Dis/connection: Violence, Religion, and Geographic Imaginings in Aceh and Colonial Indonesia, 1890s–1920s

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This article draws attention to the case of Aceh to analyse the mechanisms through which ideologically driven geographic imaginings obscured the role of place and class in colonial and anti-colonial violence in Indonesia. Its main perspective is the region's West Coast. In the course of the long and brutal Dutch-Acehnese war (1873–1942), the West Coast of Sumatra was transformed from a dynamic centre of trade, commerce, and religious renewal into a colonial frontier. Violent resistance persisted in this area as the Dutch involved themselves in and exacerbated local contestations for authority and resources. Colonial discourse worked to conceal these complexities, foregrounding an image of the West Coast as a remote, backwards, and inherently dangerous place, prone to a violent Muslim millenarianism.

Keywords: violence, colonialism, geography, Islam, the Netherlands Indies, Aceh

> Just as none of us is outside or beyond geography, none of us is completely free from the struggle over geography. That struggle is complex and interesting because it is not only about soldiers and cannons but also about ideas, about forms, about images and imaginings.
> —— Edward Said[1]

Inspired by Edward Said's statement and Willem van Schendel's work on the politics of knowledge and geographic imaginings in area studies, this article analyses the role of and linkages between knowledge, ideology, and geography in the colonial subjugation of Aceh and the Acehnese.[2] The Dutch-Acehnese war (1873–1942) was the largest, longest, and deadliest in pre-1945 Dutch colonial history. While the literature has dwelt on the magnitude of the struggle and its reverberations throughout the Malay-Indonesian archipelago, it has also produced a simplistic and detrimental image of single-minded colonialists pitted against fanatical Muslims. Much emphasis

has been placed, for example, on perceptions of the struggle as a "holy war." Little has been written, in contrast, on ambivalent and multidimensional stances taking shape on both sides.[3] The conquest of Aceh was congruent with the incorporation of Malaya by the British, on the opposite side of the Strait of Malacca. That is, the conquest operated as an effort to sever connections linking Aceh with other areas and to constitute the region as an isolated periphery of the colonial state. It was a sequence of enclosure, brutal violence, and the enforcement of a colonial frontier. It was not, however, a one-sided process. Rather, it modified and was modified by evolving Muslim subjectivities, a process in which both colonisers and colonised had stakes.[4] Geographic imaginings on the part of the colonisers served to obscure these processes of connection and disconnection, however, eliding the process of frontier construction. These geographic imaginings need to be deconstructed. This is the task I set myself in this essay.

Elsewhere, I have analysed in detail the layered social and political processes through which Aceh was imagined as a particularly "pious" place.[5] The present article elaborates on this attempt at de-essentialising Acehnese history and society by scaling down to discuss one specific subregion of Aceh. Offering a detailed analysis of violent encounters on the Acehnese West Coast, I will argue that this subregion was transformed from a connected, kaleidoscopic zone of political, economic, and religious interaction into a liminal and supposedly "isolated" fringe. Further, this transformation was key to the application of violence and, at a broader level, the need for state intervention. The case of Aceh sheds light on politically expedient religious categories emerging in the process of producing integrated circuits of rule, a process of categorisation with relevance not only for the specific debate about the integration of Aceh in the Netherlands Indies, but also for more general discussions about the transformation of economic hot zones into colonial frontiers.

I engage with the special issue's central theme of displacement not, as most other contributions do, by looking at forced or self-imposed mobilities (e.g., exile or refuge), but by investigating spatial orders in the service of the colonial state. As Joshua Gedacht and Amrita Malhi argue in their introduction, coerced mobility and efforts to politically or infrastructurally connect or disconnect colonial subjects to and from each other were mutually constitutive elements in a politics of de-territorialisation and re-territorialisation contingent on the workings of empire.[6] In his individual contribution, which also deals with Aceh, Gedacht focuses on the Dutch policy of exiling local elites suspected of fuelling loyalty to the disbanded sultanate to Java, the administrative centre. This was simultaneously a punishment and an attempt at rendering these figures harmless by integrating them, through education and socialisation, into the empire as faithful servants of the colonial state.[7]

Moving people around was just one way of manipulating mobility and "re-territorialising" Aceh, however. Another equally important strategy was to reconfigure Aceh as a province with a hierarchical relation to Batavia and with a certain spatial logic. People in Aceh responded to this reconfiguration in different ways. As I will show, their responses were increasingly framed by the colonial state in religious terms, even if motivations for resisting the colonial order were in many cases, or in origin, pragmatic, opportunistic, or desperate in nature. Specifically, I will highlight how colonial power

worked to transform such considerations, discursively, into dichotomous religious dispositions: one violent and conservative, one collaborative and transformative. This contrast was predicated on an emerging, deeply ideological geographic imagining of the West Coast as a specially remote and dangerous subregion of Aceh steeped in millenarian traditions.

In the next section I offer a concise historiographical and conceptual framework that allows for an understanding of the politics of knowledge and deliberate ignorance as an ingredient of violence. The empirical heart of the article is formed by a detailed analysis of two concrete struggles: the confusing contest for power in and around the town of Meulaboh in the 1890s, and a burst of anti-colonial resistance, and its vicious crackdown by the Dutch, in the 1920s. Viewed in context, these events reveal some of the central processes through which the imagining of the West Coast as an isolated fringe, versus the rest of Aceh as a whole, took place, while showing how ambiguous relationships were turned, eventually, into hard, consequential "facts" about the social and intellectual condition of the Acehnese people. Each case is introduced by a section on local context, including a discussion on the making of ethnographic and geographic classifications. I conclude with a note on the concealment of social class in colonial representations of the war.

Geographic Imaginings

Colonial expansion and state formation depended on knowledge production and, in a broader sense, on "cultural technologies of rule."[8] The subjugation of Aceh, like all forms of colonial conquest, was based on a "regime of territorialization," usefully conceptualised by Matthias Middell and Katja Naumann as a dynamic and dialectical relationship between a variety of (social, political, economic) "entanglements" on the one hand and "attempts to control and regulate those same entanglements" on the other.[9] This essay explores the geographic imaginings on which Dutch colonialism in Aceh was predicated, that is, the construction of an evocative and relatively coherent set of spatial references to Aceh as a territory and the place and trajectory of this territory as a part of the Netherlands Indies.

In an influential article on the construction of "areas" in "area studies," Willem van Schendel investigates how certain regions and spatial configurations were privileged over others as a result of the dominant political and scholarly power nexus.[10] The study of world areas, like Southeast Asia, produces "geographies of knowing," in the form of the accumulation and cross-fertilisation of certain types of knowledge about those areas, as well as "geographies of ignorance." As a paradigmatic example, van Schendel evokes "Zomia," a vast body of highland societies that ranges from the southern Himalayas to Indochina and that straddles the borders of (the more commonly recognised world areas of) South, East, and Southeast Asia. Although Zomia has all the characteristics of a world area itself—a shared ecology, a set of related languages, similarities in terms of culture and religion—it has been neither imagined nor studied as such. Instead, it sits on the margins of both maps and research agendas.

The same process, van Schendel notes, takes place on a smaller scale. Thus, the study of Southeast Asia is dominated by the study of Indonesia, Thailand, and Vietnam, while other places and societies have been relegated to the fringes of the field. One way in which area specialists may try "to overcome what their geography of knowing has obscured and marginalised," van Schendel suggests, is to study borderlands, such as Zomia, which do not correspond neatly with the interests of nation states or with the macropolitical configurations of global contests for power.[11] Aceh is a particular kind of borderland. Not so understudied as other areas, it is nonetheless a maritime border that straddles the divide between the established "world area" of Southeast Asia (and within it Indonesia) and the more recently emerging scholarly field of Indian Ocean Studies. This separation is contingent on the emergence of European imperial powers and their successor nation states, which forced Aceh to turn its gaze from the Indo-Muslim world (of which it was an integral part) to the Netherlands Indies/Indonesia.[12] Further, van Schendel's intervention raises the question of scale: on what scales did geographies of knowing and ignorance enable this shift? My strategy for answering this question is to descend into the local to critically examine the construction of specific subregions within Aceh in the context of contemporary perspectives on the Dutch-Acehnese war. What did the war look like from the vantage point of the supposedly "remote" West Coast, where outbreaks of violence persisted even after rebellion had been quelled elsewhere in Aceh?

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the coastal traverse between the (present day) provinces of Aceh and West Sumatra became a "region," that is, a borderland characterised by a certain landscape, migration, and a gradual integration of the interior in the globalising economy. It is this area that in later times would be defined by the Dutch as the "Acehnese West Coast."[13] Consisting of long and relatively narrow strips of arable land adjoined on one side by the sea and on the other side by swamps and sharply rising mountain ranges, the area proved suitable for the cultivation of cash crops—particularly pepper—drawing both Acehnese-speaking migrants from the north and Minangkabau-speaking migrants from the south. European traders and colonial powers were part of this emerging region as they moored for pepper and coffee and—to advance their economic interests—engaged in local politics and conflicts. The colonial state, however, which asserted itself more forcefully from the nineteenth century onwards, called for a rather different spatial configuration.

When the Dutch tried to conquer Aceh, first invading in 1873, the West Coast proved particularly troublesome. Although victory over Aceh was claimed in the late 1910s, outbreaks of armed resistance persisted in this coastal area until the final years of colonial rule. In the remainder of this article, I approach this coast as a starting point of my analysis rather than a subplot of the war. Dutch attempts to gain control, extending into the 1920s and 1930s, went hand in hand with a geography of deliberate ignorance, asserting the area's remoteness from the vantage point of the North Coast as the main developing economic corridor and disregarding its history of ethnic diversity, connectedness, commercial expansion, and religious renewal. A geography of knowing, meanwhile, based on politically motivated geographic and ethnographic incursions apart from military

Figure 1. Map of Aceh, drawn by the author on the basis of a lithograph by J. Smulders & Co. (ca. 1923), including the (colonial-era) border of Aceh "province." Source: J. Kreemer, *Atjèh: Algemeen Samenvattend Overzicht van Land en Volk van Atjèh en Onderhoorigheden.* Volume 2. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1923.

intelligence, placed the area as a new periphery in the emerging spatial and administrative order of the colony, legitimising the violence used to accomplish that goal.

The Sumatran West Coast

The area that is known today as the "Acehnese" West Coast—a term whose provenance goes back to Dutch colonial constructions of the area as a periphery – stretches some five

hundred kilometres between Lhok Nga and Singkil. According to nineteenth-century Dutch sources, the original inhabitants—small in numbers—were known as *orang mantir,* a people who may have been closely related to the Gayo and the Batak, populating the mountainous regions to the north.[14] In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, trade along the coast expanded significantly, partly because the Portuguese capture of Malacca in 1511 drove Muslim traders to change their routes.[15] Responding to new opportunities, increasing numbers of Acehnese from Pidie and Great Aceh and Minangkabau from West Sumatra settled on the coast. Acehnese migrants also settled farther south as the increasingly powerful Sultan of Aceh extended his control to West Sumatra. There, they traded in gold and pepper, commodities that were heavily in demand with merchants from Gujarat and, increasingly, China and Europe.[16]

Naturally, given these economic opportunities, the West Coast was a contested space. In 1663, the Dutch-Minangkabau treaty of Painan replaced local Acehnese chiefs in West Sumatran ports with officers of the Dutch trading company (the VOC), to the dismay of local Minangkabau brokers who had cultivated mutually beneficial relationships with the Acehnese for years.[17] In the eighteenth century, Minangkabau communities were gradually driven south by Acehnese chiefs who, on the authority of the sultan, ventured to the coast to levy duty on local trade. They relocated to the ports of Susoh, Tapaktuan, Trumon, and Singkil. Not all of them left, however. In some places, Minangkabau chiefs pledged loyalty to the sultan. Acehnese and Minangkabau communities either continued to live separately from each other or merged as a result of intermarriage.

In the final decades of the eighteenth century, a sharp increase in the global demand for pepper led to a new wave of Acehnese migrants. They were led by enterprising people of noble descent, who had the resources to cultivate the land and plant pepper, and who came to rule over these newly opened areas in the name of the sultan. In practice, these figures often acted independently. Migration was concentrated in a relatively short stretch of coast between Kuala Batu (near Blang Pidie) and Trumon (south of Meulaboh), where many Minangkabau lived.[18] "Given the fact that Acehnese immigrants were moving into regions where large numbers of non-Acehnese had long settled," writes Lee Kam Hing, "and where there was no clear demarcation of boundaries, there were bound to be friction and clashes."[19] Migration was not the only source of tension, however. Expanding trade attracted, besides settler communities, a stream of renegades, adventurers, and aspiring warlords. Among European traders, the area south of Meulaboh came to be known as lucrative and unsafe. The Acehnese, in particular, acquired a bad name for engaging in plunder and piracy.

A series of skirmishes between Acehnese chiefs and British trading posts led to new agreements and trading deals, one of which marked the Singkil River as the "limit beyond which Acehnese were not allowed to settle."[20] The British remained mistrustful, however. Although they benefitted from the emergence of strong Acehnese chiefs, they also worried about the weak authority of the sultan and endeavoured to assist him with military and diplomatic support as a counterweight against rogue elements settling in the area. The situation became more complex after the outbreak in West Sumatra of the so-called Padri War (1803–1837). In the late eighteenth century, a group of religious

teachers and recently returned pilgrims from Mecca (the "Padris") engaged in violent campaigns against the immoral practices that had come to "taint" society in the wake of its rapid social and economic transformation. Attempts by the Padris to take control of market towns and regional trade led to a protracted and highly disruptive war against an alliance of traditional Minangkabau nobility and the Dutch colonial army. In the 1820s, Padri leader Imam Bonjol attacked several Acehnese communities in West Sumatra as part of his strategy to control coastal trade and to "persuade" the Acehnese of the need to counter moral vices.[21] He was particularly interested in Trumon, as an alliance might help to break through a trade blockade imposed by the Dutch. His overtures were successful. In the 1810s and 1820s, Imam Bonjol and Trumon cultivated a strong and mutually beneficial relationship.[22]

Meanwhile, the growing power of local Acehnese chiefs became increasingly problematic for the sultan. The enormous expansion of the pepper trade, since the late eighteenth century, led to a renewed attempt to reinstate a royal monopoly in the areas south of Meulaboh. The actions of the sultan brought him into conflict, however, not only with the distant chiefs of the West Coast, but also with the powerful lords of Aceh Besar—the fertile hinterland of the sultan's seat and port city Banda Aceh—who had great personal interests in the pepper trade as well. A violent conflict ensued, which lasted five years, from 1814 until 1819. This situation contributed significantly to the worries of the British, who saw in the unstable sultanate easy prey for Dutch or French imperialists. After the intervention of Stanford Raffles, the British decided to support the sultan by supplying him with arms and loans. These events, together with the Padri War, the establishment in 1819 of Singapore, and the aftermath of the Napoleonic wars in Europe, led in 1824 to the Treaty of London, which "allocated" Sumatra to Dutch influence and the Malay Peninsula to the British, while ensuring the independence of Aceh to protect British commercial interests in the region.

As European powers extended their control, borders were more clearly defined. In 1840, the port of Singkil was taken by force, "annexed" to the Netherlands Indies, and added to Tapanuli. Its Acehnese chief was expelled. Moving upstream along the Singkil River, Dutch military forces encountered a diversity of communities, governed by chiefs of Acehnese, Malay, Nias, Batak, and Mandailing backgrounds. According to Dutch reports, some of these chiefs requested that the Dutch provide protection against their "shared Acehnese enemy." Instead, the Dutch decided to recognise all of them as autonomous rulers under Dutch authority, an act symbolised by the gift of an official sceptre decorated with a silver handle. Only two of them, the chiefs of Tanjung Mas and Tualang, were given a sceptre with a golden handle, by which the Dutch acknowledged the oldest appointments of these chiefdoms by the Sultan of Aceh.[23] At least symbolically, then, Acehnese authority in Singkil was recognised by the Dutch as early as 1840, even though it was not before 1905 that the area came to be administered as part of the "province" of Aceh.

For the Dutch, the Padri War—and the extent to which it had spilled over to Singkil and other Acehnese ports to the north—made clear that the boundaries between Aceh and the rest of Sumatra were not just political in nature. In the 1850s, well before the

outbreak of the Dutch-Acehnese War and the creation of Tapanuli as a separate province, Dutch colonial authorities started to contemplate a strategy of keeping the Muslim territories of Aceh and Minangkabau separated by encouraging the Christianization of the Bataks.[24] This so-called "wedge-policy," which was further fuelled by a series of mass conversions to Islam among the Bataks of northern Tapanuli in the 1860s and 1870s, may be seen as a precursor of the belief, developing gradually among Dutch administrators and military leaders, that compared to the rest of the archipelago, Aceh and the Acehnese were of a different stock.[25] In the Dutch colonial imagination, Aceh at this moment in time came to be regarded more explicitly as a territory, the characteristics of which could be known and the boundaries of which were to be carefully drawn and managed, as part of a broader attempt to gain control over the messy and unpredictable connections, mobilities, and interactions that characterised the archipelago as a whole.

Beyond Narratives of the Holy War: The Struggle for Meulaboh

In 1871, a new treaty between the British and the Dutch ended the agreement about Aceh's independence. In 1873, the Dutch acted on their imperialist ambitions as they decided to conquer one of the last remaining independent kingdoms in the archipelago and incorporate it into its Asian empire.[26] The campaign was a disaster. Two invasions and several battles were needed to take the palace, after which the sultan and his entourage fled and moved their court to a village in North Aceh. In 1874, Sultan Mahmud Syah died of cholera. The Dutch general van Swieten reacted by "abolishing" the sultanate and announcing that the colonial government would take its place. In a compelling history-cum-travelogue, Anton Stolwijk considers the consequences of this decision, which was a conspicuous break with the (tried and tested) Dutch method of bargaining with local rulers and maintaining them as formal representatives of colonial authority.[27] Powerful Acehnese chiefs, including the guardians of the new (underage) sultan, saw no other option but to resist. The Dutch response was brutal and featured systematic attacks on villages and rice fields.[28] The result was a protracted and gruesome guerrilla war, in which, to borrow James Siegel's words, "one out of eight Atjehnese was killed or displaced and in which the economic base of Atjehnese society was drastically altered."[29]

Positions on both sides were marked by different interests and ideas about how to confront, appease, or collaborate. A deep cleavage emerged within Acehnese society between the traditional aristocratic elite (the *uleebalang*) and a vanguard of religious teachers (the *ulama*), who framed the struggle as a "holy war" (*jihad,* or *perang sabil*). While the *uleebalang* were willing, increasingly, to strike a deal with the Dutch, the *ulama* and their followers took an uncompromising stance. In the early 1890s, the Dutch discovered, by way of information gathered by the orientalist scholar Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje, that the *ulama* had become the de facto leaders of the resistance. In response, they changed their strategy, investing all of their energy in courting the *uleebalang* and persecuting the *ulama.* This strategy proved successful. In

subsequent decades, the military advantage shifted, gradually but inevitably, in the direction of the Dutch.

Having provided a general outline of the war, let me now move back in time and return to the West Coast. After the invasion of Aceh Besar in 1873 and the first (failed) attempt to conquer the royal palace, the Dutch tried to "persuade" local chiefs, by way of a blockade, into submission. Meanwhile, an estimated eight thousand Acehnese fighters ventured from the West Coast to Aceh Besar to join the struggle.[30] The chief of Meulaboh, one of the most prominent ports on the West Coast, was one of the first rulers to pledge allegiance to the Dutch. In 1877, a military presence was established in this town. By 1881, the rulers of all major ports on the West Coast had recognised the sovereignty of the Dutch. In practice, however, the influence of the Dutch and their allies "remained small and was surpassed by that of the resistance party."[31] In 1884, the resistance in Aceh Besar had become so strong that the Dutch were forced to retreat behind a so-called "line of concentration." Meulaboh was kept, but only nominally. The West Coast was "administered" by the Dutch from Banda Aceh, and it was not until the end of the 1890s that the colonisers were able to extend their control to the upstream areas of the Meulaboh River. I will proceed by investigating the situation around Meulaboh in more detail.

Despite the support of the local ruler (*raja*), resistance in the area around Meulaboh was fierce. Several members of the *raja*'s own family, including his oldest son, Teuku Kejeruen Muda, had joined the anti-Dutch movement. Initially, armed opposition came from the side of Merbau, on the opposite bank of the river. The settlement was destroyed, after which the centre of resistance moved upstream to Rundeng, a village just north of Meulaboh and separated from the town by a swamp.[32] One of its leaders was Teuku Umar, who in years to come would grow to become a powerful warlord, a real nemesis for the Dutch, and a living legend. Meulaboh's central market, the Dutch fortification, and the villagers who visited the town to trade were the target of regular attacks. Dutch control was minimal. It took almost twenty years, until 1893, before Dutch troops and their local allies were able to carry out a decisive attack on Rundeng and surrounding fortifications.[33]

One of the reasons the struggle for Meulaboh lasted so long was that the Dutch invasion exacerbated a long-standing local struggle for power and authority that played out, to a large extent, within the family of the *raja.* The latter was the most important ally of the Dutch. He died in 1879, however, after which his position became the subject of fierce contestation by different factions, including—making the situation particularly complex—some of those who had joined the resistance at an earlier stage.[34] In 1893, the year of the decisive attack on Rundeng, the *raja* of Meulaboh was Teuku Hitam, a younger son of the old *raja.* His main opponents came from the entourage of his predecessor, a grandson of the old *raja,* Teuku Hitam's nephew, who had died unexpectedly in 1891. They were suspected by the Dutch of supporting the resistance in secret.

There is little information about the group in Rundeng. The only non-Dutch source known to me is an Acehnese poem about the confrontation of 1893.[35] The *Hikayat Teungku di Meuké* ("The Story of Teungku di Meuké") is an unconventional work,

also from an Acehnese point of view, in the sense that its main focus is not the struggle against the Dutch, but the conflict between two local factions, namely the group around Teuku Hitam (designated by his title, Lila Peukasa) and a group around a charismatic religious teacher, called Teungku di Meuké, who operates from Rundeng.[36] The author of the poem, who identifies him- or herself as a servant of Lila Peukasa, tells the story from different perspectives. The narrative starts with Teungku Meuké, who has erected a blockade to disrupt local trade, and concludes with the attack on Rundeng, its capture, and Teungku di Meuké's death.

In Rundeng, the story begins, "religion was upheld" (*nyan nanggroe nyang ka kong agama*) by Teungku di Meuké. The latter was widely respected as a religious leader. However, his actions were also controversial.[37] The people of Meulaboh were angry because of the blockade, the *teungku*'s contempt for established social hierarchies, and his custom to brand the people of Meulaboh as "unbelievers" (*kaphe*). The attack on Rundeng lasted many days and, according to the poem, was only decided after Lila Peukasa received weapons from the Dutch. For the purposes of this article, I am less concerned with the details of the story than the categories used by the author to denote the groups and individuals involved. The followers of Teungku di Meuké are designated twice as "Muslims" (*ureueng museulimin*) but in most instances by their origin: Woila, Bubon, and other places. "From upstream and downstream, from East and West they gathered there in redemption of vows and promises."[38] These travellers became the "people of Rundeng" (*ureueng Rundeng*) and as such entered into a conflict with Lila Peukasa, the "chief of the region (*raja dalam nanggroe*)," who allied with the "chief of the Dutch (*raja beulanda*)."[39] Lila Peukasa's followers are designated as "the people of the river mouth (*ureueng kuala*)," but also as *jamee* ("guests"). They are thus migrants, too.

Teungku di Meuké is designated as a "religious teacher" (*cukuna, teungku*), the "lamp of religion" (*tanglong agama*), and occasionally as "the mighty sword of the Rawa people" (*geudubang taré' aneu' rawa*). The term Rawa, like *jamee,* seems to suggest that Teungku di Meuké is a descendent of Minangkabau (while it may also indicate a connection with the Padris, but this is less certain).[40] The designation "Aceh" occurs only once, in a section in which the perspective shifts to the Dutch. When the situation around Meulaboh became heated, the poem narrates, the "Dutch ruler" (*raja beulanda*) conferred with the "ruler of Batavia" (*raja Batavia*), who told the former that "it is apposite to come to Lila Peukasa's aid. If that is how things are, you must apply to the Governor of Aceh. Go to Aceh and make clear the agreement that was made." The Dutch administrator went to Aceh Besar and returned with weapons and soldiers, including "men from Pegu and Indian Tjatis."[41]

There is no mention in Dutch reports of a "Teungku di Meuké" or a "Teungku di Rundeng." It seems unlikely that, if his role was as significant as the poem suggests, the Dutch would be entirely unaware of his existence. Perhaps the poem collapses several historical figures into one, for stylistic reasons or to (over)emphasise the religious aspect of the struggle, or both. Either way, it is noteworthy that Dutch reports mention few names when it comes to the leaders of the resistance, except in those instances

concerning defecting allies. It is equally noteworthy that, in the case of the West Coast more generally, the Dutch seemed to be relatively uninterested in, or less attentive to, the possibility of religious motivations driving their opponents. Colonial reports describe the opponents consistently as "gangs" (*bendes*), "the resistance party" (*de partij van verzet, verzetspartij*), or, less specific still, "malicious elements" (*kwaadwillenden*).[42] There is a conspicuous contrast, in this regard, with reports about other regions, particularly Pidie and the North Coast, but also Great Aceh, which contain frequent references to the "clerical party" (*geestelijke partij*) or the "holy war movement" (*prang sabil-beweging*).

These sources about the struggle for Meulaboh show multiple perspectives at play both on the side of the colonisers and on the side of the colonised. They thus present an insightful and undervalued perspective on the Dutch-Acehnese war. Far from a one-dimensional struggle between Muslims and infidels, they depict a confrontation in which ethnicity, local struggles for power and resources (and associated patronage politics), political and religious legitimacy, and pragmatic choices and dilemmas played a crucial role. The factor of religious authority, in particular, raises questions. Does the relative absence of discussion in Dutch sources mean that religious leaders were less prominent in the resistance on the West Coast? Or should we attribute this to the fact that the Dutch were too busy managing relations with the nobility, including those who went over, to pay attention to the role of religious leaders?

It is difficult on the basis of the available material to answer these questions in a satisfactory way. In any case, the reports show that, in their effort to strengthen their alliance against "the malicious ones," the Dutch invested considerable energy in local marriage politics and mediation between opposing groups of *uleebalang*.[43] It is also clear, as I will show in the sections to follow, that the interest in religious motivations increased in subsequent decades. In the twentieth century, the Dutch came to consider Aceh as finally "pacified" and distinguish sharply between acceptable forms of Islam and its mistaken or "corrupted" manifestations posing a threat to that hard-won peace.

Social Mobility and the Persistence of Violence

In 1903, the sultan surrendered. By the late 1910s, the largest remaining centres of organised resistance were crushed, allowing the Dutch to gradually wind down the standing practice of military rule. In 1918, the first civil governor in three decades was installed. Subsequent decades were characterised by the establishment and expanding of tasks of government institutions in the fields of agriculture, education, and health care. The integration of Aceh in the Netherlands Indies was seen by administrators as a process of "normalisation" based on state building, as well as the cultivation of "good" subjects by diminishing the influence of dangerous, deviant, or subversive ideas. The "pacification" of Aceh was nonetheless a deeply ideological project, characterised by an increasingly strong emphasis on the need to know the Acehnese mind, to study and understand its susceptibility to the attractions of the holy war, and to change it for the better.[44]

The increasingly self-conscious tone of colonial discourse on the nature of the Acehnese concealed the fact that it was often very difficult to determine what, in

particular, distinguished this group from others.[45] On the West Coast, a population chart compiled in the 1880s on the basis of information obtained from local chiefs broke down the category of "Acehnese," identifying people from Great Aceh by the *sagi* (confederation of fiefdoms) from which they hailed.[46] An explanation accompanying this chart indicated that "the bond between Great Aceh and Pidie and the Acehnese regions on the West Coast had always remained very strong."[47] The chart also indicated, however, that the Acehnese-speaking migrants on the West Coast probably did not—ever or in the first place—speak of themselves as "Acehnese." It is important to emphasise that Aceh in this period was not (yet) a territory delimited by borders. As a geographic indication, it referred to the port (Banda Aceh) and the seat of the sultan. Migrants probably identified with specific villages—the one in which they were born and, in the case of men, the one to which they moved after marriage—and, as suggested by the chart, with the "regions" (*nanggroe*) to which their villages belonged, referring to specific *uleebalang*-ships, federations, or former kingdoms like Pidie.

Adding to the complexity, there were places in which Acehnese- and Minangkabau-speaking communities lived in modes of "cohabitation" and "symbiosis." Consecutive waves of migration had led to the creation of hybrid statelets, which were referred to in most Dutch reports as "Malay," or mixed "Malay-Acehnese."[48] The distinctions between Acehnese and Minangkabau customs (*adat*) were emphasised and reified by the Dutch as they tried to increase their authority beyond the main coastal towns and attempted to implement a system of indirect rule at the local level. While Acehnese *adat* was seen as the basis of a patriarchal, territorial, and "orthodox Islamic" system of "one-chief" rule, Minangkabau *adat* implied a matriarchal, clan-based system of multiple chiefs that was, in essence, incompatible with Islamic law. Dutch administrators preferred the Acehnese system, because they thought it made indirect rule at a local level more straightforward and effective. Acehnese *adat* was also seen as less antithetical to Islam, making traditional leaders seem better equipped to neutralise the latter's radical expressions. Colonial administrators were thus much inclined to transform Minangkabau styles of rule into forms that, supposedly, were more in accordance with the "Acehnese" system.[49]

In the thick forests of the highlands and the swampy terrains of the West Coast, meanwhile, groups of fighters continued to challenge colonial authority. Some of these bands acquired near-mythical status. The Tripa and Seuneu'am "gangs" consisted of men and women and were either led or inspired by Teuku Raja Tampo, a guerrilla leader and half-brother of Teuku Moeda Mat Said, a major resistance leader during the early decades of the war.[50] Between 1925 and 1927, the smouldering fire of resistance suddenly flared up, leading some Dutch administrators to suggest that a full-blown revolt was imminent. It started with an attack on a military patrol, on its way to arrest a member of a local *uleebalang* family (on the charge of sedition) near Bakongan. In subsequent months and years, the violence spread to the districts of Tapaktuan, Singkil, and the Gayo highlands.

A general pattern in the resurgent resistance of the mid-1920s is the central role played by discontented figures of noble descent.[51] As a result of the Dutch policy to co-opt the *uleebalang* at all costs, the positions of local rulers had become increasingly lucrative.

This led to fierce contestations and claims of entitlement among the class of *uleebalang*. There was a difference, however, between the situation on the West Coast and other regions. The settlement of the West Coast in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had taken place recently, quickly, and—at times—quite violently. As a result, the *uleebalang* in this area did not, generally, enjoy the same kind of prestige that was ascribed to noble families in Great Aceh, the North Coast, or even the highlands. In fact, many of those who had ventured to the West Coast in the first place had been driven—despite their titles—by their relatively marginal social and political positions in their regions of origin. In other words, the scramble for resources that characterised the Sumatran West Coast for much of the nineteenth century was also a struggle for social mobility.

This process was further intensified by Dutch colonial policies. Some of the leading figures in the outbreak of violence in the 1920s were "veterans" of the war. They included warlords of high descent and social standing, such as Cut Ali, the former *panglima prang* (military commander) of Teungkoe Bin Blang Pidie. The majority, including supporters of Cut Ali, belonged to a larger group of people who possessed a title but nevertheless felt disowned, outplayed, or bypassed in the struggle for positions.[52] Finally, there were resistance leaders who, rather than claiming noble descent, expected an office, an *uleebalang*-ship, or control over particular areas or swaths of land on the basis of their or their ancestors' achievements. What follows is a case of the latter.

Mapping Religious Dichotomies: Teungku Peukan and the "Isolated" Coast

In 1926, a group of sixty men attacked a military barracks in Blangpidie. The assault was led by a religious teacher called Teungku Peukan.[53] A Dutch report about the incident says little about his background, except that "he had acquired the title of Teungku because of his piety and his religious teachings." In stark contrast to the Teungku di Meuké episode over thirty years earlier, colonial observers were quick to highlight the role of religion as a key attribute of this outbreak of anti-colonial violence. Teungku Peukan, we learn from the report, was married to a daughter of his uncle, Haji Wahid, a Minangkabau who had come to Tapaktuan as a little boy. Haji Wahid's father had been a famous tiger hunter, who, in the late nineteenth century, had been summoned by the chief of Manggeng, a district south of Blangpidie, to clear the area of tigers causing trouble to local people. "When this was done, the promised reward of 500 Acehnese dollars failed to materialise. Instead [Haji Wahid's father] was given the rights over some wastelands in the region. This [land] was developed by father and son, as a result of which [Haji Wahid] gradually obtained some say over the territory." At some point, Haji Wahid had felt confident enough to petition the Dutch for the rights over the chiefdom of Manggeng. As becomes clear from an earlier report, however, this claim had been rejected and as a result relations between Haji Wahid and the local administrator had turned sour.

In 1924, Haji Wahid received a tax assessment from the district authorities. "It was a moderate assessment, surely," the report stated, "but Haji Wahid was offended by the fact that he received one. He saw in it a denial of the services that he and his father

had paid to the land." Haji Wahid refused to pay and was summoned to the office of the district head. Instead he sent his son-in-law, Teungku Peukan, who also refused to pay and was subsequently given a substitute sentence in jail. This was when the situation escalated, with Dutch administrators continuing to place special emphasis on the role of Islam:

> Haji Wahid paid his taxes, hoping that his son-in-law would be released. He soon found out, however, that his efforts were in vain. Embittered by our Government and the zelf-bestuurder [local ruler] of Manggeng, and "maloe" [ashamed] about the way he was treated, he stayed for some time at the house of Teungku Peukan's brother, Haji Jahja, in Aloeë Pakoe, where, after Teungku Peukan's jail term expired, consultation took place between the three about what to do next. Haji Wahid persuaded his "kemanakans" [cousins] to become "muslimins" [fighters for the Islamic cause]. The "Kompeuni" had forgotten his services; they had taken away his "kehormatan" [honour].

For six months, nothing conspicuous happened in Manggeng, but in neighbouring districts the situation was festering. Intelligence reports noted that a number of meetings had been held in the district of Tapaktuan, discussing possible actions "against the Kompeuni" and the motivations of holy war. The immediate cause for the unrest seemed to be a combination of administrative reconfigurations, the most important of which was a contentious plan to merge the self-governing subdistrict of Kluet with Trumon to form a new, directly administered district of "South Aceh." Things remained quiet until, in September 1926, a *kenduri* (communal meal) was held by Teungku Peukan, during which he declared that the Imam Mahdi had descended in his person, and that the Day of Judgement was drawing near. His party travelled to Blangpidie on the next day, but only after "the men had been given holy water to drink, and their *klewang* had been blessed." During the march to the bivouac, one of Teungku Peukan's sons walked in front with a "Prang Sabil flag" in his hands.[54] Teungku Peukan himself was stripped to the waist and was said to wear "numerous amulets" around his neck. The march was completed "under the mumble of the confession of faith." They attacked on the morning of 10 September. Most of them, including Teungku Peukan, were killed. A few Dutch soldiers were also killed.

In the following weeks, the majority of surviving attackers were hunted down and killed. During interrogations, they said that they believed that Teungku Peukan was sent by God. "As good Muslims, they had given in to the pressure to fight for the cause of Islam." Interestingly, it turned out during the investigation that many of the attackers, including Teungku Peukan himself, had in an earlier period been members of the (Indonesia-wide) association of Islamic traders and intellectuals Sarekat Islam. Some of them had then shifted to the West Sumatran Islamic modernist movement Soematra Thawalib, which had opened a branch in Tapaktuan in 1920.[55] Among colonial administrators, Soematra Thawalib was infamous because some of its members in West Sumatra had championed communist sympathies. Thus, the suspicion was raised that the incident in Blangpidie, and the violent outbreak on the West Coast more generally, was driven by a communist motive. This, however, was "only an assumption" and in the end the report concludes that "it is more plausible to attribute the resistance . . . to the fact that

one man, who was brani [brave] enough to . . . resist the hated Kaphé—whose superior strength was no longer convincing—rose to revolt."

This kind of lukewarm interest in possible ideological motives other than the "typical" Acehnese hatred for unbelievers is a clear pattern in Dutch reports about the violent eruptions on the West Coast. Such interpretations of the conflict were common by the 1920s, but this had not always been the case. As I have shown, they were hardly a feature of Dutch colonial discourse thirty years earlier. Two years before the outbreak in Manggeng, a report mentioned the discovery of a "conspiracy" against colonial rule in the region of Dayah, north of Calang. While the Dutch seemed uncertain about the nature and background of the incident, the report expressed few doubts about its deeper causes. Interrogations had shown that the "religious fanaticism and ignorant naiveté of the still primitive population of the region of Dayah" lay at the basis of the unrest.[56] A 1931 report warned against a certain Teungku Raman from Kluet, whose teachings deviated from what "all other teungku's" in that area regarded as correct:

> It seems that the followers of these teachings easily reach a state of religious ecstasy and although the teachings in themselves may not be regarded as dangerous, the resulting practice is that some of these adherents will not be able to control themselves and may continue to engage . . . in acts that might disturb peace and order in one or the other area.[57]

Two years later, Teungku Raman was preemptively arrested. He was brought before the *musapat* (indigenous court) in order to force him to "take responsibility for the consequences of his tarikat [mystical order], the dissemination of which he had been repeatedly warned against by the chiefs." Again, the report stated that his teachings, although not considered dangerous in and of themselves, "might lead to excess."[58]

These events, and the responses by the Dutch, contain important information about the ways in which "Aceh" came to be imagined during the colonial period as a meaningful ethnic, religious, and geographical space. The frequent use of the term "isolation" by Dutch soldiers, scholars, and administrators is particularly revealing. Initially, two very different meanings were attached to the "isolated coast" (*geïsoleerde kuststreek*), one referring to Aceh as a colonial frontier, and the other referring to the Acehnese as an inherently inward looking people. By the late colonial period, both uses became thoroughly conflated. According to Snouck Hurgronje, who was frequently quoted by administrators, Aceh had been an isolated place for a long time. The problem with the Acehnese was that they had never learnt to live in association with "differently-minded'" (Dutch: *andersdenkenden*). Political and diplomatic associations in the past had failed to make them conscious of their own inferiority.[59] These ideas, notwithstanding the conspicuous social changes that characterised Acehnese society in the late colonial period, were eagerly reproduced by later scholars and administrators. They informed the emergent geographies of knowing and ignorance that characterised Dutch colonialism in Aceh.

According to the Dutch, there was a direct relationship between isolation, the persistence of locally salient expressions of Islamic mysticism, attraction to the "holy war," and

the outbreak of violence. This view was grounded in colonial ideas about Islam more generally that had developed in the nineteenth and early twentieth century in dialogue with reform-minded Islamic scholars and in the context of the decline of royal courts—previously the main sites of religious exchange—and the decentralisation of religious authority through the proliferation of rural-based religious schools (called *pesantren* in Java and *dayah* in Aceh).[60] These scholarly conversations inspired Dutch interests in religious motivations, something that was also fuelled by the surge of Indonesian Muslims to the Arabian peninsula and the increasing traffic of ideas and anti-colonial ferment across the Indian Ocean. In Aceh, mystical or heterodox beliefs, practices, and skills were increasingly regarded as forces driving the holy war. Snouck Hurgronje, who agreed with reformist Islamic scholars that these beliefs and skills were based on dangerous corruptions of ("proper") Islamic orthodoxy, standing in the way of Muslims' modernisation, development, and enlightenment, was the most influential proponent of this view.[61]

In the case of Soematra Thawalib, which was difficult to categorise—being modernist in its approach to religious education but with strong roots in West Sumatran customs and traditions—the colonial emphasis was placed on clandestine networks through which it spread, thus placing it in league with secretive (and therefore dangerous) mystical orders.[62] In the case of Sarekat Islam, attention was given rather to the organisation's secretive character and the holy oath by which its members pledged loyalty to its leadership.[63] In Aceh, this construction of a stringent binary between dangerous forms of religious deviancy and more forward-looking expressions of Islamic reform overlapped, increasingly, with the geographic distinction between the West Coast and other parts of Aceh, particularly Aceh Besar and the North Coast.[64]

In the 1920s and 1930s, successive governors spoke of the pitiful neglect of the West Coast, where people were isolated and an old and "typically Acehnese" mentality of hatred against unbelievers persevered. At the same time, and rather paradoxically, Dutch military and administrative leaders worried about what seemed to be a continuous, unregulated stream of people and ideas between Aceh and West Sumatra.[65] Despite this traffic, administrators maintained that the West Coast should be "liberated" from its isolation by connecting the area, through western-style education, ambitious infrastructural projects, large-scale economic investments, and engagement with "legitimate" networks of Islamic modernism, to the parts of Aceh and the Netherlands Indies considered more developed, both economically and intellectually.[66] Discourses about the "isolated coast" thus communicated a specific geographic imagining, one that disconnected the region from existing regional and global networks and connected it, instead, to the grid of the colony.[67] This was a double process, in which the West Coast became to Aceh what Aceh became to the Netherlands Indies. At both levels, the disconnections caused by the region's conquest were presented, through the geographies of knowing and ignorance that undergirded Dutch colonialism and the use of violence, as the result of a much longer process of political and economic decline and, ultimately, the Acehnese's inherent cultural backwardness.

Conclusion

To understand the nature of colonial and anti-colonial violence in Aceh, it is important to move beyond simplistic narratives of the war as a one-dimensional struggle between ruthless imperialists and zealous Muslims. Instead, I have argued to take into account multiple perspectives and to focus on the changes, contestations, and ideological forces that characterised different parts of the region from well before the first invasion onwards. The material on the Acehnese West Coast demonstrates that shifting geographical imaginings played a crucial role in Dutch efforts to subjugate the region, while resistance movements often defied the spatial categories advanced by the Dutch.

From the perspective of the communities who settled on the West Coast of Sumatra in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, this area was characterised by trading opportunities, ideological renewal, and movement. From the perspective of Banda Aceh—the seat of the Sultan—the West Coast was lucrative, but also far, wild, and difficult to control. The Dutch, after taking control of the palace and its direct surroundings, were not interested in trade, at least not primarily. Their priority was to crush the resistance and to bring the remaining parts of Sumatra under its government. Aceh was perceived as a frontier region that was to be subjugated and subsequently integrated—politically, economically, and culturally—into the Netherlands Indies. This process was complicated by the political fragmentation of the sultanate and by complex regional configurations with regard to language, religion, customs, economy, and social organisation.

As my discussion of the struggle for Meulaboh shows, in the early decades of the war these factors were viewed pragmatically by Dutch and Acehnese alike. Resistance was fierce but relatively unorganised. While the urge to oppose Dutch aggression was widespread, local chiefs made use of the fluid situation to improve their positions in local contestations for power and resources. Dutch administrators and military commanders, who were struggling to exercise some control, became deeply implicated in their politics. In the twentieth century, when military rule was replaced by civil rule and the colonial state was imposed, gradually, on the coastal regions and the villages of the interior, local differences and haphazard alliances were seen as a problem and a cause for the ongoing resistance. In this context, Dutch military leaders and administrators came to imagine the West Coast as an "isolated" region. This perception was meaningful only from the perspective of regional integration, with Banda Aceh as the province's political centre, and the North and East Coasts as its economic, cultural, and religious heart.

The unexpected surge of anti-colonial violence in the 1920s was driven by local discontent about the distribution of power and resources as much as resentment about Dutch violence and surveillance and framed in a variety of ideological and practical concerns. Colonial administrators and their indigenous allies responded however by creating an image of detached fanatics led by a poisonous cocktail of mystical and millenarian traditions. Colonial policies, they argued, should unlock this area, physically and intellectually, and develop it after the example of other, more forward-looking parts of Aceh and the Netherlands Indies.

Distance, accessibility, and remoteness, Willem van Schendel argues, denote cultural metaphors as much as physical realities.[68] As I have tried to show, a focus on the West Coast lays bare certain "geographies of knowledge," such as the map of geographic, political, and religious denominations that undergirds the narrative of the *Hikayat Teungku di Meuké,* as well as the social, military, and ideological cartographies of Dutch administrators in search for an explanation for the festering situation in this part of the province. It also lays bare certain "geographies of ignorance," such as the increasing unwillingness (or inability) on the part of the colonial government to see the West Coast as part of other trajectories or grids. Ignorance is indeed the appropriate term, for, as Heather Sutherland has noted, the tendency of European colonial agents to see Asian political and economic systems as "backward" in comparison with European models, while "embedded in . . . assumptions of superiority," was not so much a matter of arrogance. It was "a fundamental misunderstanding of the real world, a choice of ideology over knowledge."[69]

Reports about violent outbreaks, such as the one involving Teungku Peukan, show how grievances against the colonial state were framed in religious motives. At the same time, they reveal how local elites and their followers moved between the attractions of the colonial model and the rewards promised by other, older or newly revived, networks and ideologies. Local perceptions of class and nobility, resentment, and expectations of social mobility were crucial factors yet difficult to interpret or accept by the Dutch. These tensions disappeared from the colonial record, however, as explanations for the violence travelled from the local level to the centre, thereby giving way to more general, established forms of knowing the region. As Ann Stoler has argued in her work on violence, the making of colonial categories, and the nature of sources, the subtle distinctions made by, and affective engagements of, local observers tended to dissolve as their reports moved through the colonial bureaucracy to the desks of higher officials. In the process, they gave way to inflexible and often racial categories as tools to explain the causes of the violence.[70]

Stoler is right to emphasise the discursive nature of these epistemic shifts. At the same time, it is important to consider the extent to which these discourses thrived on the construction of certain compelling geographic imaginings, including but not limited to the visual image of the map. Colonial constructions of the Acehnese race were carefully cultivated in the bureaucracy, but they were persuasive because the province was viewed as the empire's edge.

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Notes

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1 Said, *Culture and Imperialism,* 7.

2 Van Schendel, "Geographies of Knowing."

3 Anthony Reid's *The Contest for North Sumatra* discusses the diplomatic background of the struggle for Aceh, detailing the relations and negotiations between the sultanate, the Dutch, and the British in the second half of the nineteenth century. Paul van 't Veer's *De Atjeh-oorlog* (The Aceh war) pays less attention to international politics and more to the struggle on the ground, as well as the struggles in the Dutch parliament. These two studies have long been the only comprehensive works on the Dutch-Acehnese war, and both are heavily biased towards the nineteenth century, leaving undiscussed the social and political changes that took place in the late colonial period, including the impact of the colonial state as it asserted itself more forcefully on Acehnese society. The only texts that deal in detail with this period are the first chapter of Anthony Reid's *The Blood of the People* and the first chapter of David Kloos's *Becoming Better Muslims.* Neither one deals extensively with the ways in which the violence varied in nature from phase to phase and from place to place. Several works engage with the perception of the struggle as a "holy war" and Dutch responses to this perception. These include Alfian, *Perang Di Jalan Allah*; Hadi, "Exploring Acehnese Understandings of Jihad"; Siegel, *Shadow and Sound*; Gedacht, "Holy War, Progress, and 'Modern Mohammedans'"; and Kloos, "Images of Violence and Piety in Aceh." A recent addition to the literature is Anton Stolwijk's *Atjeh,* which tells the story of the Dutch-Acehnese War and its traces in Aceh's landscape and society today. For an overview of the historiography of Aceh, see Feener, "The Acehnese Past."

4 See Malhi, "Making Spaces, Making Subjects."

5 Kloos, *Becoming Better Muslims.*

6 Gedacht and Malhi, "Introduction to Coercing Mobility."

7 Gedacht, "Exile, Mobility, and Re-territorialisation."

8 Nicholas Dirks, "Foreword" in Cohn, *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge,* ix.

9 Middell and Naumann, "Global History and the Spatial Turn," 165.

10 Van Schendel, "Geographies of Knowing."

11 Ibid., 662.

12 See Peacock and Teh Gallop, *From Anatolia to Aceh*; and Reid, "The Pre-Modern Sultanate's View."

13 See, in particular, Dobbin, *Islamic Revivalism.*

14 Van Langen, *Atjeh's Westkust,* 145–6.

15 Prakash, "The Trading World of India and Southeast Asia," 34.

16 Dobbin, *Islamic Revivalism,* 75.

17 Ibid., 77; Kathirithamby-Wells, "Acehnese Control over West Sumatra."

18 Dobbin, *Islamic Revivalism,* 166, citing Lee Kam Hing, "Acheh's Relations with the British," 35.

19 Lee Kam Hing, "Aceh at the Time of the 1824 Treaty," 77.

20 Ibid., 79.

21 Dobbin, *Islamic Revivalism,* 165–6.

22 Ibid., 167.

23 Steinbuch, "Nota over de invoering van het inlandsche gemeentewezen in de onderafdeeling Singkel, Meulaboh," 14 April 1925. Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia (henceforth ANRI), Koleksi Binnenlandsch Bestuur, inv. nr. 1156, p. 4.

24 Castles, "The Political Life of a Sumatran Residency," 26.

25 Ibid. 27–8. Cf. Aljunied, *Raffles and Religion.*

26 See Reid, *The Contest for North Sumatra.*

27 Stolwijk, *Atjeh,* 73–7. See also Gedacht, "Exile, Mobility, and Re-territorialisation."

28 See Kreike, "Genocide in the Kampongs?," for an analysis of Dutch scorched earth tactics in Aceh.

29 Siegel, *Shadow and Sound,* 229.

30 Van Langen, *Atjeh's Westkust,* 3: 152.

31 Ibid., 3: 165.

32 Ibid., 3: 157–69.

33 Bijlagen van het Verslag der Handelingen van de Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal 1894–1895, Bijlage C: Koloniaal Verslag (henceforth "Koloniaal Verslag"), 1994.

34 See Koloniale Verslagen, 1879–1894.

35 Drewes, *Two Achehnese Poems,* 56–7.

36 The Hikayat Teungku di Meuké is part of an Acehnese-language war literature that emerged during the Dutch-Acehnese War. See Kloos, "From Acting to Being," 447–50; Siegel, *Shadow and Sound.*

37 Drewes, *Two Achehnese Poems,* 72–3.

38 Ibid., 58–9.

39 Ibid., 58–63.

40 The phrase is *geudubang taré' aneu' rawa,* ibid., 56–7; see also Snouck Hurgronje, *De Atjhèhers,* 1: 20; on the rather enigmatic origins of the "Rawa," see Milner, "A Note on the 'Rawa.'"

41 Drewes, *Two Achehnese Poems,* 80–1.

42 For references to the group in Rundeng, see, e.g., Koloniaal Verslag 1893, 8; Koloniaal Verslag 1894, 11.

43 See, for example, the efforts to solve a marriage dispute between two groups of *ulee*balang described in Koloniaal Verslag 1893.

44 Kloos, *Becoming Better Muslims,* 34–5; Kloos, "A Crazy State."

45 For an analysis on colonial constructions of race in British Malaya, which shows important parallels with colonial Aceh and the Netherlands Indies generally, see Sandra Kor Manickam, *Taming the Wild.*

46 Van Langen, *Atjeh's Westkust,* 2: 65–67.

47 Ibid., 2: 64.

48 See, e.g., R. A. Kern, "Onderzoek Atjeh-moorden," December 16, 1921, Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Ministerie van Koloniën: Politieke Verslagen en Berichten uit de Buitengewesten, nummer toegang 2.10.52.01 [henceforth NL-HaNA, Politieke Verslagen Buitengewesten, 2.10.52.01], inv. nr. 6, p. 46.

49 The Dutch preference for a "single-chief" system was rooted in the history of Dutch, Acehnese, and Minangkabau interactions on (and off) the West Coast between Trumon and Baros. See, e.g., Kielstra, "Sumatra's Westkust sedert 1850; De Klerck, *De Atjèh-oorlog,* 144–99; Steinbuch, "Nota," 66–68. According to Jongejans, who wrote in 1939, the originally Minangkabau statelets in Tapaktuan

had gradually evolved "to follow the patriarchal form of Acehnese institutions, to which we have contributed in strong measure by replacing the multiple chief system by one based on single chiefs." Jongejans, *Land en Volk van Atjeh*, 288. In other places, diversity remained. A 1935 report emphasised that "the Malay race had not been lost or dissolved into that of the Acehnese" but rather lived in symbiosis with it. A special case was the district of Meuké, which was led by a "diarchy," comprising both an Acehnese and a Minangkabau chief, a situation described by the author as "peculiar." J. Pauw, "Vervolg Memorie van Overgave van de afdeeling Westkust van Atjeh," 1935, Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Ministerie van Koloniën: Memories van Overgave, 1849–1962, nummer toegang 2.10.39 [henceforth NL-HaNA, Koloniën/Memories van Overgave, 2.10.39], inv. nr. 652.

50 In the late 1920s, Teuku Raja Tampo was regarded by the Dutch as one of the most dangerous men in Aceh. See, e.g., "Memorie van Overgave van O. M. Goedhart, aftredend Gouverneur van Atjeh en Onderhoorigheden," 30 May 1929, NL-HaNa, Koloniën/Memories van Overgave, 2.10.39, inv. nr. 158, 47–52.

51 Eva de Hoog, "Atjeh's kwade hoek."

52 See, e.g., Rijnders, "Ter Gelegenheid"; Zentgraaff, *Atjeh!*, 230–42; For a discussion, see de Hoog, "Atjeh's kwade hoek."

53 The following discussion of this case is based on "Kort verslag omtrent de gebeurtenissen in het Gouvernement Atjeh en Onderhoorigheden gedurende de maand April 1924," Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Ministerie van Koloniën: Politieke Verslagen en Berichten uit de Buitengewesten, nummer toegang 2.10.52.01 [henceforth NL-HaNA, Politieke Verslagen Buitengewesten, 2.10.52.01], inv. nr. 6; and "De politieke toestand in het gouvernement Atjeh en Onderhoorigheden gedurende het jaar 1926," 7 February 1927, NL-HaNA,

Politieke Verslagen Buitengewesten, 2.10.52.01, inv. nr. 7.

54 According to the report, the flag carried by Teungku Peukan's troop showed Quranic verses, pictures of a "stick and bladed weapons," and a "statement that Allah had first chosen Teukoe Angkasah, then Teukoe Tjoet Ali, and now him, Teungku Peukan." It made clear, therefore, that the activities of Teukoe Angkasah and Tjoet Ali in South Aceh had been "infectious."

55 "Soematra" is old Dutch spelling for Sumatra.

56 "Kort verslag April 1924."

57 "Verslag betreffende den politieken toestand in het gouvernement Atjeh en Onderhoorigheden gedurende het eerste halfjaar 1931," 8 August 1931, NL-HaNa, Politieke Verslagen Buitengewesten, 2.10.52.01, inv. nr. 7.

58 "Verslag betreffenden den politieke toestand in het gouvernement Atjeh en Onderhoorigheden gedurende het 1e halfjaar 1933," 9 October 1933, NL-HaNa, Politieke Verslagen Buitengewesten, 2.10.52.01, inv. nr. 7.

59 Snouck Hurgronje, *De Atjèhers,* 1: 174; 2: 372–3.

60 See Laffan, *The Makings of Indonesian Islam.* Chapters 7–9, which focus on the role and networks of Snouck Hurgronje, are particularly relevant for my analysis here.

61 See Gedacht, "Holy War, Progress, and 'Modern Mohammedans'"; Kloos, *Becoming Better Muslims,* 34–7.

62 On Soematra Thawalib, see Steenbrink, *Pesantren, Madrasah, Sekolah,* 43–7; and Yunus, *Sejarah Pendidikan Islam.*

63 See Reid, *The Blood of the People,* 19–20.

64 A telling example of these stacked binaries (West-North, wild-domesticated, dangerous-safe, backward-developed, traditional-orthodox) can be found in a travel description by J. Jongejans, a former administrator of Aceh province. Jongejans, *Land en Volk van Atjeh,* 29–47.

65 See Kloos, *Becoming Better Muslims,* 37.

66 Central to this process was the construction of roads, fit for cars and trucks,

joining together the province. This included a coastal road from Medan, via Banda Aceh, to Singkil, and several roads running straight through the mountains, linking both coasts. One of these would connect Bireuen, Takengon, Blang Kejeren, and Tapaktuan. Another, the so-called "transversal road" (Dutch: *Transversaalweg*) would lead from Sigli, via Tangse, to Meulaboh. At the end of the Dutch period, the road along the west coast, connecting Banda Aceh in the north and Rundeng in the south, was completed. At the moment of the Japanese invasion, the government was getting close to the completion of the Transversaalweg, and had just started work on the "final" link necessary to "unlock" the West Coast, namely the road between Singkil and Sidikalang (Tapanuli), which would connect West Aceh to the Karo highlands. See Piekaar, *Atjeh en de Oorlog met Japan,* 28–9.

67 See also Gedacht, "Islamic-Imperial Encounters" and Gedacht, "Exile, Mobility, and Re-territorialisation."

68 Van Schendel, "Geographies of Knowing." 660.

69 Sutherland, "Believing Is Seeing," 145.

70 Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain.*