

# COLONIAL COLLECTIONS COMMITTEE

## RECOMMENDATION

### Objects

Four manuscripts from the Sultanate of Aceh  
RV-163-48a, RV-163-48b, RV-163-48c and RV-163-48d



Images: Wereldmuseum

Current owner

The State of the Netherlands

Custodian

Wereldmuseum Leiden

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*<sup>1</sup> (hereinafter referred to as: Tim Repatriasi)

Date of application for restitution

13 November 2025

Recommendation number

ID-2026-4

Date of recommendation

19 June 2026

<sup>1</sup> *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).

The Colonial Collections Committee<sup>2</sup>  
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 13 November 2025 the Republic of Indonesia submitted an application to the Dutch Minister of Education, Culture and Science for restitution of the manuscript, referred to in the application as 'Manuscript-Hikayat Makkah Madinah' with inventory number RV-163-48d from the collection of the Dutch State, which is in the custody of the Wereldmuseum Leiden. Tim Repatriasi requested that the three manuscripts with inventory numbers RV-163-48a, RV-163-48b and RV-163-48c also be included in the recommendation.

### 2. The objects

The manuscript with the title *Hikayat Makkah Madinah* (story of Mekka and Medina, RV-163-48d) by an unknown copyist was originally written by Tuan Ahmad and tells of the blessings of the Hajj and other pilgrimages.<sup>3</sup>

The 12-page manuscript is incomplete and undated. It is written in the *sanja* verse form. The text of the manuscript is in the Acehnese language and is written in Arabic script, in black and red ink on paper. The date, 13 rabi al-akhir 1125 AH (9 May 1713), refers to when Tuan Ahmad wrote the (original) text, not the date when this manuscript was completed.<sup>4</sup>

In 1876 the manuscript was registered with 's Rijks Ethnografisch Museum, now Wereldmuseum Leiden, under inventory number SA 65d (see blue label on manuscript); this number was later changed to RV-163-48d.

RV-163-48a comprises a story about Sultan Jalil, RV-163-48b details import and export tariffs issued by Sultan 'Ala ad-Din Jauhar al-'Alam Shah Aceh (1795-1823), and RV-163-48c comprises four pages of an unidentified *hikayat* in Malay.

### 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.<sup>5</sup> The policy vision is based on the Council for Culture report *Colonial Collection, a Recognition of Injustice*.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The Advisory Committee on the Restitution of Cultural Objects from a Colonial Context (in short: the Colonial Collections Committee) was established by the Dutch State Secretary for Education, Culture and Science on 6 September 2022.

<sup>3</sup> Appendix 1, pp. 2, 3.

<sup>4</sup> Appendix 1, pp. 2-4.

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

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

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.

Next, 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 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 manuscript 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 referred to as: PPROCE) the custodian of the object commissioned research into the provenance history; the 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 announced on 29 May 2026 that the conclusions of the PPROCE report are unchanged and that the provenance report also applies to the manuscripts with inventory numbers RV-163-48a, RV-163-48b and RV-163-48c (*appendix 2*).

The Committee discussed the application for restitution and the provenance report at a meeting on 23 January 2026. The PPROCE report was shared with Tim Repatriasi. On 15 June 2026 Tim Repatriasi indicated that it had no further questions in relation to the provenance report (*appendix 3*).

Tim Repatriasi requested that the three manuscripts with inventory numbers RV-163-48a, RV-163-48b and RV-163-48c also be included in the recommendation. Tim Repatriasi furthermore issued a response to the contents of the provenance report; this can be found in section 6.

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 four manuscripts were gifted to 's Rijks Ethnografisch Museum, now Wereldmuseum Leiden, by Jan Semmelink (1837-1912) in 1874. As a medical officer with the Royal Netherlands East Indies Army (KNIL) Semmelink took part in what is referred to as the Aceh War.<sup>7</sup> On 24 January 1874 the KNIL captured the quarters (*dalam*) of Sultan Alauddin Mahmud Syah II (c. 1854-1874) and proceeded to establish a military base there.<sup>8</sup>

Semmelink's involvement with the military actions whereby the *dalam* of Alauddin Mahmud Syah II was captured is clear from a letter that he sent, along with a list of objects, to the museum ahead of his donation. In the letter Semmelink states that he had done his utmost to collect objects for the museum. Number 36 on the list of objects is described as 'Several loose papers and book pages found in the Sultan's house'.<sup>9</sup> These include the four manuscripts.<sup>10</sup>

During the taking of the *dalam* the KNIL captured some canons.<sup>11</sup> This official war loot is listed in the publication *Beknopte beschrijving van den Kraton van Groot-Atjeh en omstreken, alsmede van zijne verdedigingskracht en bewapening en van de merkwaardigheden daarin aangetroffen*.<sup>12</sup> In addition to the official spoils of war captured by the KNIL, officers such as Semmelink looked for valuable objects in the *dalam* to have as personal 'souvenirs' and took objects for their own personal use.

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<sup>7</sup> Appendix 1, p. 4.

<sup>8</sup> Appendix 1, pp. 1, 2, 5.

<sup>9</sup> 'Eenige losse papieren en bladen van boeken gevonden in de woning van den Sultan'. Appendix 1, p. 4.

<sup>10</sup> Appendix 1, p. 4.

<sup>11</sup> Appendix 1, p. 6.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

Senior engineering officer Johan Kerlen wrote about the looting of objects in his memoirs: 'On January 24th the kraton fell into our hands. From this day on the men of the Engineering Corps marched every day from Peunayong to the kraton to make it ready, so we could settle more permanently there. The day after we took possession, Pey and I went to the kraton to see if we could find something to our liking in the sultan's buildings; we only nicked a porcelain soup-tureen and a big brass cooking pot. Pey took the former and I used the pot as a bathtub in our living spaces in Peunayong and from there we took it back again to the kraton.'<sup>13</sup>

The *Amsterdamsche Courant* published an eyewitness account from a naval officer from which it can be inferred that soldiers of the KNIL combed the sultan's quarters and looted objects such as manuscripts. The account also describes the state of the *dalam* after its capture.<sup>14</sup> On 6 April 1874 the newspaper reported: 'It is always a badly chosen moment to enter a house right after the last inhabitant has left it. That is especially the case here, because the holes and crevices in the walls and the roof, the large cracks in the floor planks, caused by grenades, form a sad whole, together with the broken pots and pans, the few empty chests, the torn books, the ripped cushions etcetera. It comes to no surprise that the sultan was not able to hold out here for very long. After we took a few pages from a Malay manuscript<sup>15</sup> as a souvenir, we swiftly left the sad royal house.'<sup>16</sup>

## 6. Response from Tim Repatriasi

Tim Repatriasi emphasises the importance of returning the *Hikayat Makkah Madinah* manuscript: 'The manuscript of the *Syair Mekah dan Madinah* (identified in the report as "*Hikayat Makkah Madinah*") is of paramount importance. [...] Its return provides a unique opportunity for Indonesian philologists to perform the first-ever transliteration of this specific text.'<sup>17</sup>

For the sake of completeness, Tim Repatriasi notes that the manuscript with inventory number ML95a mentioned on page 2 of the provenance report currently no longer resides at Museum Pusat but at Perpustakaan Nasional (National Library).<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> 'den 24sten januari viel de Kraton in onze handen. Van nu af marcheerden de geniewerklieden dagelijks van Penajoeng naar de Kraton om dezen tot een meer permanente vestiging in te richten. De dag na de in bezitneming togen Pey en ik op maraude om te zien of er in de gebouwen van den Sulthan ook iets van onze gading was te vinden; wij pikten [tikten] alleen een porseleinen soepterrine en een grooten koperen kookketel op den kop. Pey nam de eerste mee en ik bestemde de ketel tot badkuip in ons logies te Penajoeng van waar hij later weer naar de Kraton meeging.' Appendix 1, p. 5.

<sup>14</sup> Appendix 1, p. 5.

<sup>15</sup> The whereabouts of this Malay manuscript are unknown.

<sup>16</sup> 'Is het altijd een slecht gekozen oogenblik, om een huis te gaan zien, als de laatste bewoner het pas verlaten heeft; vooral is dit hier het geval, want de gaten en spleten in wanden en dak, de groote scheuren in de planken van den vloer, veroorzaakt door de granaatscherven, vormen met de gebroken potten en pannen, de enkele ledige kisten, de verscheurde boeken, de opengereten hoofdkussens enz. een zeer treurig geheel. Dat de Sultan het er niet lang in heeft kunnen uithouden, zal niemand verwonderen. Na als souvenir een paar bladen van een maleisch manuscript<sup>16</sup> te hebben meegenomen, verlaten wij spoedig de treurige vorstelyke woning.' Appendix 1, p. 5.

<sup>17</sup> Appendix 3, p. 2.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

## 7. Assessment of the restitution application

### 7.1 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.

### 7.2 Policy framework

The application for restitution concerns cultural objects 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.

### 7.3 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.

### 7.4 Substantial assessment

Next, the Committee assessed whether it is plausible that the loss of the cultural objects whose restitution is requested was involuntary. In this matter it considers as follows.

The provenance report shows that the four manuscripts were gifted to 's Rijks Ethnografisch Museum, (now Wereldmuseum Leiden) by Jan Semmelink, medical officer with the KNIL, in 1874.<sup>19</sup> The report also shows that Semmelink took the manuscripts from the quarters of Sultan Alauddin Mahmud Syah II.<sup>20</sup>

The provenance research shows that during the Aceh War the KNIL conducted attacks on the *dalam* [sultan's quarters] of Alauddin Mahmud Syah II and then set up a military base there.<sup>21</sup> After capturing the sultan's quarters on 24 January 1874 KNIL soldiers looted the quarters and took objects for their own personal use.<sup>22</sup> This transpires from publications such as those by chief engineering officer Johan Kerlen and an unknown naval officer, who both stated that they had taken objects.<sup>23</sup>

Semmelink was involved in the capture of the *dalam* as a medical officer, as he stated in a letter which he sent to the museum along with a list of objects ahead of his donation. In the letter he stated that he had done his utmost to collect objects for the museum.<sup>24</sup> The Committee notes that the list of objects shows that Semmelink had taken the manuscripts from the *dalam*: 'Several loose papers and book pages found in the Sultan's house'.<sup>25</sup>

On the foregoing grounds the Committee concludes that the manuscripts fell into Semmelink's hands as a direct consequence of colonial acts of war after the capture of the *dalam* of Sultan Alauddin Mahmud Syah II by the KNIL on 24 January 1874.

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<sup>19</sup> Appendix 1, p. 4.

<sup>20</sup> Appendix 1, pp. 1, 2.

<sup>21</sup> Appendix pp. 1, 2, 5.

<sup>22</sup> Appendix 1, pp. 4, 5.

<sup>23</sup> Appendix 1, p. 5.

<sup>24</sup> Appendix 1, p. 4.

<sup>25</sup> 'Eenige losse papieren en bladen van boeken gevonden in de woning van den Sultan.' Appendix 1, p. 4.

### 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 the manuscripts whose restitution is requested 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 objects 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.

### 8. The recommendation

The Committee has assessed the application for restitution and recommends that the Minister proceed with the unconditional restitution of the four manuscripts with inventory numbers RV-163-48a, RV-163-48b, RV-163-48c and RV-163-48d and that the metadata associated with the objects be placed at the disposal of the Republic of Indonesia.

The Committee furthermore recommends that the metadata, 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 [manuscript] Hikayat Makkah Madinah* (PPROCE provenance reports no. 22). 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 [manuscript] Hikayat Makkah Madinah

Shatanawi, Mirjma

2022

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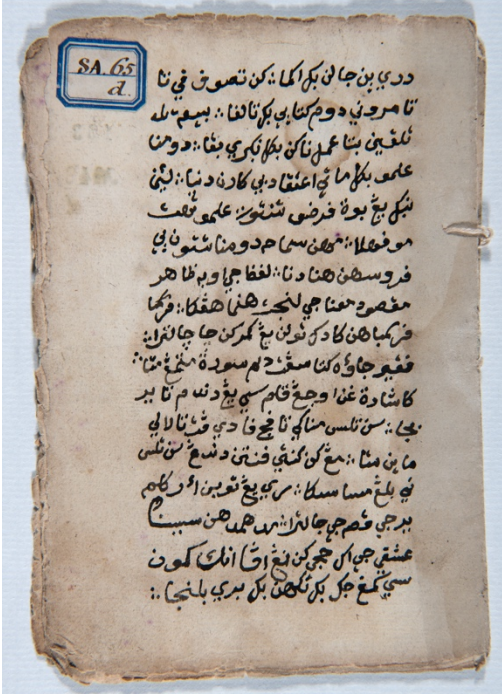
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## Provenance report regarding [manuscript] Hikayat Makkah Madinah

Mirjam Shatanawi

|                                                                                                                                                                          |                    |                            |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|----------------------------|
|  <p>Photo: Collection Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen.<br/>Coll.no. RV-163-48d</p> | Custodian          | NMVW Museum<br>Volkenkunde |
|                                                                                                                                                                          | Current possessor  | Dutch State                |
|                                                                                                                                                                          | Inventory number   | RV-163-48d                 |
|                                                                                                                                                                          | Material/technique | Paper; black and red ink   |
|                                                                                                                                                                          | Measurements       | 16 x 11 cm                 |

### Summary of findings

The manuscript was removed from the house of Sultan Alauddin Mahmud Syah II (ca. 1854-1874) by medical officer Jan Semmelink (1837-1912), with the goal of donating it to Museum Volkenkunde in Leiden. The removal took place between 25 January and 29 March 1874, after the conquest of the *dalam* of Banda Aceh. The manuscript was dispatched to Leiden, along with 60 other objects taken by Semmelink from the *dalam* and the surrounding villages. Since 1876 the manuscript has been part of the collections of Museum Volkenkunde.

### Reconstruction provenance

#### After 1713 – before 1874

Manufacture of manuscript

#### ? - 1874

Sultan Alauddin Mahmud Syah II or Sultanate Aceh

NL-LdnRMV-A1-2-144/146. Archives of the Museum Volkenkunde, letter Jan Semmelink to Conrad Leemans, director of the Museum Volkenkunde, 29 March 1874.

## 1874

Jan Semmelink

NL-LdnRMV-A1-2-144/146. Archives of the Museum Volkenkunde, letter Jan Semmelink to Conrad Leemans, director of the Museum Volkenkunde, 29 March 1874.

## 1876 - present

's Rijks Ethnografisch Museum (today NMVW Volkenkunde)

NL-LdnRMV-A1-2-195/196. Archives of the Museum Volkenkunde, letter Conrad Leemans to Ministry of Colonies, 23 February 1875.

## Introduction and context

This manuscript from the collection of Museum Volkenkunde is an incomplete and undated copy of *Hikayat Makkah Madinah*. In 1874 it was removed from the house of Sultan Alauddin Mahmud Syah II (r. 1870-1874) by medical officer Jan Semmelink (1837-1912) and donated to Museum Volkenkunde in Leiden.

After the Dutch conquest of the sultan's quarters (*dalam*) in 1874, it was converted into a military base. The KNIL officers and soldiers roamed the compound searching for valuables, and in the collections of Dutch museums thus far more than 25 objects have been identified as originating from the *dalam*, including several manuscripts and printed books.

It is likely that the collection of books found in the sultan's house were part of a royal library belonging to the sultanate family rather than to an individual.<sup>1</sup> There is little known about the royal libraries in the Malay world, in contrast to the royal libraries in Java, and there are no surviving (royal) manuscript libraries in situ.<sup>2</sup>

## Object information

Incomplete manuscript by Tuan Ahmad, written by an unknown copyist at an unknown date, comprising the final twelve pages (6 folios) of an Acehnese text with the title *Hikayat Makkah Madinah* (Story of Mecca and Madinah), written in the poetic style, *sanja'*. The manuscript is rare and there are only two other copies known: there is a complete copy in the collection of SOAS (University of London), inv. no. 12914A, and another defective one in Museum Pusat in Jakarta, inv. no. ML 95a.<sup>3</sup> According to the Leiden scholar Petrus Voorhoeve, the work is unique because of the personal account of the author, which is unusual in texts about the Hajj.

A blue-edged label with the handwritten number SA 65d is glued on the first page of the manuscript. This is an older museum number; similar labels are found on other objects that were acquired in the same period.

<sup>1</sup> Email Dr. Annabel Gallop, Curator Southeast Asia The British Library, to author, 12 January 2021.

<sup>2</sup> Malay Heritage Centre, "Where Are All The Malay Royal Libraries?", <https://www.malayheritage.gov.sg/en/publication/essays/where-are-all-the-malay-royal-libraries>

<sup>3</sup> M. C. Ricklefs, P. Voorhoeve, and Annabel Teh Gallop, *Indonesian Manuscripts in Great Britain: A Catalogue of Manuscripts in Indonesian Languages in British Public Collections (New Editions with Addenda et Corrigenda)* (Jakarta: Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia, 2014), 159; Reza Idria, 'Hikayat Makkah Madinah Dalam Bahasa Aceh: Ikhtisar Dan Komentar', in *Naik Haji Di Masa Silam: Kisah-Kisah Orang Indonesia Naik Haji (1482–1964)*, ed. Henri Chambert-Loir, vol. 1, 3 vols (Jakarta: KGP, 2013), 219–34; P. Voorhoeve, *Catalogue of Acehnese Manuscripts in the Library of Leiden University and Other Collections Outside Aceh* (Leiden: Leiden University Library, 1994), 176;345.

Volkenkunde:<sup>5</sup>

(A, p.3 peue nyang salah bèk takeunang, ban di abang)  
[A, p.4] teu keun gata  
aneuk keumuen dudoe sikali, jantōng até biji (B: bijèh) mata  
nyang ri kukeunay goh kuturi, dumteu saré lom cut raya (not in B)

*Hādhihi khātimah*

<sup>5</sup> Voorhoeve, *Catalogue of Acehnese Manuscripts in the Library of Leiden University and Other Collections Outside Aceh*, 345–47.

Further research is necessary to identify Tuan Ahmad. According to Voorhoeve, it is possibly Sayyid Ahmad, the author of the Malay text *Kanz al-khafi*. The manuscript *Hikayat Makkah Madinah* includes a date, 13 rabi al-akhir 1125 AH (9 May 1713); this is the date of finalizing the text, not of finalisation of this copy. Therefore, the manuscript RV-163-48d can be dated between 1713 (the date of the original work) and 1874 (the date this copy was collected).

## Provenance report

The manuscript was donated in 1874 to Museum Volkenkunde by Jan Semmelink (Zutphen 1837 - Den Haag 1912). Jan Semmelink was a medical officer (*officier van gezondheid*) in the Dutch East Indies Army (KNIL). Between 1863 and 1876 he collected around 700 objects for the 's Rijks Ethnografisch Museum, currently known as Museum Volkenkunde (Museum of Ethnology). The objects came from the various regions where he worked for the KNIL, including Flores, Timor, Kalimantan, Java and Aceh. He also collected objects and specimens for the Rijksmuseum van Oudheden (National Museum of Antiquities) and Rijksmuseum van Natuurlijke Historie (these are currently part of the Naturalis Biodiversity Center collections).<sup>6</sup>

In the letter announcing his donation, Semmelink explains that he was part of the troops that were sent to Aceh (for the second expedition), where he did his utmost best to collect objects for the Museum Volkenkunde.<sup>7</sup> With his letter he includes a list of objects, number 36 is "several loose papers and book pages found in the sultan's house" (*Eenige losse papieren en bladen van boeken gevonden in de woning van den Sultan*). Besides the manuscript *Hikayat Makkah Madinah*, the papers include pages from a story about Sultan Jalil (RV-163-48a), a document detailing tariffs for export and import issued by Sultan 'Ala ad-Din Jauhar al-'Alam Shah (1795-1823) (RV-163-48b), and four pages of an unidentified *hikayat* in Malay (RV-163-48c).

The more than 61 objects were sent to Leiden in three crates.<sup>8</sup> The first crate arrived quickly, but the second crate (which contained the manuscript) and the third were delayed. On 23 February 1875, director Conrad Leemans of the Museum Volkenkunde confirmed the receipt of these crates.<sup>9</sup> Finally in 1876 the objects were registered at the museum. The manuscript received a new number: first, SA 65d and later RV-163-48d.

From the list in the correspondence, it is clear that Jan Semmelink took the manuscript from the sultan's house within the confines of the kraton (a more correct term would be *dalam*) or sultan's quarters. The contents of the four documents (RV-163-48abcd) also conform to what one can expect to be part of a sultan's library. Semmelink found more objects inside the house, such as a kitchen lamp (RV-163-23) and a basket (not found in the Volkenkunde collections). The circumstances in which Semmelink made his "finds" are aptly described by Johan Kerlen (1850-1927), a young officer of the KNIL Engineering Corps, who wrote a memoir about his time in Aceh,<sup>10</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Wikipedia. 2021. "Jan Semmelink." [https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jan\\_Semmelink](https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jan_Semmelink)

<sup>7</sup> Letter Jan Semmelink to Conrad Leemans, 29 March 1874. Archives of the Museum Volkenkunde, NL-LdnRMV-A1-2-144/146.

<sup>8</sup> About ten objects have been lost, because the current list (series RV-163) contains only 51 objects.

<sup>9</sup> Letter Conrad Leemans to Ministry of Colonies, 23 February 1875. Archives of the Museum Volkenkunde, NL-LdnRMV-A1-2-195/196.

<sup>10</sup> Memoires van generaal-majoor b.d. der genie J.G. Kerlen, was als hoofdofficier van de genie nauw betrokken bij de aanleg van de tram in Atjeh, betreffende zijn dienstdienst in Nederlands-Indië in de periode 1870-1906 (transcript). Nederlands Instituut voor Militaire Historie, Koloniale eeuw Nederlands-Indië (1814-1941), 543, inv. no. 87.

“On January 24th the kraton fell into our hands. From this day on the men of the Engineering Corps marched every day from Peunayong to the kraton to make it ready, so we could settle more permanently there. The day after we [the KNIL] took possession [of the area], Pey and I went to the kraton to see if we could find something to our liking in the sultan’s buildings; we only nicked<sup>11</sup> a porcelain soup-tureen and a big brass cooking pot.<sup>12</sup> Pey took the former and I used the pot as a bathtub in our living spaces in Peunayong and from there we took it back again to the kraton [after it had become a military base, MS].”<sup>13</sup>

Jan Semmelink probably did exactly that, as his donation includes a piece of armour (RV-163-29) which he found on 25 January near the graves of the former sultans inside the dalam. The buildings and sites inside the compound had visibly suffered from the attacks on the dalam, especially during the first Aceh expedition in 1873. A precise description of what Semmelink and other KNIL staff saw inside the sultan’s house is given by an anonymous Navy officer who sent a letter with his eyewitness account to the Dutch newspaper *Amsterdamsche Courant*, just after the conquest of the dalam in January 1874:<sup>14</sup>

“Somewhat to the right of the gunpowder house, behind a wall, is the sultan’s actual house. Those who fantasised about oriental splendour will be very disappointed! The building is made from wood, although it is a beautiful type of wood, it is unpainted. The carvings and the carefully made carpentry, the copper hinges and a few gilded parts show this was not the house of an ordinary native [...] It is always a badly chosen moment to enter a house right after the last inhabitant has left it. That is especially the case here, because the holes and crevices in the walls and the roof, the large cracks in the floor planks, caused by grenades, form a sad whole, together with the broken pots and pans, the few empty chests, the torn books, the ripped cushions etcetera. It comes to no surprise that the sultan was not able to hold out here for very long. After we took a few pages from a Malay manuscript as a souvenir, we swiftly left the sad royal house.”<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> This citation is from a transcript and the verb ‘pikken’ (to nick) may be a mistake, as it continues with ‘op de kop.’ ‘Op de kop tikken’ roughly translates in English as ‘to get a bargain.’

<sup>12</sup> He refers to his friend Dirk Leonard Pey (b. 1850), an army pharmacist.

<sup>13</sup> [...] den 24sten januari viel de Kraton in onze handen. Van nu af marcheerden de geniewerklieden dagelijks van Penajoeng naar de Kraton om dezen tot een meer permanente vestiging in te richten. De dag na de in bezitneming togen Pey en ik op maraude om te zien of er in de gebouwen van den Sulthan ook iets van onze gading was te vinden; wij pikten alleen een porseleinen soepterrine en een grooten koperen kookketel op den kop. Pey nam de eerste mee en ik bestemde de ketel tot badkuip in ons logies te Penajoeng van waar hij later weer naar de Kraton meeging.

<sup>14</sup> *De Tijd: Godsdiens- en Staatkundig Dagblad*, 6 April 1874, Dag edition, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010263630>.

<sup>15</sup> Eenigszins rechts van het kruithuis staat achter een muur het eigenlijke huis van den Sultan. Wie nu zich veel heeft voorgesteld van oostersche pracht, zal erg teleurgesteld zijn! Het gebouw is van hout opgetrokken, hoewel dan ook van een fraaie houtsoort, maar ongeschilderd; aan het snijwerk echter en de zorgvuldige betimmering, als ook aan de koperen scharnieren en enkele verguldsels zag men, dat het niet de woning is geweest van een gewoon inlander [...] Is het altijd een slecht gekozen oogenblik, om een huis te gaan zien, als de laatste bewoner het pas verlaten heeft; vooral is dit hier het geval, want de gaten en spleten in wanden en dak, de groote scheuren in de planken van den vloer, veroorzaakt door de granaatscherven, vormen met de gebroken potten en pannen, de enkele ledige kisten, de verscheurde boeken, de opengereten hoofdkussens enz. een zeer treurig geheel. Dat de Sultan het er niet lang in heeft kunnen uithouden, zal niemand verwonderen. Na als souvenir een paar bladen van een maleisch manuscript te hebben meegenomen, verlaten wij spoedig de treurige vorstelyke woning.

The *Beschrijving van den kraton van Groot-Atjeh* (Description of the Kraton of Great Aceh), published by the Ministry of Colonies in 1874, just simply mentioned “all houses we found in the kraton, including that of the sultan, looked neglected and devoid of cleanliness and order” and concluded that the sultan must have been poorer than most chiefs in Aceh, as his house was “devoid of even the smallest sign of royal splendour.”<sup>16</sup> The author of the *Beschrijving* concludes that “in vain we have searched for objects of value.”<sup>17</sup> The official war loot is listed in the *Beschrijving* and mainly consisted of canons (some are now part of the collection of Museum Bronbeek).

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<sup>16</sup> *Beknopte beschrijving van den Kraton van Groot-Atjeh en omstreken, alsmede van zijne verdedigingskracht en bewapening en van de merkwaardigheden daarin aangetroffen* (Batavia: Landsdrukkerij, 1874), 6.

<sup>17</sup> *Beknopte beschrijving van den Kraton van Groot-Atjeh en omstreken, alsmede van zijne verdedigingskracht en bewapening en van de merkwaardigheden daarin aangetroffen*, 11.

## **Memorandum**

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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

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## 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 Leiden<sup>1</sup> in 1883.<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup> They were described together in the catalogue of the museum in 1914.<sup>4</sup> 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.<sup>5</sup>

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.

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> 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.

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

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

<sup>5</sup> 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,<sup>6</sup> 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 Aceh<sup>7</sup> 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.

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<sup>6</sup> 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.

<sup>7</sup> 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.<sup>8</sup> This list likely refers to other series donated by Semmelink as well, such as RV-148.<sup>9</sup> The series RV-163 consists of 59 entries<sup>10</sup> 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.<sup>11</sup> 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.

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

<sup>9</sup> 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.

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

<sup>11</sup> 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 Kampen<sup>12</sup> 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.

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<sup>12</sup> 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

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## 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.

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## 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