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Promise, pretence and pragmatism: governance and taxation in colonial Indonesia, 1870-1940

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6 Hiding behind the oriental despot

Indigenous elites and violence in Aceh

> "Head downstream, gentlemen, to war! It is God's will [...] obey our prophet! [...] Fighting the kafir is your duty! [...] If you accept the hand of the infidel, you will become one yourself [...] If no one fights the Dutch, great will be our penance! [...] They will appropriate land [...] take half of all popular possession to enable their expenses [...] such is the rule of the *keumpeni* [...] They will take everything they find […], confiscate all weapons, and once having all of them, change the laws and command all to participate in the labour of the *keumpeni* [...].
>
> Out of every seven days, one must be worked in service of the overlord! Such laws they invent, that women and men, small and large, old and young, even small children and the sick, are called for work when strong enough [...] See for yourself in Padang, Deli and Batavia in Java, where divine laws are no longer obeyed! [...] Such is the system of those cursed by Allah [...] who do not fear His punishment."[1]

These are the severe warnings of the *Hikayat Perang Sabil*, an Acehnese Islamic epic written around 1880 as a political-religious call for the Acehnese to go into battle against Dutch colonial oppression. To the Dutch, the phrases of the *Hikayat* signalled merely the rage-filled rant of 'Islamic radicals', but the *Hikayat* is much more than that. It displays the genuine mixture of concerns of Acehnese resistance fighters about the colonial government's extreme demands and their impact, as expressed in the confiscation of weapons, imposition of forced labour and taxes, attempts at de-Islamization, and the establishment of a rule of heresy and extortion. Allegedly, this had already happened in Java and other parts of Indonesia subject to Dutch rule. These concerns are understandable when considering the fact that few regions in Indonesia experienced a more rapid and radical political-fiscal and socio-economic metamorphosis than Aceh, in the late nineteenth century. In 1870, it was an independent Sultanate – in fact the only remaining principality on Sumatra still unscathed by Dutch imperialism. By 1900 it was devastated, after decades of Dutch imperialist war for expansion. By 1920 it was fully incorporated as another integrated and taxed province of the colonial state.

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1 H.T. Damsté, "Hikajat Prang Sabi", *BKI* 84 (1928), 545-609: 573 (line 260-265), 581 (l. 340-345, 355), 585 (I. 395, 400), 587 (l. 410-420, 415-425), 589 (440-445), 595 (l. 520-525), 597 (l. 545-550).

Indeed, by 1915, company taxes had been introduced, and were in fact (to some extent) paid. Testament to this are the two tax forms displayed in the prologue of this dissertation, which are, indeed, from Aceh. The fact that these forms have been used and preserved as proof of payment throughout the decades signals the importance that Dutch bureaucracy started to play. Perhaps the paper-based culture of the government presented new opportunities for resistance. In Aceh under the Sultanate, no direct taxes or labour services were levied in the manner made customary, by the Dutch colonial government. So how did Aceh move from the severe warnings of the *Hikayat Perang Sabil* to the seemingly compliant tax payment of 1907? The two seem to conflict, or at least represent two profoundly different experiences of, or views upon, colonial rule; the one defines an unholy, extortive regime, the other a reasonably functional colonial tax state. This is striking, because Aceh was unique in the archipelago in the sense that its "colonial occupation was from start to finish a military one."[2] How did the Dutch enforce tax compliance and 'normalize' tax payment in such a region? How did they attempt to transform a population, perceived as religiously overzealous, unstable and violent 'fanatics', into obedient, taxpaying subject-citizens?

To answer these questions, this chapter highlights the importance of indirect rule. By the time the Dutch invaded Aceh, the colonial practice of shaping indirect ruling classes out of 'Oriental despots' had become a standardized method of governance that had known a long evolution throughout the archipelago. It had been invented in Ambon and Java, refined during the nineteenth century on Sumatra, and was optimized in Aceh, where the role of Acehnese regional lords, *uleebalang*[3], became crucial. Taking over from the Acehnese Sultan, the Dutch developed a profitable local system of trade, tariffs and taxes. By appropriating and employing this system through incorporation of the *uleebalang* in the colonial bureaucracy as 'feudal', 'traditional' lords (which they had never been), the Dutch professed a continuity of the precolonial political-fiscal system, but at the same time deeply intervened by modifying the roles of the *uleebalang* and introducing coerced corvée labour and direct taxes. This chapter discusses how state agents at various levels attempted to outbalance the looming inconsistencies between this purported continuity and radical change. It illustrates how conflicts between colonial interventionist governance and 'standoffish' indirect rule complicated the legitimization and elaboration of the state-building process.

2 A.J.S. Reid, "Colonial Transformation: A Bitter Legacy", in A.J.S. Reid (ed.), *Verandah of Violence: The Background to the Aceh Problem* (Singapore/Seattle: Singapore University Press/University of Washington Press, 2006), 96-108: 96.

3 The term derived from the Malay '*hulubalang*' which literally means military leader. Andaya L.Y. Andaya, *Leaves of the Same Tree: Trade and Ethnicity in the Straits of Melaka* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008), 132.

The first section of this chapter briefly addresses Aceh's pre-colonial political and fiscal constitution to highlight the pre-colonial role of the *uleebalang*. Section two discusses the colonial conquest of Aceh. In section three, the fiscal-political inclusion of the *uleebalang* during the Dutch invasion through contract-based indirect rule, developed in East Sumatra, will be analyzed. The fourth section describes the imposition of corvée labour and the company tax in 1908, and investigates the fiscal inclusion of the Acehnese into the same fiscal regime as the Ambonese, Javanese and Minangkabau, against the backdrop of continuous resistance and continuous colonial anxiety.

6.1 Power in trading, trading in power

The Acehnese Sultanate, strategically located on the northernmost tip of Sumatra, was among the first regions in the archipelago to encounter both Islamic and European merchants. A mercantile hub, it appealed to many foreign traders, which supported its rise as the dominant power in the Malacca Strait around 1600.[4] The Sultanate reached its zenith under Sultan Iskandar Muda (r. 1607-1636), who established a consolidated empire on Sumatra, with Banda Aceh as its cultural, commercial and religious capital, and many satellite states around the Strait. He was only halted at his fourth attempt to conquer Portuguese Malacca in 1629. In Dutch sources he is depicted as an arbitrary and cruel ruler, a classic 'oriental despot.'[5] In Aceh, Iskandar Muda is heralded as the epitome of Acehnese royalty, power and potential, supporting Aceh's "historical myth […] of the golden age, a time of greatness" that would gain in strength under the increasing Dutch influence in the nineteenth century.[6]

4 Andaya, *Leaves of the Same Tree*, 122-124. According to Reid, the unification of various states into the unified Acehnese Sultanate in the sixteenth century was essentially enabled by the "intolerable intervention of the Portuguese." A.J.S. Reid, *An Indonesian Frontier: Acehnese and Other Histories of Sumatra* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2005), 95. See also Reid, *The Contest for North Sumatra*, 2.

5 Kreemer, Atjèh, I, 6, 230.

6 E. Aspinall, *Islam and Nation: Separatist Rebellion in Aceh, Indonesia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), *Islam and Nation*, 22.

Political organization under the Sultanate

Trade in various commodities – pepper being the most important one – made Banda Aceh a bustling commercial hub that attracted merchants from across the globe, informing its political and fiscal organization. Trade dictated the political constellation of the Sultanate and the distribution of power.[7] The Sultan, at the apex of the system, collected revenue and commanded trade by levying various duties (see figure 7.1).[8] He was elected by, and from, a powerful class of wealthy merchants, *orangkaya* ('rich men'), as principal among equals. The Sultan was of supposedly exemplary pious, just behaviour, and outside his court-capital he was considered a symbolic head of state, as protector of Islamic law and faith, and not a supreme, feudal lord. Only within 'Great Aceh' (current-day Aceh Besar or Aceh proper), the vicinity of the capital of Banda Aceh, the Sultan held executive administrative power.[9] The *orangkaya* co-administered the city, conducted their own trade and were allowed to levy duties of which they had to award shares to the Sultan. They were also expected to provide him with military assistance. In return they were bestowed with military titles, such as *uleebalang* and *panglima*, under so-called *sarakarta*, royal deeds of appointment.[10]

7 Across Indonesia, an intertwined process of commercialization, Islamization and state formation helped formulating the cultural identifies of kingdoms and Sultanates as part of an 'Indonesian Islamic cosmopolis'; Aceh was the most prominent one in the seventeenth century, followed later on by Goa and Bone in South Sulawesi, Banten, Minangkabau and other sultanates in Sumatra the eighteenth centuries. See: T. Abdullah, "Islam and the Formation of Tradition in Indonesia: A Comparative Perspective", in J.C. Heesterman et al., *Comparative History of India and Indonesia Vol. 4: General Perspectives* (Leiden/New York: E.J. Brill, 1989), 17-36.

8 K.H. Lee, *The Sultanate of Aceh: Relations with the British, 1760-1824* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1995), 8.

9 J.T. Siegel, *The Rope of God* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969): 10-11, 30, 38-39; T. Ito and A.J.S. Reid, "From Harbour Autocracies to 'Feudal' Diffusion in Seventeenth Century Indonesia: The Case of Aceh", *Sydney Studies in Society and Culture* 2 (1985), 197-213: 202; Sher Banu A.L. Khan, *Sovereign Women in a Muslim Kingdom: The Sultanahs of Aceh, 1641-1699* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2017), 48-50, 271-272.

10 Reid, *An Indonesian Frontier*, 98, 103-104; Siegel, *The Rope of God*, 20; Andaya, *Leaves of the Same Tree*, 132-133. *Uleebalang* would become territorial rulers while *Panglima* were appointed by the court as major military fiefs of important parts of the Kingdom, or as important officials at the court itself. These royal deeds of appointment were needed to lend legitimacy to the position of *uleebalang*, see Lee, *The Sultanate of Aceh*, 10. According to Siegel the possession of a *sarakarta*, or linkage to the original holders of it, started to base descent and inheritance of the *uleebalang* title.

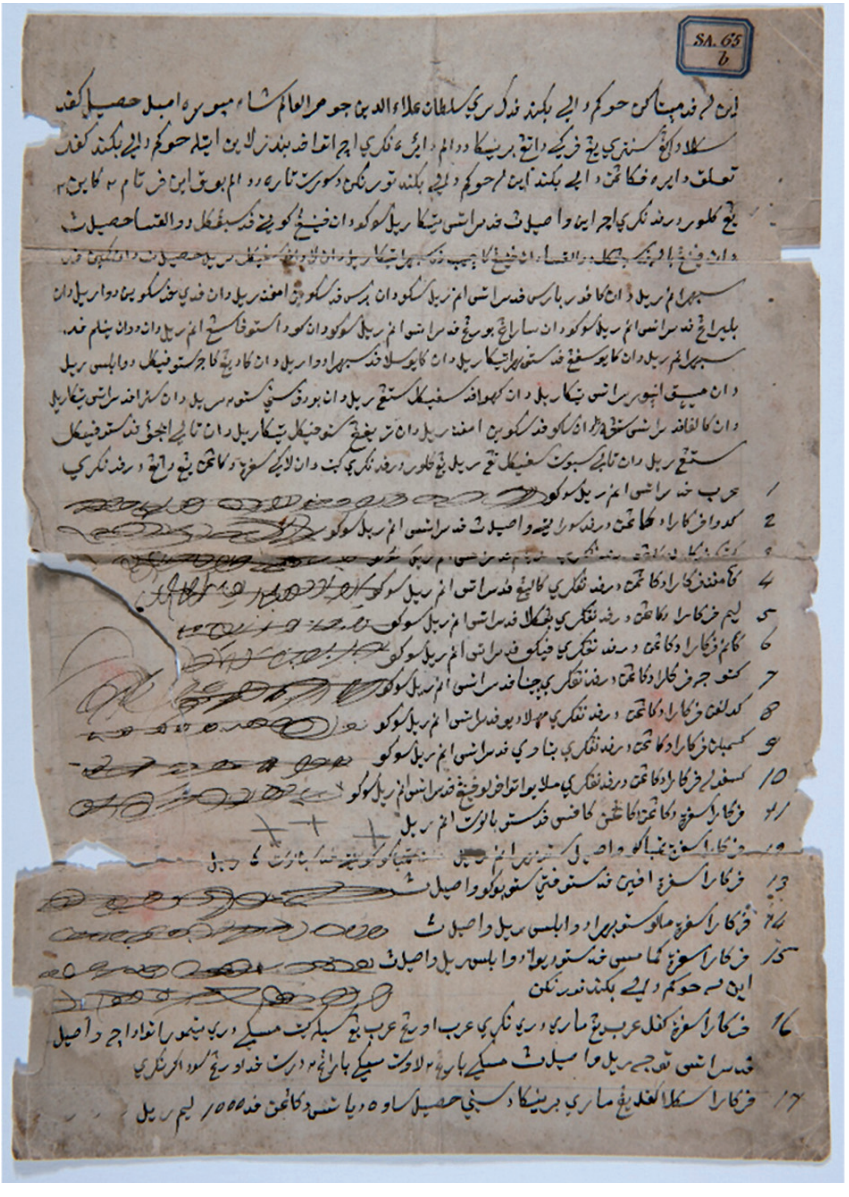

Figure 6.1. Provisions for import and export rights, issued by Sultan Ala ad-Din Djauhar al-'Alam Shah of Aceh (1795-1823). The Sultan determined which goods were taxed and under what tariffs, and shared these tariffs rights with the uleebalang of Great Aceh, who levied them.

Source: Dutch National Museum of Ethnology, Inv. Nr. RV-163-48b. The list has been translated and described by G. Drewes.[11]

11 G.W.J. Drewes, "Atjèhse Douanetarieven in het Begin van de Vorige Eeuw", *BKI* 119 (1963), 402-411.

The surroundings of Aceh's court-capital were governed by semi-independent rulers that largely derived from a class of local entrepreneurs, mainly *peutuha pangkai* or '*pangkai* holders', the funders and overseers of pepper gardens. Providing capital for pepper plantations, they gained a dynamic position between village societies as commercial tycoons, gaining incomes by levying trading tolls and duties.[12] Using their profits to support a body of deputy retainers and collect groups of followers, they slowly established themselves as the hereditary, territorially bound rulers of a *mukim* (an area of multiple *kampung* centred around one mosque), gain a *sarakarta* from the Sultan and establish themselves as *uleebalang* in their own realm. In the core region of the Sultanate, multiple *mukim* were organized in a federation (*sagi*) led by the supreme *uleebalang* (sometimes under the greater title of *panglima*).[13] The Sultan awarded these provincial lords the *uleebalang* title, to tie them and their regions to his influence and access their profits through taxes.[14] So the use of the *uleebalang* title was fluid and differed through time and space. In the capital, *uleebalang* were state-officials who balanced out the Sultan's power. In the province, they formed a class of independent territorial rulers and warlord-merchants who held ambiguous patron-clientele relationships and competed over commercial interests and resources with the Sultan.[15] This power balance of rivalry and partnership between Sultan and the various *uleebalang* dictated Aceh's political dynamics.[16]

12 *Peutuha pangkai* and other subordinate chiefs were sometimes able to collect their own group of followers and break away to establish themselves as independent *uleebalang* in their own realm. See Siegel, *The Rope of God*, 17-20, 33-34; J.H. Heyl, *De Pepercultuur in Atjeh en Onderhoorigheden* (S.l.: s.n., 1913), 4-5; R. Kamila, *The Disobedient Uleebalang: Sarekat Islam and Colonial Civil Rule in Aceh, 1918-1923* (MA thesis, Leiden University, 2017), 13.

13 These *sagi* were named after the number of *mukim* they incorporated. Andaya, *Leaves of the Same Tree*, 144; D. Kloos, "From Acting to Being: Expressions of Religious Individuality in Aceh, ca. 1600–1900", *Itinerario* 39:3 (2015), 437-461: 444; Reid, *An Indonesian Frontier*, 107-108.

14 Siegel, *The Rope of God*, 36-37, 40-41.

15 Kloos, "From Acting to Being", 441. Lee suggests provincial *uleebalang* originally were military commanders of *mukim*, and later assumed more diverse functions such as tax collection, becoming the *mukim*'s undisputed leaders. *Mukim* were often united in larger federations (*nanggru*). Lee, *The Sultanate of Aceh*, 8-9.

16 The situation may be compared to Java's power division between the *Sunan* and *apanage* holders in the crown lands or *Bupati* in the provinces (see Chapter 4), the difference being that in Java power was determined by disposition over men and agricultural produce (taxed in yield shares, cash or labour), while in Aceh power was driven by commerce (taxed in tariffs and duties).

The tax system under the Sultanate

As in Java, the Sultan was entitled to a range of taxes and duties, but lacked the administrative power required to enforce these and relied on the *orang-kaya*, *uleebalang* and *syahbandar* (harbourmasters), to do so.[17] *Uleebalang* in Great Aceh held rights to levy *wasé*, export and import duties, their most important source of income. To levy these *wasé*, *uleebalang* needed as much access as possible to harbours, rivers and bays, where export was taxed under a 'mooring' or 'docking tax' (*adat labuan*).[18] *Uleebalang* had to distribute portions of their *wasé*-revenues to their own administrative elites, and award a share to the Sultan, as *wasé* àm, or *wasé sultan*.[19]

Uleebalang also collected *wasé jalan* (toll duties) from foreigners for the use of roads, and *wasé lueng* from pepper growers for the use of their irrigation channels.[20] Irrigation itself (as on Bali), not land (as in Java), was considered a tax base.[21] *Uleebalang*, contrary to Javanese lords, levied very few direct taxes and virtually no corvée services – though according to Snouck, some powerful *uleebalang* used feudal services or forced labour as punishment for people unable to pay their fines.[22] Indeed, the *uleebalang* in Great Aceh also had the authority to levy fees (*hak* or '*adat*') from their followers for organization of specific services, legal procedures and conflict resolution related to, for instance, marital affairs (*hak* or *adat balé*) or inheritance distribution (*hak praké*) in which village officials (*keuci* and *teungku*) were entitled to share. Villagers who violated *adat*, paid fines to the

17 Lee, *The Sultanate of Aceh*, 10, 127-128.

18 Predominantly in the coastal areas around Sigli and Lhokseumawe (see map 6.1). Heyl, *De Pepercultuur*, 32-33; J. Kreemer, "De Inkomsten van het Landschaps-Bestuur in het Gewest Atjèh en Onderhoorigheden", *IG* 42:2 (1920), 123-148: 136.

19 I only use *wasé* as the term for indigenous import, export and trading duties the Sultan and *uleebalang* levied. In literature and archival material, the terms *wasé* (right) and *hasil* (yield or tax) are used interchangeably, though having different meanings. According to Heyl, *wasé* were rights over land and export, and other levies were called *adat* or *hasil*. In the case of *wasé raja* or *wasé sultan* this can be confusing as in East Aceh the term *hasil raja* was also used for what Heyl termed *wasé* or *hasil uleebalang*, a generic term for the share of pepper yield *uleebalang* were entitled to. Heyl, *De Pepercultuur*, 28, 31-32; Kreemer, "De Inkomsten", 133-134.

20 *Wasé lueng* or *loeëng* was levied by a special official, the *kenjoeroeëng balang*, usually a family member of the *uleebalang*, or executed in unpaid labour services. See: UBL KITLV Collectie Rouffaer (173) D H 875-[1], herein: 'Ass-Res Meulaboh' 1, p. 4-8, 11; Siegel, *The Rope of God*, 22-23.

21 Ibid., 25; cf. Schulte Nordholt, *The Spell of Power*, 12-13, 247-254, 335-336.

22 C. Snouck Hurgronje, *De Atjehers*, II vols. (Batavia: Landsdrukkerij, 1893-1895), 123, 290. One officials mentions that some *uleebalang* levied '*usoy*' (or *'oesoy'*), a direct tax levied "arbitrarily" from *rayat* or non-agricultural subjects, while agriculturalists were sometimes expected to pay a "*boeët oemong*", or yield tax to the *uleebalang*. UBL KITLV Collectie Rouffaer (173) D H 875-[1], herein: "Nota van de civiel gezaghebber, P.A.H. Heldens, te Meulaboh, over belastingplicht en agrarisch recht voor de Atjehers, Meulaboh."

uleebalang.[23] But whether the *uleebalang* really "ruled through fear", using these fines and punishments (or confiscation) to intimidate and extort their followers and top their incomes with "as much cash as possible […]" simply because "the common Acehnese […] easily lets himself be maltreated […] by the *uleebalang*", as argued by Snouck, is difficult to verify.[24] As elsewhere, negotiation was at the heart of the tax assessment procedure, and though many *uleebalang* enjoyed unassailable status, the risk of potential unrest and economic instability provided a sufficient counterbalance to overexploitation.[25] In contemporary sources *uleebalang* are presented as "independent harbour kings" who presumably attempted to retain as much revenue as possible for themselves at the cost of the Sultan. The Sultan's alleged poor tax administration and record keeping prevented him from obtaining his rightful share and provoked structural negotiation of distribution of *wasé* among the Sultan's delegates and local *syahbandar* in service of *uleebalang*.[26] But all parties depended on each other for the continuation of trade, redistribution of profits and power and religious protection. Taxation was political business, in which interested parties were assured of gaining a maximum profit for themselves, but never at the cost of the collapse of other crucial players in the system.

Yet in Dutch eyes', the *uleebalang* personified the typical 'mini-despots' suitable to act as a local counterforce against the Sultan's rule. As such, they developed into their consolidated role as the local tyrants (which Snouck claimed they were) only under colonialism and backed-up by the military. Systematized rule through fear and violence should perhaps not be understood just as a result of the provincial *uleebalang*'s double position as entrepreneurs, *adat* chiefs and warlords, as claimed by J. Siegel, but also as a method of passing down the increasing strain caused by colonial violence and expansion.[27]

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23 Usually, *hak praké* was ten percent of the value of inherited property. Snouck Hurgronje, *De Atjehers*, I: 69, 73, 74-78, 122-123, 481. Among other taxes levied were "*adat peukan*" (market tax for covering the costs of maintaining the 'market house'); "*adat kroeëng*" (for cleaning rivers and river banks) and "*adat blang*" (paid to chiefs for maintaining irrigation works). *Zakat*, it was claimed, was the "only tolerated form of taxation among the Acehnese Muslims" and was "prioritized above *adat blang*." UBL KITLV collectie Rouffaer (173) D H 875-[1] and (63) D H 699-[12 serie I], herein: "Nota van C. Winter Sr. betreffende 'Inlandsche Geestelijkheid', 'Inlandsche Rechtsbedeeling', 'Landelijke Inkomsten' en 'Belastingen door het Inlandsch Bestuur geheven', Soerakarta, 1836-1837, met aantekeningen van G.P. Rouffaer."

24 Snouck Hurgronje, *De Atjehers*, I: 102, 125, and see pp. 122-123 for the full list of *uleebalang* incomes. See for another detailed account on these levies and average amounts Kreemer, "De Inkomsten", 135; Heyl, *De Pepercultuur*, 32-34.

25 See for instance Visser, *Een Merkwaardige Loopbaan*, 24-33.

26 See for instance UBL Collectie Rouffaer, D H 875-[1], herein: 'Nota Ass. Res. Meulaboh over belastingheffing', 13-6-1905; NA MinKol OV 5251, Vb. 1-3-1898 n16 herein: RvI 26-5-1891; Heyl, *De Pepercultuur*, 32. See also K.H. Lee, "Aceh at the Time of the 1824 Treaty", in A.J.S. Reid (ed.), *Verandah of Violence*, 72-95: 79-84.

27 Siegel, *The Rope of God*, 31-32, 44.

6.2 From Sultanate to province

Aceh underwent a rather different colonization process than Java, Ambon or West Sumatra. It was deliberately conquered and colonized during the heydays of Dutch imperialism in Indonesia. After the death of Iskandar Muda (in 1636) and the Dutch capture of Malacca (in 1641), Aceh had slowly lost its political influence in the Straits and its protectorate states on Sumatra. Two and a half centuries later it was sole surviving independent monarchy on the island, and found its own independence heavily contested.[28]

The Sultanate contested

Around 1870, economic focus translocated from Java to Sumatra. Legions of international entrepreneurs interested in rubber rather than coffee or sugar, poured in from across the globe, constituting a new genre of colonial entrepreneurs. They were based in the North-east, Sumatra's plantation belt, oriented towards the planter's capital of Medan rather than Batavia, and financed their business in Singapore, a town Fransen van de Putte complained that attracted many "malcontents […] and adventurers, who […] readily choose this place as the base for undertakings, detrimental to Dutch interest."[29] These 'adventurers' settled their own concessions and contracts with indigenous rulers, which colonial statesmen feared harmed Dutch supremacy and 'local stability', and compelled abandonment of the 'abstention policy.'[30] Following the expansion of private concessions, the

28 After Iskandar Muda's death, Aceh was ruled by four succeeding Sultana's, and the Acehnese empire declined but remained politically stable. Khan, *Sovereign Women*, 17-23; Khan, "The Sultanahs of Aceh, 1641-99", in A. Graf, S. Schröter, and E. Wieringa (eds.), *Aceh: History, Politics and Culture* (Singapore: ISEAS, 2010), 3-25; Reid, *An Indonesian Frontier*, 104-106; J. Kathirithamby, "Achehnese Control over West Sumatra up to the Treaty of Painan, 1663", *Journal of Southeast Asian History* 10:3 (1969), 453-479.

29 Translated and quoted by Reid, *The Contest for North Sumatra*, 271. The planters used the Straits dollar as effective currency and found a steady labour supply in Malacca. See A.J.S. Reid, "Chains of Steel; Chains of Silver: Forcing Politics on Geography, 1865-1965", in Lindblad (ed.), *Historical Foundations of a National Economy*, 281-296: 284-287.

30 Reid, *The Contest for North Sumatra*, 21. Abstention policy had been introduced in the 1840s (see C. Fasseur, "Een Koloniale Paradox"), and was still strongly defended by Minister of Colonies J. Loudon in 1861, who wrote to the Governor-General: "Every expansion of our authority in the archipelago I consider a step closer to our downfall." Quoted in P. van 't. Veer, *De Atjeh-Oorlog* (Amsterdam: De Arbeiderspers, 1969), 96. See also J.M. Somer, *De Korte Verklaring* (Breda: Corona, 1934), 94, 120-124. See for colonial 'adventurism' as a trope in relation to the end of abstention policy: J.A. Michener and A.G. Day, *Rascals in Paradise* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1957), 110-144; 't Veer, *De Atjeh-Oorlog*, 17-19, 24-25, 40; E. Locher-Scholten, "Dutch Expansion in the Indonesian Archipelago Around 1900 and the Imperialism Debate", *JSAS* 25:1 (1994), 91-111: 109 and Locher-Scholten, *Sumatraans Sultanaat*, 101-116.

governmental imperial machine pushed the colonial frontier across North Sumatra until Aceh's border was reached.[31]

At the time, Aceh's independence was guaranteed by the London Treaty of 1824, which had secured Dutch expansion on Sumatra and settled British-Dutch imperial disputes, for the time being, by swapping Malacca for Bengkulu. Meanwhile, the opening of new pepper plantations – following the growing world demand for pepper from around 1800 onward – by immigrants from Great Aceh to Aceh's Western and Northern coastal areas, spurred the economic power of independently minded coastal *uleebalang*, and boosted the economic revival of the Sultanate. This enabled the Sultan to expand his trading network and continue maintaining commercial, political and diplomatic relations with the outside world.[32] However, it also triggered increased political competition with the self- enriching, powerful *uleebalang*, adding to political instability.[33] These vibrant interior tensions, and regular diplomatic contact between Aceh and foreign powers fuelled Batavia's concern.[34]

Aceh became the last frontier obstructing the idea of a strong, united Dutch colonial state in Indonesia. After the opening of the Suez-canal in 1869, trading routes shifted, raising the importance of the Malacca Strait, over which Aceh held effective maritime control.[35] Despite the 'treaty of friendship' between Aceh and the Dutch government, signed in 1857, the Dutch started accusing the Acehnese of supporting piracy in the Strait – a common colonial trope[36], used to legitimize a much more aggressive strategy towards Aceh.[37] In 1871, the British and Dutch concocted a new Sumatra treaty that 'allocated' Sumatra to the Dutch in exchange for Dutch possessions on the Gold Coast. It signified complete Dutch withdrawal

31 Locher-Scholten, "Dutch Expansion", 95; Lindblad, "Economic Aspects", 3.

32 Lee, "Aceh at the Time of the 1824 Treaty", 73-74, 76-77. Aceh produced more than an estimated half of the world's pepper supply at the time. See J.W. Gould, *Sumatra: America's Pepperpot 1784-1873* (Salem: Essex institute, 1956), 100-104.

33 Lee, "Aceh at the Time of the 1824 Treaty", 79-89.

34 Veer, *De Atjeh-Oorlog*, 41-42; Reid, *The Contest for North Sumatra*, 52.

35 Reid, *The Contest for North Sumatra*, 75-77. The Suez Canal reduced traveling time from Europe to Indonesia from 120 to 40 days.

36 Western powers responded with increasing aggression to this so-called 'pirate menace' in Southeast Asia which they deemed a serious threat to European commerce. Many Southeast Asian rulers, including the Acehnese Sultans, made use of the services of such 'pirates' in return for shares in their profits. Obviously, whoever was considered a pirate depended on who claimed legitimate power over the territorial waters. Not only Southeast Asian, but also European sailors frequently found themselves accused of piracy. See Noor, *The Discursive Construction*, 57-63, 135, 151; S. Eklöf Amirell, "Civilizing Pirates: Nineteenth Century British Ideas about Piracy, Race and Civilization in the Malay Archipelago", *Humanetten* 41 (2018), 25-45; Locher-Scholten, *Sumatraans Sultanaat*, 49-50, 55.

37 Kreemer, *Atjèh*, 10-11; S. Eklöf Amirell, *Pirates of Empire: Colonisation and Maritime Violence in Southeast Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 153-157. Like the Dutch, the Sultan and *uleebalang* accused those who did not pay tolls of piracy.

from the 'scramble for Africa' and exclusive focus on Indonesia.[38] Knowing that the treaty gave the Dutch carte blanche, the Acehnese Sultan lobbied for support against Dutch aggression, among American, French and Italian diplomats in Singapore and the Ottoman Sultan, without success.[39], However, his actions did provoke long held Dutch suspicion of international interference in their colony.[40] Interpreting the Sultan's quest for aid as betrayal of the 1857 treaty, the Dutch found their casus belli and prepared for an invasion.

The Sultanate destroyed

In 1873, the Dutch colonial army landed in Banda Aceh. The following devastating war has taken a prominent position in both Acehnese and Dutch historical memory. To the Acehnese it was the end of independence, to the Dutch another bloody episode in their long record of colonial violence. The Dutch army greatly underestimated potential resistance; the first attack was repulsed and the general in charge killed. The second wave succeeded in capturing the *keraton*, but to little avail. The Dutch retreated behind a 'concentrated line' around the capital (rebranded Kuta Raja), and the war lingered on in the surrounding province for the decades to come.[41] By 1877, it had cost over 70 million guilders, causing heated debates among succeeding Governors, officials and in parliament about whether to continue or retreat, or how to enforce victory.[42] To many Acehnese, the war was increasingly fought for self-preservation against foreign rule. Local *ulama* provided religious inspiration to young men collected in *dayah* (religious boarding schools) and the praying houses of the *tarekat*.[43] As in

38 Reid, *The Contest for North Sumatra*, 56-75; Lindblad, "Economic Aspects", 3-4.

39 Aceh historically maintained diplomatic relations with the Sultanate, using the Ottoman flag on its fleet, and continuously tried to enhance its ties with and confirmation of the Ottoman empire of its vassal states. However, the attempts to keep this bond warm remained largely unilateral. See A.J.S. Reid, "Aceh and the Turkish Connection", in Graf, Schröter, and Wieringa (eds.), *Aceh*, 26-38; I.H. Göksoy, "Ottoman-Aceh Relations as Documented in Turkish Sources", in M.R. Feener, P. Daly and A.J.S. Reid (eds.), *Mapping the Acehnese Past* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2011), 65-96.

40 Reid, *The Contest for North Sumatra*, 119-155; Locher-Scholten, "Dutch Expansion", 99-100.

41 't Veer, *De Atjeh-Oorlog*, 52, 98-102; Reid, *The Contest for North Sumatra*, 97-99; M. Kitzen, "Between Treaty and Treason: Dutch Collaboration with Warlord Teuku Uma during the Aceh War, a Case Study on the Collaboration with Indigenous Power-holders in Colonial Warfare", *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 23:1 (2012), 93-116: 156-160.

42 A. Missbach, "The Aceh War (1873-1913) and the Influence of Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje", in A. Graf, S. Schröter, and E. Wieringa (eds.), *Aceh*, 39-62: 46; Reid, *The Contest for North Sumatra*, 12; Reid, *An Indonesian Frontier*, 12; Veer, *De Atjeh-Oorlog*, 126-133.

43 Kloos, "From Acting to Being", 444; Reid, *An Indonesian Frontier*, 146. The *ulama's* position had been strengthened under leadership of the prominent Teungku di Tiro, as some *uleebalang* had compromised their position by cooperating with Dutch. Reid, *The Contest for North Sumatra*, 251.

West Sumatra, the *ulama* promised, "the unity of all men despite the social identities which separated them […] leaving behind the ties of kinship in order to unite as Muslims", while "Islam […] offered a release from traditional obligations" and opportunities outside village life.[44] The non-kinship related identity of the *ulama* distinguished them from the villages' political orders, on which they had profoundly different views than (especially coastal) *uleebalang*.[45] They legitimized enactment of Islamic (property) law, and increasingly mingled in disputes 'normally' the domain (and source of income) of *uleebalang*, gaining increasing political power and popularity, and took the lead in resistance to the Dutch.

The Sultanate incorporated

Snouck Hurgronje was among the first to realize the importance of the role of *ulama* in the conflict. He was invited in 1891 to conduct fields research in Aceh to advise the government and acquire intelligence. Through a thorough mastery of written sources and deep engagement in lived reality, Snouck recognized the political conflict over resources and authority between *uleebalang*, and *ulama* whose role as 'mystical leaders' he interpreted in terms of his typical reformist views on Islam.[46] *Ulama*, Snouck argued, posed an 'anti-modernizing power' as they were not interested in defending territorial rights or commerce, contrary to *uleebalang*, but in submission to God – as represented in widely circulating epic poems such as the *Hikayat Perang Sabil* or *Hikayat Perang Keumpeni*.[47] Still, they wielded strong worldly power and the ability to mobilize popular support to pursue financial and material means. To "restore natural harmony between lords and peasants" and secure and maintain Dutch authority, Snouck recommended a focus on fighting the *ulama* and support those *uleebalang* that recognized Dutch rule, by enhancing their positions and privileges. This was a repetition of the same techniques of indirect rule that had helped the Dutch gain a foothold virtually everywhere else in the archipelago.[48]

Snouck's advice enabled a Dutch breakthrough in the war. For decades, military and civil authorities debated whether *uleebalang* could be trusted, climaxing when the notorious *uleebalang* Teuku Umar, who had repetitively submitted to and then defected from the colonial state, once more 'betrayed'

44 Siegel, *The Rope of God*, 51-55, 73-74, 77; D. Kloos, *Becoming Better Muslims: Religious Authority and Ethical Improvement in Aceh, Indonesia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), 15.

45 Siegel, *The Rope of God*, 11.

46 Snouck Hurgronje, *De Atjehers*, I: 174; Laffan, *The Makings of Indonesian Islam*, 147-234; Kloos, *Becoming Better Muslims*, 34-35; G.W.J. Drewes, "Snouck Hurgronje and the Study of Islam", *BKI* 113 (1957), 1-15: 11; Siegel, *The Rope of God*, 42, 50-51, 56-67.

47 Aspinall, *Islam and Nation*, 25; Kloos, *Becoming Better Muslims*, 34; Siegel, *The Rope of God*, 49; Kamila, *The Disobedient Uleebalang*, 16.

48 Aspinall, *Islam and Nation*, 25; Locher-Scholten, "Dutch Expansion", 108.

the Dutch.[49] Shortly after, in 1898, J.B. van Heutsz was appointed Governor General. His policies were strongly guided by Snouck's theories as he unleashed a total, devastating assault on the *ulama* and their followers, conquering one district after another, while installing 'favourable' *uleebalang* as territorial chiefs instead. In 1903, Sultan Alauddin Muhammad Da'ud Syah (1864-1939, r. 1875-1903) surrendered and the Sultanate, for what it was still worth, was abolished, making "a peaceful outcome impossible."[50] After 1903, guerrilla fighting lingered on for decades, while Dutch control over the province remained unbalanced and feeble. Despite considerable criticism[51], Van Heutsz formulated and exercised a solid but brutal strategy of targeted violence. Continued bloodshed cost thousands more lives during his and his successors' relentless campaigns in Eastern and Southern Aceh.[52]

The Dutch established a repressive regime of terror, characterized by arbitrary application of the law, violence and forced labour which left a considerable mark on the Acehnese people, resonating until deep into the twentieth century.[53] Van Heutsz was awarded the position of Governor-General in 1905, and Snouck retired from government service, becoming a Professor in Leiden.[54] Their strategies were instrumental to the colonial regional conceptualization or "geographic imagination" of Aceh as a frontier region. As such it was inherited by succeeding officials and a class of expert-advisors trained by Snouck[55], to be politically, economically and

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49 Kreemer, *Atjèh*, 22-23. Together with his wife Cut Nyak Jin, Teuku Umar played a pivotal role in the Acehnese resistance after his 'betrayal.' His final deflection in 1896 was crucial to the application of Snouck Hurgronje's political advice. See 't Veer, *De Atjeh-Oorlog*, 148-156.

50 Reid, "Colonial Transformation", 98.

51 The retired Major L.W.A. Kessler, for instance, inflated two volumes of the *Tijdschrift voor Nederlansch-Indië* with articles in a personal mission to prove the "Van Heutsz-Snouck Hurgronje strategy" wrong, and argued that to prevent further alienation and revengefulness of the Acehnese, the Sultan of Aceh should have been restored under acknowledgement of Dutch authority to end the war. L.W.A. Kessler, "Onze Tegenwoordige Atjeh-Politiek", *TvNI* 3 (1899), 105-117: 108 (quote); "Bij Wie de Fout Schuilt in zake Atjeh", ibid., 180-181; "Geschiedvervalsing in zake Atjeh", ibid., 215-220; "De Oude Atjeh-legende", ibid., 407-415; "Atjeh", ibid., 461-473; "Herstel van het Sultanaat in Atjeh", *TvNI* 4 (1899), 160-164; "Dr. Snouck Hurgronje en de Macht der Atjehsche Oelama's", ibid., 245-255; "Een Helder Licht over den Tegenwoordigen Toestand in Atjeh", ibid., 497-503.

52 't Veer, *De Atjeh-Oorlog*, 247, 270. In the Netherlands these campaigns were heralded as the heroism of the *Marechaussee.* In reality, they were slaughtering frenzies in which many men, women and children were brutally murdered. Snouck Hurgronje held Van Heutsz' and Van Daalen personally responsible for the general state of unrest in Aceh and enmity of the Acehnese people and chiefs..

53 't Veer, *De Atjeh-Oorlog*, 280; Anonymous, "De Atjeh Paragraaf in de Troonrede", *TvNI* 3 (1899), 627-639: 628-630.

54 A position he had turned down in 1891 to be able to conduct his field research in Aceh as government advisor. See Drewes, "Snouck Hurgronje and the Study of Islam", 11.

55 Laffan, *The Makings of Indonesian Islam*, 190-208, 235.

fiscally integrated into the unified colonial state.[56] Much complicated by the ambiguity of their ambitions – utilizing the political-fiscal foundations of a society they deeply distrusted – and by the political fragmentation and diversification within the former Sultanate, the Dutch engaged in a complex colonization process and ruthless establishment of their power. That process was perpetually sustained with shrewd strategies of military administration and carefully targeted "exemplary" violence and terror.[57]

6.3 Imperialism by contract

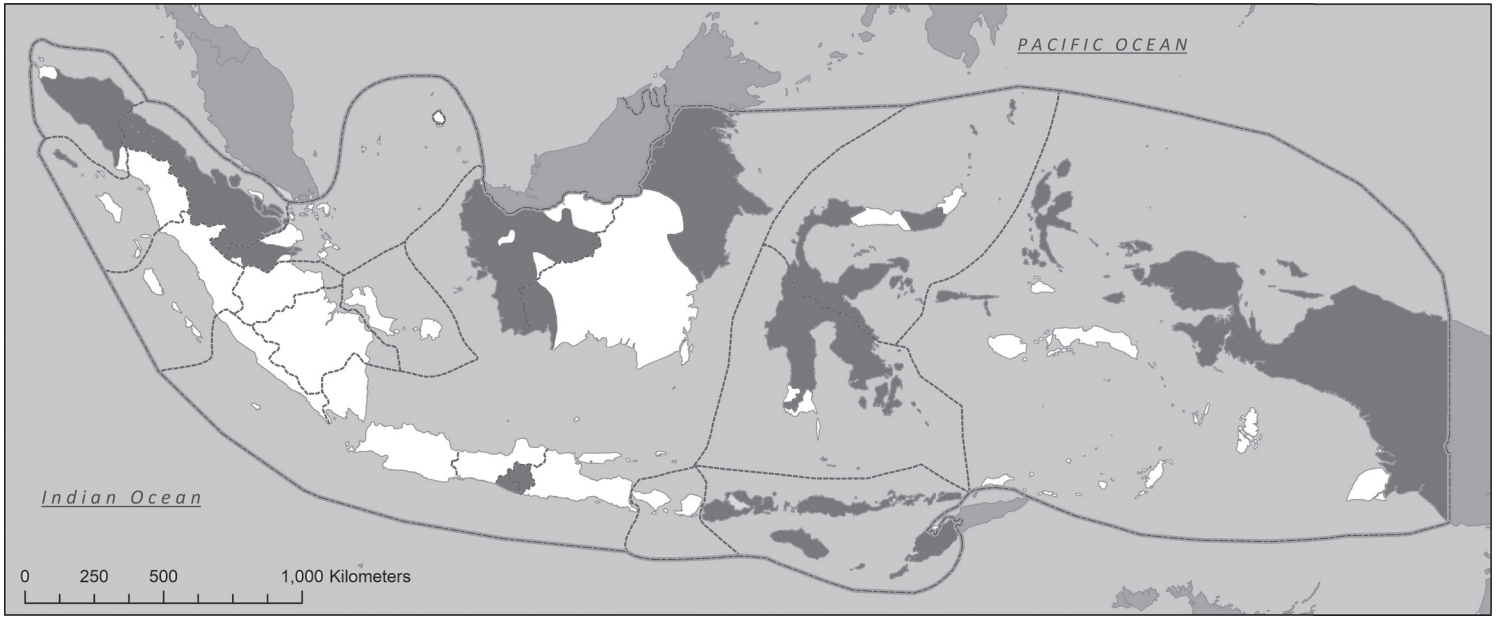
Despite continued unrest and warfare, Aceh was subjugated likewise to a neat colonial paper administration. Borders were drawn and administrators appointed. Whereas Great Aceh was directly ruled as 'government-territory' *gouvernementsgebied*), the provinces became 'self-governing' territories (*zelfbesturende landschappen*) as indirectly ruled, semi-autonomous 'Dependencies' (*onderhoorigheden*), together shaping the new province 'Aceh and Dependencies.'[58] Each district was ruled by a Dutch *controleur* and subdivided into numerous territories, each one usually housing a few thousand inhabitants unified under a local *uleebalang*.[59] 'Self-government' (as opposed to directly administrated 'government-territory') was a crucial pillar in Dutch imperial governance. It was used in Java (where the Principalities of Yogyakarta and Surakarta were self-governing), and exported enthusiastically to Sumatra, Borneo and East Indonesia where many principalities remained 'self-governing' regions and Dutch bureaucratic influence was quite minimal (see map 6.2). The imposition of self-governance in Aceh cannot be separated from experiences in North-eastern Sumatra, where experiences of treaty- and contract settlement would deeply influence similar practices in Aceh.

56 D. Kloos, "Violence, Religion, and Geographic Imaginations in Aceh, 1890s-1920s" (Paper Presented at the Workshop 'Violence, Displacement and Muslim Movements in Southeast Asia', KITLV/LUCIS, June 2016), 27.

57 As argued by Schulte Nordholt, and more recently by P. Groen, see: H.C.G. Schulte Nordholt, *A Genealogy of Violence in Indonesia* (Lisboa: Centro Português de Estudos do Sudeste Asiático CEPESA, 2001); P.M.H. Groen, "Colonial Warfare and Military Ethics in the Netherlands East Indies, 1816–1941", *Journal of Genocide Research* 14:3-4 (2012), 277-296. See for similar examples Locher-Scholten, *Sumatraans Sultanaat*, 22; L.Y. Andaya, "Treaty Conceptions and Misconceptions: A Case Study from South Sulawesi", *BKI* 134:2-3 (1978), 275-295.

58 Munawiah, *Birokrasi Kolonial di Aceh 1903-1942* (Banda Aceh/Yogyakarta: Ar-Raniry Press/AK Group, 2007), 4-7.

59 Every territory or *landschap* was split up in smaller domains of which rulers carried the title of *uleebalang-cut* and usually aspired to control their own *landschap* in the future. See A.J. Piekaar, *Atjèh en de Oorlog met Japan* ('s-Gravenhage: Van Hoeve, 1949), 140-141.



Map 6.2. Self-governing territories (portrayed in dark grey) in the Dutch East Indies.

Contract rule in Northeast Sumatra

Though 'directly administered' territories also employed a level of indirect rule, self-governing territories enjoyed much higher levels of autonomy. During the industrial, tobacco and rubber driven expansion in East Sumatra the government experienced difficulties following in the high pace of the entrepreneurs' footsteps. In 1873, the Residency of 'Sumatra's East Coast' was established, but the new Resident was understaffed and had little foothold in funding and effectuating his bureaucracy.[60] Meanwhile, the entrepreneurial elite, furnished by the Agriculture Law and Domain Declaration, had successfully secured major concessions for their 'frontier' tobacco and rubber plantations through diplomatic engagement with the indigenous aristocracies of the Sultanates of Deli and Siak.[61] The state soon followed, concerned to guide, standardize and unify the colonization process, now driven by the interests of private capital.[62] In Sumatra's plantation belt, the advent of new plantation societies was accompanied by the well-known "racial and ethnic confrontations" and tensions between the faiths of different classes, including coolie laborers, migrants, European governors and industrialists and the local population.[63]

Between 1858 and 1863, through forceful diplomacy, political power-play and cunning exploitation of internal rivalry, important contracts were negotiated and settled with the Sultanates, determining the transfer of tax, pawning and opium sale rights to the Dutch, in exchange for handsome rewards.[64] These contracts awarded the Governor-General rights to "levy and alter or replace all existing customs and taxes, […] for a fair compensation to the Sultan, viceroys and grandees [*rijksgroten*]."[65] Typical colonial claims that Siak's indigenous tax regime was despotic, and that the colonial

60 W.H.M. Schadee, *Geschiedenis van Sumatra's Oostkust* (2 vols., Amsterdam: Oostkust van Sumatra-Instituut, 1918) vol. II, 1-2, 3.

61 In fact, the Sultan of Siak was the superior regional ruler, and his approval was required for conducting any trade. see: ANRI AS Besl. 13-8-1879 n19, herein: Res. Deli to GG, date unknown. See for the same, NA MinKol 1850-1900 3061, Vb. 16-1-1878 n51, herein: Vb., Nota A2 and GG to MinKol, 28-8-1875. See also: Lindblad, "Economic Aspects", 102 and T.K. Wie, "The Development of Sumatra, 1820-1940", in A. Maddison and G.H.A. Prince (eds.), *Economic Growth in Indonesia, 1820-1940* (Dordrecht/Providence: Foris Publications, 1989), 133-158: 149.

62 Lindblad, "Economic Aspects", 10-12 (quote p. 12); Wie, "The Development of Sumatra", 134-141.

63 A.L. Stoler, *Capitalism and Confrontation in Sumatra's Plantation Belt, 1870-1979* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1985), 2-10.

64 These contracts were extended in 1875-1876 by the Director of Finances upon personal inspection, as part of a huge package deal, settled with approval of the (supreme) Sultan of Siak, and including the smaller sultanates of Bola Panai, Kota Pinang, Serdang and Langkat. Sultans often had different interests than their viceroys and grandees who received smaller concessions. Schadee, *Geschiedenis van Sumatra's Oostkust* I, 80-81. See also Locher-Scholten, *Sumatran Sultanate*, 59-84, 277.

65 NA MinKol OV 1850-1900 3061, Vb. 16-1-1878 n51, herein: Vb.

government would "impose much fairer taxes on the population"[66], was used to legitimize this takeover of taxation. However, there was a difference between whoever was authorized to sign these contracts and whatever its experienced value was, on the spot. In the Javanese (self-governing) principality Surakarta for instance, the local grandees (*rijksgroten*) signed contracts individually. All of them, except those holding offices at the court, were entitled to apanage, and as such, rulers in their own rights. In many other places (where this was not the case) only the central ruler signed a contract in which the rights and duties of his grandees were included.[67] These contracts followed the standardized model of the 'Long Declaration' (*Lange Verklaring*) that redefined the fiscal autonomy, duties and rights of the involved rulers and the colonial state, thereby impacting the subject-relation of people to their 'rulers', or to whomever they really paid tax.[68] These 'Long Declarations' prescribed that 'self-governors' could levy no other taxes than those specified in the contracts, and as such they were relegated from autonomous rulers to government servants annex tax agents.[69]

For decades, if not centuries, establishing contracts with local governing elites to legitimize the colonial presence had been the elementary pattern of the Dutch strategy for colonial expansion and indirect rule. By luring local aristocracies into contracts to exert influence over their tax rights, using internal political fragmentation and awarding gifts and salaries, the government slowly intervened in political order, law and society.[70] For many rulers, the best option was to accept Dutch supremacy and make the best of it, but inevitably, all local rulers slowly lost power, as the Dutch increasingly took charge of territorial rule, arrangement of royal succession, legal procedures, diplomacy, trade, tax rights, personal services and mining concessions. Increasingly skilled at influencing the multiple layers and factions at ruling courts, the Dutch spied and plotted against rulers out of favour, keeping alive the practices of the patrimonial bureaucracy of the nineteenth century. While theoretically, these practices had been discarded as 'unmodern' and obstructive to social progress, pragmatically it remained at the core of Dutch political imperialism throughout the archipelago. In East Sumatra, it helped the Dutch to gain all rights to export duties, opium and liquor sales and game and pawning tax by 1875, without having to

66 NA MinKol 1850-1900 3061, Vb. 16-1-1878 n51, herein: Vb. and Nota A2. Under the Sultanate, local rulers had to render shares of their agricultural profit to the Sultan at eighty percent of the market value, and buy part of the Sultan's merchandize for double the market price. This imposed a high burden on the local peasantry according to the Dutch who obtained the rights to these taxes and abolished it. This gave birth to the 'Model contract for the East Coast of Sumatra 1906', used for new contracts with Deli, Langkat, Asahan and Serdang. See Schadee, *Geschiedenis van Sumatra's Oostkust* II, 4-8.

67 Bongenaar, *Zelfbesturend Landschap*, 118-121.

68 Ibid., 133-183.

69 Ibid., 229-230.

70 Lev, "Colonial Law", 57-58.

maintain a burdensome, full-fledged administration.[71] The government kept a "system of bribes and prerequisites […] much cheaper than the taxation of a modern government structure"[72], greatly to the benefit to the colonial government and its officials.[73] The Sultans, who enriched themselves through their royal concessions, salaries and privileges, became paragons of constituted 'traditional' rulership and luxurious planters life.[74] East Sumatra demonstrates how contract rule crystallized into an exemplary model of standoffish governance, shaping "states within states", that would condition colonial rule throughout the archipelago.[75] Dependent on the infusion of Western capital and industrial entrepreneurs, many indigenous rulers across the archipelago lost financial autonomy, and by signing over

71 At a lumpsum of 182,000 guilders in total annual compensation of local *raja*, the cost of government was outweighed drastically by the raising profits of the tobacco industry, increasing tenfold between 1864-1865 and surpassing 33 million guilders by 1899. See: W. Westerman, *De Tabakscultuur op Sumatra's Oostkust* (Amsterdam: De Bussy, 1901), 4; ANRI DepFin 369, herein: 'Extract besluit', 3-12-1883, DirFin to Res. SOK and GG, 30-1-1885 and Extract 10-11-1885. See also Stbl. 1885 n198 (In- en Uitvoerrechten SOK) and NA MinKol 1850-1900 3061, Vb. 16-1-1878 n51, herein: GG to MinKol, 28-8-1875. See the 'Advies A2' for the exact specification of what rights were taken over from whom. In 1884, total tax revenue surpassed 2.5 million guilders versus total expenses of around 1 million guilders, making Sumatra's East Coast by far the most profitable province of the empire. Schadee, *Geschiedenis van Sumatra's Oostkust* II, 8.

72 A.J.S. Reid, *The Blood of the People: Revolution and the End of Traditional Rule in Northern Sumatra* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1979), 45.

73 Dutch civil servants in East Sumatra received copious collector's wages because of presumed high costs of life in Deli, making it a much-desired posting. In 1904 the Government considered to abolish these wages, as the Director of Finances claimed that it was not in the "interest of the state" if civil servants participated in the "exclusive planters' life." Local officials protested heavily against the intended abolishment, claiming that when deprived of income and no longer able to take part in local colonial social life, they would lose face and authority. See NA MinKol OV 1901-1953 319 Vb. 23-6-1905 n16, herein: GG to MinKol 30-4-1904, Gov. Sec. to Res. SOK 1-11-1904, Res. SOK to GG, 4-2-1905 and DirFin to GG, 23-2-1905.

74 Be it only temporarily, as by 1930 it appeared the royal extravagance of the East Sumatran Sultans had resulted in spectacular debts, and that display of their wealth had only helped them "making up in majesty what they lacked in power." Reid, *The Blood of the People*, 46. The Sultan of Siak alone received compensation of 40,000 guilders for all his tax rights, the Sultan of Serdang more than 47,000. This excluded the salaries awarded to their grandees. A complete overview is found in NA MinKol 1850-1900 3808, Vb. 12-11-1884 n19, herein: GG to MinKol, 18-8-1884: 'Advies A3', 'voorlopige visie A2', 20-10-1884 and 'Afschrift', Res. SOK to GG, 28-6-1884, Res. SOK to GG, 14-7-1884, as well as in ANRI Besl. GG, 13-8-1879 n19, herein: Res. Deli to GG, date unknown. See also Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1879-1880, Kamerstuk 86 nr. 4, 'Overeenkomsten met inlandsche vorsten in den Oost-Indischen Archipel': 'Contract met Serdang voor de overneming van belastingen', 13-8-1879.

75 Stoler, *Capitalism and Confrontation*, 22, quoted from K.J. Pelzer, *Planter and Peasant: Colonial Policy and the Agrarian Struggle in East Sumatra 1863-1947* (s-Gravenhage: Nijhof, 1978). See for the manifold legal and constitutional complexities of the position of Indonesian semi-independent kingdoms, self-governing landscapes, regencies, petty states (etc.), Resink, "Inlandsche Staten."

their tax rights to the government, their power seeped away. Entrenched in these ever obtrusive 'Long Declarations' and a life of luxury, they often experienced little choice but to keep subscribing to Dutch sovereignty.[76]

Contract rule in Aceh: recasting the ueleebalang

In the 1890s, when Aceh was deemed sufficiently 'pacified', the colonial government commenced the integration of Aceh into its fiscal framework by approaching *uleebalang*, who had been identified as the Oriental Despots suitable for indirect rule. Because the *uleebalang* were seen as merchants rather than landholders, trade was prioritized over land or labour as the dominant source of tax revenue and power. The Dutch therefore coveted control over *wasé*, Aceh's most important fiscal resource.[77] *Lange Verklaringen* had been established with some *uleebalang* in 1874-1884, allocating these rights to the colonial government. However, the *uleebalang* in the Dependencies valued their relative independence and did not always adhere to the agreement, attempting to avoid the state as much as possible.[78] Moreover, their primary interest was not 'to rule'; warlord-merchants rather than chiefs, they prioritized maintaining commercial-financial and fiscal stability over territorial domination and popular welfare. As such, they were deemed of much lower status than many other territorial lords on Sumatra – Snouck characterized them as "so insignificant that the *raja*-title seems rather ludicrous."[79] Hence, the *uleebalang* were taxed based on commercial interests, and not out of some sort of bureaucratic need for administrative justice, in which they had little interest. However, that did not fit in with the expectations of colonial officials, so, based on Snouck's theories, the *uleebalang* recast into territorial-administrative chiefs, just as the *raja* on Ambon, the assorted village officials in Java and *penghulu* and *mamak* in West Sumatra had been recast into ascribed roles that conflicted with their previous positions.

Uleebalang were argued to have "few ties with villagers whom they supposedly ruled…", rather using "…their profits from trade to support a body of retainers who were the real source of their power."[80] This was in fact largely the result of the deteriorating relationship between *uleebalang* and the people, as a consequence of the war. Siding with the Dutch, the

76 In Lombok, Kalimantan, South Sulawesi and many other parts of Sumatra, indigenous rulers were accused of 'despotism' in case rulers refused to cooperate as a pretext for conquest. Ironically, the most durable guarantee for some level of autonomy was signing a *Verklaring* and participate in arbitrary forms of indirect rule, but the outcome was always growing Dutch dominance. See Locher-Scholten, "Dutch Expansion", 98, 103-104.

77 Missbach, "The Aceh War", 41.

78 Somer, *De Korte Verklaring*, 251-253-255, bijlage 254, 357-359: 'Model Verklaring in 218 artikelen, door verschillende Atjehsche Hoofden afgelegd in de jaren 1876 tot 1884, art. 1876-1878.

79 Quoted in ibid., 261, see also pp. 273-274.

80 Siegel, *The Rope of God*, 11.

uleebalang had lost potential fiscal and administrative authority over their people. As a result, according to Inspector of Finances J.J. Roëll, in the majority of the coastal regions of North and Eastern Aceh (Sigli, Idi and Lhokseumawe), *wasé* were in practice increasingly collected by Dutch civil servants under military escort, who became the "tax administrators of the *raja*."[81] Indeed, tax-levying was enforced through military means by the Dutch, so it is unsurprising that, as Roëll observed, the *uleebalang* in Idi and Lhokseumawe "highly appreciated the government's intervention, realizing that […] levying and monitoring [by the Dutch] was guaranteed much better" than before.[82] But its side-effect was a deepening crack in the relations between *uleebalang* and the people. Collaborating with the Dutch ensured income continuity and political security in relation to the ongoing power-struggle with the *ulama*, but paradoxically, might have driven people who were no longer protected from the greed of their 'despots' through negotiation and bargaining, back into the hands of the *ulama*, thereby in fact further stimulating resistance and violence.

Their influence over the *uleebalang* enabled the Dutch to punish non-cooperation and resistance to a much greater extent than the *uleebalang* could before, and control the *uleebalang* by withholding part of *wasé* revenue. "Levying of taxes […] became a political instrument […] that the government appropriated […] to enable putting less benevolent chiefs under pressure."[83] The burden of these punishments was passed down onto the general population, by levying extra duties over pepper export or by confiscating property, causing popular anger, occasionally resulting in uncontrolled migration.[84] And because the collection of *wasé* principally depended on export values which differed, depending on the region, the tax burden remained unequally spread.

Many *uleebalang* in East Aceh, where pepper was the only commodity being taxed, levied all kinds of surtaxes on pepper to maximize revenue.[85] Because of generally poor compliance in the payment of *wasé* and other duties, the appropriation of the rights to levy them was politically rather than fiscally significant. However, as in East Sumatra, control over local the revenue apparatus created space to expand the fiscal revenue base by levying new taxes or by monopolizing local financial networks. For

81 NA MinKol 1850-1900 5251, Vb. 1-3-1898 n16, herein: DirFin to GG, 15-5-1897 and InspFin Roëll to DirFin, 8-11-1896: 'Rapport, omtrent het onderzoek naar de in het Gouvernement van Atjeh en Onderhoorigheden gedane belastingen en heffingen, welke niet op wettelijken grondslag berusten': 'a. Groot Atjeh.'

82 NA MinKol 1850-1900 5251, Vb. 1-3-1898 n16, herein: InspFin Roëll to DirFin, 8-11-1896: 'Rapport': 'b. Noord- en Oostkust.'

83 NA MinKol 1850-1900 5251, Vb. 1-3-1898 n16, herein: InspFin Roëll to DirFin, 8-11-1896: 'Rapport': 'b. Noord- en Oostkust.'

84 H.T. Damsté, "Atjèh-Historie", *KT* 5:1 (1916), 318-339, 449-468, 609-627: 462, 467-468, 610, 613.

85 NA MinKol 1850-1900 5251, Vb. 1-3-1898, herein: RvI 26-5-1891; Heyl, *De Pepercultuur*, 35-36.

instance, upon the occupation of coastal areas, the efficiency of Dutch bureaucracy ensured the take over and control of harbours and the usurping of the fiscal relations with *syahbandar,* who collected all import and export duties.[86] In Meulaboh, opium revenue was an important income source for *uleebalang*, so opium sale was monopolized by the government, to "pressurize" local *uleebalang* into cooperation.[87]

This gradual reform of the *uleebalang* from within was standardized in two different ways. In 'directly governed' Great Aceh, the *uleebalang* were appointed as civil servants in the *Inlands Bestuur,* under substantial fixed allowances.[88] In the 'Dependencies', the more than 100 *uleebalang* were maintained as 'self-governors', and forced into a new, more concise model-contracts, specially drafted by Snouck for Aceh (but also applied elsewhere), called *Korte Verklaring* (short declaration).[89] These 'three-point' contracts determined that a ruler's domain became part of the colonial empire, that the ruler agreed to obey the Governor General's orders, maintain law and order and that the ruler promised to refrain from engaging in or maintaining relations with other states.[90] Taxation was left unregulated in the *Korte Verklaringen* to, as advised by Snouck:

> "…increase [import duties] without actual takeover, lest the chiefs lose interest in the development of their districts, going asleep while receiving a fixed, annual compensation fee."[91]

Locked in a *Korte Verklaring*, *uleebalang* could no longer circumvent their colonial overlords. Their "rightful shares" to *wasé* were allocated under supervision of officials who subtracted the cuts of the government.[92] Eventually, in 1908, the imposition of local treasuries guaranteed separation of

86 In 1907, for instance, a new harbour was acquired in Langsa, and the *syahbandars* were immediately bribed or replaced with Dutch officials. Stbl. 1907 n379; NA MinKol PVBBg 1 (Atjeh 1907), herein: Dossier Mailr. nr. 1041-1387: Gov. Sec to Gov. Aceh, 5-9-1907, DirFin to GG, 25-7-1907, DirBB to GG, 5-8-1907, Gov. Aceh to GG, 18-3-1907.

87 This fitted into similar policies of monopolization of what before was a tax farming system. NA MinKol 1850-1900 5251, Vb. 1-3-1898 n16, herein: 'Rapport': 'c. Westkust'; DirFin to Gov. Aceh, 13-12-1897; Kreemer, "De Inkomsten van het Landschaps-Bestuur", 124.

88 Kreemer, *Atjèh*, 68-70; Bongenaar, *Zelfbesturend Landschap*, 84-85; H. Colijn, *Politiek Beleid en Bestuurszorg in de Buitenbezittingen* (Batavia: Landsdrukkerij, 1907) vol. I, 116. According to Reid, direct rule was imposed over Aceh Besar because there were too little *uleebalang* remaining to fulfil the required amount of 'self-governors.' Reid, *The Contest for North Sumatra*, 203. See also Kreemer, Atjèh, I, 68-70; Reid, "Colonial Transformation", 102.

89 Somer, *De Korte Verklaring*, 254.

90 Ibid., 95, 108-109, 362-363; Kreemer, Atjèh, II, 182-184; Locher-Scholten, "Dutch Expansion", 98 n32, 108; 't Veer, *De Atjeh-Oorlog*, 237-238. The *Korte Verklaring*-model expresses the principal Dutch motives and fears in dealing with Indonesian states: that for rebellion, misgovernance and intervention by other imperial powers.

91 Quoted in Somer, *De Korte Verklaring*, 264.

92 NA MinKol 1850-1900 5251, Vb. 1-3-1898 n16, herein: RvI 26-5-1891.

the *uleebalang*'s private from public incomes which "dramatically reduced their power in relation to the Dutch and enabled the colonial authorities to bring greater uniformity [...]."[93]

Local treasuries also enabled the direct allotment of tax revenue to local expenses.[94] As only taxes collected under a 'Batavian' ordinance could be deposited into the government's treasury, taxes collected under a 'self-governance regulation' (*zelfbestuursregeling*) could be deposited and spent without Batavia's consent.[95] In Batavia, such unruliness was not appreciated, not only because of potential fiscal profligacy but also because various taxes in Aceh started to be levied spontaneously and without control.[96] The *wasé Sultan* (the Sultan's share in *wasé* levied over pepper export), for instance, fully appropriated in 1897, was allocated directly by colonial officials for road construction and maintenance.[97] In some places, *wasé Sultan* became erroneously known as *wasé jalan* (in fact this was an access-toll which peasants paid to *uleebalang* to use their roads) collected in so-called 'road funds.'[98] As a result, local colonial administrations began independently adjudicating on infrastructural budgets and development, without Batavia's ratification, causing a lack of balance and divergence in fiscal-infrastructural policy. Hence, *Inspector* Roëll was ordered by the Director of Finance to "legislate" the Acehnese tax system; bureaucratic jargon for issuing central ordinances to preserve central coordination. In 1899, Van Heutsz' declared all roads 'tax-free' and replaced the 'road-funds' with vehicle taxes.[99]

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93 M. Gade Ismail, "The Economic Position of the Uleëbalang in the Late Colonial State. Eastern Aceh, 1900-1942", in Cribb (ed.), *The Late Colonial State*, 79-92: 85-86, quote p. 85; Kreemer, "De Inkomsten", 123-124.

94 Kreemer, *Atjèh*, II, 154; Gade Ismail, "The Economic Position", 86.

95 NA MinKol 1850-1900 5251, Vb. 1-3-1898 n16, herein: DirFin to Gov. Aceh, 13-12-1897. This came in useful when local rulers and officials planned on making controversial or risky expenses. When General *Deijckerhoff (Governor of Aceh in 1892-1895),* for instance, *planned to adhere to Teuku Umar's controversial request for material support (before his treason) to fight off ulama gangs active in his region, he bought him extra firearms and munition paid for using local tax revenue collected in the local treasury of Sigli.* NA MinKol 1850-1900 Geheim/ Kabinetsverbaal 6247, Vb. 29-5-1897 R9, herein: GG to MinKol, 13-10-1896, Gov. Aceh to GG, 24-7-1896; 't Veer, *De Atjeh-oorlog*, 181-182, 201-202.

96 Governor J.W. Stemfoort (1896-1897) even audaciously proposed takeover of levying of *zakat*, which he claimed was structurally embezzled by the *ulama* to expand their financial capacity and popular influence. But as infringement in religious institutions was generally considered off limits, the plan was discarded. Instead, options were discussed for awarding tax revenue shares or collector's wages to the *kampung* elite to undermine the financial power of the *ulama*. NA MinKol OV 5251 (1850-1900), Vb. 1-3-1898 herein: DirFin to Gov. Aceh, 13-12-1897.

97 NA MinKol 1850-1900 5251, Vb. 1-3-1898 herein: RvI 26-5-1891.

98 NA MinKol 1850-1900 5251, Vb. 1-3-1898 herein: RvI 26-5-1891; DirFin to Gov. Aceh, 13-12-1897.

99 Kreemer, "De Inkomsten", 131.

In 1906, Van Daalen prohibited the *uleebalang* from levying any tax other than *wasé* over pepper at a maximum rate of 10%, including the shares for *pangkai* holders (fixed at 0.35 guilders). This sealed the ongoing development of the Dutch gaining influence over the fiscal instrumentation of *uleebalang*.[100] Aceh became a focal province of the Dutch policy, demonstrating the Dutch capacity, to uplift what was considered a despotic and extortive fiscal regime to the heights of colonial-coordinated, centralized and 'legalized' fiscal modernity. In 1910, *wasé uleebalang* were fixed at 1.50 guilders (of which 0.50 was to be awarded to the *pangkai* holders)[101] and the government expanded its central toll area over all of Aceh. A tariff of four percent was imposed, which finalized the expansion of Batavia's tax rights over the province.[102] All of the *uleebalang*'s rights had been confiscated and transformed into government levies, funding the local treasuries from which their salaries were paid, and which were co-managed and scrutinized by civil servants in Kota Raja.[103] Their financial independence had been fully dissolved. Instead of entrepreneurs in their own rights holding monopolies, *uleebalang* became Aceh's facilitators of legitimate tax-levying.[104] In similar fashion, the system of the *hak balé* (the *uleebalang*'s judicial rights to penalties and confiscation) was deconstructed by Governor H.N.A. Swart (in office 1908-1918), who in 1912 ordered 75% of it to be paid to the *adat* 'courts' and 25% to the local treasury.[105]

Not all officials shared in this enthusiasm for confiscating the incomes of the *uleebalang*. Particularly critical was *controleur* H.T. Damsté of Idi (in office 1908-1912) who feared that the loss of financial independence would harm their prestige and authority, potentially causing an resurgence of violence and resistance.[106] Swart distributed an instructional pamphlet among district officials in which he recommended treating *uleebalang*, "with dignity […] to uphold their position vis-a-vis the people", and prohibited "coarse, scornful or unbecoming treatment of chiefs and people."[107] It seemed to have had little effect. In 1919, Swart's successor complained about the "awkwardness" of many officials, who were "unsuitable for diplomacy."[108]

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100 Munawiah, *Birokrasi Kolonial di Aceh 1903-1942*, 98-99.

101 Kreemer, *Atjèh*, II, 143; Heyl, *De Pepercultuur*, 40-41.

102 Stbl. 1910 n628; Kreemer, *Atjèh*, II, 138-142. See also: N. Easton, "De Voorgestelde Wijziging der Indische Mijnwet", *Quarterly Review of The Royal Netherlands Economic Association* 65:1 (1916), 795-820.

103 By 1912, all districts had been subjected to the imposition of local treasuries. Kreemer, *Atjèh*, II, 128-129; Heyl, *De Pepercultuur*, 154-155.

104 Gade Ismail, "The Economic Position", 87.

105 The same happened to the *hak praké* (estate/legacy rights). Kreemer, "De Inkomsten", 132-134.

106 Damsté, "Atjèh-Historie", 622-623. Quoted in: Heyl, *De Pepercultuur*, 40. Before, Damsté had been *controleur* of Sigli, in 1902-1903.

107 UBL Collectie Damsté D H 1084-[29], herein: 'instructie voor de onderafdelingschefs in de Onderhoorigheden van Atjeh', art. 6.

108 ANRI DepBB 1156, herein: Gov. Aceh to DirBB; DirBB to Gov. Aceh 2-4-1919.

Swart also prohibited officials from seeking rapprochement with hostile chiefs without his consent[109], which in the case of Damsté led to severe conflict. Damsté, an energetic and independently-minded official, fluent in Acehnese and of strong opinions, frequently accused his predecessors and superiors of malpractice and mal-governance. He insisted on supervising 'his' *uleebalang* independently and came into open conflict with Swart, after which he was punished with a posting to a remote island.[110]

The ever-looming threat of religious insurrection created a common interest shared by the Dutch state and the *uleebalang*, creating a bond in which both became invested in each other's hegemony. Because of their importance as a front against the *ulama* and the generally feeble condition of Dutch authority, the *uleebalang* were assured of decent salaries and the stability of their positions to a greater extent than the aristocracies of Java and Ambon, that had to make up their own salaries from what they could get through collectors wages and percentages.[111] Supported by growing Western industry and Dutch officialdom, their power base became stronger than ever before.[112]

By the end of Swart's term, reports of 'unpleasantness' with *uleebalang* had diminished, and virtually all *uleebalang* were incorporated within the Government's contract-based framework.[113] The employment of the *uleebalang* attests to the consolidation of an aloof contract-rule as inherited from centuries of colonialism elsewhere in the archipelago. It also illustrates the pragmatic nihilism permeating Dutch colonial governance. By appointing the *uleebalang* as indirect rulers, the government employed chiefs it constantly accused of "enforcement of corvée for private purposes", "unlawful gathering of income" and "illegal occupation of lands."[114] By doing so, the government ineluctably incorporated a tax instrumentation which, measured by its own standards, was as unjust and arbitrary as it had been under the Sultan, even when rephrased in the hollow slogans of the colonial regime. In fact, by investing the office of *uleebalang* with considerable administrative-executive power and supporting them militarily, the

109 UBL Collectie Damsté D H 1084-[29], herein: 'instructie voor de onderafdelingschefs in de Onderhoorigheden van Atjeh', esp. article 9: "As long as they do not surrender, there is only one code of conduct: to try overpower them."

110 See: C. Fasseur, 'Damsté, Henri Titus (1874-1955)', in *Biografisch Woordenboek van Nederland* (http://resources.huygens.knaw.nl/bwn1880-2000/lemmata/bwn4/bwn4/bwn3/damste consulted on 12-11-2019); UBL, Collectie Damsté D H 1084-[29], herein: 'Nota', 232.

111 Reid, *The Contest for North Sumatra*, 281.

112 Reid, *The Blood of the People*, 13; Siegel, *The Rope of God*, 30-31; Aspinall, *Islam and Nation*, 22-23. Bongenaar, *Zelfbesturend Landschap*, 83.

113 NA MinKol PVBBg 1 (Atjeh 1907), herein: Dossier Mailr. nr. 1041-1387: 'Afschrift: Halfjaarlijks verslag omtrent de werking der scheepvaart regeling over het eerste semester van 1907.'

114 Piekaar, *Atjèh en de Oorlog met Japan*, 8.

Dutch incited a hybridization of the mercantile-administrative interests of *uleebalang*. The *uleebalang* remained highly active as economic agents and used their extended administrative authority to promote their economic ambitions to buy land, control the market and monopolize resources. This brought them into further competition with their own people, only adding to popular discontent and resistance.[115] The Dutch had created the 'feudalist' type of draconian potentate that, theoretically, they claimed to eliminate.[116] How could governance and taxation in Aceh ever be modernized according to the ambitions of colonial developmentalism if, in its execution, it kept depending on the apparatus of local power-hierarchies that the colonial government claimed to think of as despotic?

6.4 Domination and development

The integration of the *uleebalang* into the colonial state did not mean they were fully trusted. It is significant that the settlement of *Korte Verklaringen* and the appointment of new civil servants in neatly demarcated territories during the following decades never led to the abolition of military rule. Simultaneously, concern about the costs of war, both in human lives and in money, sparked new questions of colonial self-legitimacy. As one author argued, the Dutch spent "800 million guilders, wrestled from the Javanese (a reference to the *batig slot* or colonial profits) which was devoured […] in an outrageous injustice […] during the Aceh-war."[117] The economy and the administrative system were in a deplorable state, in steep contrast to colonial promises of developmental colonialism and administrative justice. Hence, colonial officials became obsessed with development, focussing in particular on the construction of a reliable infrastructure, to both support the ongoing war and furnish the growth of the local economy.[118] Exemplary are the expansion of the Aceh-tramline in 1874-1917 (see figure 6.2), celebrated as one of the greatest successes in the development of North Sumatra under colonial rule and victory over Acehnese resistance, expressed in the sabotage of the railway and the construction of the Gayo road from

115 Reid, *The Blood of the People*, 16-17.
116 Reid, "Colonial Transformation", 102.
117 Anonymous, *De Atjeh Paragraaf in de Troonrede*, 630.
118 See for instance reports of *controleur* H.T. Damsté of Sigli (in office 1902-1903) in: UBL Collectie Damsté D H 1084-[4], herein: 'Extract dagboek controleur Sigli, pp. 27-29 (23-8-1899 – 24-8-1899): 'Habib Hassim dari Negeri Naloe Djoean' to 'Tuan Controleur', 25-7-1898 and 'Cut Muhammad Adam' to 'Tuan Controleur', 29-7-1898. Snouck Hurgronje, in his major work on Gayo, also elaborates on the problem of access to main roads in Aceh and Gayo. See C. Snouck Hurgronje, *Het Gajöland en zijne Bewoners* (2 vols., Batavia: Landsdrukkerij, 1903), I: 12-54.

Bireuën into the mountains, around Takengon.[119] Maritime trade was rebooted following a new naval regulation declared in 1892, and furnished by the establishment of a coal depository and harbour in Sabang on *Pulau Weh*, which in 1899 became an important hub of the KPM in countering Singapore-based commerce.[120]

Vital to economic development and the funding of these costly projects[121] was the discovery of a rich oil field near Perlak (or *Peureulak*), in South-eastern Aceh. This find occurred in 1896 in the midst of the accelerating global importance of fossil fuels. The same year, The Royal Petrol-Exploitation Company of the Netherlands East Indies reached an exploitation agreement with Van Heutsz, who strongly advocated the contribution of European industry to Aceh's economic development, and the *Raja* of Perlak, in return for concessions and royalties.[122] Production reached almost 250 million litres by 1903, the highest in the Indies.[123] Shares in oil dividends became of great fiscal importance to the colonial government in the form of concessions, and to the *uleebalang* in the form of royalties and import and export rights. The oil dollars facilitated an upward economic spiral of improved public finance, infrastructural development, growing commerce and political stability.[124]

The question remains, as always in the case of colonial economic growth: who benefited? The majority of the Acehnese indigenous population drew little benefit of the oil wells in Perlak, Aceh tramline, Gayo road or harbour in Sabang; on the contrary. All served Dutch military expansion

119 Damsté, "Atjèh-Historie", 613. Some even expected that the construction of the Gayo road, developed initially as a "military access road […] to demonstrate that the Dutch planned to permanently settle in the Gayo lands", would help transforming Takengon into some sort of spa, as "the tour itself to Takengon, was already delightful." See: C.L., "De Gajoweg", *TBB* 48 (1915), 299-302: 300.

120 Kreemer, *Atjèh*, I, 9-12; à Campo, *Engines of Empire*, 18; Reid, "Chains of Steel", 290. Taselaar, *De Nederlandse Koloniale Lobby*, 24.

121 The Gayo road alone cost 1.5 million between 1908-1913, even though it was largely constructed using corvée labourers and cheap coolies. In 1915, another 100,000 guilders was required to make it suitable for cars. See: Anonymous, "De Gajoweg", *Java Bode* 12-4-1915, 2; C.L., "De Gajoweg", 299.

122 J. Jonker and J.L. Van Zanden (ed.) *Geschiedenis van Koninklijke Shell Vol. I: Van Nieuwkomer tot Marktleider, 1890-1939* (Amsterdam: Boom, 2007), 52-53. This was of essential importance for the Company, as the promising oil wells of Bukit Mas in Langkat near Telaka Said unexpectedly dried up, causing shares to plunge. New geological methods of searching for new sources were applied in Perlak. After the welcome discovery of oil in Perlak, geological teams were dispatched all over the archipelago to apply these new methods, to find new sources and secure supply of petroleum for the export market (within the Indies, or on Sumatra, there was limited market for petroleum, the sole product the Royal produced until the start of the twentieth century). Ibid., 24, 37, 46-48; Lindblad, "Economic Aspects", 11-13; P.A.C. De Ruiter, *Het Mijnwezen in Nederlands-Oost-Indië, 1850-1950* (PhD thesis, Utrecht University, 2016), 119-122.

123 J.P. Poley, *Eroïca: The Quest for Oil in Indonesia (1850-1898)* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2000), 151.

124 M. Gade Ismail, "Aceh's Dual Economy during the Late Colonial Period", in Lindblad (ed.), *Historical Foundations of a National Economy*, 229-248: 232.

Figure 6.2. Railway station 'Kraton at Kota Raja' of the Aceh Tramline, 1870-1900.
Source: Rijksmuseum, Obj. nr. RP-F-F18004.

rather than popular economic development and in fact, the Aceh tram was generally too expensive for the majority of the Acehnese population.[125] To them the growth of the provincial economy must have had rather different connotations, related to an increase in labour services (used for the construction of the Gayo road and the tramline) and further exploitation of their resources as warned by the *Hikayat Perang Sabil*.[126] The Acehnese people noticed little improvement in the development of the local infrastructure,

125 As a Dutch prestige project serving transport of military troop and goods, the tramline was prone to frequent sabotage. See A. Stolwijk, *Atjeh: Het Verhaal van de Bloedigste Strijd uit de Nederlandse Koloniale Geschiedenis* (Amsterdam: Prometheus, 2016), 242-252.

126 Ibid., 246-247. Profits largely accrued to the foreign-capital holders who invested in these industries. It is general presumed that the shift of ownership of companies from Indonesia to The Netherlands, as well as the phenomenon of the 'colonial lobby' in which the interests of capital-holders and government overlapped, prevented structural reinvestments of locally earned profits. See: P. van der Eng, *Economic Benefits from Colonial Assets: The Case of the Netherlands and Indonesia 1870-1958* (Groningen Growth and Development Centre, University of Groningen, 1998); P. van der Eng, *The 'Colonial Drain' from Indonesia, 1823-1990* (Economics Division Working Papers: Southeast Asia, Canberra: Research School of Pacific Studies, Australian National University, 1993); A. Booth, "Exports and Growth in the Colonial Economy", in Maddison and Prince (eds.), *Economic Growth in Indonesia*, 67-96: 79.

which they did actually use. Dutch officials held the *uleebalang* accountable for this; particularly *uleebalang* in the dependencies, they complained, structurally underinvested in local infrastructure and only maintained the roads that were of direct interest to their trading networks.[127] Hence, Van Heutsz attempted to enlarge economic control over the *uleebalang* and intensify their engagement in local development, for instance by requesting that the Dutch national government impose higher taxes on mining profits and channel shares of the oil-profits back into society.[128] In 1909 he granted far-reaching rights allowing European mining companies to access North Aceh, hoping to enhance production and correlated tax revenues.[129] Oil concessions from mining corporations were distributed onward at a rate of 40/60 between the government and the *uleebalang*.[130] In many oil-producing regions, mining concessions soon took over the importance of pepper cultivation – traditionally a sign of wealth and power – especially when, in the twentieth century, pepper cultivation declined due to depopulation and economic collapse caused by the war, crop disease and market fluctuations.[131] However, in those regions where no oil was found, little changed. Moreover, pepper quality was assessed differently at different export harbours. Therefore the pepper price, and its concomitant export and tax revenue, rendered an unfair disadvantage to some *uleebalang*, inciting price competition that eroded profits.[132] To reduce the impact of market fluctuations on *wasé* revenue, in 1902 its rates were fixed.[133] Setbacks in pepper *wasé* were counterbalanced by levying *wasé* over copra, but in 1904 the Director of Finances 'discovered' that this was illegitimate (the government had no right to levy such local export duties – only to demand revenue

127 NA MinKol 1850-1900 5251, Vb. 1-3-1898 n16, herein: RvI 26-5-1891.

128 Reid, *The Blood of the People*, 28-30; 't Veer, *De Atjeh-Oorlog*, 220-222.

129 NA MinKol 1901-1953 OV 693, Vb. 8-12-1909 n34, herein: Gov. Sec. to 'Dir. Gouvernementsbedrijven', 16-9-1909, Gov. Aceh to 'Chef Mijnwezen', 12-6-1909, Dir. Gouvernementsbedrijven' to GG, 20-8-1909.

130 NA MinKol 1901-1953 OV 383, Vb. 31-5-1906 n49, herein: Mailr. n362, Besl. 12-3-1906, Dir. Onderwijs, Eeredienst en Nijverheden to GG, 24-2-1906. Gade Ismail, "The Economic Position", 85.

131 Heyl, *De Pepercultuur*, 36.

132 Ibid., 38; Kreemer, *Atjèh*, I, 129-130. Heyl exemplifies Lhokseumawe, where pepper was taxed 4 guilders lower than in Langsa (to the South), even though the quality of pepper exported in Lhokseumawe (from the Northcoast of Aceh) was better than that in Langsa (from the East coast). So the *uleebalang* in Lhokseumawe cashed less tax revenue over better quality pepper than in Langsa.

133 Varying between 1.30 to two guilders in the Dependencies and set at four percent of the yield in Great Aceh (1% was subtracted as *wasé jalan*). *Wasé* revenue rose from 83,000 guilders in 1898 to 193,100 in 1904, but dropped back to 132,200 guilders in 1905. ANRI DepFin 598, herein: DirFin, 18-5-1893, DepFin, 9-2-1905, Gov. Acehto DirFin, 11-3-1904, DepFin 10-4-1905; Kreemer, *Atjèh*, II, 137: 'Gouvernementsbesluit 1902 n97/k.'

from the *uleebalang* levying them), and '*wasé* copra' was abolished.[134] By 1925-1938, export values of pinang (betel or areca palm), copra and rubber all overshadowed that of pepper.[135] As a result, the distribution of economic resources in Aceh became even more unfair, due to the impact of Dutch colonization. Like in Ambon and Java before, while the economic importance of Northern Sumatra and Aceh to the colonial treasury increased, the processes that purportedly fostered regional economic development only benefited those lucky enough to be in a position of power.[136]

The myth of the 'crazy native'

This is why fiscal policy gained in importance. A lack of balance in the distribution of the tax burden was often seen as an indicator of administrative deficiency, a problem that needed to be fixed. Not only were taxes paid unequally within the provincial borders, as various parliamentarisms complained, Aceh was seriously undertaxed compared to other provinces, especially Java, leaving the majority of the burden of the costs of 'controlling the Acehnese', on the Javanese.[137]

The solution to this problem, as phrased by Governors J.A. Vetter (in office in 1896) and J.W. Stemfoort (in office 1896-1897), was to centralize Aceh's "numerous, occasional tax arrangements" (by which he meant the various *wasé*) into a full-fledged tax system suitable to Acehnese society and behaviour, and gain a balance of budgets within the province.[138] But Aceh

134 ANRI DepFin 598 herein DepFin, 18-5-1893, Gov. Aceh to DirFin, 11-2-1893, DirFin, 20-3-1895, DirFin, 9-2-1898, DirFin, 7-11-1903, DirFin, 9-2-1905, DirFin 10-4-1905, DirFin, 21-2-1907, DirFin 4-12-1908 and Gov. Aceh to DirFin 6-4-1910.

135 J.R.C. Gonggrijp, *Overzicht van de Economische Ontwikkeling van Atjeh Sedert de Pacificatie (Tijdperk 1923-1938)* (Den Haag: Van Stockum, 1944), 9-10. 20. The value of exported rubber even tripled that of pepper in 1938 (208,000 vs. 678,000 guilders), but rubber (totalling more than 4.5 million guilders) remained the economic champion of Aceh due to high export prices. Palm-oil also showed rapid growth in 1925-1938, from 673 tons in 1929 to 14,415 tons in 1938.

136 H. Bakker, "Het Economisch Belang van Noord-Sumatra tijdens de Atjehoorlog, 1873-1910", in J.Th. Lindblad and A.H.P. Clemens (eds.), *Het Belang van de Buitengewesten: Economische Expansie en Koloniale Staatvorming in de Buitengewesten van Nederlands-Indië* (Amsterdam: NEHA, 1989), 41-65: 41, 45-47, 51, 55-59, 60-62.

137 Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1896-1897, 11e vergadering, 17-11-1896, herein: Pijnacker-Hordijk, p. 138, Van Gennep, pp. 141-142, Kuyper, pp. 144-145; the same complaints were still expressed ten years onward, see Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1906-1907, 23e vergadering, 22-11-1906, herein: Van Deventer, pp. 428-429, 429-430, Van Kol, p. 430.

138 Apart from the above discussed indirect levies, Great Aceh only knew a vehicle tax and taxes on streetlights and *pasars*. Since none of these were arranged by a government decree, they did not contribute to the national treasury. Until 1910, all taxes were collected in local treasuries. ANRI AS GB MGS 3964, herein: MGS 13-12-1897 n2813, Besl. 13-12-1897 n1.

was still seen as a region of violence and instability[139], and its people as unsuitable for direct taxation. Contemporary scholars like Snouck stereotyped the Acehnese as "fanatic, anarchic and treacherous."[140] To his Leiden colleague P.J. Veth (1814-1895), the struggle in Aceh "represented civilization and humanity versus barbarity and cruelty."[141] And Van den Berg even proposed an "ethnic cleansing" of the province by Ambonese soldiers.[142] This dominant depiction of the Acehnese as beastly, cunning, crazy and degenerate revived, in the 1910s and '20s, after the seemingly 'random' murders of about 120 Europeans. These were ascribed to the heavy psychological impact of the war on the 'Acehnese mind' and the aspiration to become *syahid* (martyrs) in the holy war, allegedly caused by the degeneration of Aceh from "veranda to Mecca", from an independent, exemplary Muslim state, to an indirectly ruled colony under foreign domination.[143] The murders caused much fear and anxiety and spurred attempts to "theorize the native mind" through Orientalized forms of psychiatry.[144] Such paradigms of indigenous violence and instability were fundamental to Dutch imperialist conquests around the archipelago, as we will also see in the next chapter. They fuelled convictions that specific 'recently colonized' people were 'unready' for 'modern governance and taxation', which further legitimized the colonial project of tutelage, that claimed to induce this transition.

Snouck invoked the classic 'oriental despot' theory and argued that the Sultan had forced "subjected natives" into such abusive forms of extortive "slave labour" that, upon having an ensured sustenance, the Acehnese were reluctant to continue labouring since whatever more they produced was confiscated by their chiefs anyway.[145] He considered in particular the levying of *hak tabé* or *hak sabil*, a surtax on *zakat* collected by groups of *ulama* to fund the holy war, as a typically repressive form of indigenous extortion, a "razzia" rather than taxation, deemed to induce passive economic

139 Which it was but primarily because of the Dutch invasion. Yet few officials (contrary to the press) directly related the alleged 'violent nature' of the Acehnese people to the colonial invasion.

140 Reid, *The Contest for North Sumatra*, 286, 288-289. The word 'treacherous' of course also related to the 'betrayal' of Teuku Umar, a particularly sensitive and frustrating event to the Dutch colonial state.

141 P.J. Veth, *Atchin en zijne Betrekkingen tot Nederland; Topographisch-Historische Beschrijving* (Leiden: Kolff, 1873), 136, quoted in P.J. Veth, quoted in: P. van der Velde, *A Lifelong Passion: P.J. Veth (1814-1895) and the Dutch East Indies* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2006), 192. Also quoted by Locher-Scholten, "lmperialism After the Great Wave", 32.

142 L.W.C. van den Berg, "De Atjheres", *De Gids* 58 (1894), 195-238, quoted in: Locher-Scholten, "lmperialism after the Great Wave", 35.

143 Kloos, *Becoming Better Muslims*, 2.

144 D. Kloos, "A Crazy State: Violence, Psychiatry, and Colonialism in Aceh, Indonesia, ca. 1910-1942", *BKI* 170:1 (2014), 25-65: 28-30 (quote p. 29-30). See also Kloos, "Violence, Religion, and Geographic Imaginations", 15-17.

145 Anonymous, "De Toekomst van Groot-Atjeh", *TvNI* 9:1 (1880), 241-255: 248; ANRI AS GB MGS 3964, herein: MGS 13-12-1897 n2813.

behaviour among the Acehnese.[146] Kreemer considered the Acehnese unfit to work as coolies due to their "dislike of regulated labour."[147] To current-day observers, it may not seem surprising that the Acehnese were unenthusiastic about working in a colonial system they despised and from which they drew little profit, but this was typically interpreted by a colonial author like Kreemer as the inherent nature of "Eastern people […]" to have "a smaller urge to material prosperity", even though they were "not necessarily lazy."[148]

Such visions supported the precepts of typical colonial self-legitimization mentioned before, in this case upholding the idea that centuries of 'wicked despotism', 'economic mismanagement' and 'underdevelopment' had resulted in a material insecurity among the Acehnese. This now prevented them from aspiring to greater productivity or wealth and instilled within them a great distrust towards governance and taxation, as those who governed them had never served their needs. As a result, the Dutch theorized, the Acehnese were locked in the same sort of 'societal paralysis' as other '*inlanders*', but the exceptionally harsh nature of 'sovereignty' and the presence of 'religious fanaticism' in Aceh added another dimension of violence and social instability to the province which made introducing taxes even harder.

As testified by the *Hikayat Perang Sabil*, it was of course the Dutch government that the Acehnese distrusted most. Caricaturizing the 'native mind' as violent and unstable and the relations between the Sultan, *uleebalang* and the Acehnese population as extraordinarily extortive provided the strawman the state required to justify its presence and remain comfortably blind to the turmoil it caused. The havoc the war had wreaked cannot of course be ignored when discussing economic collapse, but to admit that would endanger the core principles of colonial self-legitimization, requiring a transformation of the epistemology upon which the entire state was based. Rather, as in all other provinces, the Dutch cultivated their familiar stereo-

146 C. Snouck Hurgronje, "Een Onbezonnen Vraag", *Java-Bode*, 22/23-11-1899 1899, n272; Snouck Hurgronje, *De Atjehers*, I: 186; Kessler, "Dr. Snouck Hurgronje en de Macht der Atjehsche Oelama's", 250. According to H.T. Damsté, the prominent *ulama* Teungku Cik di Tiro "made the war into a holy one" (Tiro was the one who popularized the *Hikayat Perang Sabil*) and was particularly successful in organizing gangs that levied the *uang sabil*, See: Damsté, "Atjèh-Historie", 449. See also Anonymous, "De Toekomst van Groot-Atjeh", 240-250; Reid, "Colonial Transformation", 99.
Reports of misuse, obfuscation or corruption of *zakat* funds and overlap between *zakat* and colonial tax collection are found throughout colonial Indonesia, and occasionally local officials urged to regulate *zakat* collection and other forms of Islamic voluntary contributions and philanthropy to more detail under colonial tax law. However, the government maintained a policy of secularism that prohibited such interference. See Fauzia, *Faith and the State*, 112-122, 137; A. Salim, *Challenging the Secular State: The Islamization of Law in Modern Indonesia* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2008), 120-123.

147 Kreemer, *Atjèh*, I, 240. Experiments with state-organized rubber plantations had failed according to Kreemer because the Acehnese labourers showed up too irregularly.

148 Ibid., I: 188 (quote), see also 241, 522-601.

types of indigenous 'instability', 'laziness' and 'social paralysis', to provide reasons why the colonial government was requisite for the development of Aceh. Coerced labour and taxation were envisioned as the primary tools to train and change the Acehnese mind, and transform the region from one of continuous violence into one of peace and obedient tax-payment.

The introduction of corvée and direct taxes

From the 1890s onward, the government started looking for methods to make the Acehnese contribute to the local colonial development project. The government was aware of its feeble position, and Snouck warned that successfully levying head taxes would be undermined by local political disorganization, potential discontent and the aversion of the Acehnese to any direct charge in their incomes.[149] Governor J.W. Stemfoort (in office 1896-1897), acknowledged these concerns: "Since we [the Dutch] have little foothold in the dependencies" it was essential to use "a prudent policy" to prevent "bad-tempered people from exploiting the cherished argument that the company is so fiscal."[150]

According to Dutch colonial theories of fiscal development, the appropriate step prior to levying head taxes was corvée labour. However, corvée was an alien concept in Aceh. Before colonization, some *uleebalang* levied services for the construction of mosque's and the housing of principles and chiefs, or used forced labour as a form of punishment, but an institutionalized form of labour service to lords, in lieu of taxation, did not exist anywhere in Aceh, a fact of which the government was well-aware.[151] Snouck was exceptionally critical of the use of corvée labour. He considered it "an evil, in some areas […] perhaps necessary […], but still, its use to be limited, diminished and abolished as soon as possible."[152] Yet, a corvée regulation for Great Aceh was issued in 1898, primarily to supply the huge demand for cheap labour, necessary to build infrastructural projects required for the war.[153] Completion of these projects was claimed to automatically reduce the use of corvée services.[154] Obviously, this was not the case, and by 1906 the expansion of corvée to the Dependencies

149 C. Snouck Hurgronje, E. Gobée and C. Adriaanse (eds.), *Ambtelijke Adviezen van C. Snouck Hurgronje 1889-1936* ('s-Gravenhage: Nijhoff, 1957), I, III-5: 'Adviezen over de te volgen Atjeh politiek na 1903', pp. 1384-1391 (advies 1941).

150 ANRI AS GB MGS 3964, herein: Besl. 13-12-1897 n1, MGS 13-12-1897 n2813. See for the same: NA MinKol 1850-1900 OV 5251, Vb. 1-3-1898 n16, herein: DirFin to Gov. Aceh, 13-12-1897.

151 ANRI AS GB MGS 3964, herein: MGS 13-12-1897 n2814: RvI 2-7-187. In some districts, *uleebalang* also levied head taxes, but these were not considered to relate to labour. See UBL Collectie Rouffaer, D H 875-[1], herein: Ass. Res. Meulaboh 1, p. 1.

152 NA MinKol 1901-1953 OV 627, Vb. 22-3-1909 n15, herein: Advies Snouck Hurgronje, 8-1-1909, p. 4.

153 Kreemer, *Atjèh*, II, 151.

154 ANRI DepFin 357, herein: Nota DepFin 19-3-1912: DepFin 28-8-1909: Gov. Sec. to Gov. Aceh, 3-7-1909.

was under consideration. To Snouck, the introduction of corvée in Aceh "deliberately ignored *adat*."[155] He dismissed levying of corvée anywhere in Aceh as entirely illegal, born out of the ""temporary and local interest" of "overambitious civil servants and incapable authorities […], competing with each other in their zeal to construct roads", making "large masses perform labour with minimal result" as "roads […] disappeared as fast as they were built."[156] Whatever money had been saved by using corvée, he assured, "was spent doubly on fighting resistance against it."[157] Snouck found support in parliament, where Van Deventer explained how in Great Aceh, the use of corvée would only arouse further popular suspicion, resistance and disdain.[158] And he was right; corvée was much resented by the Acehnese, as also testified in the *Hikayat Perang Sabi*, l quoted above. The Hague's reply was vindicative and predictable. It denied that civil servants in Aceh were overzealous, and, quoting a civil servant in New Guinee, the ministerial bureaucrats repeated that:

> "years of service experience show that throughout the archipelago's many districts […], a fair regulation of taxation and mild corvée and *desa* services produce an unmistakable educational force, in the direct interest of the natives. […] Labour services […] compared to a necessary, constructive reformatory."[159]

This way, corvée was presented as a suitable first step to give the Acehnese a taste of the 'beneficial experience' of colonial taxation. Corvée became an instrument to 'tame the Acehnese', inculcate a belief in the benefits of colonial domination and align them for a role in the greater state-society, away from a "self-destructive and self-sacrificial pre-occupation with lost freedom, and towards positive movements of economic and political reform and modernity."[160] In reality, corvée was, of course, little more than a form of cheap labour, used for infrastructural development to support the European export-economy, without which the Dutch believed they could not survive, especially in the frontier regions of their empire. By twisting the words of Snouck Hurgronje, who in the misquote of ministry officials had advised "keeping use of corvée as mild as possible"[161], the green light gave the 'go-ahead'. In 1908 corvée labour was implemented all over Aceh and more specific regulations were issued for all districts during the following

155 NA MinKol 1901-1953 OV 627, Vb. 22-3-1909 n15, herein: Vb. and 'Advies Snouck Hurgronje', 8-1-1909, p. 6; Kreemer, Atjèh, II, 150-151. The corvée regulations in Aceh, as elsewhere in the archipelago, highly resemble the ordonnances issued in Java in the 1890s following the investigation of Fokkens (see Chapter 4).

156 NA MinKol 1901-1953 OV 627, Vb. 22-3-1909 n15, herein: Advies Snouck Hurgronje, 8-1-1909, pp. 3-4, 6-8.

157 NA MinKol 1901-1953 OV 627, Vb. 22-3-1909 n15, herein: Advies Snouck Hurgronje, 8-1-1909, p. 8.

158 Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1908-1909, 17e vergadering, 5-11-1908, Van Deventer, p. 270.

159 NA MinKol 1901-1953 OV 627, Vb. 22-3-1909 n15, herein: Aantekeningen A3.

160 Reid, *The Blood of the People*, 16.

161 NA MinKol 1901-1953 OV 646, Vb. 7-6-1909 n10, herein: Vb.

years. In theory use of corvée was only allowed for the construction of 'government' roads with the explicit approval of the Governor of Aceh, at a maximum of 24 days of labour per year (which was higher than in surrounding provinces), as local roads were supposedly maintained using *wasé jalan*.[162] In Greater Aceh, epicentre of local industry and hence home to many more roads and infrastructural projects, the maximum amount todays was even higher, at 52 days per year.[163]

Simultaneously, officials worried that only subjecting the Acehnese to corvée would keep them from developing in harmony with the rest of the archipelago. The government ultimately aspired the fiscal integration of all people across the archipelago, in a unified, monetized fiscal regime. Continuing to tax the Acehnese through labour was the sort of exception that in bureaucratic terminology was undesirable, as it signalled inequality. Hence, Aceh was subjected to a rapid fiscal evolution, at least on paper, during which many of the established stereotypes and the fear of hostility needed to be overcome. Cavalier as the government had been in introducing corvée labour, introducing income taxes was considered to entail more risk. Corvée labour had been conceptualized as an extension of labour punishments by the *uleebalang* and thereby considered to be popularly accepted and easily delegated. Income taxes on the other hand, required more thorough legitimization and more direct forms of governance than were present at the time in Aceh, compromising the distance the state had tried to maintain by using the *uleebalang*.

As a matter of fact, the Acehnese in the self-governing Dependencies were not considered to be liable for full taxes by the colonial government because they were subjects of local *uleebalang*, whom, as self-governors, collected taxes from their people and supposedly ensured the government gained its 'rightful share.' Only European, 'Foreign Orientals' and 'non-indigenous *inlanders*' paid taxes directly to the central government's treasury.[164] All other taxes in Aceh were self-organized by self-governors.[165] The government simply hived-off profits from the *uleebalang*, as stipulated by its contracts, and occasionally interfered in the enforcement of collection,

162 NA MinKol 1901-1953 OV 627, Vb. 22-3-1909 n15, herein: Vb.; NA OV 782, Vb. 22-11-1910 n4, herein: Vb., GG to MinKol, pp. 7-9-1910, RvI 4-7-1910; Kreemer, *Atjèh*, 152-153.

163 Ibid., 151.

164 Bongenaar, *Zelfbesturend Landschap*, 156, 167, 664. For Aceh, these included the Personal Tax and Patent Law followed by the Income Tax of 1905, and for 'Foreign Orientals' and 'non-indigenous *inlanders*' the assorted income taxes, in which Aceh was included in 1904. Stbl. 1904 n20 (Company Tax for West Sumatra, Aceh, Celebes, Benkulu, Lampung, Palembang, South and East Borneo and Ambon). See: NA MinKol 1850-1900 3082 Vb. 25-3-1878 n78, herein: Afschrift HGB.

165 Including the assorted *wasé*, pasar levies, streetlight taxes and in some cases head taxes. The *uleebalang* supposedly kept record of tax payment by using tax registers (made mandatory in 1897) under supervision of Dutch officials, but often many of such tax registers once received in Kuta Raja were still empty. ANRI AS GB MGS 3964, herein: MGS 16-3-1899, n611: Gov. Aceh to GG, 24-9-1898, MGS 13-12-1897 n2814: RvI 2-7-1897; Gov. Aceh to GG, 26-2-1895.

using its military power. The priority, as emphasized by Director of Finance Bakhuizen van den Brink, was not "to create theoretically sound taxes, but to substantiate the existing situation as much as possible […]."[166] Deliberately keeping these taxes 'unlegalized' enabled the government and the *uleebalang* to levy them at their own discretion, using military violence, extortion and all other means considered necessary in Aceh. Remaining aloof by maintaining 'self-governance' and 'not regulating' was a clear-cut state strategy to avoid the problem of having to abide to its own principles of fair, modern governance, and instead to keep relying on the *uleebalang*, whom they could then blame for any problems the tax system brought about.

Only, in the twentieth century this would no longer do, or at least not in theory. 'Ethical' colonialism demanded a responsible type of taxation in which there was no place for uncontrolled 'indigenous extortion.' Additionally, diversification in fiscal identities had also provided frequently used opportunity for tax navigation. In 1901, a European taxpayer in West Aceh even declared himself subject of the *uleebalang* of Idi, based on which he refused to pay Patent Law.[167] This fuelled the intensifying call for fiscal unification, which was only possible through 'legalization' and direct administration of all of the various assorted taxes being levied in Aceh by issuing ordinances.[168]

In 1901, the government prudently 'legalized' a number of personal and indirect taxes on streetlights, markets and consumption, to lead the way to head taxes.[169] A head tax ordinance was drafted in 1906. As in West Sumatra, it was coined *bea pencarian* ('income tax'), rather than *bea kepala* ('head tax') in order not to offend the Islamic population, who used the former term for religious taxes paid by non-Muslims, predominantly Chinese.[170] According to Snouck, all taxes not acknowledged in Islamic law would be considered an extortive and illegal levy, no matter what it was called.[171]

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166 ANRI AS GB MGS 3964, herein: MGS 16-3-1899, n611: DirFin to GG 11-2-1899.

167 NA MinKol OV 183, Vb. 17-6-1903 n31, herein: Gov. Aceh to GG, 16-12-1902.

168 This was proposed by Van Heutsz as Governor of Aceh in 1903 but deemed improbable by Governor General Rooseboom (in office 1899-1904) because of the fragility of the government on the ground to effectively enforce these ordinances through non-military means. NA MinKol 1901-1953 OV 183, Vb. 17-6-1903 n31, herein: Vb., Gov. Aceh to GG, 16-12-1902, DirFin to GG, 28-3-1903.

169 In the Chinese quarters in Oleh Leh, streetlights were funded publicly, contrary to almost everywhere else in the Indies where streetlights managed by private companies and funded by local governments from local tax revenues. Payment of streetlight tax guaranteed exemption from performing corvée services. NA MinKol 1850-1900 5251, Vb. 1-3-1898 n16, herein: InspFin Roëll lto DirFin, 8-11-1896: 'Rapport': 'a. Groot Atjeh'; ANRI AS GB MGS 3964, herein: MGS 16-3-1899, n611: RvI 3-3-1899: Nota RvI (W.J.M. Michielsen); For market taxes, see: ANRI AS Besl. 1364, herein: Besl. 8-1-1901 n31: MinKol to GG, 11-4-1900; Besl. 4-8-1906: 'Invoering Persoonlijke Belasting in Atjeh en Onderhoorigheden, nota.'

170 ANRI AS GB MGS 4515, herein: 'Nota van toelichting "bea pencarian", directe belasting in Atjeh.'

171 Snouck Hurgronje, Gobée and Adriaanse (eds.), *Ambtelijke Adviezen*, I, III-5 'Adviezen over de te volgen Atjeh politiek na 1903', p. 1390 (advies 1941).

A warning to which the opposition in the Dutch parliament paid heed. Led by Van Deventer and socialist parliamentarian H. van Kol, the Parliament rejected the proposal for head taxes in Aceh. Their opposition to the head tax was based on the risk they thought it posed to the preservation of peace, and for the unfairness of reclaiming the costs of the Aceh war on the Acehnese themselves.[172] The Christian-dogmatic government of A. Kuyper and Minister of Colonies Idenburg supported the military establishment in Aceh headed by Van Daalen, who insisted that prevailing unrest was not the result of the upcoming introduction of head taxes, but of local political incitement by ex-Sultan Alauddin Mohammed Daud. A few years earlier, a group of army officials had proposed the restoration of the Sultanate as a sign of goodwill, and Van Heutsz had conceded to their lobbying, offering the Sultan a position and salary, contrary to Snouck's advise.[173] According to Van Daalen, the Sultan had started using his position to 'sabotage' Dutch authority by rallying support among *uleebalang* for the continuation of the war.[174] The Sultan was exiled to Java, but resistance continued. Incipient rumours of the introduction of a head tax were "eagerly nourished", as argued by a local army officer in Kuta Raja, "by the hostile-minded" to make people believe "the tax would be the starting point of all suffering […] and that in few years the '*keumpeni*' would come back to confiscate all."[175] The members of the *Raad van Indië* were sceptical about potential suffering and commented that there were "plenty examples in the archipelago of tribes that in a couple of days earn enough money for the whole year […] of which they spend the rest in idleness, or worse, by organizing raids and headhunting [...] all the more reason to tax them to a higher extent."[176]

Interestingly, while this alleged behaviour was used, decades before, to argue why people were 'unready for taxation', here it is suddenly used in favour; monetary taxes, instead of an obstruction or a level not yet reached by the Acehnese, were now interpreted as a tool serving the "pedagogic" aim of habituating the Acehnese to regular contribution to a unified state.[177] Swart described taxes as "a barometer of political circumstances", the intro-

172 Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1904-1905, 15e vergadering, 23-11-1904, herein: Van Kol, p. 205; Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1905-1906, 15e vergadering, 30-11-1905, herein: Begroting van Nederlandsch Indië voor het dienstjaar 1906, Van Deventer, p. 287. ANRI AS GB MGS 4515, herein: Besl. 9-6-1906 n23; Besl. 13-8-1906, RvI 23-6-1906.

173 't Veer, *De Atjeh-Oorlog*, 246. Kessler, "Onze Tegenwoordige Atjeh-Politiek", 108.

174 ANRI AS GB MGS 4515, herein: MGS 14-9-1907, MinKol to GG, 16-8-1907, Besl. 13-8-1906: 'Geheim geschrift 1334 a107, 'Afschrift brief van Van Daalen aan GG', s.d., geheim.' See also: 't Veer, *De Atjeh-Oorlog*, 281; T.I. Alfian, "Acheh Sultanate under Sultan Mohammad Daudsyah and the Dutch War", in S. Kardodirdjo (eds.), *Profiles of Malay Culture. Historiography, Religion and Politics* (Jakarta: Ministry of Education and Culture, Directorate General of Culture, 1976), 147-166: 160-163.

175 ANRI AS GB MGS 4515, herein: 'Geheim geschr. 1334 a107', Hoofd Officier Schroder, 8-7-1907.

176 ANRI AS GB MGS 4515, herein: Besl. 13-8-1906, RvI 23-6-1906.

177 NA MinKol 1901-1953 OV 646, Vb. 7-6-1909 n53, herein: Advies A3: Gov. Aceh to GG, 2-3-1909.

duction of which would, in fact, help in assessing and repairing hostile attitudes towards the Dutch.[178] This was not because the colonial government thought the Acehnese had suddenly become more 'developed' through performing coerced labour, but simply because of the political reality in both The Hague and Batavia, where opinion had changed dramatically and an unbalanced tax policy was now out of favour. All provinces on Sumatra had been subjected to some sort of head, income or company tax. The relentlessly high ambitions of politicians in The Hague demanded that Aceh reach a similar status. Hence Aceh, with the exception of Gayo and Alas, was included in the proportional company tax for the 'Outer Islands' of 1907 (see Chapter 3), that taxed all incomes at 2%, starting at incomes of 50 guilders.[179] *Uleebalang* were expected to organize its levying and received the standard 8% collectors wage.[180]

Van Heutsz knew that such a complicated tax instrument was "easily introduced on paper" but difficult to levy in practice.[181] Indeed, from its very inception the collection of company taxes in Aceh met many problems and heavy delays. Colijn, chief of the central tax commission in Aceh at the time, reported that a majority of the Acehnese population earned below the tax payment threshold of 50 guilders, and that the indigenous administration was incapable of meeting its deadlines because of prevailing 'unrest.' Its revenue was structurally insufficient to meet the costs of the abolition of local levies deposited in local treasuries.[182] Chiefs showed a "complete lack of interest and cooperation", Colijn reported, and the people believed taxes were levied "only to the personal benefit of government officials."[183] For the tax-gatherings, he wrote, an Acehnese taxpayer saved,

> "his most pitiful look, rummaging in his belt for his last pennies and eventually popping out an egg, or something like that, while in the meantime he keeps aside some banknotes for his amusements…"[184]

178 NA MinKol 1901-1953 OV 646, Vb. 7-6-1909 n53, herein: Vb., Advies A3: Gov Aceh to GG, 2-3-1909. Similar vocabulary is used by P.J. Havik, who describes how in Portuguese Guinea "fiscal policies and practices" constituted "a barometer for gauging the nature of a particular 'administrative and fiscal culture' in a colonial setting, and the relevance of local conditions for shaping relations between rulers and ruled [...]." See Havik, "Taxing the Natives", 175.

179 Stbl. 1907 n183 and 184.

180 Kreemer, Atjèh, II, 134-135.

181 Van Heutsz himself advocated a simple head tax, which he thought would outbalance achievability and fairness. ANRI DepFin 347, herein: 'Extract besluit', 9-3-1906.

182 ANRI DepFin 357, herein: DirFin 26-4-1912: Extract DepBB (nota) 30-3-1912, pp. 1-2.

183 NA MinKol 1901-1953 OV 646, Vb. 7-6-1909 n53, herein: Advies A3, 'bijlage': 'Rapport (nota) voor de Civiel en Militair Gouverneur van Atjeh en Onderhoordigheden. Belasting van de inheemse bevolking en de aanwending harer opbrengst in het directe volksbelang, door H. Colijn, hoofdambtenaar commissie', 31-8-1908, pp. 1-10.

184 ANRI DepFin 357, herein: DirFin 26-4-1912: Extract DepBB (nota) 30-3-1912, pp. 3-4.

Tax assessments could be paid in two terms, the final annual assessment to be due before the first of May.[185] Colijn encouraged to have the final assessments ready before the second quarter of the year, but at that time administrators in many districts were still busy dispersing tax bills and filling out assessment lists. The tax forms at the beginning of this chapter, for instance, were awarded only in October and September, five months late. It might be that late payment and deferral became one among various and new every-day strategies of resistance. So, tax-registration, listing and form writing became the new paper categories through which the state was expressed and through which it was opposed. In this case, the exhausted Acehnese no longer gave in to the calls for a holy war, but instead turned the state-machinery against itself. This is hard to verify, but considering the experiences of the Dutch elsewhere in the archipelago, it is not difficult to imagine that in Aceh, paper-based rule was redrafted, negotiated and turned around as well. It forced the government to extend its assessment-deadlines, immediately hampering the subsequent deadlines for tax collection and the tax assessments of the next year which, Colijn warned, threatened to cause a chain of endlessly postponed tax assessments. As a result, one tax year fused into the next, making the system vulnerable to sabotage.[186] Colijn made a bold proposal: to give up the assessments of 1907 and focus on a fresh start in 1908 to assure the next tax year would not be hampered by the former, to establish the correct "assessment rhythm."[187] His superiors agreed and the tax year of 1907 was written off.[188]

Hiding behind the despot

This way, around 1908, virtually all of Aceh was subjected to corvée services and income taxes. In the minds of state-builders in The Hague and Batavia, Aceh was subjected to a radical fiscal transformation much faster than we have seen in Ambon, Java or West Sumatra. By the time of the introduction of income taxes, the Dutch had been in Aceh for only 30 years, and effectively, many parts were never really controlled. The province was barely under control, far from understood. It was poorly administered, the subject of great dispute and overshadowed by violent upheavals, military domination and bloodshed. How did they expect to successfully complete this transformation under such circumstances? The answer, I think, is that they did not. During the years after 1908, taxes were reportedly levied "without many difficulties", through "collection left much to be desired", attributed

185 Stbl. 1907 n184: art. 8 (1).
186 MinKol 1901-1953 OV 646, Vb. 7-6-1909 n53, herein: Advies A3, 'bijlage': 'Rapport […] door H. Colijn, 31-8-1908, 8-11.
187 MinKol 1901-1953 OV 646, Vb. 7-6-1909 n53, herein: Advies A3, 'bijlage': 'Rapport […] door H. Colijn, 31-8-1908, 14-16.
188 Stbl. 1907 n380 and 533.

to the alleged flawed collection procedures of the *uleebalang*.[189] This was accepted as the reality of taxation in Aceh. The province was subjected to a centralized income tax system that, unworkable and awkward as it played out locally, seemed to satisfy the bureaucrats of Batavia and the parliamentarians in The Hague. The government considered its task done; it had 'legalized' Aceh's tax system, issued the requisite ordinances and developed a regime that worked on paper, and, most importantly, fitted the overarching tax-framework of the rest of the archipelago. In theory, no one could claim anymore that the Javanese paid for the administration of the Acehnese. The annual Colonial Reports, the ordinances in the State Gazette, and the paper archives made sure of that. In reality, the state remained as aloof as ever, fully ceding the execution of its tax system to self-governors whom the colonial government ensured carried total responsibility and culpability in case anything went wrong.

Like other indirect rulers across Indonesia, the *uleebalang* were invested with much greater avail over their population than before. They started levying excessive amounts of services, much to the benefit of the development of the state. This might explain why in 1919 the buy-off rate was fixed at a rate of three guilders per service, which was too high for the majority of the Acehnese.[190] This way, the government kept forcing many Acehnese to perform coerced labour, while comfortably hiding behind the *uleebalang* and accusing them of 'despotism' and 'corruption', whenever too many services were levied. As elsewhere in the archipelago, an alleged perpetual "lack of coolies" was purported to obstruct the abolition of corvée labour.[191] An inventory of 1933 demonstrated that in many districts corvée was still levied at this maximum amount and performed by those unable to pay tax, which was a majority of the population. Their labour power was valuated monetarily and deducted from their tax assessment.[192] In fact, during the economic crisis of the 1930s, many Acehnese lost their income as a result of an export crisis in the pepper, rubber, oil, and palm-oil industries.[193] Locally

189 KV 1913: C.3, 7; KV 1914, C.3, 9. The total tax assessment of the province of Aceh surpassed 200,000 guilders in 1908 of an indigenous population of about 5070,000 people, of which less than 400,000 were taxable, rendering the average assessment below 2 guilders. See: KV 1909 C.3, 9; KV 1910, C.3, 9; Boomgaard and Gooszen, *Changing Economy Vol. 11: Population Trends*, 109. The average assessment climbed to 3,36 guilders in 1916, see KV 1917; Kreemer, Atjèh, II, 135.

190 ANRI AS GB MGS 5162, herein: BGS 17-2-1923: 'Uittreksel uit de jaarverslagen betreffende den afkoop van Heerendiensten in de gewesten buiten Java en Madoera over 1921: Atjeh.' (The buying off price was 6 guilders in Singkil and 5 guilders on Sabang, where the economy was considered to be in better condition.)

191 ANRI AS GB MGS 5052, herein: BGS 20-3-1928: 'Nota, afkoopbaarheid van heerendiensten', Ag. 8174, I. 'Nota betreffende het meer algemeen afkoopbaarstellen van den heerendiensten' and II. 'De afschaffing van de heerendienstplicht, DepBB', DirBB to GG, 6-3-1928 and 'nota (kopie)', BGS 22-8-1928: 'Bestuursconferentie 1928: Buitengewesten, eerste dag', pp. 22-39.

192 ANRI AS GB TGA 9331, herein: BGS 30-5-1934: 'Resume bespreking', 23-11-1933, DepBB.

193 Siegel, *The Rope of God*, 90-91. See also: Touwen, *Extremes in the Archipelago*, 77, 399.

preserved materials housed in Aceh's provincial archives disclose how road maintenance, required after unpredictable and frequently occurring landslides and earthquakes, started falling behind.[194] An official in Takengon reported that no cash was in circulation, and all labour was performed in corvée.[195] He fully relied on the indigenous chiefs' ability to force their people to perform extra corvée.[196] Thus, the government kept a vested interest in the continuation of corvée labour as a cheap labour resource.

This, 'indispensability' of corvée labour, symbolized the many inherent paradoxes of the colonial narrative of development under domination. The Acehnese economy had collapsed as a result of Dutch aggression, but the government, of course unwilling to admit this, attributed the increasing poverty among the Acehnese to their innate characteristics and ruling traditions. Yet, these ruling traditions were continued by the colonial government, incapable of doing without indirect ruling partners. The problem of 'unproductivity' was deemed solvable by using corvée, which only aggravated the burden and popular discontent, leading to even further economic disasters. Thus, Dutch conceptualizations of the Acehnese became somewhat of a self-fulfilling prophecy. If the Dutch had not pursued a policy of 'despotic exploitation', or if they had allowed for a greater amount of commercial freedom, or absorbed some of the economic shock caused by war through its treasury, the need for corvée might have been less. Thus, the effect and burden of colonialism might have been experienced as lighter and resistance might have been reduced. By perpetually refusing to properly invest, and by anxiously holding-on to their fixed concepts of 'native laziness and craziness', the Dutch blocked any potential for the Acehnese to actually become monetized, taxpaying subject-citizens. Instead of a tool for 'social elevation', corvée obstructed the upward economic spiral which could have helped to lift the Acehnese from their state of economic desperation.

Conclusion

The *Hikayat Perang Sabil*, as exemplified at the beginning of this chapter, and the two tax forms figured in the prologue, essentially symbolize the two opposing responses to colonialism: resistance and compliance. Though the *Hikayat* was certainly still read at the time the exemplified tax forms were

194 Dinas Kearsipan dan Perpustakaan Propinsi Aceh (*Provincial Archives and Library of Aceh*; DKPPA), Collection Aceh/Aceh Tengah, Tahun 1917-1942: Tk. Aceh Tengah No. 59/Ga: 'Financieel onderhoud van wegen en bruggen', herein: Ass-Res Noordkust Aceh to controleur Takengon, 18-3-1936; Controleur Takengon to Ass-Res Noordkust Aceh, 18-2-1935.

195 DKPPA, Koleksi Aceh Tengah 1917-1942: Tk. Aceh Tengah No. 59/Ga: Financieel onderhoud […], herein: 'Jaarverslag no. 47: Financieel en technisch verslag nopens aanleg onderhorigen, 1932, wegen en bruggen in de verschillende landschappen in het gewest': 'Controleur/hulpgezaghebber Takengon' to Ass-Res Gayo- en Alaslanden, 7-10-1931.

196 DKPPA, Koleksi Aceh Tengah Tahun 1917-1942: Tk. Aceh Tengah No. 59/Ga: Financieel onderhoud […], herein: Jaarverslag no. 47 […]: Controleur/hulpgezaghebber […], 7-10-1931; 'Rondschrijven' Gov. Aceh to Afdelingschefs, 12-12-1930.

issued, strategies of resistance had long changed by then, following the imposition of Dutch governance. The Dutch had successfully subjected the region by incorporating the *uleebalang* and their fiscal instrumentality into their state-machinery. That way, the colonization process of Aceh elevated the use of indirect rule to its summit. Self-legitimized by their claim to superior abilities, enabling them to justly rule and tax, the Dutch replaced the Sultan with their state, his *sarakarta* with their *Korte Verklaringen*, and the system of rights (*wasé*) and levies with a unified and centralized system of direct taxes. Considerably more than the Sultan ever had, they crept into the tax instrumentation of the *uleebalang*, monopolizing and performing their levies using military surveillance. Because in the modern colonial tax state, taxes were supposedly never levied under the threat of violence, the government hid in the shadows cast by the *uleebalang* who, invested with greater power and capacity than ever before, provided an ideal combination of strawmen and scapegoat. Their unique role was used to uphold the farce of self-rule to the Acehnese, but also to protect against initiatives from Batavia. Most of all, it allowed for the maintenance of a status quo in which taxes were basically the same form of extortion as the Dutch claimed they had been under the Sultanate, without the government having to take responsibility for it.

This does not mean that the *uleebalang* were passive bystanders or loyal collaborators with the colonial regime. As demonstrated by Reid, many *uleebalang* capably manoeuvred the politics of the government to dodge and bend its demands and engaged in underground resistance.[197] What matters here however, is that state agents kept using the *uleebalang* as an institutionalized instrument, to which they could attribute the manifold shortcomings of colonial governance. Unable to adhere to its own standards of governance, officials comfortably shielded itself behind the *uleebalang* to maintain its self-legitimizing narrative of development and improvement, which ultimately withheld them from designing a better tax system. In practice, the ostensible economic development of Aceh and fiscal normalization of its population into a socially and spiritually healthy population of productive individuals according to colonial standards, ultimately depended on the structural support of the armed forces, in cooperation with ever more despotic *uleebalang*, and the use of forced labour. The idea that taxation would create a fairer and more tenable and productive society dissipated in the implausible logic of self-governance and indirect rule. The persistent branding of Acehnese as 'unstable' and dangerous creatures, and their subsequent mistreatment, demonstrates the limitations of the Dutch belief in the capacity of the Acehnese to become 'normalized' taxpaying citizens, subject to the unified colonial state. The Dutch colonial tax system in Aceh was permeated with structural ambiguity and ambivalence, resulting from a conflict between ambition and the reality on the ground, combined with strong disagreements among various levels of governance. This is illustrative of the perpetual conflicts within Dutch imperialist ambitions.

197 Reid, *The Blood of the People*, 18-25.

Map 7.1. Seram. Displayed are the Nagari mentioned in this chapter.