

MAPPING THE ACEHNESE PAST

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VAN HET KONINKLIJK INSTITUUT
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MAPPING THE ACEHNESE PAST

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Preface

The tsunami that swirled over Aceh's capital on 26 December 2004 was an unparalleled disaster. It killed over 160,000 people in the province, including a high percentage of its administrative and academic elite, and destroyed much of its infrastructure of roads, bridges, houses, industries, offices and records. This disaster was on such an undreamt-of scale that it shamed the human actors into overcoming their relatively puny conflicts. Both the agents of Jakarta's rule in Aceh and the pro-independence activists fighting to end that rule suffered in one day many times the losses their enemies had inflicted on them in decades of conflict.

The main jail of Banda Aceh was among the buildings destroyed by the giant waves that crashed over the city that day. Among the hundreds of prisoners killed there were a large proportion of the civilian elite of Gerakan Aceh Merdeka (GAM, Free Aceh Movement), who had been transformed from peace negotiators to criminals seven months earlier, when Jakarta launched its attempted military solution. One of only a handful to survive by getting onto the roof was Irwandi Yusuf, who in the post-tsunami chaos managed to escape to Malaysia, and later to take part in the negotiations for a lasting peace that began only a month after the tsunami. In February 2007 he became the first directly elected governor of Aceh, charged with implementing the Helsinki peace agreement of August 2005 conferring extensive self-government on the territory of Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam (the State of Aceh, Abode of Peace).

The rebirth of Aceh was long overdue. It had been more at war than at peace ever since the Netherlands, with the support of Aceh's erstwhile ally Britain, launched its assault on the independent sultanate in 1873. The long conflict with Jakarta has had ruinous effects also on the understanding of Aceh's past. Its legendary distaste for foreign rule was distorted by both sides of the conflict for their respective propaganda purposes. Serious research was made impossible by the unsafe conditions and the exclusion of foreign researchers, particularly since 1989. The 2004 tsunami wrought another crisis in this area, annihilating the Pusat Dokumentasi dan Informasi Aceh (PDIA, Aceh Documentation Centre), destroying books and manuscripts, and killing some of Aceh's leading historians and intellectuals.

This book is part of the renaissance of Aceh, specifically through the internationally cooperative recovery of an understanding of its rich past. The tsunami disaster, unlike Aceh's earlier sufferings, had the effect of tearing open doors long closed. Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono welcomed an unprecedented international relief effort which brought thousands of government and private aid workers to Aceh, transforming it from isolated backwater to international hub. Immediately following the Helsinki peace agreement hundreds of peace monitors from Europe and Southeast Asia also fanned out to safeguard the fragile peace. To manage the seven billion dollar reconstruction effort, President Yudhoyono took another exceptional step in authorizing the highly autonomous Badan Rehabilitasi dan Rekonstruksi NAD-Nias (Agency for the Rehabilitation and Reconstruction of Aceh and Nias, BRR), headed by Dr Kuntoro Mangkusubroto, former minister of mines, as a minister responsible directly to the president.

Aware that a healthy reconstruction effort needed to ensure that international engagement with Aceh did not end with the mandate of the Aceh Monitoring Mission (AMM) in December 2006, and the BRR (2009), Dr Kuntoro approached Sumatra historian Anthony Reid, then in Singapore, to recommend measures to establish an international research presence which could be ongoing. The result was an initial International Conference of Aceh and Indian Ocean Studies (ICAIOS), held at Banda Aceh from 24 to 27 February 2007, funded by the BRR but organized in conjunction with the Asia Research Institute (ARI) of the National University of Singapore (NUS), of which the editors of this volume were the most concerned members. The Indian Ocean context was intended to emphasize that Aceh's significance was not limited to Sumatra or Indonesia, but was enmeshed by the tsunami, by geography and by history with a much wider world. The tsunami had reawakened interest in Malaysia, Britain, the United States, France, Portugal, the Netherlands and, particularly, Turkey in their engagement with Aceh's past, and the contribution they could therefore make in the rebirth of the *Nanggroe* in an international context. The conference was accompanied by an exhibition of documentary materials on the region's history brought by participants from these countries, many of which were then being seen for the first time in Aceh. Since the close of the conference, these copies of valuable primary source materials have been integrated into the permanent collections of the Aceh Museum.

Most of the chapters in this book originated in one of the six conference panels devoted to histories of Aceh and the Indian Ocean world. The other five panels necessarily dealt with urgent current issues on which Aceh could offer lessons to the broader world: 1) seismology, geology and environmental issues; 2) conflict resolution, peacemaking and democratization; 3) disaster relief and reconstruction; 4) Islamic law and society; 5) language, culture and society in Aceh. A selection of revised papers from these panels are being published

in a companion volume by the same editors.¹ The bilingual discussions in Aceh generated great local interest, and group discussion sessions ensured that Acehnese academics and intellectuals could debate with colleagues from around the world to evaluate the state of knowledge and the way forward towards a more open future. The relationships begun there have deepened and improved the chapters, now held together with an introductory survey of the field.

These chapters embrace Acehnese history from the twelfth to twentieth centuries, mapping available resources around the world relevant to the study of the Acehnese past and presenting critical surveys of existing work. Together, they highlight the diversity of Aceh's global connections. Uniquely in the Indonesian Archipelago, Aceh was a free agent in dealing with other independent states up until the Dutch invasion of 1873 – in this respect more comparable to mainland Southeast Asian states like Siam and Burma than to other Indonesian polities. As the world's leading pepper producer from the sixteenth through nineteenth centuries, it also had abundant contacts around the Indian Ocean and beyond. Hence, although Aceh's own archival resources have been meagre since the war with the Dutch (though not negligible once the Islamic manuals kept in religious schools are inventoried), there are abundant resources in the archives of foreign countries. The chapters in this book make that clear.

Of these, perhaps the most novel and unexpected insights come from the archives of Istanbul, as first presented in English in two of our chapters. In the wake of the tsunami, public sympathy in Turkey was enhanced by historians who were able to point to Aceh's ancient connection with the Ottomans, and the extraordinary loyalty Aceh showed to that connection in the nineteenth century. In consequence, Turkish assistance to the reconstruction became one of the most substantial and indeed visible national efforts. The Turkish flag emblazoned on every home built by Turkish aid had a striking resemblance to the banned independence flag of GAM, in turn based on the ancient recognition of Turkish suzerainty over Aceh. İsmail Göksoy was one of the modern Turkish scholars who have been galvanized to work on Indonesia, and who presented a survey of the known Turkish data at the 2007 conference. Subsequently a British Academy project coordinated by Andrew Peacock located further crucial documents in Istanbul, including the remarkable Acehnese map which graces our cover. We are grateful to the members of that project for making a late but crucial entry into this book project.

The chapters are arranged in a roughly chronological order with regard to the sources treated in each. These sources range from archaeological to textual

¹ Patrick Daly, R. Michael Feener and Anthony Reid (eds). *From the ground up; Perspectives on post-tsunami and post-conflict Aceh*. Singapore: ISEAS, in press.

and visual materials, covering more than 800 years. Among them are sources relevant to various interconnected aspects of religion, trade and diplomacy, as Aceh negotiated its own position in relation to the wider worlds with which it was connected at various periods of its history. The ongoing dynamics of this can be glimpsed, for example, in the correspondence of Iskandar Thani, documents of missions to the court of Sultana Safiyyat al-Din, and important literary texts generated in Aceh, as examined in the contributions to this volume by Annabel Teh Gallop, Sher Banu, Teuku Iskandar and Amirul Hadi. Other contributions, such as those by Georges Alves on Portuguese-language materials, the two papers on materials from Ottoman archives, and Jean Taylor on photographic images preserved in the Dutch KITLV collections, not only provide us with specific points of new information, but also reveal the diverse ways in which Aceh has been perceived by outsiders at various points in its long history. Through the presentation of such rich material, it is hoped that the essays collected here can help to inform and inspire a new generation of historians, both Acehnese and non-Acehnese, to engage in more substantial ways with the rich array of sources available for furthering our understanding of the region's past as it looks towards a new future.

The editors would like to thank those who made the 2007 conference possible, notably Kuntoro Mangkusubroto, Teuku Kamaruzzaman, and Heru Prasetjo of BRR, and the admirable Alyson Rozells of ARI. In preparation of the book Deborah Chua did much of the copy-editing, two anonymous readers helped sharpen our arguments, and Harry Poeze was encouraging at KITLV.

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Abbreviations

ABRI	Angkatan Bersenjata Republik Indonesia; Armed Forces of the Republic of Indonesia
Ac.	Acehnese
AMM	Aceh Monitoring Mission
Ar.	Arabic
ARI	Asia Research Institute
b.	Ibn; Ar. 'son of'
BRR	Badan Rehabilitasi dan Rekonstruksi NAD-Nias; Agency for the Rehabilitation and Reconstruction of Aceh and Nias
D.	Dutch
DI	Darul Islam
GAM	Gerakan Aceh Merdeka; Free Aceh Movement
Gy.	Gayo
<i>HPS</i>	<i>Hikayat prang sabi</i>
ICAIOS	International Conference on Aceh and Indian Ocean Studies; The same abbreviation is also now used for the International Centre for Aceh and Indian Ocean Studies, located in Darussalam, Banda Aceh.
ISEAS	Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore

Jv.	Javanese
KITLV	Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde; Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies
KNIL	Koninklijk Nederlandsch-Indisch Leger; Royal Netherlands Indies Army
NUS	National University of Singapore
n.y.	no year
OT	Ottoman Turkish
PDIA	Pusat Dokumentasi dan Informasi Aceh; Aceh Documentation Centre
Pr.	Portuguese
PUSA	Persatuan Ulama-Ulama Seluruh Aceh; The All-Aceh Ulama Association
TBG	<i>Tijdschrift van het Bataviaasch Genootschap</i>
Tm.	Tamil
TOEM	<i>Tarih-i Osmani Encümeni Mecmuası; Journal of the Ottoman Historical Society</i>
VOC	Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie; Dutch East India Company

CHAPTER I

The Acehnese past and its present state of study

R. Michael Feener

What does it mean to study the history of Aceh? What kinds of questions have been asked, and which remain to be formulated? Once posed, what sources are available to consult in answering these questions? This volume presents a series of investigations into the diverse source bases that have relevance to Aceh in various periods of its history. This introductory essay aims to provide a broader framework for these individual studies by presenting an overview of the current state of Acehnese history, while highlighting the areas where new work is needed in order to develop a better understanding of the rich heritage and experience of this region.¹

Aceh has a long, rich and complex history, and the earliest sources we have point already to its position as a site of cultural and commercial contact with a wide range of other societies stretching from China to the Coromandel Coast of India. Maritime sites in the area such as Lamri are mentioned in the texts of Arab geographers as early as the ninth century.² Archaeological finds from that site reflect its position as a node in trans-regional trading networks, with considerable amounts of South Indian red-ware found alongside higher-fired ceramics from China, including Yuan blue and white porcelain, in deposits demonstrating a clear intermixture of these various trade items, rather than simply stratigraphic layering.

Some still preliminary observations on the northern and eastern coasts of Aceh also report the presence of early Muslim grave markers carved in a distinctive obelisk-like form known as *plang pleng*, that bear possible southern Indian stylistic overtones (Illustration 1). Similar markers are also found at Gampong Pande in Banda Aceh.³ Another early Islamic site, in the vicinity

¹ This work was undertaken partially with the support of the Singapore Ministry of Education's Academic Research Fund (MOE AcRF no. R-110-000-029-750).

² For a summary of early Arabic, Chinese, Armenian, Javanese and European references to 'Lamri', see Jordaan and Colless 2009:236-7.

³ E. Edwards McKinnon, personal communication, February 2009.



Figure 1. Toppled *plang pleng* Muslim grave marker at Lamri.
Photograph by R. Michael Feener.

of Perlak, is known locally as Cot Meuligue – a name that may be derived from the Tamil *malikai* ('palace' or 'temple').⁴ Despite calls for further work on this site published over two decades ago, very little has been done, and Lamri, Cot Meuligue and other heretofore understudied sites remain long overdue for a systematic archaeological survey (McKinnon 1988:121). With the openness of post-conflict Aceh, new possibilities for the exploration of Aceh's archaeological heritage now present themselves.

This volume thus begins with a state-of-the-field review of early Acehese history by Daniel Perret. Drawing upon existing archaeological survey data, as well as early textual materials in Chinese, Javanese, Armenian and European languages, Perret presents an overview of early urban settlements in Aceh. The picture that emerges from this is one of a complex constellation of trading ports with far-flung connections across both the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea. However, much work remains to be done in order to better understand the particular patterns of exchange and relations centred on these North Sumatran nodes in broader regional commercial and cultural networks. Perret's essay points to some practical avenues for pursuing such work through his catalogue of over a score of sites in Aceh requiring more systematic archaeological investigation, as well as through his assessment of analogous work already done in the neighbouring area of Barus.

During the thirteenth century, the various settlements along the coasts of northern Sumatra appear to have been largely autonomous under the rule of various coastal 'rajas'. It appears that during this period, some of these ports, including Perlak, were being established under Muslim rule. The earliest Islamic sultanate in the region for which we have any significant surviving sources was established at Pasai (on Aceh's north coast) at the end of the thirteenth century. This area is particularly rich in early stone monuments in the form of grave markers (Illustration 2), which have attracted considerable scholarly attention. Elizabeth Lambourn, for example, has produced groundbreaking work on both the importation of South Asian models of Muslim funerary monuments and the development of local traditions of Muslim grave markers in the region (Lambourn 2003, 2004). More recently, Claude Guillot and Ludvik Kalus have produced a comprehensive catalogue of inscriptions from the major cemeteries on Aceh's north coast, dating from c. 1400 to 1523. The catalogue is complete with identifications of Qur'an, Hadith, poetry, and other texts in their inscriptions, as well as a proposed new typology of forms (Guillot and Kalus 2008). Nearly half of the book, however, is taken up by essays advancing new interpretations of this data, in which they reconstruct the genealogies of Pasai's rulers in ways that challenge established recensions

⁴ I would like to thank Ronit Ricci for her help in identifying and transliterating this Tamil term.



Figure 2. Muslim funerary monuments at Pasai, North Aceh.
 Photograph by R. Michael Feener.

derived from later Malay literary texts, including the *Hikayat Raja Pasai* and the *Sejarah Melayu*. Among the important points advanced by Guillot and Kalus' work for understanding the earlier history of the region is their highlighting of the significance of latter-day descendants of the Abbasid nobility in contests for religious and political legitimacy during the earliest period of Pasai's history, as well as the apparent prominence of women in positions of authority. Both of these cases demonstrate important early precursors to subsequent developments of the Acehnese sultanate in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Since the rise of Pasai, and through the subsequent development of the Sultanate of Aceh, the region has maintained a very strong sense of Muslim identity, and many of the best-surviving sources for its history over the centuries since Ibn Battuta's visit chronicle developments in evolving local interpretations of Islam and changing patterns in Aceh's relationships with other parts of the global umma. Upon his arrival at Pasai, Ibn Battuta was greeted by Amir Daulasa, a Pasai court official whom he had previously met in Delhi. Later in his account, Ibn Battuta (d. 1369) also noted that some of

the Pasai court's most impressive entertainments, including performances by dancing horses, were similar to those he had seen performed for 'the king of India' (*Ibn Battuta* n.y. :478-81). All of this points to the significant degree of interactions between Pasai and the Muslim cultures that were developing in South Asia during the post-Abbasid period.⁵

By that time, the prosperity of Pasai had helped it to become a leading centre of Muslim culture in the Indonesian Archipelago, particularly in the transmission of Islamic religious knowledge and the production of Malay literature (Roolvink 1965). The importance of Pasai as a centre for the development of Malay as a major language of Islamicate culture is attested by some of the earliest surviving texts from the region, such as the *Hikayat Muhammad Hanafiyyah*, the *Hikayat Amir Hamza* and the *Hikayat Dhu'l-Qarnayn*.⁶ The centrality of Pasai as a Muslim cultural, economic and political centre was, however, eclipsed during the sixteenth century by the rise of a new sultanate situated at Banda Aceh (Andaya 2008:118). The ascendance of Aceh as a new maritime power in the Straits of Malacca was forcefully announced with the 1521 rout of a Portuguese fleet. Over the century that followed, the Sultanate of Aceh continued to clash with the Portuguese⁷ as it projected its expanding influence not only eastward across the straits to the Malay Peninsula, but also southward into the Batak and Minang lands.⁸

Acehese interactions with the Portuguese continued until the early nineteenth century and developed in complex and multifarious ways, with documents written in Portuguese remaining important sources for the early history of the Acehese sultanate. Jorge Santos Alves' essay in this volume presents an introduction to and overview of such Portuguese-language documents, arranged thematically so as to highlight the diversity of such sources. This typology allows us to appreciate the range of perspectives presented by merchants, missionaries, cartographers and captives alongside those of royal missives and official documents composed under the auspices of the *Estado da Índia*.

Complex interactions with various parts of the Muslim world involved economic, political and even (proposed) military operations. One of the most famous episodes of this type involved the Ottomans. In his contribution to this volume, İsmail Hakkı Göksoy provides a detailed review of documents

⁵ For the broader context of these developments in the Indian sub-continent, see Wink 2004.

⁶ These texts and their place in the development of Malayo-Muslim culture are further discussed in Teuku Iskandar's contribution to this volume (Chapter III).

⁷ For a nuanced study of one contemporary account of this conflict framed in explicitly religious terms, see Subrahmanyam 2009.

⁸ The interaction of Aceh and Minangkabau in particular has resulted in complex and ongoing commercial contact and exchange in both directions over the past four centuries, for example, with pepper cultivation and the *Jame'* (West Sumatran) ulama.

from Ottoman chanceries related, in particular, to two periods of interaction between Banda Aceh and Istanbul. The first of these was in the sixteenth century, when ambassadors from both courts were sent back and forth across the Indian Ocean in response to the increasingly aggressive presence of the Portuguese in the region. The second period of intensified Aceh-Ottoman relations came in the mid-nineteenth century, when Aceh applied (ultimately unsuccessfully) to the Sublime Porte for vassal status as a means of countering increasing Dutch incursions into Sumatra. New materials related to these revived nineteenth century Aceh-Ottoman relations, including a rare map of Sumatra, are presented in the chapter by Ismail Hakkı Kadı, Andrew Peacock and Annabel Teh Gallop and its accompanying appendices. Despite the impediments to realizing Acehnese hopes of receiving direct and significant political and military aid from the Ottoman Empire, the cultural memory of a 'special relationship with the Turks' remains a significant aspect of Aceh's long and complex relationships with Muslim societies of the Middle East.

Aceh's complex relations with the Portuguese influenced more than just the sultanate's ongoing engagement with the Ottomans. Attempts to counter further Portuguese incursion into the region were also important factors in the development of subsequent Acehnese relations with other European powers and, particularly, the English and Dutch East India Companies, as Aceh came to see these two new merchant maritime powers as important new players in the contest for control of then Portuguese-dominated Malay states along the Malacca Straits.⁹ Indeed, over the first two decades of the seventeenth century, shifting Luso-Dutch relations in the region proved to be a significant factor in the vigorous assertion of Acehnese control over Pahang and Johor (Borschberg 2010:110-15).¹⁰

In her contribution to this volume, Annabel Teh Gallop presents detailed studies of three remarkable documents attesting to Aceh's engagements with European powers in the seventeenth century. These comprise the only three surviving originals of Acehnese royal letters from that period: a Malay letter from Sultan Perkasa Alam (Iskandar Muda) of Aceh to King James I of England, dated 1615 CE; a letter from Sultan 'Ala' al-Din Mughayat Syah (Iskandar Thani) of Aceh to Frederik Hendrik, Prince of Orange (1584-1647),

⁹ In the seventeenth-century the VOC 'factory' at Aceh was located just beside that of the English East India Company. I would like to thank Peter Borschberg for first calling my attention to the coloured drawing of the VOC 'factory' at Aceh reproduced here as Illustration 3 (Nationaal Archief, the Hague, 4.VEL 1150).

¹⁰ The Acehnese expedition against Johor and its consequences are the subject of the pre-eminent epic of Acehnese literature, the *Hikayat Malém Dagang*. The Acehnese text, together with a Dutch summary translation, can be found in Cowan 1937.



Figure 3. Seventeenth-century coloured drawing of the VOC 'factory' at Aceh. The note in the lower left corner indicates its close proximity to the English 'factory'. (Used with permission from the Nationaal Archief, the Netherlands, 4.VEL 1150.)

dating from 1639; and an illuminated letter from Sultana Taj al-'Alam, dated 12 October 1661, congratulating Charles II on his accession to the English throne, and reaffirming the cordial ties between Aceh and the English dating back to the time of Iskandar Muda. Gallop's work on explicating both the physical features of these documents and their political contexts helps us to understand some of the more nuanced aspects of Aceh's diplomatic relationships with European powers in the early modern period.

The late sixteenth through seventeenth century is one of the best-documented periods of Acehese history, and has often been described as the 'golden age' of the sultanate. Its most famous leader, Iskandar Muda (r. 1607-1636), launched campaigns for the Islamization of the neighbouring Gayo and Minangkabau regions of Sumatra, and staged elaborate observances of Friday prayers and other Islamic religious ceremonies. He also appears to have adopted various symbols and institutions from the contemporary

Mughal and Ottoman empires to bolster his authority as a ruler of Muslims, including official state seals and insignia (Siegel 1979:24-5), and even an institution reminiscent in some ways of the high Islamic religious office of the *Sehülislam* (Ito 1984:259-62). Iskandar Muda and his successors devoted considerable patronage to Islamic learning and literature as well, as attested by both European visitors' accounts of Aceh and the legacy of influential seventeenth-century Muslim texts produced there that have survived to this day (Lombard 1967).

The records of the period reveal that a number of ideas and institutions rooted in the earlier history of the region were transmitted and transformed within the sultanate's Islamicized idioms of symbolic power and social order. Perhaps the most striking example of this is a structure located within the precincts of the sultan's palace known as the *Gunongan* (Illustration 4). This was an artificial mountain located in the royal gardens, and descriptions suggest its resemblance to replicas of Mt Meru known from other Southeast Asian courts, both Muslim and non-Muslim. The name of the garden in which this powerful Hindu-Buddhist image was situated was *Taman Ghayra*, through which flowed a river known as the *Dar al-ishq*, on the banks of which was a mosque called *Ishq Mushahada* (Wessing 1988). The Arabic terminology employed here is thick with Sufi valences, and points to the important role of sufism in expressions of the religious and political culture of the sultanate.

Under the Sultanate of Aceh, new forms of Islamicate art and culture that were clearly influenced by models developed at the Mughal court began to take root (Braginsky 2006). Conversely, Aceh was itself attracting the attention of Mughal writers in India at the turn of the seventeenth century, though not necessarily as a source of inspiration for higher culture (Alam and Subrahmanyam 2005). At the same time, Acehnese patronage was also drawing a number of Islamic scholars from various parts of the Middle East and South Asia (Hoesein Djajadiningrat 1911:157, 160-1).¹¹

During the first half of the seventeenth century, Aceh became the leading regional centre of Islamic learning, and, in particular, a site for fervent debates over Sufi cosmology and ritual practice. One topic that has received particularly intense and sustained attention in international scholarship has been the struggles over claims to religious authority and proper understandings of Sufism at the Acehnese court. From the nineteenth century, Dutch scholars began work in this field, inspiring over a century of academic discussions.¹²

¹¹ International trends in various fields of the Islamic religious sciences continued to be reflected in Aceh and elsewhere in Southeast Asia through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, facilitated by the continuing circulation of scholars from across Asia and the Middle East (Azyumardi Azra 2004).

¹² For an overview of the extensive academic literature on this material published in Dutch and English, see Peter Riddell 2001.

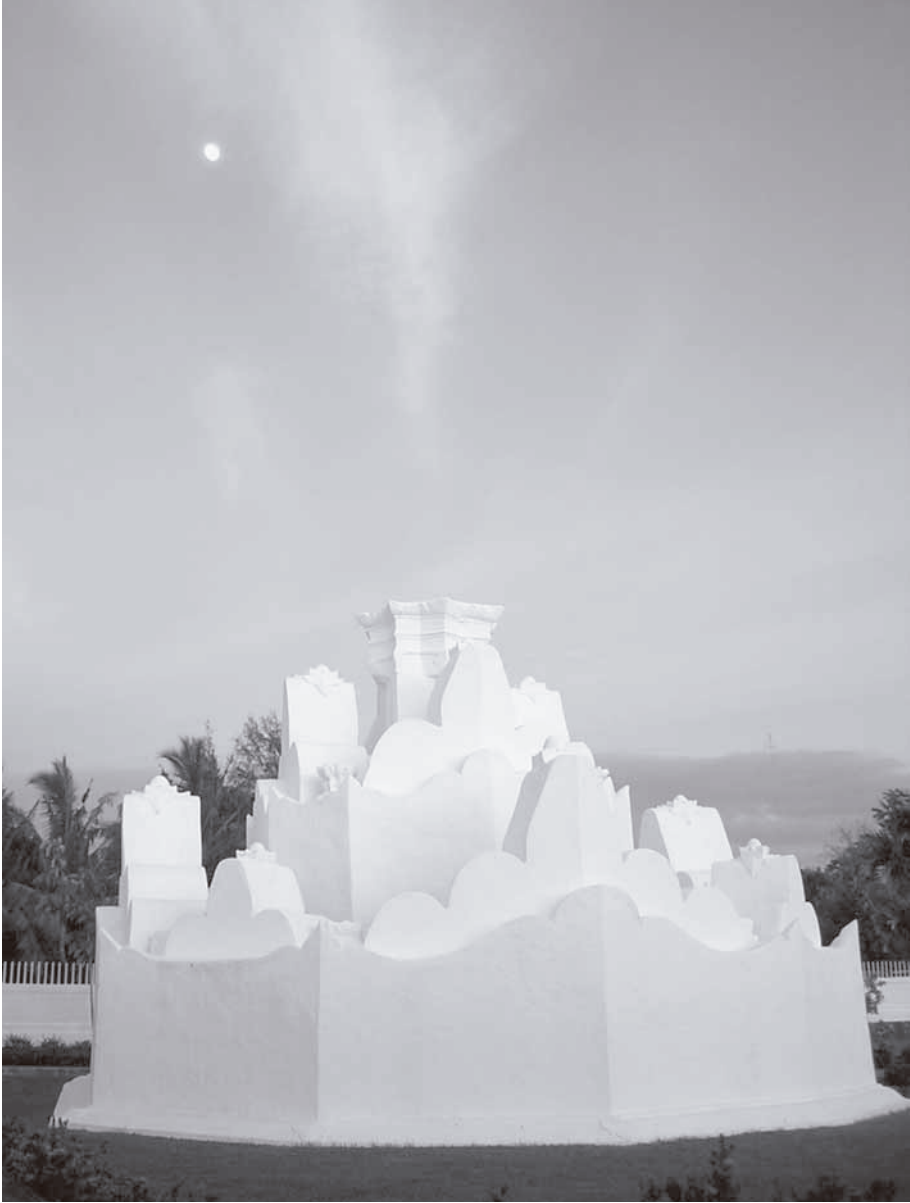


Figure 4. The Gunongan on the former grounds of the sultan's palace at Banda Aceh.
Photograph by R. Michael Feener.

At present, there is an extensive literature of international scholarship on the Achenese ulama of this period, focused particularly on the works of four authors: Hamza Fansuri, Shams al-Din al-Sumatra'i, Nur al-Din al-Raniri and 'Abd al-Ra'uf al-Singkili. The general tendency has been to see these authors as linked to each other in direct succession. More recently, however, important new evidence has come to light that is particularly relevant to the life and work of the celebrated 'first teacher' of this Sumatran Sufi literature, Hamza Fansuri. Working from a rubbing made from the Bab Ma'la Cemetery in Mecca, Guillot and Kalus have proposed a revision that has the potential to significantly change our understandings of these developments (Guillot and Kalus 2000).¹³ This shows clearly the ways in which the discovery of new material, however small, can have a significant impact on our understandings of the Acehnese past. It opens new areas to explore, and also gives us pause to better understand the striking differences between the respective models of Sufi cosmology in the works of Hamza, and those of another well-known scholar of the period, Shams al-Din al-Sumatra'i (d. 1630), who was heretofore often regarded as Hamza's pupil. Beyond what survives of his own writings in Malay and Arabic, we know more about Shams al-Din's role at the Acehnese court from notices recorded in the works of European visitors.

The types of Islamic learning and literature developed by Hamza and Shams al-Din were subjected to strident critiques by a scholar of the next generation, Nur al-Din al-Raniri (d. 1658). Al-Raniri was a Gujerati Muslim of South Arabian descent, who was born into a family with far-flung connections in the commercial and cultural networks across the Indian Ocean littoral (Azyumardi Azra 2004:54-5). After having established himself at the Acehnese court in 1637, al-Raniri initiated a radical campaign of religious reform that sought to discredit the mystical cosmologies popularized in the region by Hamza and Shams al-Din, and to replace them with what he considered to be a more 'orthodox' doctrine. Al-Raniri's ambitious programme of reform was carried out through the creation of a remarkable corpus of works written in Malay that strove to redefine Aceh's Malayo-Muslim tradition in the fields of jurisprudence, mysticism, theology, literature and history. While this new understanding of Islam managed to catch the attention of the ruling sultan, Iskandar Thani (d. 1641), it also suffered from subsequent vicissitudes of patronage, as other views of Sufism, promulgated by the Minangkabau Shaykh Sayf al-Rijal, rose to counter the influence of al-Raniri, who then left Aceh in apparent disgrace in 1643 (Ito 1978:489-91).

¹³ This notice prompted polemics with Vladimir Braginsky, who had previously published an article on Hamza's life based on earlier data in a previous volume of the same journal (Braginsky 1999). These discussions were continued in a later number of this same journal published in 2001; see *Archipel* 62:24-38.

The next major court scholar of Islam prominently appearing in texts known to us today was 'Abd al-Ra'uf al-Singkili (d. 1693), a locally born scholar who had returned to Aceh after two decades of study in Arabia. His learning is reflected in a number of works in the Islamic religious sciences, most of which were produced under the patronage of the Acehese court after his return from his studies in the Middle East. Notable among these compositions is the *Mir'at al-tullab*, in which he advanced a Shari'a-based argument for the legitimacy of a female to serve as the head of a Muslim state (*khalifa*) (Amirul Hadi 2004:60). For 'Abd al-Ra'uf, this was not an abstract, hypothetical ruling, but rather a concrete reference to the situation in Aceh during his day, as the sultanate was ruled by a succession of four sultanas between 1641 and 1699.

As rich as this particular body of texts is, it must be noted that there is more to seventeenth-century Aceh than internal Sufi polemic, and Islam, although undeniably important, is not in itself sufficient to explain the history of Acehese culture and society over the centuries. There were also complex political and economic developments in the Acehese sultanate that cannot be explained as simply reflections of its Islamic identity. One example of such developments is evocatively depicted in Sher Banu Khan's contribution to this volume. In her narration and interpretation of 'the jewel affair', she demonstrates some of the ways in which Sultana Safiyyat al-Din Taj al-'Alam Syah (r. 1641-1675) negotiated her assertion of new priorities in the allocation of royal resources, as well as the manner in which officials of the Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (VOC, Dutch East India Company) reacted to the ascendancy of a female ruler in the Acehese sultanate during the late seventeenth century. This study provides a richly detailed view into the diplomatic tensions that arose in the period of transition to the rule of the four sultanas in the seventeenth century, as well as complex aspects of Aceh's relations with emerging European powers in the early modern period.

The interventions of the VOC at that time eventually resulted in the realignment of trade relationships that hastened Aceh's decline as both a port and a polity in the mid-seventeenth century (Ito 1984:451). With the abdication of the last sultana (Keumalat Syah, r. 1688-1699), power passed into the hands of prominent Arab migrants who had established themselves in Aceh during the seventeenth century.¹⁴ This transition was a notably rough one, with a rapid succession of three sultans in the first four years. Relative stability was only achieved with the ascension of Jamal al-'Alam Badr al-Munir (Poteu

¹⁴ During the early eighteenth century, other Hadrami creole migrants also established themselves at Siak, Mempawa, Matan, Kubu and Pontianak. At the same time, integration of both Bugis and Arab elements elsewhere took place, with the establishment of the 'Four Youths of Tarim', who pioneered the expansion into various parts of Sumatra, Kalimantan and the Malay Peninsula (Engseng Ho 2002).

Djeumaloj, r. 1703-1726). The following year, however, this short-lived Arab Jamal al-Layl dynasty was overturned by yet another group of powerful immigrants (Veltman 1919). In 1727, a local Bugis leader named Maharaja Léla Meulajo assumed the throne as Sultan 'Ala' al-Din Ahmad Syah.

This seizure of power prompted a dramatic reaction on the part of Poteu Djeumaloj, who attempted to retake the throne, and the struggle that ensued is chronicled in the *Hikajat Potjut Muhamat* – one of the major works of a new Acehnese-language literature that began to evolve at that time (Drewes 1979). The tussles between diverse contestants for the throne of the sultanate fostered the development of new political, economic and cultural dynamics in eighteenth-century Aceh. This included a marked shift of the locus of political power out of the coastal capital of Banda Aceh towards the agricultural lands of the interior (Reid 2005:110). These dynamics of de-centralization facilitated the development of new models of administration and authority linked to the relative ascendance of an Acehnese landed nobility (*ulèëbalang*) in the eighteenth century (Van Langen 1888).

The resultant political fragmentation proceeded alongside and mutually facilitated the rise of new and increasingly powerful economic interests in the region. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, foreign trade was generally focused at Banda Aceh and regulated by officials of the sultan. By the mid-eighteenth century, however, the ability of the sultanate to assert control over Aceh's profitable foreign commerce had all but disappeared in the face of challenges by a wide range of contenders, including private European 'country traders' and Tamil Muslim merchants from the Coromandel Coast of India. These new mercantile interests prospered by evading the dwindling reach of the central authority of the sultanate. Instead, they became increasingly engaged directly with the local rulers of smaller, independent ports. In this way, Aceh can be seen as participating in a much broader pattern of economic and political restructuring that was occurring across the Malay world in the eighteenth century (Kathirithamby-Wells 1998).

One major characteristic of these developments was the expansion of cash crop cultivation across new areas, away from the earlier centres of political power. By the turn of the nineteenth century, for example, pepper planting had expanded dramatically in the hinterlands of Aceh's west coast, from whence it was exported in great quantities in American ships from Salem, Massachusetts (Putnam 1924; Gould 1956a, 1956b, 1956c). This brusque trade declined in the mid-nineteenth century due to a combination of factors including fluctuations in US trade policy, as well as the emergence of Singapore and Penang as major regional entrepôts powerful enough to shift production across to the north coast of Aceh (Lee 1995).

This decentralization also resulted in a transformation of cultural production in eighteenth-century Aceh. In earlier centuries, the more powerful sul-

tans and sultanas had made their courts important centres of Malay-language Islamicate culture. In fact, the power and prestige of the Acehese court in the seventeenth century enabled it not only to take up the mantle of Muslim Malay culture rooted in the earlier tradition of Malacca, but also to significantly transform it. Rather than Acehese, the predominant language of both the royal court and Islamic religious scholarship in the Sultanate of Aceh in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was Malay, and written documentation of everything from poetry to commerce, history and religious scholarship was dominated by the Malay language, whose Islamicate forms had been extensively developed at the courts of coastal sultans since the period of Pasai (Reid 2005:149). The extent to which this was the case has been demonstrated by Leonard Andaya, in arguing that 'Aceh came to offer new standards of "Malayness" based on Islamic models in literature and in court administration and behaviour' (Andaya 2001:45, 2008:124-45).

Acehese authors continued to produce works in Malay, particularly in various fields of the Islamic religious sciences, right through the early twentieth century; of course, they continue to write in modern Indonesian to this day.¹⁵ The earliest surviving evidence for a tradition of Acehese literature written in a modified Arabic script comes from the mid-seventeenth century. However, most written texts in that language were produced in the nineteenth century (Voorhoeve 1952). A considerable number of texts survive from this later period.¹⁶ Moreover, some of this material can be identified with a number of named authors, including (but by no means limited to): Tgk. Cik Di Simpang, Abdullah al-Ashi, Tgk. Shaykh Di Seumatang, Muhammad Zayn, Jamal al-Din al-Ashi, Sharif Alwi Abi Bakr b. al-Sharif Husayn Ba Faqir, Tuan Amat, Muhammad b. Ahmad Khatib, Tgk. Khatib Langgien and Tgk. Muhammad Ali Pulo Pueb.¹⁷

¹⁵ Indeed, some of this literature maintained an importance in the twentieth century, or was 're-discovered' to enter into contemporary conversations of the twenty-first century. For example, collections of works composed and/or compiled by later Acehese ulama were repeatedly republished in Jawi at places like Cairo as late as the 1940s. Examples include Isma'il Aceh's *Taj al-Muluk* and *Jami' al-Jawami' al-Musnafat*, and the *Safinat al-Hukkam*, a manual of Islamic legal procedure and administration by the eighteenth-century jurist Jalal al-Din al-Tarusani. This manual was transliterated and published by IAIN and the Dinas Syariat Islam in 2004, in connection with contemporary efforts to implement Islamic law in the province. Unfortunately, the writings of such later scholars have yet to receive any serious academic attention, even while studies of the 'golden age' ulama continue to proliferate.

¹⁶ For the most complete listing of such materials preserved at libraries around the world, see Voorhoeve and Iskandar 1994.

¹⁷ Some very preliminary discussions of some of these authors can be found in works including Hasjmy 1987 and Ara 2008. However, much more work remains to be done in developing more substantial studies of their works, and in examining them as documents of cultural and social history.

The first attempt to survey Achenese literature by Snouck Hurgronje (1906:66-189) has been followed up over the past century by only a handful of studies on specific works, most of which tended to take the form of philological studies focusing on the relationship between Acehese texts and other Asian literary traditions.¹⁸ However, it is clear that such material also has the potential to document the social as well as literary history of Aceh in the early modern period. Indeed, calls by Takeshi Ito and, more recently, Annabel Teh Gallop, urging contemporary scholars to be more open to the use of such indigenous sources than were the Dutch founders of 'Aceh Studies', have been compelling (Ito 1984; Gallop 2009). Such work could be greatly facilitated by the spate of archive preservation projects and new manuscript catalogues that are currently being produced by Acehese and international scholars working on various projects.¹⁹

The Acehese literature of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries deals with a host of new subjects, for example depictions of the harsh life of those seeking fortunes in the new pepper plantations of the West Coast in the *Hikajat Ranto* of Leubè 'Isa (Drewes 1980:6-41). Contrasting works like this with the later genres narrating events of the Dutch wars, G.W.J. Drewes has noted that in many Acehese literary works from the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, 'the religious element is absent' and the focus tends to be on 'the intestine (*sic.*) wars on the issue of the throne of Aceh' (Drewes 1979:9). By the end of the nineteenth century, however, we see more of a renewed trend for literary works to take on a more religious focus, and the body of Acehese texts that has received the most substantial and sustained attention has been those related to the wars against the Dutch in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.²⁰ Amirul Hadi's discussion of the Acehese literary traditions of the *Hikayat prang sabi* provides a concrete illustration of the interaction between particular Acehese texts and the broader contexts of social change in the colonial period. In doing so, he provides important insights into the dynamic nature of developments in Acehese understandings of Islam, and their relationships to changing conceptions of cultural identity and political organization.

¹⁸ See, for example, Cowan 1937; Damsté 1916, 1928, 1939, 1942, 1948; Hoesein Djajadiningrat 1916; Iskandar 1959, 1986.

¹⁹ A joint Indonesian-Japanese team has produced two major catalogues: Fathurahman and Holil 2007; and Fathurahman 2010. Another young scholar, Fakhriati, is currently working on manuscripts from collections in Pidie and Aceh Besar. A project coordinated by Nurdin AR of the Aceh Museum and the University of Leipzig has also started work on an online catalogue: <http://acehms.dl.uni-leipzig.de/content/below/team.xml?sessionid=138A6E413FB0161EF345011362CC7720?lang=de>

²⁰ See, for example, Damsté 1928; Hasjmy 1971; Ibrahim Alfian 2006.

The period of the Dutch wars in Aceh (1873-1942) is undoubtedly the most heavily documented and discussed period of the region's history.²¹ The Dutch invasion and continuing campaigns to establish control over Aceh had a profound effect on the development of Acehese society. One of the most fundamental transformations was in the way that Dutch intervention reconfigured relations between *ulèëbalang* and ulama (Snouck Hurgronje 1906, I: 187).²² The prolonged conflict left deep scars on both the Acehese and the Dutch well beyond the horrendous casualties of the battlefields, and in many ways the experience was formative on the development of the respective cultural dynamics on both sides since the turn of the twentieth century (Illustration 5). For the Dutch, it made a deep impact on domestic visions of Islam and the colonial encounter that continue to inform contemporary discourses.²³ For the Acehese, the legacies of conflict, both during and since the wars against the Dutch, have fostered popular perceptions and even self-ascriptions of Aceh's history as pre-eminently one of violence, as well as the establishment of the idea of 'resistance' as a key concept in the formation of Acehese identity.²⁴

On a more concrete level, the Dutch wars in Aceh were responsible for dramatic cultural innovations facilitated by a range of new elements introduced to the region during the conflict. These included European, Chinese and Javanese immigrants who brought with them their own cultural practices and material artefacts, while also introducing the latest technologies of both battle and bourgeois pastimes to the region. Of particular importance for historical documentation was the camera, which captured many military, public and domestic scenes around Aceh during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Jean Gelman Taylor's chapter in this volume introduces the Images Archive of the Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde (KITLV, Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies) as a resource

²¹ Indeed, new sources for the history of the Aceh War continue to be brought to light, most recently with the translation of edited excerpts from the account of a Czech physician in the service of the Dutch invasion force (Durdik 2009).

²² Snouck Hurgronje is often credited (or castigated) as central in making this division crucial to shaping the contours of the Dutch wars in Aceh. For Snouck's own statements on the religious and social dynamics of Aceh in this context, see Gobée and Adriaanse 1957:47-396.

²³ As attested to by the sustained resonance of echoes of popular Dutch works, and their Indonesian translations, including Zentgraaf 1938, and Van't Veer 1969.

²⁴ It is curious that other cultures in Indonesia that took to displays of dramatic violence in the face of Dutch colonial expansion at the turn of the twentieth century have elected not to foreground this as formative of their cultural identity. An example would be *puputan* in Bali, where horrific incidents of religiously-inspired wartime martyrdom and subsequent outbursts of violence, such as during the 1965 killings, are effectually 'erased' from cultural memory in creating an identity emphasizing tolerance and harmony.



Figure 5. Qur'an MS pierced by a bullet - collected beside a fallen Acehese at Laut Tawar (Central Aceh) in August 1905 by Dr Knud Gjellerup, a Danish physician in the service of the Dutch expedition (used with permission from the Danish Royal Library, Cod. Arab. Add. 47). Photograph by R. Michael Feener.

for materials that can serve to shed new light on our visions of Achenese history since the mid-nineteenth century. Most of the more than 1,000 images of Aceh from 1873-1939 contained in this collection are photographs, and many of these are images of war depicting various aspects of the protracted campaigns and resistance between the Acehese and Dutch colonial forces.²⁵ However, Taylor's essay goes beyond this to explore the possibilities for using these valuable visual records to shed light on other, often neglected aspects of Acehese history during this period, including the social life of civilian elites and the region's changing physical landscape, as well as developments in technology and the arts.

In addition to the intrusion of Western colonial institutions, the early twentieth century also saw the transformation of the internal dynamics of

²⁵ A generous selection of photos and other documents focusing specifically on the war can be found in Muhamad Hasan Basry and Ibrahim Alfian 1990.

Acehnese society driven by new tensions arising from debates over differing visions of what constitutes proper Islamic belief and practice. In the early twentieth century, Acehese Muslims returning from periods of study abroad began bringing home with them some of the modern visions of Islamic reform that were gaining ground in West Sumatra, Java, Egypt and elsewhere at that time. Such visions of Islamic reform, however, seem to have initially been more appealing to certain modernizing *ulèëbalang* than they were to many Acehese ulama, as the first branch of reformist movements like the Muhammadiyah were founded by the *ulèëbalang* T. Muhammad Hasan and T. Cut Hasan (Alfian 1985:84). In fact, when the largely reformist organization, Persatuan Ulama-Ulama Seluruh Aceh (PUSA; All Aceh Ulama Association), was first founded in 1939, it received significant support from the *ulèëbalang* (Piekaar 1949:13-24).

This state of things, however, did not last long, as PUSA took on an increasingly anti-Dutch and anti-*ulèëbalang* orientation and eventually became an active and, at times, even radical Muslim nationalist organization (Van Dijk 1981:270-1). Unlike the Muhammadiyah and other Islamic reform movements, then, PUSA was successful in establishing a distinctly Acehese movement for Islamic reform.²⁶ With its reformist orientation, moreover, PUSA worked to establish its own modern educational institutions, such as the Normaal Islam Instituut at Sigli that trained cadres to fill positions in a modern system of administration (Alfian 1985:85). PUSA's anti-Dutch agenda and its penchant for modern organization and mobilization also facilitated its active cooperation with the Japanese during their wartime occupation of Sumatra. At the end of the war, PUSA and its sympathizers moved swiftly against the group they saw as the last remaining allies of the Dutch colonial order, the *ulèëbalang*. In the 'Social Revolution' that raged over the region in late 1945 and early 1946, the *ulèëbalang* were all but wiped out.²⁷ This left the field open for a reconstitution of the class of administrative professionals in Aceh, the ranks of whom soon swelled with young professionals with allegiance to PUSA.

PUSA was led by Daud Beureu'eh, who emerged after the end of the Second World War not only as Aceh's foremost Islamic reformist leader, but also as its military governor and chief administrator. In 1953, Daud Beureu'eh launched an armed rebellion against the central Indonesian government known as the Darul Islam (DI). Contemporary reports on the composition

²⁶ In the 1920s, other organizations such as al-Irsyad (Java) and the Thawalib (West Sumatra) had also established Acehese branch schools in Lhoksukon and Tapak Tuan, respectively (Alfian 1985:84).

²⁷ For more on these complex developments in the 1930s-1940s, see Reid 1979. A selection of declarations, proclamations, military announcements, legislative motions, letters and other documents related to the early contests for Acehese autonomy are collected in Alibasjah Talsya (n.y.).

of the Darul Islam movement all point to a very high rate of involvement of civil servants in the rebellion, who seemed to share a combination of Islamic reformist ideology and a strong sense of Acehnese nationalist identity.²⁸ The Acehnese Darul Islam movement waged a long struggle to establish an independent Islamic state, but was ultimately unsuccessful. Agreements to end hostilities were reached with most of the rebel leaders in 1959, when Aceh was granted the status of a 'special' province, but Daud Beureu'eh and an inner circle of his followers continued their resistance until 1962, when he was granted a pardon.²⁹

The end of the Darul Islam movement was soon followed by the end of the founding regime of the Indonesian Republic and the establishment of Suharto's New Order. The dynamics of interaction between Aceh and the Indonesian central government underwent a new evolution during this period. The discovery of natural gas in the area of Lhokseumawe in the 1970s brought Aceh once again to prominence in Indonesian politics and the New Order's vision of economic development. As competition for these valuable resources mounted, there arose a new movement for Acehnese independence, known as the GAM or Free Aceh Movement.

In 1976, GAM's leader, Hasan Muhammad Di Tiro, proclaimed Aceh's independence from Indonesia and initiated a campaign of armed resistance against Indonesian military operations in the province. In 1979, he and a number of other leaders of the movement fled into exile abroad in the face of an intense Indonesian counter-insurgency campaign. A decade later, however, GAM operations began to rise once again, resulting in the launch of massive Indonesian military operations that continued on through the end of Suharto's New Order in 1998. Under the rapid succession of presidents over the years that followed, military operations were also supplemented with other strategies aimed at resolving the conflict, including granting Aceh the right to special autonomy in fields including the application of Islamic law in the province.³⁰ The conflict ended, however, only in July 2005 with the signing of the Helsinki Peace Agreement.³¹ By that time, the situation on the ground in Aceh had been literally transformed by the devastating Boxing Day earthquake and tsunami of 2004.

²⁸ In 1959, many of these Darul Islam-affiliated civil servants were re-integrated into the Regional Administration of Aceh under the Indonesian Republic (Van Dijk 1981:299, 309-10, 335-6).

²⁹ For more on these developments, see Van Dijk 1981:269-339.

³⁰ For nuanced discussions of these complex developments, see the essays by M. Isa Sulaiman, Edward Aspinall, William Neesen, Damien Kingsbury and Lesley McCulloch, Kirsten E. Schulze, Aleksius Jemadu, Michelle Ann Miller, and Rodd McGibbon in Reid 2006:121-359, as well as Miller 2009.

³¹ Overviews of diverse aspects of the peace process can be found in Aguswandi and Large 2008. An Indonesian version of the same text is also available online at <http://www.c-r.org/our-work/accord/aceh/index.php>

The end of the conflict and subsequent efforts to maintain peace have received considerable attention elsewhere, as have the immense projects of post-disaster physical and social reconstruction.³² What is important to note here is that the complex interactions of peace-making and post-disaster reconstruction have resulted in major social transformations that are shaping the next chapters of Aceh's history. The stories of these developments are often dramatic narratives of the experience of a society beset by multiple and massive trauma. Some organizations have already been actively collecting extensive data on the experiences of the conflict, as well as on the earthquake and tsunami, and a growing body of work is thus available to scholars pursuing in-depth investigations of the issues of trauma, resilience and cultural transformation, in addition to the processes of physical, political and economic restructuring (Damanhuri bin Abbas et al. n.y.).³³

In their attempts to shape new futures for themselves, Acehese are deeply engaged with interpreting the past (Mohammad Said 1961; Zainuddin 1961; Hasjmy 1983). Some of these are linked to particular projects for defining the religious and cultural identity of Acehese society. Others, however, are less explicitly politicized attempts at recovering and reconstituting communities in the wake of the profound social changes wrought following the tremendous natural disasters and bloody armed conflicts that have hit the region over the past decade. In the current contexts of reconstruction and conflict resolution, Aceh's past has once again become a newly contested site, while simultaneously facing increasing threats of disappearance and misappropriation for various and disparate causes.

This, of course, is not necessarily something new, as battles over Acehese identity, and thus sources of legitimate authority, have been important at various points over the past five centuries. However, the lines along which contemporary debates are drawn, and the ways in which they are conducted, do reflect new realities of peculiarly twenty-first century reconfigurations of Aceh's broader political and religious contexts on both national and international levels. These include, for example, the ongoing reinterpretation of relations between the Indonesian nation-state and its 'special regions' (*daerah istimewa*) in the post-Suharto era of de-centralization, as well as trends in global Islam with renewed emphasis on scriptures, assertive critiques of various 'traditional' practices, and increasing concern with more rigid definitions of confessional communal boundaries. These and other influences

³² For more on these developments, and the extant literature on both reconstruction and conflict resolution, see Daly, Feener and Reid, *From the ground up*.

³³ There are also a considerable number of audio-visual records of the earthquake and tsunami and of their immediate impact at various locations around Aceh. These are now kept in the Provincial Archives (Arsip Provinsi NAD n.y.), catalogued as *Dokumen elektronik hasil kegiatan ganti rugi dan liputan arsip tahun 2006*.

from outside Aceh impact significantly upon local debates, marking a new phase in the region's long experience as a site of contact and communication between Southeast Asia, the broader Indian Ocean world and beyond.

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