

COLONIAL COLLECTIONS COMMITTEE

RECOMMENDATION

Object

Qur'an manuscript TM-1482-1



Image: Wereldmuseum

Current owner

The State of the Netherlands

Custodian

Wereldmuseum Amsterdam

Application for restitution from

The Republic of Indonesia represented by *Tim Repatriasi Objek Pemajuan Kebudayaan Dan Pengembalian Cagar Budaya Yang Berada Di Luar Wilayah Republik Indonesia Ke Dalam Wilayah Republik Indonesia*¹ (hereinafter referred to as: Tim Repatriasi)

Date of application for restitution

13 November 2025

Recommendation number

ID-2026-3

Date of recommendation

19 June 2026

The Colonial Collections Committee²
consisting of

Lilian Gonçalves-Ho Kang You (chair),
Laura van Broekhoven, Remco Raben, Alicia Schrikker
(members)

Secretariat

Jona Mooren, Liesbeth Ouwehand

¹ *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 Fathurahman, Bambang Sunarto, Suryadi, Ninie Susanti, Putu Supadma Rudana (members), Raden Usman Effendi (coordinator), Anton Wibisono, Andhini Widyasari, Khanifudin Malik, Fatwa Yulianto (secretary).

² 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.

1. The application

On 13 November 2025 the Republic of Indonesia submitted an application to the Dutch Minister of Education, Culture and Science for restitution of the Qur'an manuscript from Aceh, referred to in the application as 'Qur'an manuscript' with inventory number TM-1482-1 from the collection of the Dutch State, which is in the custody of the Wereldmuseum Amsterdam.

2. The object

The Qur'an is written on Dutch paper in black and red ink with blue, red and yellow-orange illuminations. The layout, text frames, verse markers and cloth binding are typical of Acehese Qur'ans. Like most other Qur'an manuscripts from Aceh, this Qur'an has no colophon and does not state its owner's name. Unusually, the manuscript contains notes on recitation.³

The Qur'an is registered at the Wereldmuseum Amsterdam under inventory number TM-1482-1.

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.⁴ The policy vision is based on the Council for Culture report *Colonial Collection, a Recognition of Injustice*.⁵ 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 this is established to be 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.

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

³ Appendix 1, pp. 2, 3.

⁴ Policy vision, 29 January 2021, <https://committee.kolonialecollecties.nl/documents/2021/01/01/policy-vision-on-collections-from-a-colonial-context>

⁵ Report of 7 October 2020, <https://www.raadvoorcultuur.nl/documenten/adviezen/2021/01/22/colonial-collection-and-a-recognition-of-injustice>

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 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 13 November 2025 the Republic of Indonesia submitted an application to the Dutch Minister of Education, Culture and Science for restitution of the Qur'an described under 1 above. On 18 December 2025 the Minister requested the Committee to advise on the restitution application.

In the context of the Pilot Project Provenance Research on Objects of the Colonial Era (hereinafter to be referred to as: PPROCE) the custodian of the object commissioned research into its provenance history; the provenance report was published in 2022 (*appendix 1*). On 13 January 2026 the Committee asked the Wereldmuseum whether there were any amendments or addenda to the PPROCE report. The Wereldmuseum communicated on 29 May 2026 that the conclusions of the PPROCE report remain unchanged and declared that there are no addenda (*appendix 2*).

The Committee discussed the application for restitution and the report at a meeting on 23 January 2026. The provenance research was shared with Tim Repatriasi. Tim Repatriasi announced on 15 June 2026 that it had no further questions or comments regarding the provenance report (*appendix 3*).

After discussing the restitution application on 19 June 2026 the Committee resolved to recommend as stated below.

5. The provenance research

The provenance research was conducted by Mirjam Shatanawi in the context of PPROCE. The provenance report forms an integral part of this recommendation.

The provenance report records the following findings.

The Qur'an was donated to the Colonial Institute (now the Wereldmuseum Amsterdam) in 1941 by Karel Wilhelm Gisolf, a district officer (*controleur*) in Ulee Lheue (at the time Oleh-leh).⁶ In a note accompanying the donation, Gisolf explained how the Qur'an had come into his possession: 'On a particular day between the 10th and the 20th of August 1896 (the date of which I cannot verify) this manuscript (Qur'an) came into my possession during a military expedition against the areas of Lepong and Lohong on Aceh's Westcoast. I was inspector in Oleh-leh, to which these areas were subject, and I was attached to the [military] staff. On that particular day (not verifiable), the gang leader Teuku Umar had taken refuge – overnight and in a hurry – in a coffee plantation in the mountains that was owned by the Kejuruan of Lohong, and to where he fled from the settlement (hamlet) Teue at the foot of the mountains. The flight – in company of his family and some followers – was on a very steep mountain path, and our troops were right behind him. They found the road scattered with all sorts of objects from his house, including this Qur'an. With rather great certainty we can assume that it belonged to Teuku Umar. The column commander gave the manuscript to me after his return in Teue.'⁷

Teuku Umar (1854-1899) was one of the most important resistance leaders in Aceh during the Dutch war of conquest, known as the Aceh War, and was made a National Hero of Indonesia in 1973.⁸ Having initially cooperated with the Dutch troops, Teuku Umar turned against the Dutch in March 1896.⁹ He was subsequently pursued by the Royal Netherlands East Indies Army (KNIL) for several years before being killed in 1899.¹⁰ Objects that had belonged to Teuku Umar were much sought after by museums and collectors.¹¹ There were two occasions on which numerous objects from Teuku Umar's possession were taken: during the raid on his house in Lampisang from 23 to 25 May 1896, and during the August 1896 military action in Leupung and Lhong (at the time Lepong and Lohong) referred to by Gisolf.¹² Of the Qur'ans belonging to Teuku Umar in Dutch collections the one that is the subject of this restitution application is the only one to have been captured during the military action of August 1896.¹³

The provenance report points out the direct link that existed between Teuku Umar and Gisolf, the donor of the Qur'an. When still in the service of the KNIL, Teuku Umar had reported offensive actions

⁶ The Commission uses the current spelling of place names.

⁷ 'Op een niet nader door mij te verifieeren datum dan tusschen den 10en en 20en Augustus 1896 is op een militaire expeditie tegen de landschappen Lepong en Lohong ter Westkust van Atjeh ondernomen (ikzelf was als controleur te Oleh-leh waaronder genoemde landschappen ressorteerden bij de staf ingedeeld) is het handschrift (quoran) in mijn bezit gekomen. Op den bewuste niet nader te bepalen datum had het bendeheofd Toekoe Oemar 's nachts in overhaaste vlucht vanuit de nederzetting (gehucht) Teue aan den voet van het gebergte de wijk genomen naar een koffietuin in de bergen van den kedjoeroean van Lohong. Die vlucht vergezeld van zijn gezin en eenige volgelingen vond plaats langs een zeer stijl boschpad en dicht op den hielen gezeten door onze troepen, die den weg bezaaid vonden met allerlei voorwerpen van huishoudelijken aard, waaronder de bewuste quoran. Met vrij groote zekerheid mag worden aangenomen, dat deze aan Toekoe Oemar toebehoorde. De colonne-commandant heeft mij bij zijne terugkomst in Teue het handschrift ter hand gesteld.' Appendix 1, p. 3.

⁸ [National Hero of Indonesia - Wikipedia](#), consulted on 14 October 2025.

⁹ Appendix 1, p. 2.

¹⁰ Appendix 1, p. 5.

¹¹ Appendix 1, p. 2.

¹² Appendix 1, p. 5.

¹³ Appendix 1, p. 6.

(*krenkende handelingen*) by Gisolf, consisting of physical and verbal abuse against himself and others.¹⁴ The provenance report suggests that this could be the reason why Gisolf took part in the military action in Leupung and Lhong in person – something that was unusual for a *controleur*.¹⁵

The provenance report cites various colonial sources that support Gisolf's account of how he gained possession of the Qur'an. The sources report the ransacking, looting (*rampassen*) and subsequent torching of Teuku Umar's house and remaining furniture during the two military actions.¹⁶ The 'Letters from Aceh' published in the *Samarangsch advertentie-blad* of 26 August 1896 include accounts of the looting during the military action in Lhong:

'At Lohong, Teuku Umar had organised a new settlement with a neatly furnished house for himself. The contents were ransacked as much as possible and, when we left, the house and any furniture that had not been taken were burned. Cavalry Captain De Lannoij used the occasion to add a bit to his interior furnishings; his share of the booty was a beautiful marble-topped washbasin, which now stands beside the magnificent music box annexed in Lampisang.'¹⁷ The newspaper article supports Gisolf's account of how the Qur'an came into his possession, with the writer reporting that the Dutch troops 'found on their way all sorts of things that were thrown away or hidden by the fugitives'.¹⁸

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. The Committee therefore concluded that the application is admissible.

6.2 Policy framework

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 to determine 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.

¹⁴ Appendix 1, p. 4.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ 'Te Lohong had Oemar een nieuwe nederzetting georganiseerd met een keurig net ingericht huis voor zich zelven; de inhoud werd zooveel mogelijk gerampast en bij ons vertrek werden het huis en de niet vervoerde meubels verbrand. Bij deze gelegenheid heeft ritmeester de Lannoij zich weer een beetje ingericht; eene mooie washtafel met marmeren blad was zijn aandeel in den buit en staat nu naast de prachtige speeldoos te Lampisang geannexeerd'. Appendix 1, pp. 5, 6.

¹⁷ Appendix 1, p. 6.

¹⁸ 'op hunnen weg allerlei zaken door de vluchtelingen weggeworpen of verborgen'. Appendix 1, p. 5.

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. In this matter it considers as follows.

The Qur'an with inventory number TM-1482-1 was donated to the Colonial Institute (now the Wereldmuseum Amsterdam) by Gisolf in 1941.

The provenance research shows that an attack took place on the Acehese resistance leader Teuku Umar in Leupung and Lhong in August 1896. During the attack KNIL soldiers pursued Teuku Umar and people in his circle, and seized possessions that had been abandoned, including the Qur'an in question. The Committee notes that Gisolf states in a note accompanying the donation that the Qur'an was captured during the military action in Leupung and Lhong:

'[...] between the 10th and the 20th of August 1896 [...], this manuscript (Qur'an) came into my possession during a military expedition against the areas of Lepong and Lohong on Aceh's Westcoast. [...] [Teuku Umar's] flight – in company of his family and some followers – was on a very steep mountain path, and our troops were right behind him. They found the road scattered with all sorts of objects from his house, including this Qur'an.'¹⁹ Other colonial sources also mention the violence and looting during the military actions against Teuku Umar and support Gisolf's account.²⁰

Based on the facts set out in the provenance report it can be established that this Qur'an belonged to Teuku Umar or someone in his circle. Whether the Qur'an belonged to Teuku Umar himself or to someone else in his circle is not pertinent to answering the question of whether the loss of possession was involuntary.

On the foregoing grounds the Committee finds that the Qur'an fell into Dutch hands in August 1896 as a result of military action by the colonial regime in Aceh, after the Qur'an had been hidden or left behind by Teuku Umar or another person in his circle as they fled.

Conclusion

On the grounds of the facts and circumstances set out above the Committee is of the opinion that it is plausible that the loss of possession of the Qur'an was involuntary.

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 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 Minister proceed with the unconditional restitution of the Qur'an with inventory number TM-1482-1.

¹⁹ '[...] tusschen den 10en en 20en Augustus 1896 is op een militaire expeditie tegen de landschappen Lepong en Lohong ter Westkust van Atjeh ondernomen [...] is het handschrift (quoran) in mijn bezit gekomen. [...] [Teuku Umars] vlucht vergezeld van zijn gezin en eenige volgelingen vond plaats langs een zeer stijl boschpad en dicht op den hielen gezeten door onze troepen, die den weg bezaaid vonden met allerlei voorwerpen van huishoudelijken aard, waaronder de bewuste quoran.' Appendix 1, p. 3.

²⁰ Appendix 1, pp. 5, 6.

The Committee furthermore recommends that the metadata associated with the object, such as archive material, correspondence and other contextual documentation, also be placed at the disposal of the Republic of Indonesia in the context of rectifying injustice.

This recommendation was adopted by the Colonial Collections Committee on 19 June 2026.

Chair

Secretariat

Lilian Gonçalves-Ho Kang You

Jona Mooren, Liesbeth Ouwehand

Appendices

1. Shatanawi, M. (2022) *Provenance report regarding Handgeschreven Qur'an met rijkversierde folio's [Qur'an manuscript]* (PPROCE provenance reports no. 18). NIOD Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies.
2. Memorandum: Response to questions from the Colonial Collections Committee regarding PPROCE Reports no. 3, 18, 19, 22, and 23. (Wereldmuseum, 29 May 2026)
3. Response to the Colonial Collections Committee Regarding Provenance Reports and Repatriation Recommendations. (Tim Repatriasi, June 2026)



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

Provenance report regarding Handgeschreven Koran met rijk versierde folio's [Qur'an manuscript]

Shatanawi, Mirjam

2022

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Provenance report regarding Handgeschreven Koran met rijk versierde folio's [Qur'an manuscript]

Mirjam Shatanawi

 Photo: Collection Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen. Coll.no. TM-1482-1	Custodian	NMVM Tropenmuseum
	Current possessor	Dutch state
	Inventory number	TM-1482-1
	Material/technique	Paper; black and red ink
	Measurements	29.5 x 19 x 6 cm

Summary of findings

This Qur'an manuscript was looted during the flight of Teuku Umar and his followers on 13 August 1896, and donated to the Tropenmuseum in 1941. The donor, Karel Gisolf, included with his gift a note detailing the taking of the Qur'an. His account is supported by other sources that were found during the provenance research of the Qur'an. Teuku Umar (1854-1899) was one of the most important resistance leaders during the Aceh War. He is a national hero of Indonesia. Karel Willem Gisolf (1870-1953) was a civil administrator in service of the Dutch colonial government. Although the moment of looting is confirmed by the sources, the exact owner is uncertain, as Teuku Umar was in company of several others, and the manuscript itself does not contain marks of ownership.

Reconstruction provenance

After 1800 – before 1896

Manufacture of Qur'an manuscript

Annabel Teh Gallop, 'An Acehnese Style of Manuscript Illumination,' *Archipel* 68 (2004): 222

Before 1896 – 1896

Teuku Umar or one of his fellow fighters

NL-HaNA, Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen, 2.20.69, inv.no. 7490.

13 August 1896

KNIL column (J.W. Stemfoort)

NL-HaNA, Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen, 2.20.69, inv.no. 7490.

1896 - 1941

K.W. Gisolf

NL-HaNA, Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen, 2.20.69, inv.no. 7490.

1941 - present

Koloniaal Instituut (today NMVW Tropenmuseum)

Inventory card TM-1482-1, digitised in TMS.

Introduction and context

This Qur'an was donated to the Koloniaal Instituut (the current Tropenmuseum) as having belonged to Teuku Umar (1854-1899), the famous resistance leader of Aceh, and for decades considered to be the main adversary of the Dutch. He came from a lower-ranking noble (*uleebalang*) family that was indirectly related to the sultan's house of Aceh. Between 1884 and 1896, Teuku Umar alternately was an ally of the Dutch forces and their enemy. In 1893 he was put in command of a legion of soldiers fighting with the KNIL (The Netherlands East Indies Army). In March 1896 he turned (again) against the Dutch, leading to years of chasing him and, eventually, his killing in 1899.

In the colonial period, objects that belonged to Teuku Umar were much sought after by museums and private collectors. It was a matter of pride and prestige to own objects that were attributed to him. Therefore, there are quite a few of these items present in the museums in the Netherlands. In the collections of the National Museum of World Cultures, thus far eleven objects have been described as originating from Teuku Umar. Other museums in the Netherlands, like the Wereldmuseum and Museum Bronbeek, also own objects that belonged to Teuku Umar.¹ It is not certain that all of these items really belonged to Teuku Umar, because donors and sellers may have had reasons to attribute objects to Teuku Umar to enhance their value, while in reality this may not have been the case. Not all Teuku Umar objects in Dutch museum collections were looted; some are purchases or gifts from Teuku Umar or his relatives.

Object information

The Qur'an manuscript is in Acehnese style. The text is written in black and red ink on Dutch paper. The illuminations are in red, blue and yellow-orange ink. The binding is linen. Annabel Gallop, lead curator Southeast Asia at the British Library and an expert on Malay manuscripts, described Qur'an TM-1482-1 as follows:²

¹ For a provisional list of Teuku Umar objects in public collections in the Netherlands, see Bijlage A in: Caroline A. Drieënhuizen, 'Koloniaal collecties, Nederlands aanzien: De Europese elite van Nederlands-Indië belicht door haar verzamelingen, 1811-1957' (PhD thesis, Amsterdam, University of Amsterdam, 2012).

² Annabel Teh Gallop, 'An Acehnese Style of Manuscript Illumination,' *Archipel* 68 (2004): 222.

KIT 1482/1

Qur'an. 2 DF : beginning (*S. al-Fāṭihah* & beg. of *S. al-Baqarah*), no side wings; end (*S. al-Kāfirūn* to *S. al-Nās*), w.o. arches or side wings. Red, orange, dark blue, reserved white. 30 x 20.5 cm.

According to her, the manuscript is a typical illuminated Acehnese Qur'an, but without the 'side wings' or tendrils usually found flanking the arches on the outer vertical sides, in the opening frames, while the final illuminated frames are even simpler, without arches at all, only with horizontal and extended vertical frames.³ The pages after the frontispiece pages contain preliminary notes on recitation; these notes are not very common in Qur'an manuscripts. The layout, text frames, verse markers and cloth binding are all very typical for Aceh Qur'an manuscripts.

Acehnese Qur'an manuscripts rarely contain a colophon, detailing, for example, the name of the scribe, the commissioner, and the date of completion. Occasionally marks of ownership are found in such manuscripts. Like most other Acehnese Qur'ans, this Qur'an has no colophon nor mentions of ownership. Therefore, in the manuscript there are no indications of who owned the Qur'an before it was taken as loot by the KNIL.

Provenance report

The Qur'an was donated to the Koloniaal Instituut (the current Tropenmuseum) by K.W. Gisolf in 1941. From the correspondence it is clear that several other people mediated the gift on behalf of Gisolf: W. Snepvangers and G.W.A. Nieuwenhuijs, both affiliated with the Vereeniging van Indische Verlofgangers en Gerechtvaardigden.⁴ With the Qur'an they sent a signed handwritten note in which Gisolf explains how the Qur'an came into his possession:⁵

"On a particular day between the 10th and the 20th of August 1896 (the date of which I cannot verify) this manuscript (Qur'an) came into my possession during a military expedition against the areas of Lepong and Lohong on Aceh's Westcoast. I was inspector in Oleh-leh, to which these areas were subject, and I was attached to the [military] staff. On that particular day (not verifiable), the gang leader Teuku Umar had taken refuge —overnight and in a hurry— in a coffee plantation in the mountains that was owned by the Kejuruan of Lohong, and to where he fled from the settlement (hamlet) Teue at the foot of the mountains. The flight —in company of his family and some followers— was on a very steep mountain path, and our troops were right behind him. They found the road scattered with all sorts of objects from his house, including this Qur'an. With rather great certainty we can assume that it belonged to Teuku Umar. The column commander gave the manuscript to me after his return in Teue."⁶

³ Email Dr Annabel Gallop to author, 12 August 2020.

⁴ Correspondence between B.J.O Schrieke (director Koloniaal Instituut) and G.W.A. Nieuwenhuijs, 26-27 May 1941. NL-HaNA, Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen, 2.20.69, inv.no. 7506.

⁵ Correspondence between B.J.O Schrieke (director Koloniaal Instituut) and G.W.A. Nieuwenhuijs, 30 May-18 June 1941. NL-HaNA, Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen, 2.20.69, inv.no. 7490.

⁶ "Op een niet nader door mij te verifieeren datum dan tusschen den 10en en 20en Augustus 1896 is op een militaire expeditie tegen de landschappen Lepong en Lohong ter Westkust van Atjeh ondernomen (ikzelf was als controleur te Oleh-leh waaronder genoemde landschappen ressorteerden bij de staf ingedeeld) is het handschrift (quoran) in mijn bezit gekomen. Op den bewuste niet nader te bepalen datum had het bendevoofd Toekoe Oemar 's nachts in overhaaste vlucht vanuit de nederzetting (gehucht) Teue aan den voet van het gebergte de wijk genomen naar een koffietuin in de bergen van den kedjoeroean van Lohong. Die vlucht vergezeld van zijn gezin en eenige volgelingen vond plaats langs een zeer stijl boschpad en dicht op den hielen gezeten door onze troepen, die den weg bezaaid vonden met allerlei voorwerpen van huishoudelijken aard, waaronder de bewuste quoran. Met vrij groote zekerheid mag worden aangenomen, dat deze aan Toekoe Oemar toebehoorde. De colonne-commandant heeft mij bij zijne terugkomst in Teue het handschrift ter hand gesteld."

The military expedition against Lepong and Lohong, which Gisolf mentions in his note, took place between 9 and 14 August 1896. The goal was to chase Teuku Umar and his followers from Lepong and the surrounding areas. The commander-in-chief was Johannes Wouter Stemfoort (1844-1913), who was appointed as interim Civil and Military Governor of Aceh and dependences in June 1896.⁷ As column commander Stemfoort was responsible for the official report of the expedition, which had to be sent to the Generale Staf (General Staff) of the KNIL in Batavia and may have contained details about the loot taken. The Stemfoort papers in the National Archives in The Hague do not contain copies of the reports he sent.⁸ The archives of the Generale Staf remained in Indonesia after Independence; they were not consulted for research on this object. Therefore, no official report could be found to confirm Gisolf's account. However, several contemporary accounts of the expedition did appear in the Dutch news media and popular press that contain details supporting Gisolf's recollection of events.

Two weeks after the expedition, several Dutch newspapers published a detailed report, apparently written by one of the KNIL officers under the pseudonym Iksx.⁹ The report, which is in the style of an official report, contains a number of details that confirm Gisolf's recollection. First of all, there is a list of members of the column, including the staff members. It indeed mentions K.W. Gisolf, district officer (*controleur*) in Oleh-leh (present-day Ulee Lheue), as one of the expedition members. Gisolf's participation is confirmed by later reports of the expedition, such as the publication *Atjeh 1896* (1913), which also contains a detailed account of the expedition.¹⁰

It was unusual for a civil administrator like Karel Gisolf to join a military expedition. The reason for his participation was probably to be found in his close involvement in the Teuku Umar affair. Gisolf had been the first to report signs that Teuku Umar would turn against the Dutch.¹¹ Christoffel Deyckerhoff (1840-1911), the Governor of Aceh at the time, had refused to believe him. After the "desertion" of Teuku Umar, Deyckerhoff was dismissed from office and replaced by Stemfoort. Furthermore, when Teuku Umar was still in Dutch service, he had filed a complaint against Gisolf and chief *jaksa* (prosecutor) Mohammed Arif on account of offensive actions (*krenkende handelingen*) against himself and other people.¹² The accusations included physical abuse, such as kicking and beating people with a whip, and scolding and shaming Teuku Umar and his direct relatives. They were expressed in a letter to Governor Deyckerhoff, but revoked two weeks later.¹³ When investigated by the colonial authorities Gisolf denied the accusations of physical and verbal abuse.¹⁴ However, according to some, Gisolf's actions had made Umar turn against the Dutch. Gisolf's personal involvement with the case may also explain Stemfoort's decision to hand him the Qur'an as a keepsake. The KNIL did not have official regulations on spoils of war, but the unwritten rules stipulated that Stemfoort, in his position as commander-in-chief, had the right to decide what would be done with them.

⁷ NL-HaNA, Oorlog / Stamboeken Officieren KL, 2.13.04, inv.no. 618.

⁸ NL-HaNA, Inventaris van het archief van A. Seret (1916-2007) en enkele familieleden, 1847-1997. 2.21.205.55, inv. nos. 37-43.

⁹ 'Brieven uit Atjeh', *Samarangsche advertentie-blad*, 26 August 1896, <https://www.delpher.nl/nl/kranten/view?coll=ddd&identifier=ddd:011139463:mpeg21:a0025>.

¹⁰ A. Kruisheer, *Atjeh 1896*, vol. 2 (Weltevreden: Visser en Co., 1913).

¹¹ 'Atjeh', *De grondwet*, 6 February 1896, <https://www.delpher.nl/nl/kranten/view?coll=ddd&identifier=ddd:110620540:mpeg21:a0165>.

¹² *Koloniaal verslag van 1896. Nederlandsch (Oost-) Indië* ('s Gravenhage: Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 1896), 7.

¹³ Letters of Teuku Umar to Christoffel Deyckerhoff, 30 March and 12 April 1896. A. Kruisheer, *Atjeh 1896*, vol. 1 (Weltevreden: Visser en Co., 1913) bijlage II and IV.

¹⁴ NL-HaNA, Inventaris van het Ministerie van Koloniën 2.10.02/6239. Geheim Verbaal 8 augustus 1896 N14, Indisch Dépêche 14 april 1896 33/1, Proces Verbaal van verhoor van Controleur der 2e klasse K.W. Gisolf. https://www.nationaalarchief.nl/onderzoeken/archief/2.10.02/invnr/6239/file/NL-HaNA_2.10.02_6239_0661

Secondly, the reports contain a number of details that are similar to Gisolf's account. The newspaper reporting described that, according to some accounts, Teuku Umar had anticipated his flight and had spent a large sum to have a footpath cut to the inner lands. Such a path was normally used to search for rubber; it was narrow so that only one man could pass and on the edges was impenetrable jungle. Teuku Umar had hidden his guns and valuables along the path to safeguard them.¹⁵ The account of *Atjeh 1896* adds to this a note that the 4th squad as well as members of the 1st squad of the [3rd] battalion "found on their way all sorts of things that were thrown away or hidden by the fugitives, among them letters by Umar" (*de 4e compagnie en de sectie der 1* vonden op hunnen weg allerlei zaken door de vluchtelingen weggeworpen of verborgen o. a. brieven van Oemar*).¹⁶ This seems to confirm Gisolf's claim that the Qur'an was left behind during the flight of Teuku Umar, his family members and followers. However, based on these accounts, it is clear that Teuku Umar did not flee alone, but in the company of several others. Gisolf's assertion that "with rather great certainty we can assume that it belonged to Teuku Umar" cannot be definitively proven.

The backdrop of the Lepong and Lohong expedition was the end of the collaboration between Teuku Umar and the Dutch government in March 1896. As part of the collaboration agreement the Dutch government had allowed Teuku Umar to form a legion of about 250 fighters, which were armed and financed by the Dutch at the yearly cost of 101,000 guilders.¹⁷ Teuku Umar himself received a monthly allowance of 1,000 guilders, housing, gifts and privileges like honorary titles.¹⁸ In return, he had to fight on the Dutch side against the Acehnese resistance, which at the time consisted of a coalition of fighters headed by the ulama (Islamic scholars) and the Sultan of Aceh. Immediately after Teuku Umar ended the collaboration, the Dutch began to plot a strategy to find and eliminate Teuku Umar and his troops. This resulted in military actions in April and May, and a three-day campaign on 23-25 May against Lampisang, where Teuku Umar lived, resulting in the looting and burning down of his house and the destruction of the village.¹⁹ The KNIL did not capture Teuku Umar, who already had fled Lampisang. In the following months and years, the KNIL would chase Teuku Umar from each successive region where he found refuge. In February 1899, the KNIL killed Teuku Umar near Meulaboh.

From the information with the objects and colonial-period reporting, it is apparent that the looting of Teuku Umar's property took place on two major occasions: in May 1896 during the raid of Teuku Umar's house in Lampisang and during the Lepong and Lohong expedition of August 1896, when this Qur'an also was taken.²⁰ Most reporting relates to the raid of Teuku Umar's house in Lampisang. Former KNIL officer Anton Kruisheer (1870-1945) writes that "they found in Umar's house several small canons, furniture etcetera. These things were later taken, along with correspondence of Umar, and in various houses large stocks of rice were set on fire."²¹ Another officer, G.C.E. "Frits" van Daalen (1863-1930), wrote to his wife on 27 May 1896 that "Umar's house is beautiful and well furnished. He, however, had smashed a lot. Still our troops found many useful things that we have taken along, such as a huge music box worth 300 guilders, chairs, cupboards and liquor." Van Daalen

¹⁵ 'Brieven uit Atjeh'.

¹⁶ Kruisheer, *Atjeh 1896*, 1913, 2:77.

¹⁷ *Koloniaal verslag van 1894. Nederlandsch (Oost-) Indië* ('s Gravenhage: Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 1894).

¹⁸ Martijn Kitzen, 'The Course of Co-Option: Co-Option of Local Power-Holders as a Tool for Obtaining Control over the Population in Counterinsurgency Campaigns in Weblike Societies. With Case Studies on Dutch Experiences during the Aceh War (1873-c. 1912) and the Uruzgan Campaign (2006-2010)' (PhD thesis, Amsterdam, University of Amsterdam, 2016), 232.

¹⁹ Kruisheer, *Atjeh 1896*, 1913.

²⁰ These reports include accounts in the news media and popular press, as well as archival documents. For instance, the letters from G.C.E. van Daalen to his wife Christine Elisabeth de Lang Evertsen, which are part of the Special Collections of the Library of Leiden University (Collection H.T. Damsté).

²¹ Kruisheer, *Atjeh 1896*, 1913, 1:201. "In het huis van Oemar werden een paar kleine kanonnen, meubilair enz. aangetroffen, welke zaken, evenals eenige correspondentie van Oemar later werden medegevoerd, terwijl in verschillende huizen een groote voorraad padi aan de vlammen werd prijsgegeven."

himself managed to get his hands on a “beautiful Qur’an.”²² A third officer, writing under the initial H., recounts, “Teuku Umar’s house was razed to the ground. The valuable goods, such as an open carriage, a horse etcetera, were taken to Kuta Raja. Although ransacking was prohibited, the commanders sometimes turned a blind eye, when it concerned small things.”²³ In those days, no column returned home without the majority of soldiers had [taken] one thing or another, be it chickens, ducks, goats, ceramics or tikars [mats]. Soon this was known to the Chinese salesmen, who sometimes [walked] for hours to meet the troops and buy all this stuff.”²⁴ At Lohong, reporting says, Teuku Umar had settled with his followers, in “a neatly furnished house for himself. The contents were as much as possible ransacked and, when we left, the house and the furniture that was not taken were all burned. At this occasion, cavalry captain De Lannoij furnished [his house] a bit more; a beautiful sink with marble countertop was his share of the booty and it is now standing next to the marvellous music box that [he] annexed in Lampisang.”²⁵

The reports mention European-style luxury items that were taken as booty, such as fine glass, porcelain, a white horse, a marble sink, a music box and a Japanese screen (that Umar had bought at auction from assistant resident Cornelis Kroesen). However, the items that ended up in Dutch museums were either Acehnese in style or visibly connected to Teuku Umar, such as European-style crystal drinking glasses engraved with his name. At least four of such drinking glasses ended up in museums in the Netherlands, and they all seem to be seized during the Lepong and Lohong expedition. The donor of one of the glasses (TM-2790-1), Gustave Adolphe Hansen (1852-1935), was the commander of the 3rd battalion, which played an active role in the expedition.²⁶ Hansen claimed to have found the glass in an army bag that Teuku Umar had left behind.²⁷ The third squad of Hansen’s battalion was reported to have discovered Teuku Umar’s house and inside it a large stock of rice and some fine glass and porcelain (“*de 3e compagnie was op een huis van Oemar gestooten met een grooten voorraad padi en eenig fijn glaswerk en porcelain*”).²⁸ In 1905, objects found during the chase of Umar’s widow Cut Nyak Dhien were sent by then Governor of Aceh, G.C.E. van Daalen, to the Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen (currently Museum Nasional Indonesia).²⁹ Among the objects originating from Teuku Umar, Qur’ans had a special status. At least four Qur’ans are in Dutch public collections.³⁰ Most of the Qur’ans were said to be looted during the Lampisang raid in May; this Qur’an (TM-1482-1) is the only one of the four to have been taken in August 1896.

²² Letter G.C.E. van Daalen to Christine Elisabeth de Lang Evertsen, 27 May 1896. Leiden University Library/Collection H.T. Damsté. I did not manage to locate the Qur’an. Possibly Van Daalen donated it to Snouck Hurgronje, as he used to do with other manuscripts, and it is now part of the Leiden University Library collections or the Museum Nasional in Jakarta.

²³ Until 1928, the KNIL did not have official guidelines, but individual commanders gave instructions to the troops, which sometimes included guidelines on looting. See G. Teitler, ‘Voorlopers van Het VPTL, 1928-1829: Een Terugblik,’ *Militaire Spectator*, no. 170 (2001): 268–74.

²⁴ ‘Atjeh-herinneringen,’ *De Preanger-bode*, 2 July 1910, Avond edition, <https://www.delpher.nl/nl/kranten/view?coll=ddd&identificatie=MMKB08:000122816:mpeg21:a0001>. “Het huis van Toekoe Oemar werd met den grond gelijk gemaakt. De goederen van waarde, waaronder een open landauer, een paard enz. werden meegenomen naar Koeta-Radja. Ofschoon het rampassen verboden was, werd door de bevelhebbers wel eens een oogje dicht gedaan, waar het kleinigheden betrof. Zoo zag men in die dagen geen colonne thuis komen of de meeste soldaten hadden het een of ander, hetzij kippen, eenden, geiten, aardewerk of tikars. Dit was al heel spoedig aan chineesche handelaren bekend, die dan ook de troepen soms uren ver tegemoet gingen, om al die dingen op te kopen.”

²⁵ ‘Brieven uit Atjeh.’ “Te Lohong had Oemar een nieuwe nederzetting georganiseerd met een keurig net ingericht huis voor zich zelve; de inhoud werd zooveel mogelijk gerampast en bij ons vertrek werden het huis en de niet vervoerde meubels verbrand. Bij deze gelegenheid heeft de ritmeester de Lannoij zich weer een beetje ingericht; eene mooie waschtafel met marmeren blad was zijn aandeel in den buit en staat nu naast de prachtige speeldoois to Lampisang geannexeerd.”

²⁶ Kruisheer, *Atjeh 1896*, 1913, 2:63. See also http://nl.wikisage.org/wiki/3e_Bataljon_Infanterie.

²⁷ Inventory card TM-2790-1, digitised in TMS.

²⁸ Kruisheer, *Atjeh 1896*, 1913, 2:77.

²⁹ Bataviaasch Genootschap, *Notulen van de algemeene en directie-vergaderingen van het Bataviaasch Genootschap van kunsten en wetenschappen*, vol. XLIII 1905 (Batavia: G. Kolff & Co., 1906), 60–62.

³⁰ Caroline Drieënhuizen, “‘Het merkwaardige boek’: de koran van Teuku Umar in Nederland,” *Caroline Drieënhuizen.Wordpress*, 8 juni 2016, <https://carolinedrieenhuizen.wordpress.com/2016/06/08/het-merkwaardige-boek-de-koran-van-teuku-umar-in-nederland/>

Memorandum

Topic: Response to questions from the Colonial Collections Committee regarding PPROCE
Reports no. 3, 18, 19, 22, and 23

Date: 29 May 2026

Author: François Janse van Rensburg

Summary

This memorandum responds to the questions by the Colonial Collections Committee sent to Wereldmuseum director Wayne Modest on 19 May 2026. The museum was sent the following questions:

Does the PPROCE report on the objects listed below reflect the current status of the investigation? Do the other object numbers mentioned in the report share the same provenance history as the object in question?

This concerns the provenance reports for:

- Three wayang beber panels RV-360-5255 - 5257. [PPROCE Report 3](#) states that these panels are part of a set of six scrolls in total: RV-360-5254 through 5259.
- Quran manuscript TM-1482-1, [PPROCE Report 18](#).
- Panel from a tomb RV-179-1: [PPROCE Report 19](#) refers to twenty-five objects originating from the Sultanate of Aceh, including four tomb panels that were removed from cemeteries between 1874 and 1876.
- Manuscript Hikayat Makkah Madinah RV-163-48d. [PPROCE Report 22](#) refers to sixty other objects collected by Semmelink and lists the inventory numbers of four manuscripts from the Sultanate of Aceh, namely RV-163-48a- d.
- Aceh gravestone (Batu Aceh) RV-3600-594. The [PPROCE report 23](#) refers to a total of eight gravestones from Aceh: RV-3600-589 - 596.

Process

i) Marjolein van Asdonck, the Wereldmuseum curator for Indonesia, and Mirjam Shatanawi, the author of four of the five reports, were consulted to determine if the reports were still up to date. Furthermore, the reports were checked against the museum's database, and where relevant, the museum's archive as well as secondary literature. We conclude that the findings of the reports still reflect the current understanding of the objects. Mirjam Shatanawi mentioned new sources related to PPROCE Report 19, but these do not change its conclusions.

ii) For questions 1, 4, and 5, the additional objects share the same provenance as the primary object(s) discussed in each report. For question 4, there is also a question about a larger group of 60 objects collected by the donor. Here we concluded that this would require substantial further research. For question 2, the report mentions other looted Qurans in Dutch public collections but confirms that this Quran is the only one of those looted during the events described in the report. Question 3 concerns gravestones and grave ornaments from Aceh. Currently, no definitive answer is possible: the report concerns the provenance of one object only. It mentions the existence of other gravestones and grave ornaments from Aceh in the collections of the Wereldmuseum and Museum Bronbeek. However, these objects have a different provenance from the one described in the report. Furthermore, the list of objects mentioned by Shatanawi is a work in progress. Locating all such objects and determining their provenance would require a dedicated research project.

Response to Questions

1. PPROCE Report 3

Question: *Three wayang beber panels RV-360-5255 - 5257. [PPROCE Report 3](#) states that these panels are part of a set of six scrolls in total: RV-360-5254 through 5259.*

PPROCE Report 3 was written by Klaas Stutje in 2022. The report concerns three *wayang beber* panels, numbered RV-360-5255 to RV-360-5257. Stutje states that these three panels form part of a series of six panels (RV-360-5254 to RV-360-5259) with the same provenance: all six were originally donated by Adolph François Henry van de Poel, a Dutch colonial official.

All evidence in the museum's archive and database supports this. All six panels are in the same collection, being the series RV-360. This series is made up of objects transferred from the Koninklijk Kabinet van Zeldzaamheden to Wereldmuseum Leiden¹ in 1883.² The panels are registered with consecutive inventory numbers. They were already grouped together, with the same provenance information in the original inventory book dating to ca. 1878–1883.³ They were described together in the catalogue of the museum in 1914.⁴ The panels are visibly similar in size, shape, and general appearance. The 1914 catalogue suggests that several panels are continuations of scenes depicted in previous panels.⁵

On the Wereldmuseum's database, all six panels have the same provenance. Their provenance is as follows:

- 1851: Donated by Adolph François Henry van de Poel to Rijksmuseum van Oudheden
- 1852: Transfer from Rijksmuseum van Oudheden to Koninklijk Kabinet van Zeldzaamheden
- 1883: Transfer from Koninklijk Kabinet van Zeldzaamheden to Wereldmuseum Leiden

Based on this information, it can be concluded that Stutje's report represents the museum's current understanding of these objects and that the provenance and conclusions of PPROCE Report 3 applies to all six panels.

¹ For simplicity's sake, in this document I use the contemporary names 'Wereldmuseum Leiden', 'Wereldmuseum Amsterdam' and other contemporary museum names in Dutch without translation.

² The Koninklijk Kabinet van Zeldzaamheden was a Dutch public museum located in Den Haag, operating from 1816-1883. Following its closure, its contents were divided between several Dutch museums with the Wereldmuseum Leiden and Rijksmuseum Amsterdam being the largest recipients.

³ From the Wereldmuseum Leiden's archive, NL-LdnRMV-A3-16: 'Series 360' (part I), p. 286 (img. 292).

⁴ Juynboll, H.H. 1914. *Katalog der Ethnographischen Reichsmuseums, Band XIII, Java, dritter teil*, pp. 208-209.

⁵ Juynboll (1914) believed that the narrative on RV-360-5255 continues on RV-360-5256, and likely on to RV-360-5257 as well.

2. PPROCE Report 18

Question: *Quran manuscript TM-1482-1, [PPROCE Report 18](#).*

PPROCE Report 18 was written by Mirjam Shatanawi in 2022. It concerns the Quran manuscript numbered TM-1482-1, which was donated by Karel Willem Gisolf, a Dutch colonial official, to the Wereldmuseum Amsterdam in 1941. According to the donor, the Quran was looted in August 1896.

The provenance of the Quran manuscript was already known at the time of acquisition and is described on the inventory card. Since its publication, Shatanawi's report has been used to expand the information on the museum's database: it is cited directly on the database entry for the Quran manuscript, which also incorporates a summary of the report in the 'collection history' field. Therefore, Shatanawi's report represents the current understanding of the museum about the Quran manuscript.

While Shatanawi mentions at least three other looted Qurans in Dutch public collections, the report confirms this is the only one of those looted during the events described in the report. Furthermore, the Quran manuscript is the only object in the series TM-1482 and the only object donated to the Wereldmuseum by Gisolf. Therefore, the provenance and conclusions of the report apply only to this Quran manuscript.

3. PPROCE Report 19

Question: *Panel from a tomb RV-179-1: [PPROCE Report 19](#) refers to twenty-five objects originating from the Sultanate of Aceh, including four tomb panels that were removed from cemeteries between 1874 and 1876.*

PPROCE Report 19 was written by Mirjam Shatanawi in 2022. It discusses the provenance of RV-179-1, a panel from a tomb donated to Wereldmuseum Leiden by Herman Jacob van Nouhuys in 1877.

In the report, Shatanawi notes that she has identified 25 objects in Dutch museums originating from the *dalam* (Sultan's quarter) in Banda Aceh, including four tomb ornaments (not panels as stated in the question). In total, she has identified 33 gravestones and tomb ornaments from Aceh. Of these 33, two are kept at Museum Bronbeek, while the rest are at the Wereldmuseum.

Mirjam Shatanawi was contacted for more information, and she states that the report is up to date,⁶ but that the numbers are a work in progress. In trying to replicate these figures, we found that there are also several ambiguous objects that could potentially be gravestones and tomb ornaments from Aceh as well. RV-179-1 is the only object from Aceh donated to the museum by Van Nouhuys. All the other gravestones and tomb ornaments from Aceh⁷ came into the museum via other donors or sellers. This means that the findings of PPROCE Report 19 apply only to RV-179-1.

A full accounting for all objects looted from Aceh, or looted from this specific location, or from the period 1874–1876, would require a substantial amount of additional research by the museum, which would go well beyond the scope of the above report.

⁶ Shatanawi also cites these numbers in a more recent publication, see Shatanawi, M. 2025. *Legacies of Colonialism in Museum Collections*, p. 39. When contacted, Shatanawi mentioned finding some new sources since then, but they do not change the conclusion of the report.

⁷ Or potentially from Aceh, as at least one object is in the unnumbered series of objects without provenance.

4. PPROCE Report 22

Question: *Manuscript Hikayat Makkah Madinah RV-163-48d. [PPROCE Report 22](#) refers to sixty other objects collected by Semmelink and lists the inventory numbers of four manuscripts from the Sultanate of Aceh, namely RV-163-48a - d.*

PPROCE Report 22 was written by Mirjam Shatanawi in 2022 and concerns a manuscript numbered RV-163-48d donated to the Wereldmuseum Leiden by Jan Semmelink, a Dutch medical officer, in 1874.

Semmelink was a prolific collector and sent hundreds of objects to the Wereldmuseum, predominantly from different parts of Indonesia, but also other parts of South and Southeast Asia. The series RV-163 consists of objects from Aceh. They were sent to the museum in three crates along with a list of objects.⁸ This list likely refers to other series donated by Semmelink as well, such as RV-148.⁹ The series RV-163 consists of 59 entries¹⁰ numbered RV-163-1 to RV-163-55, with RV-163-48 being sub-divided into four numbers: RV-163-48a, -48b, -48c, and -48d. Of the 59 registered numbers, 13 are now marked as missing or destroyed.

Regarding the more than sixty other objects mentioned by Shatanawi, at this moment it is not certain if the conclusions of PPROCE Report 22 can be applied to the entire series RV-163: it is not yet known if they all share the same provenance, and if they do, other series such as RV-148 may also be implicated. It is also not known how many objects there are, only that there are more than 61 in total. Finally, the museum would have to search for the missing objects.¹¹ Therefore, a full understanding of all the objects donated by Semmelink, or all the objects from Semmelink originating in Aceh, would require substantial further research.

However, all four manuscripts or documents registered under RV-163-48 do share the same provenance. According to their inventory cards, they were ‘found in the residence of the Sultan.’ This is also confirmed in Shatanawi’s report. This means that the conclusions of PPROCE Report 22 applies to all four texts and that the report represents the museum’s current understanding of those objects. The titles and descriptions below are from the museum’s database, translated into English.

- RV-163-48a:
 - o Title: Document
 - o Description: A story about a Sultan Djalîl.
- RV-163-48b:
 - o Title: Document
 - o Description: Regulations on import and export duties, issued by Sultan Ala ad-Din Jauhar al-‘Alam Shah of Aceh (1795-1823).
- RV-163-48c:
 - o Title: Document
 - o Description: Four pages of a Malay hikayat with Ratu (or Prabu) Sangsari, Ratu (Sotja Windu?), Macharadja Ikan, Nun Wati.

⁸ See NL-LdnRMV-A1-2-144/146 in the Wereldmuseum archive.

⁹ Semmelink lists 61 objects or groups of objects shipped in two of the crates, while another crate contains various objects which are only briefly described. This means more than 61 objects were dispatched to the museum.

¹⁰ Some numbers contain more than one object, e.g. RV-163-35 consists of a group of six bullets.

¹¹ Generally, objects marked as missing are lost or destroyed, however missing objects are sometimes located as the result of research.

- RV-163-48d (described in the report)

In addition, the series contains one more text, RV-163-47.

- RV-163-47:
 - o Title: Book
 - o Description: This book contains prayers in Arabic with translations in Malay.

This book has a different provenance. On the inventory card, its origins are given as ‘found in the Kampong Penajoeng’. It is also not mentioned in Shatanawi’s report. This means that it may have a different provenance from the four texts above. Until further research has been done, the conclusions of PPROCE Report 22 do not apply to this object.

5. PPROCE Report 23

Question: *Aceh gravestone (Batu Aceh) RV-3600-594. The [PPROCE report 23](#) refers to a total of eight gravestones from Aceh: RV-3600-589 - 596.*

PPROCE Report 23 was written by Mirjam Shatanawi in 2022 and concerns the gravestone RV-3600-594 from Aceh, donated to the museum of the Hoofdcursus Kampen¹² by George Nijpels, a Dutch military officer, in 1901.

Before this report, the provenance of only two of the gravestones was known to the museum. This was based on provenance information written on the inventory cards. Shatanawi found evidence in the archives of the ethnographic museum of the Royal Netherlands Military Academy, which later merged with Wereldmuseum Leiden, that all eight gravestones share the same provenance history.

In 2022, provenance researcher Tom Quist added the following information to all eight of the gravestones on the museum's database (translated to English):

This gravestone was found in 1901 in Lhoknga (Aceh Besar) along with seven other gravestones (RV-3600-589 to 595) by G. Nijpels (1859-1950), an officer in the Royal Netherlands East Indies Army (KNIL). With the permission of the Dutch colonial administration in Aceh, Nijpels had the gravestones removed and shipped to the Netherlands. The collection took place at the request of the Hoofdcursus in Kampen, where the gravestones were included in the ethnographic collection in 1902. After the closure of the Hoofdcursus in 1923, the gravestones were transferred to the Ethnographic Museum of the Royal Military Academy in Breda. In 1956, this collection was acquired by the Museum Volkenkunde. Provenance research has shown that the gravestones in Lhoknga were removed to make way for a horse racing track. However, the location of this racetrack and the original burial site is unknown. It is also unclear from which graves the stones originate and who the deceased are.

As of 2022, the museum's database attributes all eight gravestones to George Nijpels. This means that the provenance and conclusions from PPROCE 23 represents the museum's current understanding of these objects and applies to all eight gravestones.

¹² The Hoofdcursus Kampen was an officer training school within the Royal Netherlands East Indies Army (KNIL). It had its own ethnographic museum.

Response to the Colonial Collections Committee Regarding Provenance Reports and Repatriation Recommendations (June 2026)

To: The Colonial Collections Committee (CCC)

From: Ismunandar, Chair of the Indonesian Repatriation Expert Panel (Tim Repatriasi)

Date: June 15, 2026

Subject: Formal Evaluation of Provenance Reports and Recommendations for Cultural Restitution

1. Formal Response and Statement of Intent

This response represents a critical milestone in the ongoing bilateral cooperation between the Republic of Indonesia and the Kingdom of the Netherlands regarding cultural restitution. Tim Repatriasi formally acknowledges receipt of the Colonial Collections Committee (CCC) letter dated June 4, 2026. This dialogue serves as a vital instrument of restorative justice, bridging the gap between colonial history and a future defined by mutual respect.

On behalf of the Government of Indonesia, we extend our sincere appreciation to the CCC and the Wereldmuseum for their transparency in submitting the five primary provenance reports (Pproce-reports) concerning the Wayang Beber scrolls, the Quran of Teuku Umar, the Acehese Tomb Panel, the *Hikayat Makkah Madinah* manuscript, and the Batu Aceh collection. These reports provide the necessary baseline for our comprehensive evaluation.

The purpose of this document is to provide Tim Repatriasi's evidence-based evaluation of the submitted provenance research and to issue final, definitive recommendations for the physical and legal return of these assets. The technical annexes that follow substantiate our requirements, ensuring that the repatriation process honours both the historical record and the living spiritual significance of these objects.

2. Annex I: Evaluation and Recommendations for the Wayang Beber Scrolls

Cultural and Spiritual Significance

In Javanese society, Wayang Beber is not a mere art object; it is a sacred heirloom (*pusaka*) of profound spiritual magnitude. These scrolls are intimately linked to the ancestral realm and remain central to *ruwatan* (exorcism) and healing rituals. Traditionally, the scrolls may only be opened by a *dalang* (puppeteer) under strict ritual conditions. Their value is intrinsic to the spiritual health of the community of Sampang. Scientifically, radiocarbon dating has confirmed that these scrolls date between 1669 and 1933, establishing them as the oldest recorded set of Wayang Beber in existence — surpassing even the renowned sets in Gedompol and Gelaran.

Critique of Acquisition and Evidence of Coercion

The colonial narrative surrounding the acquisition of these scrolls by A.F.H. van de Poel in 1851 is historically untenable. The archive obfuscates the reality of seizure through the

sanitised nomenclature of "discovery" and "personal possession" at the home of the tomb keeper (*Panembahan*) in Sampang. Javanese custom strictly prohibits the sale or transfer of such *pusaka* to outsiders, regardless of the sum offered. Consequently, the historical probability of a "voluntary" transfer is non-existent. The removal of these sacred objects involved a structural coercion of power or a covert act of seizure by colonial officials, rendering the original departure of this set from Sampang village illicit.

Final Recommendation for Wayang Beber

Tim Repatriasi issues the following requirements for the restitution of this collection:

- **Unconditional Repatriation:** We agree and request the full physical and legal return of the complete set of six scrolls (Inventory numbers RV-360-5254 through RV-360-5259).
- **Collaborative Research:** A joint project must be established to conduct oral history research in Sampang and archival deep-dives at the National Archives of the Republic of Indonesia (ANRI).
- **Knowledge Transfer:** The return process must include high-resolution digitalisation and specialised conservation training to ensure the longevity of these 17th-century artefacts.

3. Annex II: Evaluation and Recommendations for Acehnese Manuscripts (Hikayat and Quran)

3.1 Quran

We agree and have no further comments regarding the provenance of Teuku Umar's Qur'an.

3.2 Hikayat

Strategic Philological Importance

The requested manuscripts are primary pillars of Indonesian philology, preserving the intellectual and religious history of the Sultanate of Aceh.

Philological Justification (RV-163-48d)

The manuscript of the *Syair Mekah dan Madinah* (identified in the report as "*Hikayat Makkah Madinah*") is of paramount importance. As established by the benchmark work of Suryadi (2013), this manuscript is distinct from the version held at SOAS University of London and remains untransliterated. Its return provides a unique opportunity for Indonesian philologists to perform the first-ever transliteration of this specific text. Furthermore, Tim Repatriasi formally accepts the CCC's proposal to include the three additional documents — RV-163-48a, RV-163-48b (Sultan Ala ad-Din Jauhar al-'Alam Shah regulations), and RV-163-48c — in this repatriation recommendation.

Correction of Records and Formal Inquiries

- **Institutional Location:** We formally request the CCC to update its records: the related manuscripts mentioned as being at the Museum Nasional Indonesia have been transferred to the Perpustakaan Nasional (National Library).
- **Transparency Regarding "The Dalam":** The provenance reports reference objects "originating from the *dalam* palace," including additional manuscripts and books. Tim Repatriasi demands full transparency on whether other manuscripts or lithographs from this specific provenance exist within the Dutch national collection.

Collaborative Mandate

We also request high-resolution digitalisation must be an integral part of the physical return process to facilitate ongoing joint philological research.

4. Annex III: Evaluation and Recommendations for Acehnese Funerary Heritage

Typological and Historical Context

The Batu Aceh represent the peak of Islamic funerary culture, reflecting the artistic and social evolution of the Sultanate of Aceh from the 16th to the 19th centuries.

Evaluation of the Tomb Panel (RV-179-1)

The Tomb Panel (RV-179-1) is identified as a core object for return. Given its inclusion in the five primary provenance reports, its physical and legal return is required to complete the narrative of Acehnese funerary craftsmanship and to restore the integrity of the Sultanate's lithic heritage.

Prioritised Tombstones for Repatriation

Inventory Number	Justification for Prioritisation
RV-3600-590	Superior state of preservation compared to RV-3600-589; lacks the substantial base damage found in the latter.
RV-3600-595	Exceptional 16th-century specimen; features a rare four-panel inscription configuration on the shaft and remains highly legible.
RV-3600-593	Significant 17th-century monument; demonstrates high structural completeness, including a multi-tiered crown.
RV-3600-594	Rare typological variation with four inscribed panels; possesses high communicative and epigraphic value.
RV-3600-591	Exhibits highly refined artistic quality and elegant proportions, serving as a masterwork of Acehnese stone-carving.

Strategic Retention Recommendation

Tim Repatriasi recommends that RV-3600-596 remain at the Wereldmuseum. While it possesses a complete structure, its significant surface deterioration and cracks pose a high risk during transport. More importantly, we believe it will strengthen our joint stewardship of shared heritage.

5. Procedural Conclusion and Closing

The repatriation of these objects is not a mere logistical transfer but a vital instrument for strengthening bilateral relations based on transparency and mutual respect.

Ismunandar

Chair of Tim Repatriasi Indonesia

CC:

- Director General of Diplomacy, Promotion, and Cultural Cooperation
- Ambassador of the Republic of Indonesia to the Kingdom of the Netherlands
- Director of Cultural Diplomacy
- Director of Europe I, Ministry of Foreign Affairs