

## Western Images of Meccan Pilgrims in the Dutch East Indies, 1800-1900

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### ABSTRAK

*Rencana ini mengkaji tanggapan barat terhadap golongan haji daripada Dutch East Indies pada abad ke sembilan belas. Adalah dihujahkan bahawa kehadiran pelbagai penulisan Barat yang berterusan di dalam menstereotaipkan imej golongan haji mencerminkan wacana yang dominan, iaitu Islam yang diamal dan dida'wah oleh golongan Arab mengandungi unsur yang membahayakan, lalu perlu disekat. Dengan kedatangan imperialisme pada pertengahan abad ke sembilan belas, wacana tersebut menjadi satu "kenyataan" yang menyekat pandangan alternatif. Maka, pada akhir abad ke sembilan belas, haji digambarkan sebagai sebuah pengaruh negatif di Dutch East Indies.*

*Kata kunci: Imej, imperialisme, orientalisme, orang Melayu, Islam*

### ABSTRACT

*This paper examines Western images of returned Meccan pilgrims (hajjis) in the nineteenth century Dutch East Indies. I argue that the persistent presence of various Western literary works that promoted stereotypical images of the hajjis in the 19<sup>th</sup> century reflects a dominant discourse, which asserted that the version of Islam that the Arabs had practised and preached was inevitably dangerous and should be contained. With the advent of direct imperialism in the second half of the nineteenth century, such a discourse became established as "natural truths" that had to large extent subsumed alternative viewpoints, which sought to amend it. Hence, by the turn of the century, hajjis, as a force, were essentialised as a negative influence in the Dutch East Indies.*

*Key words: Images, imperialism, orientalism, Malays, Islam*

### INTRODUCTION: INTO THE WORLD OF DISCOURSES

As the world endeavours to manage the contemporary Western media treatment of Islam, it may be useful to compare such a treatment in the recent past, specifically the nineteenth century. Perhaps, a study of Western misrepresentations of Islamic pilgrims, the *Hajjis*, in the Dutch East Indies may offer

some insight into Western attitudes and biases towards Muslims in an earlier era. This will then, in some ways, enable a sample, albeit limited, comparison to be made with today's Western perceptions and ideas about Islam.

The purpose of this article is to present and analyse the development of Western representations of Meccan pilgrims (*hajjis*) in the nineteenth century. By tracing a genealogy of texts, whose authors have maintained persistent negative representations of *hajjis*, I hope to uncover the underlying concerns that may have been the stimulus for their production and reproduction. Hence, the real subject of this study is the "network" within which these Western texts laid, or, as in Foucaultian terms<sup>1</sup>, the "discourse" that was prevalent in the nineteenth century, which was the framework for the construction of dominant Western portrayal of *hajjis* in the Dutch East Indies.

In this, I would like to posit that the ensemble of relationships between various Western works that propound stereotypical images of the *hajjis* in the nineteenth century reflects the dominant discourse at that time, which asserted that Islam was inevitably dangerous and should be contained. This fear was based on misunderstandings of what was perceived as "puritan Middle Eastern Islam", and was manifested in several ways. First, Westerners feared the Arabian dress code that was adopted by the returned pilgrims. Such a dress code was seen as an adoption of fanaticism that was believed to be inherent amongst Arabs. Second, returned pilgrims were constantly associated in Western writings as being similar to their "fanatical" brethren (the Arabs) in the propagation of a puritan form of Islam to the other "peaceful" and "lax" natives. With the advent of direct imperialism in the second half of the nineteenth century, such a discourse became established as "natural truths" that dominated the minds of Westerners to a point that it subsumed other alternative or "revisionist" representations that were brought forth by other Westerners at that time. The version of Islam that was practised and preached by the Arabs, as a force, was generally perceived as negative influence upon the pilgrims from the Dutch East Indies. The next part of this article will examine a genealogy of nineteenth century Western texts that have represented the *hajjis* in negative terms and typologies. By examining the unities amongst these texts, the discourse inherent within them will be brought forth. Part three examines the attempts at counter-discourse by prominent statesmen and scholars, such as L.W.C. van den Berg and Snouck Hurgronje. This is to demonstrate the ruptures within what is usually propounded as a "monolithic" Orientalist discourse. Most importantly, this part will elaborate on how such internal re-formulations were subsumed by dominant representations of *hajjis* in nineteenth century Dutch East Indies. Last but not least, the concluding part of this article will not only reiterate its main arguments, but also suggest new areas of historical research related to this topic.

IMAGES OF *HAJJIS* WITHIN A DOMINANT DISCOURSE

*Hajjis* and the *Hajj* have always occupied a curious place in the nineteenth century Western colonial imagination. This was partly a consequence of the legacy of negative representations that were left behind by the Crusades (Daniel 1993: 243). Coupled by the strict prohibition against all “infidels” entering the Holy City, the enigmatic image of the sanctuary has always made Westerners wary of anyone who had returned from the long and arduous journey.

In the context of the Dutch East Indies, similar suspicions were inherent in the psyche of Westerners. In the midst of fulfilling its desire to establish an economic and political foothold in the archipelago, the United East India Company (VOC) for example, had often faced opposition by groups of natives who were suspected to have completed the journey to Mecca. As early as 1664, there had already been strategies to discourage the natives from undertaking the *hajj* (Vrendenbregt 1962: 96). In 1684, F. de Haan pioneered the trend amongst Westerners of publishing their observations of *hajjis* whom he described as a group of people who have had “extraordinary” influence upon the rulers (Reid 1995: 161).

Such concerns continued into the eighteenth century and are reflected in VOC’s shipping policies. In 1716, ten *hajjis*, who had been allowed to land on Batavia, were put “under surveillance, so that by troubling these people, not too much displeasure should be given to the here living Mahometan officers and other ranks, but especially not to the princes of that sect or persuasion in this vicinity who generally show a more than becoming inclination to this sort of fellows” (Vrendenbregt 1962: 96). Hence, by the eighteenth century, Westerners already regarded *hajjis* as a threat to the desired “tranquillity” of the archipelago. Upon their return from Mecca, they were viewed as having established a closer affinity with their Western brethren, the Arabs, although they were still recognised as the natives of the Dutch East Indies. This discourse continued and was soon to become dominant in the nineteenth century.

## THE BRITISH PIONEERS

The purpose of this section is thus to reveal how *hajjis* have consistently been described in scholarly works and travel writings of the nineteenth century as similar and if not, heavily influenced by the Arabs and how the relationship amongst these texts reflects a prevalent discourse at that time; the fear of the growing influence of “puritan Middle Eastern Islam” in the Indonesian Archipelago.

Unquestionably, the most influential and highly acclaimed Western works that have been published in the nineteenth century on the Dutch East Indies were the ones written by the British trio William Marsden, Thomas Stamford

Raffles and John Crawfurd. Hence, the survey of Western negative representations of *hajjis* for this section starts with William Marsden, the author of *The History of Sumatra*. First published in 1783, this work placed him in the forefront of Western “scientific” research on the Dutch East Indies (Bastin 1986: viii). John Crawfurd for that matter was not excessive in stating that Marsden was “of all writers who have treated the literature, history, or manners of the Archipelago, the most laborious, accurate, able, and original; and previous to whose writings we possess neither correct nor philosophical accounts of these singular countries” (Crawfurd 1967 vol. II: 81).

Probably due to Marsden’s short sojourn in West Sumatra, few references to *hajjis* were made in the book. In demonstrating his concern to describe “facts” as accurately as possible, he observed that the natives regarded the *hajjis* as “learned, and confers the character of superior sanctity” (Marsden 1986: 343). Marsden then conveniently categorises them as “priests”, who were predominantly Arabs and if not, had followed closely to the observance of Islamic rites of the Arabs. “The Arabs priests”, he notes, though “in the constant practise of imposing upon and plundering the credulous inhabitants, are held by them in the utmost reverence” (ibid.: 362). Although Marsden’s portrayals were not entirely negative, his contribution to the existing Western discourse of the *hajjis* was in no doubt potent. He had established a “natural link” between *hajjis* and Arabs, thus essentializing them as one and the same. Others would refine and build upon this skimpy observation throughout the rest of the century. The most immediate one from amongst them whose work gained extraordinary prominence was Thomas Stamford Raffles.

After the defeat of the Dutch in 1811, Lieutenant-Governor Raffles (1781-1826) was left in charge of governing Java. During his term, Raffles managed to produce his monumental work, *The History of Java* (published in 1817 and partially translated to Dutch in 1836). Structuring his book on Marsden’s *History*, Raffles accounts reflect, in many ways, the classical Orientalist conception of Islam at that time. To him, Islam had robbed the natives of their glorious Hindu and Buddhist past. Demonstrating his lack of regard for Islam, only four pages were dedicated to the discussion of this dominant religion in Java, whilst the remnants of Hinduism and Buddhism were elaborated in more than sixty pages. Of striking interest was his discussion of the “Mohamedan” pilgrimage. He also argued that, “every Arab from Mecca, as well as every Javanese, who had returned from a pilgrimage thither, assumed on Java the character of a saint, and the credulity of the common people was such that they too often attributed such persons supernatural powers” (Raffles 1988 vol. II: 3). While such statements echo those of Marsden, Raffles went further to assert that:

the Mohammedan priests have almost invariably been found most active in *every case of insurrection*. Numbers of them, *generally a mixed breed of Arabs and the inlanders* go about from state to state in the Eastern Islands and it is generally by their intrigues

and exhortations that the native chiefs are stirred up to attack or massacre the Europeans, as infidels and intruders (Ibid: 3) [*italics mine*].

This jaundiced view of the *hajjis* was further reinforced in his *Memoirs*. The *hajjis* according to him, had been exposed to the bigotry and arrogance of puritan groups in Mecca, and thus were a threat to the British administration and the “peaceful” natives (Raffles 1991: 429). Such a direct correlation between the Arabs and the *hajjis* reflects colonial concerns about the “Arabian” influence. Yet, most significantly, Raffles’s assessments and generalizations were to become a source of reference for future scholarship of Islam in the nineteenth century Dutch East Indies.

John Crawfurd (1783-1868) is next within the genealogy of scholars. Being a close friend of Raffles, but clearly an intellectual rival, he published a series of books that were to become one of the earliest influential works on the Dutch East Indies. The first of these works was the three-volume *History of The Indian Archipelago* (published in 1820 and translated to Dutch in 1823), in which Crawfurd asserted with regards to the Javanese that, “certainly there is neither bigotry nor austerity in their religious beliefs”. Crawfurd went on to propound that the natives were often transformed by their experience in the holy city. They would inevitably “return worse subjects than when they went away, and have been accused of misleading the people, and of being the most active agents in insurrection and rebellion” (Crawfurd 1967 Vol. III: 269).

By expanding further and restructuring the *History*, Crawfurd published *A Descriptive Dictionary of the Indian Islands & Adjacent Countries* in 1856. Although many of the sources were mere repetition of his earlier work, the *Dictionary*, according to M. C. Ricklefs, has been considered as the first encyclopaedia of what is now Indonesia (Crawfurd 1971: vii). In his entry on “Pilgrimage”, Crawfurd wrote that “the pilgrim *wears for life the Arabian costume*, is clothed in white” and that such persons were “sometimes a fanatic and an intriguer” (Crawfurd 1971: 352) [*italics mine*]. Like Raffles, Crawfurd gives the example of the Padris who had caused a great upheaval in Sumatra. In another entry entitled, “Mahometanism”, he explicitly revealed his concern of the Arabian influence by reiterating how the natives look up to the Arabs as their spiritual guides (ibid.: 357). Thus, it can be seen that Crawfurd, who was a product of his times, shared the views of Marsden and Raffles; all returned pilgrims, like the Arabs, were a threat to colonial governments.

At this juncture, it would not be an exaggeration to assert that through their works, these three British scholars canonised the *hajjis* with a few key terms and descriptions that were to become authoritative for subsequent generation of writers. Words such as “Priesters (Priests)”, “Paapen (Popes)”, “Padris”, “Wahabees” and “Fanatics dressed in white Arab turbans and garbs” were to become inherent in major Western works on Islam in the Dutch East Indies during the nineteenth century.

THE “*HAJJIS*”  
ARABS” DISCOURSE: HERE, THERE AND EVERYWHERE

After the restoration of Dutch rule in Southeast Asia in 1816, a more scholarly interest in geography, history, linguistics and ethnology of the East Indies gradually developed amongst the residents of the Netherlands. This was also the period in which the Dutch had engaged in a full-scale exploitation and control of the Archipelago without any serious external challenge to their dominance. Thus, with the outbreak of the Java and Padri War, *hajjis* were soon to become a colonial phobia. This is reflected in the writings of natural scientist Salomon Muller (1846) whose primary mission was to provide “scientific” ethnological and geographical descriptions of the areas that he had visited. *Hajjis* did not escape his imperial imagination. Muller pointed out that as a distinct group, *hajjis*, were indeed a dangerous element amongst the natives due to their nature of being “more worldly wise people”. He highlighted that they were also cunning, armed with fanaticism and “surpassed only by their lust for power and greed for money, as a result of which...the moral and social development of the people in whatever form are sadly inhibited and thwarted” (Boland & Farjon 1983: 7). Following such observations, Muller recommended that *hajjis* be closely supervised and contained. Such ideas provided a platform for other Western authors, especially within Dutch circles.

One of these authors was A.V. Michiels, a Major General who had been the Resident of West Sumatra. In his personal reminiscences, which were published in 1851, he assessed the Padris, as being driven, “just like the Prophet”, in spreading the religion of Islam by the sword unto the *adat* chiefs. Thus, blame for the violence of the Padri War was placed upon the feet of the *hajjis* who had been leaders of the Padri movement. To Michiels, having adopted the ways of the Arabs, the *hajjis* were a powerful force that should be crippled through aggressive means (Boland & Farjon 1983: 6).

Six years following this, Francis Train, an American, published a narrative of his travels intended as a useful guide for the mercantile community in Europe. Echoing the views of those before him, his descriptions of *hajjis* and Arabs reveal the dominant discourse within which he was an integral part. Describing his encounters with some Arabs on a pilgrimage to Mecca, he represented them as “singular costumed men – of white robe – huge turban, sandal footed, moustached and whiskered sons of Mahomet”. They were, most strikingly to him, hostile to the “infidels”. Most pertinently, they were soon to become “Mahometan priests” who had and will rise up against the Westerners whenever they deem necessary (Train 1857: 50-54).

In the same year, the Bengal Mutiny broke out in British India. Believed to have been influenced by rising Pan Islamism<sup>2</sup>, its violent suppression brought about excitement even amongst the Muslims in the Dutch East Indies. Two years later, it was presumed that an attack against the Dutch in Sulawesi as well

as the killing of Christian missionaries in Banjarmasin (Borneo) had been instigated and launched by some ‘fanatical’ pilgrims from Mecca who had incipient feelings of Pan-Islam (Money 1861: 123). The Dutch, who were at the time acquiring more territories, took such phenomenon as confirmation of the *hajji* menace. Hence, inheriting much from the paternalistic and calculated intervention of Raffles during the British interregnum and encountering opposition in the form of the Padri War, the Dutch took the precautionary step of forcefully restricting access to the *hajji* in an attempt to counter the increased interest in participating in the pilgrimage, and most importantly, the perceived growing influence of *hajjis* in the East Indies.

### HAJJI-ORDINANCE AND ITS AFTERMATH

In 1859, a new *Hajji* Ordinance was passed. It was actually an addition to regulations put in place between 1825 and 1852, which required the payment of a huge sum of 110 guilders and a passport system for Muslims wishing to participate in the *hajji*, with the goal of openly discouraging it. One of the most striking features of this new ordinance was a special “*hajji*-examination” that was designed to determine whether one has truly performed the *hajji* and thus to be allowed to adorn the Arabian or “*hajji*-dress” (Hurgronje 1995 vol. ix: 171).

It was against this background that J.W.B. Money, an advocate at the Madras High Court paid a visit to Java in 1858. Having stayed and travelled for only a few months, Money subsequently published *Java or, How To Manage A Colony Showing Practical Solution Of The Questions Now Affecting British India* (1861, and translated to Dutch in the same year). Money’s primary purpose was to find “a practical solution” to the crises the Indian Mutiny had brought upon the British administration. Sharing the views of his English predecessors, he highlighted that “the natives of the Eastern Archipelago have not the fierce hatred for which maddens the *Arab and other more genuinely Mussulman races*” (Money 1861: 143-4) [italics mine]. Yet, he maintained the view that fanatical outbreaks were inevitable if these natives had contact with Arab priests or pilgrims from Mecca. Money’s comments, although minimal, was a useful contribution to the *hajji* phobia that was brewing at that time.

To make matters worse, due to the implementation of the 1859 Ordinance, an ever-growing number of natives from the East Indies travelled to Singapore and Penang, stayed for a few years, and then returned to their villages claiming that they had performed the *hajji*.<sup>3</sup> Such a phenomenon gained the attention of an American naturalist, Albert Bickmore (1839- 1914), who published *Travels in The East Indian Archipelago* (published in London in 1868, American edition and translated to German in 1869 and Dutch edition was published in 1873). Having journeyed in the Dutch East Indies for only a year, Bickmore used Raffles and Crawford’s works to supplement his own observations. As a religious

man, he did not hesitate in stating his outright hostility towards the religion of “the false prophet” (Bickmore 1991: 50). Repeating the exact words of Marsden, he observed that, “any one who has been to Mecca is regarded next to a saint”. The Arabs, according to him, dominated the status of “priesthood” within the local society. Linking up to this, in his description of the Minangkabau region of West Sumatra, Bickmore highlighted an eventful moment in the area’s history.

About 1807, three pilgrims returned from Mecca to their homes...As they had just left the grave of their prophet, they burned with zeal to discipline their lax countrymen, and to make them conform more nearly to the rigid requirement they had pretended to adopt (ibid.: 471-2).

Bickmore’s observation of the Padri movement is interesting because he echoes quite literally the words of Lieutenant J.C. Boelhouwer, who had published his reminiscences whilst serving his term in Sumatra’s West Coast from the years 1831 to 1834.<sup>4</sup> The hasty correlation that was made between experiences at the Prophet’s grave with the fanaticism of the returned pilgrims reveals the identity of his text. It was essentially an organic part of the *Hajji/Arab* discourse.

With the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 and the development of steamships as well as better communications, the number of pilgrims from the Dutch East Indies rose dramatically. The “Evil *Hajji/Arab*” discourse had by then become established in the colonial imagination. In the same year, P.J. Veth (1814-1895), a well-known Leiden professor included a discussion of *hajjis* in one of a series of three review articles. Commenting in response to a relaxed view of the *hajjis* from a member of the Dutch parliament, Veth argued alternatively that, “the increase in the number of *Hadjis* is too high a price to pay for the reduction of their prestige”. To him, “the danger lies not in the *Hadjis* themselves, but in the spirit and principles of Islam, of which the *Hadjis* at present are the principle exponents” (Boland & Farjon 1983: 555). Unsurprisingly, Veth was arguing that there was a “new spirit” that would be brought back by *hajjis* upon their return from the journey to Mecca. What this “spirit” was remains elusive but more potent is the fact that Veth’s descriptions of the *hajjis* reflect how a renowned scholar was spellbound within the *Hajji/Arab* discourse, thus describing *hajjis* based on popular portrayals that were prevalent during his time rather than by direct observation. In fact, he had never visited the Dutch East Indies, the abode of those *hajjis*, which he described with much enmity and disgust (Mandal 1994: 117; Bastin and Brommer 1979: i).

#### FROM “TEXTS” TO “REALITY”

In 1871, K. F. Holle was appointed the first *Adviseur voor Inlandsche Zaken* (Advisor for Native Affairs in the Dutch East Indies). Faced with the increasing

tide of protest movements in the Archipelago, Holle, a product of the preceding scholars and statesmen, placed *hajjis* as the prime suspects of any disturbances in the colonial territories. With this *a priori* assumption, he reported to the Dutch authorities that *hajjis* were fanatics and zealots *par excellence* upon his return from a secret mission to Singapore in 1873 (Steenbrink 1993: 79). Such an assessment reflects how the continual representation of *hajjis* as being radicals influenced and, in many ways, similar to the Arabs had established itself as entrenched “truth” in the dominant Western colonial discourse by this time.

Hence, by tracing a genealogy of texts from Marsden to Veth and subsequently Holle, it can be seen that they were inter-related or if not, in mutual support of each other in essentialising the *hajjis*. “The analysis of their coexistence, their succession, their mutual functioning, their reciprocal determination and their independent or correlative transformation” (Foucault 1972: 33), as Foucault puts it, reveals a dominant discourse that was ingrained within the minds of these Westerners. A discourse based on the misunderstandings, fear and the compelling need to contain what was perceived as “puritan Middle Eastern Islam”. Like the Arabs, a *hajji* upon his return from the land of the Arabian prophet was a “priest”, who had a potent influence on the natives and a fanatical determination to resist colonial encroachment of their native soil. In addition, similar to the Arabs, it had become “easy” for the Westerners to distinguish “them” from “others” within their own society; dressed in a long white garb, they were proud of adorning the Middle Eastern head-dress as a symbol of their prestige and ever increasing rebelliousness.

In the midst of such phenomenon, the Dutch government commissioned L.W.C. Van den Berg, a renowned Dutch scholar, to map out the activities and influence of Arabs in the archipelago. His study reflects the primary concerns of the day; the Arab menace. The Dutch authorities thought that his findings would reinforce the prevalent *Hajji*/Arab discourse and the colonial policies in addressing “puritan Middle Eastern Islam” as a threat to their own “civilising” interests. But Van den Berg proved them otherwise.

## RUPTURES WITHIN A DOMINANT DISCOURSE

The last section has demonstrated that the *Hajji*/Arab discourse was indeed inherent in most of the major Western works on the Indian archipelago in the nineteenth century. Moving on from there, this part will attempt to elaborate how this discourse was not monolithic. Rather, ruptures had been present within that discourse, which were to a great extent, subsumed by majority of works that promoted negative images of the *hajjis*. Prior to turning to the prominent role of L.W.C. van den Berg in the counter-discourse surrounding *hajjis*, mention should be made of other early contrasting Western perspectives. As early as

1805, David Woodard, an English Captain of a trading ship described his encounters in Batavia with a man he knew as “*Tuan Hadjee*”. Woodard believed that “*Tuan Hadjee*” had been active in repelling Dutch encroachment in his native land. Yet he balanced this ‘fact’ with descriptions of *hajjis* as peaceful and thoughtful group of people. “To *Tuan Hadjee*”, he asserts, “we were much indebted for great kindnesses, and I believe we owed much of our preservation to him” (Woodward 1805: 108). While this was in a great contrast to Raffles’s assessment of *hajjis* a few years later, it is worthwhile to note that Woodard also regarded *hajjis* as a class of “priests” amongst the natives.

Another example of an early counter-discourse comes from H.J.J.L. Ridder de Stuers, who was the Military Commandant Resident of West Sumatra from 1824 to 1829 and engaged in the confrontation with the Padris. Despite the violence that he had seen, Ridder de Stuers credited the Padris for their efforts in trying to rid their society of vices, such as gambling and robbery in his memoirs that was published in 1841 (Steenbrink 1993: 75). Yet, faced with the publication of a great number of popular as well as ‘scholarly’ works that continuously portrayed *hajjis* in an extremely negative light, these two works were often overlooked or seen as “exceptions” to the rule of the day. The demonization of *hajjis* so dominated the discourse that Van den Berg noted the fear and exaggerated descriptions of natives who had adorned the Arabian turban in a plethora of newspapers and popular magazines whilst working on his monograph about Arabs in the archipelago. Such fears were also compounded by other distorted feedback that was given by Dutch spies throughout the Dutch East Indies (Berg 1886: xix). It was in such an atmosphere that Van den Berg researched and published his most important work.

#### “REPRESENTATIONS VS (RE) PRESENTATIONS”

L. W. C. van den Berg (1845-1927) published *Le Hadhramout Et Les Colonies Arabes Dans l’Archipel Indien* in 1886. The work reflects the general increasing interest as well as the intervention of Western colonial rulers with regard to Islam and the Arabs (Onghokham 1978: 137). In *Le Hadhramout*, Van den Berg argued that the common perception of Arabs as having a strong influence upon the natives could not be supported by “facts”. He posited that Arab involvement in the pilgrim business had in no way assisted in the transformation of natives into fanatics. The Arabs merely facilitated the journey to the Holy City and were more interested in making profits than inciting rebellions that would jeopardise their financial interests. Coming to terms with the facts gathered from his fieldwork experience, Van den Berg further argued that many of the misperceptions towards Arabs and Islam had arisen as a result of two central factors. First, was Western estrangement from the Arabs as well as other Muslims in the archipelago. This resulted in the assumption that all people who originated

from “Hadramaut, Egypt, the edge of the Persian Gulf, and inclusive of anyone who wears the turban and Arabian garb [were] Arabs” and thus were sources of fear (Berg 1886: 118). This was, to him, a common and flawed generalisation that had arisen due to a second factor: the lack of Western scholarly as well as administrative apparatus, which had engaged in a specialized study of Islam (Mandal 1994: 121).

Although Van den Berg’s work mainly dealt with the Arabs, it was also to a great extent the first direct challenge to the prevailing *Hajji*/Arab discourse in the archipelago. Differing from many of his contemporaries, he tried to separate the *hajjis* from the Arabs, thus breaking the common correlation that has been made between these two groups. Unsurprisingly, Dutch officials responded with direct attacks on Van den Berg’s findings and criticisms against the prevailing discourse. Amongst these detractors was an influential government official, Van Vleuten, who argued that Europeans had and will always have a “natural hostility” towards Arabs, as well as the Jews. “This hatred”, he asserted, “could not be removed by reading Mr. Van den Berg’s work”. With that, he suggested that all reports from Van den Berg pertaining to the Arabs were useless and should be kept hidden away (Berg 1886: xix).

In the same year, C. Poensen published *Brieven over den Islam uit de Binnenlanden van Java*. Similar to Van Vleuten, Poensen did not share the conclusions that Van den Berg had brought forth. Poensen felt that Arabia was a rendezvous point for politicians and leaders from other Muslim societies, including those from Java to exchange ideas as well as strategies to convert the locals to Islam (Noer 1978: 25). To Poensen, the colonial government had done much to understand the native way of life and by then was well aware of the “realities”. One of the most significant “realities” was the strong influence of *hajjis*, who were often guilty of manipulating the masses that continued to live “in stupidity, heresy and poverty” (Penders 1977: 242). Without doubt, Van Vleuten’s and Poensen’s views reverberated with a majority of the Westerners at that time who were unfavourable towards alternative portrayals of *Hajjis*/Arabs that Van den Berg proposed.

Two years later, a revolt broke out in North Banten. This was coupled by the increase in the number of *hajjis*, who had studied in Mecca and returned to rouse incipient feelings amongst the natives’ against the colonial government. Similar to earlier protest movements, the Dutch saw the revolt as an affirmation of their fears towards the pilgrimage to Mecca and the influences of Pan-Islamism from there (Kartodirdjo 1966 & 1973: 71). The *Hajjis*/Arabs discourse was, once again, ignited.

In the midst of such upheavals, Snouck Hurgronje (1857-1936) was sent by the Dutch government to Arabia to carry out an important mission: to investigate the influence of the holy sanctuary on the worldview as well attitudes as of *Jawah* pilgrims towards Dutch colonial rule (Vlekke 1959: 324-5). Having stayed in Jeddah for five months and eventually gaining access to Mecca for

seven months by pretending to be a Muslim, Hurgronje was able to collect sufficient information and wrote what was, in many ways, a sharp contrast to what the Dutch authorities as well as the European public had expected. The book, *Mekka In the Latter Part of the Nineteenth Century* (1888), was one of his most important works about Islam, but was not influential at the time of its publication. Hurgronje later sent dozens of letters to Dutch administrators and a series of articles that had been published in magazines and newspapers such as *De Java Bode* and *De Locomotief* to reinforce his findings. Through these letters and articles, he intended to not only give a more ‘accurate’ description of the holy sanctuary, but also to clarify to the European public and Dutch colonial rulers what he perceived as the common ‘misperceptions’ of the West towards the *hajj* and most crucially, *hajjis*.

In this, Hurgronje focussed his attacks on a few fundamental issues. With regards to the “*hajji*-examinations”, he argued that such policies were useless for returned pilgrims who were old or were often following their guides blindly without having the slightest idea of what the various rites meant. Thus, Hurgronje argued that most of them would inevitably fail the exams. Hurgronje also highlighted that there was also another group of natives who could have easily passed the exams without undertaking the *hajj*. These were a group of people who had spent their time studying in *pesantrens*, *madrasahs*, *suraus* and mosques at that time (Hurgronje 1995 vol. viii: 239). Next, he corrected the prevalent terms that have been used to describe the *hajjis*. He highlighted that Islam does not recognise any form of priesthood. Hence, terms such as “priests” or “popes”, which had been used by generations of Western scholars to describe *hajjis*, were simply misnomers (Benda 1958: 21).

According to Hurgronje, the adoption of “Arabian” dress and even “Arabian” names were, not physical symbols of the *hajjis* attempting to mimic the Arabs. Rather, Hurgronje highlighted that there was a large proportion of *hajjis* who adorned Western clothes. In addition, “Arab” clothing that was feared by the Westerners was, in reality, not the common dressing of the Arabs in Arabia. Rather, it was a hybrid mixture of local dressing as well as those that most Arabs would scarcely wear (Hurgronje 1995 vol. viii: 104). Last but not least, he disagreed with Poensen by maintaining the stand that not all *hajjis* were active in the encouragement and participation of protest movements against the Dutch and British. Rather, only a small number from amongst them who had resided in Mecca for several years were guilty of such crimes.

Hurgronje’s writings were perhaps the most influential counter-discourse to the established *Hajji*/Arab equation. Although he was aware that his contemporaries would disregard his stance, he remained adamant in going against the tide. Snouck explicitly maintained that “in all these representations, sound observation is mixed up with misunderstanding, but it is everywhere to be observed that the Europeans are themselves largely responsible for this last” (Hurgronje 1931: 248). “This art”, he asserted, “is known to our ‘experts’ on

conditions in the East Indies, as well as to anybody ... all start from the fallacious hypothesis that the *Hajjis* have, as such, a special character” (ibid.: 239).

So sharp and sarcastic were his comments against the Western misperceptions of Islam that even Van den Berg accused him of assuming “the attitude of an orthodox Mussulman and as such assesses a matter of legislation as if the Government were concerned with the purity of the Mohammedan doctrine...” (Steenbrink 1993: 123-5).

#### “(RE) PRESENTATIONS DEFEATED”

By the end of the century, Van den Berg’s and Hurgronje’s works had undoubtedly created ruptures within the dominant *Hajji*/Arab discourse. Partly as the result of their findings, the restrictions that were set upon *hajjis* and the *hajj* were relaxed (Scidmore 1984: vii). Nonetheless, in as much as a number of draconian policies were revised or abolished, negative perceptions and representations of the *hajjis* among a majority of Westerners remained, and in fact became more intense.

In 1893, Basil Worsfold, a British traveller, wrote a guidebook for English and Australian travellers in Southeast Asia. In his account of Java, he observed that, Arab priests and *hajjis* had by then been recognized as popular leaders amongst the natives. They were, to him, “jealous of European influence, and are ready to incite the natives to revolt if occasion offers” (Worsfold 1893: 116). Going further, Worsfold highlighted an incident that had occurred a decade before his visit where he portrayed *hajjis* as being capable of going to the extent of mutilating Europeans.

The fervour did not end there. It was further aggravated by a series of four commentaries written by A. Brooshoft in the newspaper, *De Locomotief*. Brooshoft argued that the increasing number of returning pilgrims to the Dutch East Indies at that time had posed as a greater danger to the colonial government than ever before. To him, this dangerous “wave of Islamic fanaticism” would be further augmented by the inevitable fall of the Turkish Caliphate. He was also against the relaxation of restrictions upon *hajji* dress by the government and asserted that the government should be aware of the “knowledge and experience” that the *hajjis* have acquired whilst living in “land of the Arabs”. In a condescending manner, he concluded that the colonial authorities could only contain *hajjis* by applying the same formula to that of the Arabs that is, either through harsh measures, bribery or wages (Hurgronje 1995 vol. viii: 104). Evidently trapped within the *Hajji*/Arab discourse, Brooshoft was in fact repeating the same concerns and portrayal of the *hajjis* that Raffles and Crawford expressed some eighty years earlier.

Although Brooshoft’s concerns were extremely exaggerated, it was not totally unfounded. In fact, at the time in which such articles were written and

published, an increasing number of *hajjis* in the Dutch East Indies had begun to play a more prominent role in the Indies society. From being usurers and landowners, they now became active in protest movements against Dutch colonial rule. On the eve of the new century, the famous Dutch novelist, Louis Couperus published one of the most influential and damaging representations of *hajjis*. Although his work was fiction, such texts were products of its milieu, which served as “pictures of reality at the very early or the very last stage of the reader’s experience of them” (Said 1994a: 88). *De Stille Kracht* (or translated as “The Hidden Force”, published in 1900) was based on Couperus’s collection of materials from colonial officials as well his personal remembrances of his childhood in Java. *Hajjis* were represented as being one of the causes of Dutch difficulties. They were also portrayed as ghosts that lurk in the night, affecting the psyche of women. This was clearly reflected when one of the female characters proclaimed, “Miss Doddy has seen a white *hadji* going by! The white *hadji* is not a good *hadji*. He’s a ghost....Miss Doddy saw him twice: in Patjaram and here....Listen, *kandjeng!*” (Couperus 1992: 176).

Hence, whilst Snouck had attempted to counter the *Hajji*/Arab discourse, Couperus had done the opposite. With concluding the lines of this highly acclaimed novel, he solidified the discourse and brought Westerners at that time back to where Marsden, a century ago, had started. The *hajjis*, he wrote, were “like a poison and a hostile force at the body, soul, and life of the European, silently attacks the conqueror and saps his energies, causing him to pine and perish, sapping his energies very slowly, so that he wastes away for years, and in the end he dies of it, perhaps by a sudden, tragic death” (ibid.: 230).

#### ENDING A NEW BEGINNING?

Thus, going back to where this article began, a critical examination of a genealogy of Western representations of the returned pilgrims from Mecca reveals a dominant discourse that was inherent in the nineteenth century. This discourse was based on the fears and misunderstandings of what was perceived as the spreading influence of puritan Middle Eastern Islam. The effect of this was a persistent portrayal of *hajjis* as being similar to Arabs until it had become established as ‘truth’ in the minds of a majority of Westerners.

A variety of texts, however, reflect the divisive nature of the discourse. It was never monolithic. Rather, alternative Western discourses were indeed present within a given dominant discourse, although such attempts to ‘correct’ were usually disregarded. The power that emanated from the dominant discourse determined which representations of *hajjis* were to be accepted as ‘true’ and ‘untrue’. That power was not only manifested in the political form but also the sheer presence of a legacy of discursive practices that were reproduced in the nineteenth century, and were maintained by a greater number of ‘authoritative’ and ‘popular’ texts propagating the *hajji*/Arab formula.

This brings us back to some of the conclusions that Edward Said made in his criticised and celebrated book, *Orientalism* (1994). Twenty years after its first publication, Said released the second edition with no significant changes, except for an “Afterword”. One of the many propositions in the book that Said had maintained was that,

Western estrangement from Islam simply intensified their feelings of superiority about the European culture. Islam was considered a degraded (and usually, a virulently dangerous) representative. Such tendencies became built into the very traditions of Orientalist study through the nineteenth century and in time became standard component of most Orientalist training, handed from generation to generation (Said 1994b: 260).

Deriving from his study of Western representations of Islam in the Middle East, Said’s above-mentioned thesis has been criticised by historians as vitally *ahistorical* (Ashcroft & Ahluwalia 2000). Extending such criticisms, this article has shown that such assumptions may not be applicable in the context of Dutch East Indies, especially with regards to Western representations of a group within Islam: the *hajjis*. Not *all* Westerners in nineteenth century Dutch East Indies were estranged from Islam. This has been shown through the example of a traveller, David Woodard who, having spent a period of time to be acquainted with the *hajjis*, gave a fairly balanced representation of these pilgrims. Most important are the examples of Van den Berg and Snouck Hurgronje. They proved to be scholars that were not only sympathetic to Islam, but also tried to amend what they saw as misconceptions of the *hajj* and *hajjis*, and thus acted as commendable counter-discourses.

Most fundamentally, in addressing present concerns, the narratives that followed illuminate us of the fact that Western scholars and writers, similar to Muslims, should not be perceived as “monolithic” blocs. Rather, there existed fundamental divisions and constant struggles for discursive hegemony within them. With this in mind, it is pertinent for future scholars to re-examine the texts that have been used in this research as well as those that are contemporary to our times in order to understand more comprehensively Western representations of other aspects or groups within Islam. Representations of the *ulama’* (religious scholars), *umara’* (rulers) and the *wakaf* (religious endowments) are perhaps other interesting areas that could be explored. Through this, a more complete understanding on their views of Islam in a given area of study as well as a deeper appreciation of how this influenced colonial/imperial as well contemporary policies can be revealed.

Perchance, there can be no other better end to this article than a quote by Norman Daniel (1993: 12)

Apparently, under the pressure of their sense of danger, whether real or imagined, a deformed image of their enemy’s beliefs takes shape in men’s minds. By misapprehension and misrepresentation, a notion of the ideas and beliefs of one society can pass into the accepted myths of another society, in a form so distorted that its relation to the original facts is sometimes barely discernible.

## NOTES

1. The term “discourse” refers to what Foucault (1977: 199) has defined as “the delimitation of a field of objects, the definition of a legitimate perspective for the agent of knowledge and the fixing of norms for the elaboration of concepts and theories”.
2. Pan-Islamism is in reality, an elusive concept. For example, Anthony Reid (1967: 267) sees it as a nineteenth century movement that appealed to Muslims all over the world to realise and re-establish their bonds as well as concern for each other. Most importantly, it called for Muslims to acknowledge the Sultan of Turkey as the Caliph or “The Ultimate Leader from amongst the Believers”.
3. Such persons were those who had insufficient funds to undertake the journey to Mecca, hence, chose to work in these two main ports as coolies or labourers for a year or two with the hope of saving enough money. Most failed to undertake the journey and, upon returning to their hometown, would claim to have visited it in order to enjoy the status that *hajjis* wielded at that time. Those, whose real identities were so often exposed, were commonly known then as “Hajji Singapura”. See (Roff 1994: 39).
4. It is enticing to point out that Bickmore may have even plagiarized much of the works of the British and Dutch scholars. Yet, no known historian has concretely confirmed this. Nevertheless, Boelhouwer described the incident as follows: “well over fifty years ago one of the priests, having made a pilgrimage to the grave of the Prophet Mahomet in Mecca, sought an excess of religious zeal to gain a following on his return by preaching that the religion of the Malays had deviated much too far from Mahometanism” (Boland & Farjon 1983: 6).

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