form a square containing a rosette. The qur'an is in good condition, though there is a hole in the leather on the inside of the cover.

Two inventory numbers have been noted in the qur'an: 110 Sch and 8-1; these are probably the numbers from the Stedelijk Gymnasium Schiedam and the Landbouwhogeschool (Agricultural College) in Wageningen. There are no handwritten notes in Arabic or in an Indonesian language in the volume, nor are there any other signs of ownership from the period before it came into the possession of Ferdinand Kenninck.

Interestingly, the three printed qur'ans in Dutch collections related to Teuku Umar were all produced in 1879 by the same publisher, al-Hasaniyya. There are however marginal differences in the execution of the text and the illuminations on the opening pages, so it is clear that they are different editions.

Provenance – connection with Teuku Umar

According to an inscription on the flyleaf of the book dated 6 June 1896, the qur'an was looted by lieutenant quartermaster Ferdinand Kenninck (1868-1915) on 25 May 1896: "On the 25th of May 1896 (Whit Monday) this qur'an was taken by the undersigned from the home of Teuku Umar in Lam Pisang. Kota Radja 6 June '96, signed F. Kenninck. 2nd Lieut. qrmr".

Ferdinand Kenninck worked for the military administration in Kota Radja, Aceh (now Banda Aceh) from March 1895 to August 1896.⁵ The attack on Teuku Umar in Lampisang took place on 23-25 May 1896. During the attack Kenninck, as quartermaster, was responsible for the troops' quarters, including finding accommodation for them and having food prepared for them.⁶ In this capacity, he would have travelled with the troops. After Lampisang had been captured, it was the quartermaster's task to establish the headquarters of the expeditionary force there.

³ Edwin Wieringa, 'Malay Graffiti in a Nineteenth-Century Lithographed Bombay Qur'an', *Heritage of Nusantara: International Journal of Religious Literature and Heritage* 7, no. 1 (2018): 79–93, <https://doi.org/10.31291/hn.v7i1.516>.

⁴ Moinuddin Aqeel, 'Commencement of Printing in the Muslim World: A View of Impact on Ulama at Early Phase of Islamic Moderate Trends', *Kyoto Bulletin of Islamic Area Studies* 2, no. 2 (2009): 18–19; Ulrike Stark, 'Calligraphic Masterpiece, Mass-Produced Scripture: Early Qur'an Printing in Colonial India', in *Manuscript and Print in the Islamic Tradition*, ed. Scott Reese (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2022), 161–62, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110776485-006>.

⁵ Mutatiën bij het officierskorps van het Ned.-Indische leger gedurende de maand maart 1895. *Indisch Militair Tijdschrift* 26/3, January 1895, p. 576. Mutatiën bij het officierskorps van het Ned.-Indische leger gedurende de maand augustus 1896. *Indisch Militair Tijdschrift* 27/8, July 1896, p. 477.

⁶ A. Kruisheer, *Atjeh 1896*, vol. 2 (Weltevreden: Visser & Co., 1913), 155–56; 189.

Several sources describe how the home of Teuku Umar was looted by the KNIL soldiers and then set alight. These sources include both eye witness accounts published in Dutch newspapers shortly after the attack and egodocuments and accounts published in the following decades. The war correspondent of *De Locomotief*, for example, published a report of the attack on 24 May 1896:⁷

“Without any further resistance the fifth [battalion] reached Umar’s house, that was first occupied by a company led by Captain Linck. The Acehnese had been so kind as to leave the main door open, and furthermore our men found most of the contents still in their place. The rumours that Umar had taken the best furniture to Lepong, and had left behind only the inferior items, turned out to be untrue. ... The furniture was also such as to provoke jealousy in many. Rocking chairs, chairs with carved foliage, tables with turned legs, large mirrors, beautiful cabinets were present in abundance. Regrettable indeed that not much will become of so many fine things. I at least saw the fusiliers examining with expert eyes the things they had found, and conferring among themselves as to what ‘the lot’ might be worth. But still, a la guerre comme a la guerre, and our brave men deserve a little windfall.

“I fear, however, that in the retreat not much of this furniture will make it back to Kota Radja, for there is already enough to drag along besides tables and chairs. Cattle are useful spoils: buffalo and goats that can be tethered to something with a rope and taken along with ease. It was generally a comical sight, a coarse, heavy-set bombardier or fusilier, his beard down to his chest, bringing along a he-goat, or scavenging around with an unwilling calf in tow. How many of those beasts, ducks, chickens and other creatures I might have bought today, and cheaply too, I cannot say.... Friendly Acehnese and Arabs were seen wandering among the now demolished furniture that had belonged to Umar, here and there taking an item of value – to them at least! And outside there were several rickshaws waiting patiently until they received cargo to take to the more peaceful Lam Jamu.”

A day later, Teuku Umar’s house was set alight. Evidence uncovered to date suggests that at least four qur’ans were taken from the house in those two days:

- Two qur’ans taken by Sergeant major Meijer Content (1862-1930).⁸ One of these was gifted to Leiden University Library in 1900, and is still in its collection.⁹ The current whereabouts of the other qur’an are unknown.
- A “lovely qur’an” taken by Captain G.C.E. “Frits” van Daalen (1863-1930).¹⁰ Current whereabouts unknown. Van Daalen may have given the book to Islam expert Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje, as he did with other manuscripts and books, and it may now be in one of the collections of Leiden University Library or of the Perpustakaan Nasional in Jakarta.
- The qur’an looted by quartermaster Ferdinand Kenninck.

There is also a printed qur’an which, according to the donor, was looted from the trenches near Lampisang (TM-H-2089) and a qur’an manuscript (TM-1482-1) looted in Lepong as Teuku Umar fled.

⁷ ‘Atjeh’, *De locomotief: Samarangsch handels- en advertentie-blad*, 9 June 1896, Day edition, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010294321:mpeg21:a0001>.

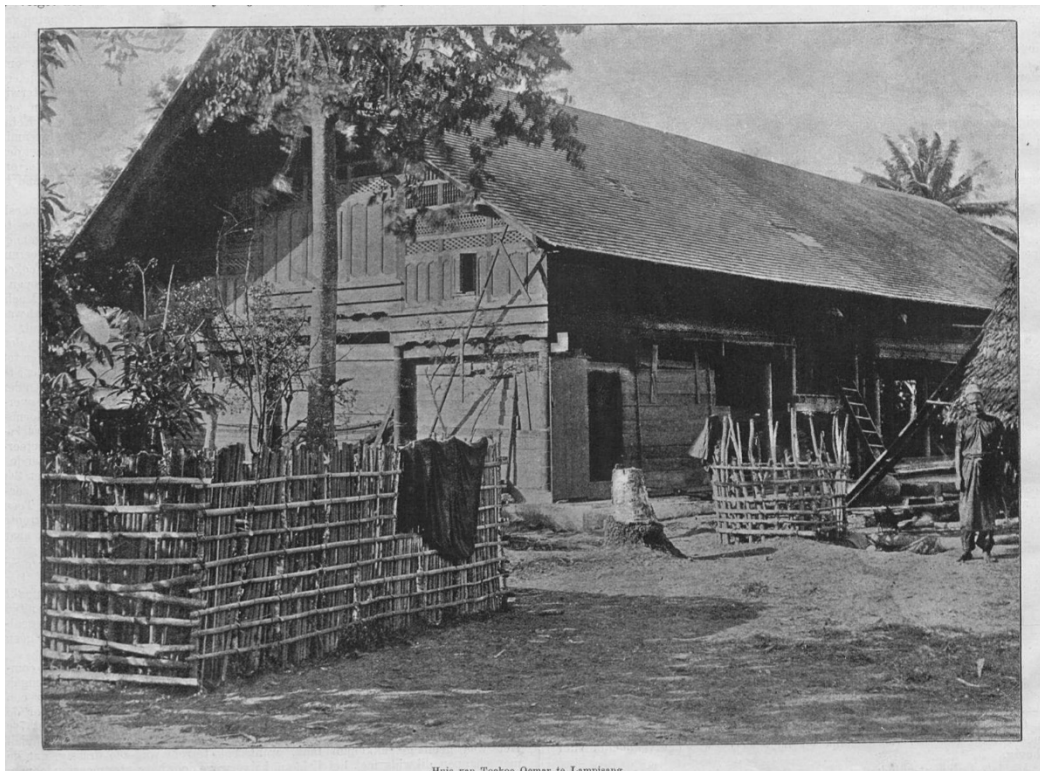
⁸ ‘Nederlandsch-Indië’, *De locomotief: Samarangsch handels- en advertentie-blad*, 17 November 1896, Day edition, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010294460:mpeg21:a0004>.

⁹ An inscription in this qur’an (866 D 18) states that M. Content took the book from the home of Teuku Umar on 25 May 1896. https://catalogue.leidenuniv.nl/permalink/f/n95gpi/UBL_ALMA21162325180002711 This therefore differs from the report in *De Locomotief*, which states “came from Teuku Umar”. The newspaper also reports that a “native miracle doctor” had offered ten guilders for one of the qur’ans..

¹⁰ Letter from G.C.E. van Daalen to Christine Elisabeth de Lang Evertsen, 27 May 1896. Special Collections, Leiden University/ H.T. Damsté collection.

Besides the qur'ans, at least one other manuscript ended up in a Dutch collection after the attack on Lampisang.¹¹

The question is whether it is possible that there were several qur'ans at the house. The Acehnese historians consulted during this research have no information as to who exactly lived at the house in Lampisang. They do however point out that it was home to several families. It was common for several generations to live under the same roof, and close relatives, particularly sisters, and their families also often lived together. This is confirmed by colonial sources. The war correspondent of *De Locomotief*, for example, wrote: "In the main building I saw a large double bed, and in the auxiliary buildings there were a further two of the same size. Our 'Panglima Prang Besar' thus appeared to like variety and comfort when it came to sleeping arrangements."¹² The three beds, which the correspondent interpreted as evidence of a nuclear family's decadent lifestyle, in fact suggest that several families lived there. The Acehnese historians believe it likely that the different relatives had their own qur'an, which is why there were several qur'ans present at the house.



Huis van Toekoo Oemar te Lampisang.
The home of Teuku Umar / Cut Nyak Dhien in Lampisang (Source: *Een officier van het Nederlands-Indisch Leger in actieven dienst, De Atjeh-onlusten in 1896*, Rotterdam: Nijgh & van Ditmar, 1896). <http://hdl.handle.net/1887.1/item:129763>

There are also different interpretations of the house itself. The construction of the dwelling in Lampisang had been paid for by the colonial administration, as a reward for Teuku Umar's siding with the Dutch in 1893. While Dutch colonial sources refer to Teuku Umar's house, Acehnese sources regard the house as the property of Cut Nyak Dhien, the best known of Umar's wives. According to customary law (*adat*) in Aceh the marital home belonged to the wife, and her husband

¹¹ Majid Daneshgar, 'A Very Old Malay Islamic Manuscript', *Indonesia and the Malay World* 50, no. 147 (2022): 161–72, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13639811.2021.1975968>.

¹² 'Atjeh'.

lodged with her.¹³ A replica of the house was built in 1982, at the precise location of the original in Lampisang. It is now a museum known as Rumah Cut Nyak Dhien.

Provenance – history in the Netherlands

After Ferdinand Kenninck looted the qur'an in May 1896, he promised to send it to his brother in Amersfoort so that it could be exhibited there "for charity".¹⁴ Several Dutch newspapers reported this news in July 1896. Ferdinand's brother was Franciscus Kenninck (1869-1937), a professor at the Old Catholic Seminary in Amersfoort.¹⁵ In August and September the newspapers reported that the book had arrived at the home of the brothers' parents, boatman Ferdinandus Josephus Ludovicus Kenninck and Cornelia van Hert, in Den Helder. According to these reports, the qur'an looked "quite ordinary", apart from the inscription, yet many came to look at it. The *Java-bode*, for example, carried the following report on 17 September 1896:

"The Qur'an of Teuku Umar, taken from his home in Lam Pisang in May last by lieut. quartermaster F. Kenninck, has been received by the lieutenant's parents in Helder and has already been viewed by many there. The book shows signs of long use; it is bound extremely simply in red leather and the cover has a silver edging. Otherwise there is no decoration or indication that it comes from such a 'great' as Teuku Umar."¹⁶

It is not clear where exactly the qur'an was in the decades following 1896, other than that it remained in the possession of the Kenninck family. Margaretha Catharina ("Gré") Kenninck (b. 1870), sister of Ferdinand Kenninck, died in 1939. Her estate was administered by executor Engelbertus Lagerwey (1880-1959).¹⁷ On 25 January 1940 Lagerwey approached the Ministerie van Koloniën (Ministry of Colonies) informing it that while securing some household effects a "fine bound copy" of a qur'an had come into his hands, and he reported the inscription on the flyleaf.¹⁸ The letter did not name the owner of the effects, but the file on the administration of the estate of Gré Kenninck indicates that it was she.¹⁹ How the qur'an came into her possession is unclear. Possible routes include via her brother Ferdinand, her parents, or her brother Franciscus Kenninck, who at the time of his death in 1937 was Catholic Bishop of Utrecht. Gré lived with him at the time of his death.²⁰ Gré Kenninck was the sole heir of her brother Franciscus.²¹ Lagerwey wanted to gift the qur'an to the ministry so that it could be included in the national collection. The ministry

¹³ See also J. Kreemer, *Atjèh: algemeen samenvattend overzicht van land en volk van Atjèh en onderhoorigheden*, vol. I (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1922), 256–57; 355–56.

¹⁴ 'Het Vaderland', *Het Vaderland*, 15 August 1896, Day edition, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=MMKB23:001438040:mpeg21:a00027>.

¹⁵ https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Franciscus_Kenninck
<https://resources.huygens.knaw.nl/bwn1880-2000/lemmata/bwn1/kenninck>
<https://carolinedrieenhuizen.wordpress.com/2016/06/08/het-merkwaardige-boek-de-koran-van-teuku-umar-in-nederland>.

¹⁶ 'De Mail', *Java-bode: nieuws, handels- en advertentieblad voor Nederlandsch-Indie*, 17 September 1896, Day edition, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010496594:mpeg21:a0016>.

¹⁷ NL-UtrHUA, Bisschoppen van Deventer, 86-2, inv.no. 295. Stukken betreffende de nalatenschap van M.C. Kenninck, waarvan Lagerwey optrad als executeur testamentair, 1937-1940.

¹⁸ Letter from E. Lagerwey to Ministerie van Koloniën, 25 January 1940. NL-UtrHUA, Bisschoppen van Deventer, 86-2, inv.no. 295. Copies of this correspondence can also be found in NL-HaNA, KIT-Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen, 2.20.69, inv.no. 7498.

¹⁹ NL-UtrHUA, Bisschoppen van Deventer, 86-2, inv.no. 295. Stukken betreffende de nalatenschap van M.C. Kenninck, waarvan Lagerwey optrad als executeur testamentair, 1937-1940.

²⁰ *Volledig Amersfoortsch adresboek* (Amersfoort: A.W.H. Eymann, 1914), XXXI.

²¹ NL-UtrHUA, Aartsbisschoppen van Utrecht, 86-1, inv.no. 713-2. Testament van Franciscus Kenninck, 1923, en acte van benoeming van executeurs, 1929, met stukken betreffende de afwikkeling van zijn nalatenschap, 1937.

accepted his offer, and in turn gave the qur'an to the Koloniaal Instituut.²² The qur'an was incorporated into the Institute's collection, under inventory number 1378-1.²³ It was displayed as part of its permanent exhibit on Sumatra (1926-1950).²⁴

In 1948 the Koloniaal Instituut (which by now was known as the Indisch Instituut) sold the qur'an, along with 88 other items, to the Landbouwhogeschool (Agricultural College, now Wageningen University and Research) for the sum of 3000 guilders.²⁵ The college's ethnographic collection had been largely destroyed during the Second World War and it had been granted central government funding to build a new collection. The college had a small museum exhibit that was used for demonstration purposes in geography and ethnology classes.²⁶ The collection was managed by Frits Herman ("Kees") van Naerssen (1904-1974), who had taught at the college since 1946, prior to which he had been a curator at the Koloniaal Instituut.

The Indisch Instituut regarded the objects sold to the college as duplicates.²⁷ The transaction was recorded as an "exchange", indicating that the proceeds were immediately spent on objects (series TM-1862) purchased from Jaap Langewis, a dealer in ethnographic objects and also a curator at the Koloniaal Instituut.²⁸ The linking of the sale and purchase meant that the objects were "exchanged", as it were, among the three parties.

Five years later it was found that a large proportion of the newly formed ethnographic collection was missing.²⁹ It is unclear whether these objects have ever been found. At some unknown point between 1955 and 1962 virtually the entire (remaining?) collection, including the qur'an, was given on long-term loan to the Stedelijk Gymnasium in Schiedam, at the request of geography teacher Dr. P.B. Vermeij.³⁰ Collections of ethnographic objects were used at high schools like the Stedelijk Gymnasium for the purposes of demonstration in class. In 1962 the college gifted 174 objects that were on long-term loan in Schiedam to the Ethnographisch Museum in Delft.³¹ The qur'an, and an unknown number of other objects, remained at the Stedelijk Gymnasium, however.

In 1997 the Museum voor Land- en Volkenkunde (now Wereldmuseum Rotterdam) approached the Stedelijk Gymnasium Schiedam to ask if the school's ethnographic collection could be transferred to

²² Letter from Ministerie van Koloniën to E. Lagerwey, 15 February 1940. NL-HUA, Bisschoppen van Deventer, 86-2, inv.no. 295.

²³ Inventory card TM-1378-1, digitalised in TMS.

²⁴ NL-AsdTM, Collectiearchief Tropenmuseum, standplaatskaart TM-1378-1.

²⁵ Correspondence between C.T. Bertling and the general secretary of the Indisch Instituut, 12 and 17 November 1948. NL-HaNA, KIT-Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen, 2.20.69, inv.no. 4402.

²⁶ NL-GldA, 0740 Rijkslandbouwschool, Rijks Hogere Land-, Tuin- en Bosbouwschool en Landbouwhogeschool te Wageningen. Stukken betreffende de verzameling etnografica, 1941-1955, inv. no. 2324. Inventaris van de verzamelingen en leermiddelen van de afdeling Land- en volkenkunde, aangelegd in 1904 en bijgehouden tot 1929, 1904-1929, inv. no. 2833.

²⁷ Correspondence between C.T. Bertling and the general secretary of the Indisch Instituut, 12 and 17 November 1948. NL-HaNA, KIT-Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen, 2.20.69, inv.no. 4402.

²⁸ NL-AsdTM, Collectiearchief Tropenmuseum. Register van afschrijvingen, afschrijvingsnummer 178.

²⁹ 'Honderd museumstukken spoorloos verdwenen', *Algemeen Dagblad*, 6 August 1953, Day edition, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=MMKB19:000359080:mpeg21:a00086>. Interestingly, the collection was referred to as belonging to Van Naerssen, whereas the archive documentation indicated that Koloniaal Instituut sold the objects to the college. There may however have been more than one collection.

³⁰ Correspondence between J.H.L. Joosten (professor at Landbouwhogeschool) and J. de Hoog (curator at Ethnographisch Museum Delft), March 1962. TMS information on object 7082-BL-16-1, accessed on 4 December 2022.

³¹ *Ibid.*

the museum.³² The school made an inventory of the 127 items in the collection, from which the museum was invited to choose around 100 items. After the objects had arrived in Rotterdam the museum staff recognised the inventory numbers as coming from the Tropenmuseum (the former Koloniaal Instituut). The Koloniaal Instituut had sold all of these objects (at different times) to the Landbouwhogeschool. It was suspected that “a professor from Wageningen” (this is probably a reference to Kees van Naerssen) had gifted the objects to the Stedelijk Gymnasium Schiedam again.³³ Archive documentation shows, however, that they were given on loan.³⁴

The Stedelijk Gymnasium’s gift to the Wereldmuseum was formalised in 2003. After consultation with Wereldmuseum Amsterdam and the Stedelijk Gymnasium, Wereldmuseum Rotterdam decided to return the objects from the Tropenmuseum to that museum. The qur’an was the only object that was not returned under this arrangement, and it remains at the Wereldmuseum, the argument being: “This object is a welcome addition to the limited collection of qur’ans at the WMR [Wereldmuseum Rotterdam, trans.] and it furthermore has great historical value due to the inscription which indicates that the qur’an was looted during the Aceh War.”³⁵ The qur’an is registered under number 74931.

³² Letter from J.M. Gaasbeek-Luursema (head of Stedelijk Gymnasium) to Hein Reedijk (director of Wereldmuseum), 3 September 1997. NL-RtdWMR, Collectiearchief Wereldmuseum, Aanwinstenlijst 2000-2004: Afrika, Amerika, Azië.

³³ Verwervingsvoorstel schenking Stedelijk Gymnasium 1997, 11 November 2003. NL-RtdWMR, Collectiearchief Wereldmuseum, Aanwinstenlijst 2000-2004: Afrika, Amerika, Azië.

³⁴ In 2024 Wereldmuseum Rotterdam and Wageningen University & Research (WUR) entered into a correspondence concerning the ownership of the qur’an. Additional research by WUR was unable to arrive at any definitive conclusion on the matter. WUR subsequently ceded its right to ownership of the qur’an to Wereldmuseum Rotterdam in a letter of 23 October 2024.

³⁵ Verwervingsvoorstel schenking Stedelijk Gymnasium 1997, 11 November 2003. NL-RtdWMR, Collectiearchief Wereldmuseum, Aanwinstenlijst 2000-2004: Afrika, Amerika, Azië.