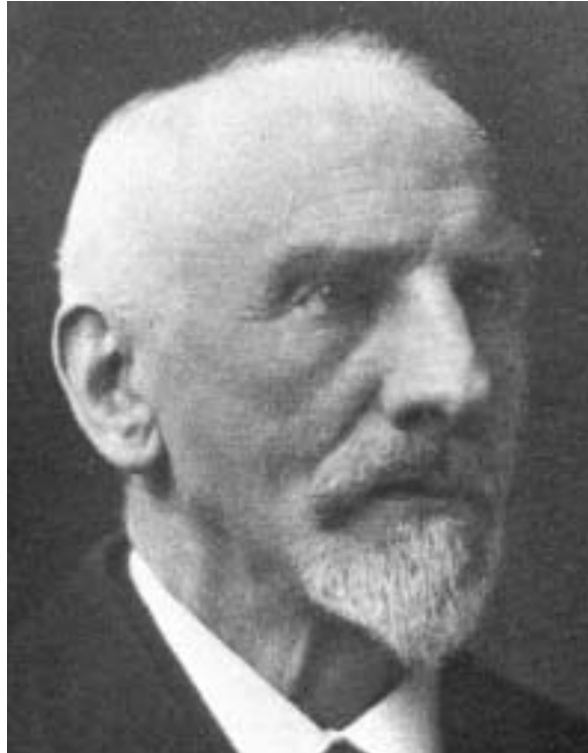


**CHRISTIAAN SNOUCK HURGRONJE**

**(1857-1936)**



**Muslim idealist  
or  
Christian colonialist**

Lizette van Hecke  
Master of History  
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## PREFACE

For a memorable number of months I had been wondering what subject I wanted for my Master's thesis in History. Although I believe this will not be the last piece I have written, it was important to me to make a relevant choice. Particularly my family and friends were of great support in this process of brainstorming and elimination.

When I selected the area of my primary interest being (religious) toleration in our society, the next step was to narrow the field and come up with a workable subject. The numerous conversations I had with my professor Dr. de Rooij helped me focus on Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje. I would like to take this opportunity to thank him for his patience and guidance. He kept reminding me my work had to be accessible to readers and assisted me in finding my story whenever I was lost.

I must also gratefully acknowledge the helpful and critical interest of Wilfred Griekspoor, whose endless academic input sharpened the text considerably. Of course I should mention with gratitude the always supportive encouragement of my mother and brother, who followed this project from its beginning to its conclusion. The occasional hot water bottles, mild criticism and energizing pep talks made the ordeal of manufacturing this thesis an inspirational process.

Further it was my good fortune not only to have a loving roommate, but also the help of several friends who listened to me, stimulated me and persuaded me every once in a while to take the necessary break. All of them made this manuscript not only enjoyable but possible.

L.v.H.

Amsterdam  
December 2004

## INTRODUCTION

“On no nation does the duty of serious study of Mohammedanism rest more heavily than on ours.”<sup>1</sup>

The shocking events of September eleventh, 2001 and unfortunately also more recent global outbreaks of religious fundamentalism, have positioned the religion of Islam in the middle of public debate. The principle of the Jihad (holy war), in particular, is of concern to those who try to get insight into the connection between extreme terrorist acts and Islam. Many scholars, politicians, and artists nowadays are relatively conscious of the impact religion can have on the life of its believers and consequently talk about the necessity of maintaining the separation of church and state. They suggest liberalization of some principles of Islam if Muslims want to reside in a Western constitutional state. In the Netherlands in particular there is currently fierce debate on the nature of Islam and its potentially dangerous influence on civil society.

It is peculiar how the tone of the current Dutch debate on Islam versus Christianity versus unfaithfulness would seem to suggest that this is the first time such a confrontation of different values has taken place in the history of a tolerant society. Sometimes it even feels as if this is the first time Islam in all its aspects is a topic of discussion. But this is not the case. Already in the nineteenth century, Dr. Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje investigated this Eastern religion in order to gain a better understanding of a relatively unfamiliar faith. He was one of the first European scholars to actually leave the safety of his desk and travel to the unknown ‘exotic’ Mecca to study what it was really like, instead of depending on hearsay and books. Furthermore he ignited an academic tradition in research on the Muslim way of living as well as the Islam religion.

The criticism Snouck evoked in the mid nineteen eighties, when his archive opened to the public, was that his scientific research was merely a part of the Orientalist movement that dominated the study of Islam and therefore overshadowed his actual contribution to the debate on this controversial subject. Yet the data that was uncovered

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<sup>1</sup> Chr. Snouck Hurgronje. In *Nieuwe Rotterdamse Courant*, 16 November 1885

concerning his views and his advice to the Dutch government regarding Islam now have a bizarre currency in the context of the discussion the world is involved in at this very moment. The subject of this thesis is a person in whose life an indefinable flirtation with Islam played a leading role, colouring all major personal and at the same time scientific decisions he made. His fascination for Islam sprouted in his childhood, but would not blossom until his college years.

The first chapter consists of a brief biography of Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje, including impressions of the circumstances he was raised in and observations how he became an exemplary theology student in Leiden. His choice of studying Eastern Semitic Languages is highlighted and his interest in Islam in particular explored. Further, it discusses how he managed to make a relevant contribution to the scientific field of Orientalism as well as the colonial strategy in the Dutch Indies. Snouck wrote in 1924 on this period: “Whoever tries to brighten the picture of our half a century in Aceh’s insults the Holy Ghost, and whoever tries to praise our colonial policy puts a suspicious kind of patriotism above the truth.”<sup>2</sup> His life will prove to be filled with ideological controversies, personal intrigues, revolutionary statements and current relevance. His abundant academic work reveals a certain general view of a religion no one had really studied scientifically before.

The second chapter therefore attempts to elucidate the range of his thought concerning Islam and the impact he believed it to have on the daily routine of its believers, altering the lives of whole continents. He proved the supposed immobile hierarchy of Islam to be a constant tug-of-war for power, completely the opposite of what the West believed the East to be. In addition, he compared the religion to Christianity and Jewry to showcase Islam as not being as alien as most people liked to believe in those days. The new ideas he brought into currency could be classified as revolutionary.

Finally it seems more than natural to compare Snouck and his method with the common consensus on Orientalism, since he engaged in intensive study in the territory of the religion of the ‘Orient.’ As originator of a whole scientific field of study of Islam, he founded an academic approach to research called the ‘Leiden School’ (*Leidse School*). This school is responsible for the way people regarded the East and Islam until far into

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<sup>2</sup> F. Schröder, ‘Mohammed contra Max Havelaar’. In *NRC Handelsblad*, 10.03.1984

the twentieth century. In order to assert the exceptional nature of Snouck's authority, the third chapter will introduce an Orientalist predecessor called Pieter Johannes Veth. The difference between these two men will become even clearer when comparing their work to *Orientalism* by Edward William Said as counterweight. The book that was published in the 1979 represented the first time anyone had criticised the representation of the East, claiming it to be based upon biased perceptions, prejudices, and incorrect data. The methods Snouck Hurgronje used in investigating and exploring might be considered controversial nowadays, but when put in the right historical perspective the positive may well overshadow the negative and show that he was not merely a 'latent' Orientalist.

## CHAPTER ONE: CHRISTIAAN SNOUCK HURGONRJE

### 1.1 Formative Years

In order to create an understanding of the revolutionary ideas of Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje, it is helpful to know the circumstances of his upbringing. This man would grow up to be a person who did not feel obliged to limit himself to a certain static line of thought or religion, but respected the fact that other people did. Even though he could be viewed as being primarily secular, his life and the choices he made would be entangled with religion in a diversity of ways.

Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje was born the son of a protestant clergyman in Oosterhout in the catholic southern part of the Netherlands on the 8th of February 1857. He was the youngest child, with two older sisters, Anna Maria and Jacqueline Julie. At this time, the newborn Christiaan knew nothing of the difficult situation his father and mother found themselves in, but it would eventually have a severe impact on his life. His youth would not be a normal one and, more importantly, neither would his adolescence. The importance of the circumstances of his childhood would display itself later in his life in the development of his character. His growing scepticism towards religion would be the exact ingredient needed for him to excel in academic pursuits.

His father, Dr. Jacob Julianus, was formally married to Adriana Magdalena van Adrichem<sup>3</sup>, but fell in love with the younger Anna Maria de Visser and decided to act upon these romantic feelings. Nowadays such an affair would bring about some social commotion, but in the nineteenth century it was simply not done, and tantamount to forsaking God. Furthermore, Jacob was not an ordinary civilian. He had given his life to the Church and was therefore specifically expected not to behave in an irresponsible manner. When in 1849 he fathered an extramarital daughter with Anna Maria, it was indeed not appreciated by the Provincial Church Council of Zeeland, especially since his wife was ill. He was fired from his clerical position because of this ‘perfidious abandonment’ and ‘indecent affair,’ which immediately darkened the distinguished family’s reputation and put them in social isolation.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.geneaal.nl/data/699.htm>, read on 23.06.2004

It didn't break up the love between him and Anna Maria, though, and a year later she gave birth to another illegitimate daughter. When Jacob's first wife passed away in 1855, he officially married 'the love of his life,' and two years later Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje was born. Particularly for the sake of his children, Jacob tried to rehabilitate to the Reformed Church. In 1849 he had not only lost his position as clergyman, but was also ostracized from the congregation as a whole and therefore denied attendance at the ceremony of the Holy Evening. This could be overcome if he would show a considerable amount of remorse, and thus "after several attempts his request to be admitted to the Holy Evening was granted" and Jacob Snouck Hurgronje was officially reintegrated.<sup>4</sup>

Christiaan's later sceptical vision of religion and its traditions could be traced to this traumatic experience of his father struggling to be accepted by the same church that had ejected him. Furthermore the Council demanded that Anna Maria publicly make her confession of faith again, which hurt her pride substantially. Snouck had always been very close to his mother, so there is no doubt that this degrading family history must have grieved him. His view on religious ceremonies is quite relevant to the development of his passion for Islam and for religious ceremonial behaviour in general. The uncomfortable experiences of the Snouck Hurgronje family may have created an unusual sensitivity towards the social effect of religion on a society.

Fully in keeping with the rest of his fairly traditional reformed upbringing, Snouck also pursued a career as a clergyman. During his successful years at the high school HBS (*Hoogere Burger School*) in Breda, he was granted the privilege of receiving private education in classical languages. This gave him the chance to apply after graduation to the State University of Leiden, where he was admitted in 1874 to study theology and literature. It might be significant that Snouck's great-grandfather on his mother's side was Dr. J. Scharp, the professor who had written the first Dutch manual on Islam for Protestant missionaries in 1824. There are quite a few similarities between Scharp's book and Snouck's first study of Islam, but no proof has yet been found that an actual transfer of knowledge took place.<sup>5</sup> After the death of her husband in 1870

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<sup>4</sup> P.Sj. van Koningsveld, *Snouck Hurgronje en de Islam*, Amsterdam 1984, 94

<sup>5</sup> Koningsveld, *Snouck Hurgronje en de Islam*, 148

Snouck's mother Anna Maria decided five years later to move to Leiden as well to be near her children.

During the first years of his studies, Snouck befriended the orthodox Protestant Herman Bavinck, whose friendship was based upon "an exchange of ideas, in which one does not in the least feel ashamed to tell each other the truth."<sup>6</sup> Herman was born three years earlier than Christiaan, the eldest son of a strict Reformed minister. He had studied at the Theological School in Kampen for a year, but switched to Leiden because it was scientifically more challenging for the ethical interests he had. Even though his parents knew he would be exposed to 'modern' theological influences, they approved his choice, trusting he would not renounce his Calvinist upbringing. In spite of their differences in social background and religious conviction, they became close friends, both taking up a similar path in study. A regular course of study meant taking a propaedeutic exam after general introductory studies that could vary from one to two years, after which it took another two to three years to obtain a candidate exam (to some extent the same as a bachelor's degree). The master's degree in those days took two years and consisted of a doctoral examination and a thesis. With theology, the propaedeutic exam was normally taken after the second year, but both Bavinck and Snouck were already taking up Arabic, obligatory as part of the theology candidate exam, during their second year in order to gain better control of it. Together with Gerrit Wildeboer they were the only ones so to extend their studies.<sup>7</sup>

Snouck and Bavinck had an understanding for each other as opponents, which for an argumentative individual like Snouck may seem remarkable. Both had their own ideas and independence, but respected each other's opinions and acknowledged that this was the most important and valuable lesson they learned during their college years in Leiden. In order to "sharpen their mental organs" they spoke their mind openheartedly and tried to "understand the other's serious conviction."<sup>8</sup> The difference between them kept getting bigger and bigger as they developed a different type of scientific research and career. Snouck was a religious free thinker and Bavinck an orthodox theoretical dogmatic. "With

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<sup>6</sup> J. de Bruijn and G. Harinck, *Een Leidse vriendschap, de briefwisseling tussen Herman Bavinck en Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje, 1875-1921*, Amsterdam 1999, 55

<sup>7</sup> de Bruijn and Harinck, *Een Leidse vriendschap*, 17

<sup>8</sup> Ibidem, 57

me induction from many details [is important], the most general is hardly looked at from afar and with you the most common [comes] up front. Maybe this is the difference in our way of work.”<sup>9</sup> Much of what we know of Snouck’s opinions on religion and life in general comes from the letters the two continued writing each other throughout their lives. Also together with Bavinck he founded a theological fraternity named *Per Ardua ad Astra*, although no notes remain from the period.<sup>10</sup>

Apparently he had the special gift of gathering people around him and getting them to talk. Not only would people remember his talent for personal communication, but the large (international) correspondence he carried on is also proof of this. Correct and formal as ever, he was also known to be the king of sarcasm. His fierceness was tamed by his attitude of willingness to understand and listen. “Sometimes he seemed not to have an answer to a difficult question straight away, but he would always come back to it later on and make the answer something special and meaningful,”<sup>11</sup> according to the late Queen of the Netherlands Juliana, with whom Snouck had numerous study-related conversations when she was a student in Leiden. He proved that behind a stiff appearance, one can have a soul that can speak with great piety and intense thankfulness of public figures who “tied the lives of others to their own”.<sup>12</sup>

After his candidate examination in the study of theology and Semitic language and literature, both in 1878, Snouck slowly developed a growing scepticism towards Christianity and a fondness for the Arabic language, which to Snouck was the language of Islam. In 1877, significantly, he still wanted to become a clergyman, as the presence of his name in the ‘Leiden Ecclesiastical Album’ (*Leids Kerkelijk Album*) shows.<sup>13</sup> In the letters he wrote to his friend Bavinck a particular passage relates to his intellectual formation: “Various affairs contribute to the fact that my sympathies are anything but on one side of one direction or party and that I prefer, since my conscience forbids me for now to join anything, to find my mental sustenance where I am bound to find sincerity.”<sup>14</sup> This quote makes even more sense in the light of the fact that Snouck started off as a firm

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 146

<sup>10</sup> Leidse University Library, Western Handwriting department

<sup>11</sup> H.M. de Koningin, *Prof. Snouck Hurgronje’s passing*, 23

<sup>12</sup> H.M. de Koningin, *Prof. Snouck Hurgronje’s passing*, 13

<sup>13</sup> P.Sj. van Koningsveld, *Snouck Hurgronje en de Islam*, Amsterdam 1984, 95

<sup>14</sup> J. de Bruijn and G.Harinck, *Een Leidse vriendschap*, Amsterdam 1999, 55

believer in Modern Theology, which meant seeing the Koran as well as the Bible as a human artefact and maintaining a sceptical view of the authenticity of these traditional religious texts. The next chapter will provide more information on this.

Herman Bavinck and Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje took their candidate exams a day after each other, and when Bavinck received a *cum laude* for his theology exam whereas Snouck didn't, Herman was highly indignant and refused his diploma until the '*cum laude*' was removed. Snouck thanked him in one of his letters for this sign of true friendship that "if necessary breaks the bonds of convention."<sup>15</sup> From here on their contact would continue, though less frequent, since Bavinck chose for a graduate study in theology and Snouck in Semitic languages and literature. In 1879 Snouck passed his doctoral exam *cum laude* and almost exactly a year later he officially started his academic career. He obtained his doctorate *cum laude* on the 24<sup>th</sup> of November 1880 with his dissertation on 'The Mecca Celebration' (*Het Mekkaansche Feest*) from Professor De Goeje at the State University of Leiden.

The scientific interest in Islam had hardly begun in those days, but his ambitious work proved what impressive results could be achieved using the historical-critical method of research. According to his study it had indeed been Mohammed who, before introducing the pilgrimage to the mosque in Mecca as part of Islam, had ennobled this old pagan rite by tracing it back to Abraham. And he tried to find out whether pre-Islamic habits had undergone significant changes after their incorporation to Islam. His research was based on an abundance of literature, as all his later work would be. Snouck concludes his thesis with the following words: "Rather than beg for forgiveness for the lacunae and faults which will be found in my work, I refer him who would want to accuse me, to the words of Allah: 'No more is demanded from a man than he is capable of'."<sup>16</sup>

In the year after this great success he temporarily took up residence in Strasbourg to study with Professor Theodor Nöldeke. Because of the growing interest in Islamic studies in Europe at the end of the nineteenth century, the Paris *Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* had proposed a critical monograph on the history of the text of the Koran in 1857. Nöldeke won the prize and the enlarged German version that was

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<sup>15</sup> de Bruijn and Harinck, *Een Leidse vriendschap*, 38

<sup>16</sup> Chr. Snouck Hurgronje, *Mecca*, Leiden 1889, 87

published in 1860 at Göttingen as *Geschichte des Qorans* became the foundation of all latter Koran Studies. In Snouck's field of interest Nöldeke was a celebrity, so it was a remarkable opportunity that he could join him in scientific activities for awhile. For the rest of his life he would continue his intellectual as well as personal contacts with Nöldeke. Other Islamists in those days were Goldziher, Dozy, and De Goeje, whom Snouck calls "teachers, friends and colleague scholars." They view Snouck to be a man with great scientific qualities such as a clear mind, refined powers of observation and an extraordinary sense of tact in interacting with Easterners, combined with a nearly unrivalled ambition and a huge capacity for work.<sup>17</sup> With methodical persistence, Snouck was able to master the basics of Islam within a few years.

After returning to Leiden in 1881 he became a teacher at the *Gemeentelijke Instelling*, an institute that educated public servants for the East Indies, until 1887 and occupied a similar post at the Military Academy (*Hoogere Krijgsschool*). In this period of time Snouck dedicated himself specifically to the study of the Muslim Law, the *fiq*, whose study had been in a central position in Muslim academic practice from time immemorial, but had been grossly neglected in Europe. Snouck managed to translate existing Arabic texts on practical juridical topics and thereby gained an understanding of the legal system. An important one hundred-and-sixty-page essay he wrote in 1884 criticizes the standard textbook on Islamic Law by Van den Berg through a well-founded and detailed commentary on the content.<sup>18</sup> Most of his alterations were processed into the well-known 'Introduction to the Understanding of Mohammedan Law' (*Handleiding tot de kennis van de Mohammedaansche wet*) by Th. W. Juynboll in 1903.<sup>19</sup>

Snouck Hurgronje presented completely new information concerning Islamic Law, the *adat*, Islamic taxes, the *zakat*, and the belief system of Islam and he pointed out the higher meaning of the teaching of the infallible Muslim community, the *idjima* or consensus that, as Snouck repeatedly mentioned, is the root of roots.<sup>20</sup> In line with this in-depth research on what he called 'the ethics of Islam,' he was preparing something not

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<sup>17</sup> Th. W. J., *Dr. C. Snouck Hurgronje*, Leiden 1901, 46

<sup>18</sup> L.W.C. van den Berg, *De Beginselen van het Mohammedaanse Recht, volgens de Imâms Aboe-Hanîfat en asj- Sjâfe 'î* (1874)

<sup>19</sup> J. Brugman, 'Snouck Hurgronje's study of islamic law', in: W. Otterspeer (red.) *Leiden oriental connections, 1850-1940*, Leiden 1989, 84

<sup>20</sup> G.W.J. Drewes, *Snouck Hurgronje en de Islamwetenschap*, Leiden 1957, 7

many people had done before. He wanted to go to Mecca to see what it was like in real life. He knew he had to be able to speak the language fluently and be aware of all rituals if he wanted to stand a chance of actually being accepted as a Western scholar. His dream was participating in the pilgrimage, the topic of his dissertation, and joining in the related festivities.

## 1.2 Voyage to Arabia

Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje's journey to Mecca opened a new era to him personally and to the whole field of Orientalists. Looking back now one recognizes Snouck's pioneering spirit as he was breaking new ground. The articles he wrote during the previous years on the principles and the content of Islamic Law would prove to be highly important to the evolution of this specific field of study. Thanks to them, he is known as one of the founders of contemporary Islamic studies. Actually leaving his desk, packing his bags and leaving for a place no sensible scientist had gone to before gives all of it an extra dimension. His travels had to be carefully planned and everything had to be thoroughly checked before leaving for this continent of mystery.

On his true motivation one can but guess, even nowadays. Yet on the reasons of his departure he writes a note in his diary in which he clearly states having a political goal next to his scientific curiosity. He wanted to observe Muslim life in all its expressions in a place where the religion originated and of which he already had quite a lot of active knowledge. Furthermore, the government wanted to benefit from what he might come across, in return for which they paid him an unknown amount of money to prepare for his trip. The Dutch government got involved with Muslims in 1796 when it officially took on responsibility in the East Indies.<sup>21</sup> The exploitation of the area was accompanied by the expansion of colonial rule and the necessity of dealing with citizens a majority of whom were Muslim. One of the five religious pillars of Islam concerns the *hajji*, the pilgrimage to Mecca every self-respecting Muslim had to undertake. After trying to limit the constant migration from and towards the Dutch Indies during the first half of the nineteenth century through obligatory travel passes and fines, a decree in 1854 ensured Muslims freedom of religion, without any restrictions.<sup>22</sup> The increase in the number of people who actually went to Mecca in subsequent years caused some distress and even resulted in political questions in the Second Chamber of the Dutch Parliament

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<sup>21</sup> J. Eisenberger, *Indie en de bedevaart naar Mekka*, Leiden 1928, 18

<sup>22</sup> F.G.P. Jaquet, 'Mutiny en hajji-ordonantie: ervaring met 19e eeuwse bronnen', in *Bijdragen tot Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde 2 en 3* (1980) 289

(Tweede Kamer) in 1859, but it was concluded that most of the returning pilgrims did not pose any threat.<sup>23</sup>

S. Keyzer, a professor of Mohammedan Law at the Delft Academy (*Delftsche Academie*), brought up a possible relation between uprisings in Muslim areas such as the Indies and Mecca in his book ‘The Pilgrimage of Locals to Mecca’ (*De bedevaart der inlanders naar Mekka*) in 1871, since every pilgrim was fanatical to a certain degree while Islam was not “a religion of peace.”<sup>24</sup> In 1872, the Dutch government recognized the importance of the city of Jeddah as the gateway to Mecca for Indonesian Muslim pilgrims, and established a Dutch legation there. Although the official purpose of the consulate was to facilitate the flow of pilgrims from the Dutch Indies and protect them from dangers like slavery or victimization at the hands of counterfeit guides, another less official task was to observe and document the social and political climate in these locations, which amounted to inspection of suspicious persons.<sup>25</sup>

This was not enough according to the Consul General, J.A. Kruyt (1878-1885) of the Dutch consulate in Jeddah, and he therefore asked the minister of Foreign Affairs, Sprenger van Eijk, if someone with thorough knowledge of Islam could research the alleged pan-Islamic influence from Mecca on the pilgrims from the Dutch Indies.<sup>26</sup> After further correspondence they agreed to assign Snouck Hurgronje this political task and allow him to teach Arabic and Islamic culture to Dutch diplomats at the same time. Snouck’s travel to Jeddah was indirectly financed, through the Royal Institute for Linguistics and Anthropology (*Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land-, en Volkenkunde*), by the Dutch government.<sup>27</sup> Koningsveld, one of Snouck’s later critics, poses an interesting question – namely whether Snouck’s journey to Mecca in fact had underlying motives, namely writing a colonial political history. Yet he concludes that Mecca as a

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<sup>23</sup> J.H.E. Mooren, ‘Snouck Hurgronje en de bedevaart naar Mekka’, in: C. Fasseur, *Imperialisme en de ethische politiek*, State University of Leiden, 4

<sup>24</sup> G.S. van Krieken, *Snouck Hurgronje en het panislamisme*, Leiden 1985, 14

<sup>25</sup> J. Schmidt, *Through the legislation window 1876-1926. Four essays on Dutch, Dutch-Indian and Ottoman history*, Istanbul 1992, 69

<sup>26</sup> Letter from consul-general J.A. Kruyt to the minister of Foreign Affairs 7<sup>th</sup> May 1884 from Jeddah (ARA, dossier A74, box 148, *Politieke toestanden in de Hedjaz*)

<sup>27</sup> Letter from minister of Foreign Affairs to minister of Colonial Affairs 29<sup>th</sup> May 1884, Letter from the minister of Colonial Affairs to the minister of Foreign Affairs 28<sup>th</sup> June 1884 and Letter from the minister of Foreign Affairs to the consul-general 3<sup>rd</sup> July 1884 (ARA, dossier A74, box 148, *Politieke toestanden in de Hedjaz*)

political goal was not found in any official records and therefore didn't become a part of it. He fails to put this occurrence in a larger context, but it did become part of colonial history since it was the go-ahead for Snouck's connection with the government that was to lead to his presence in the Dutch Indies. Already in 1884 he seemed to be eagerly interested in the connection between the Netherlands, her overseas colonies, and the role Islam played there.<sup>28</sup> Snouck here discovered a method of making his dream come true, combining scientific research with a diplomatic underpinning.

One of the most intriguing issues concerning Snouck's voyage to Mecca may be whether he did or did not officially convert to Islam, especially if one wants to pass moral judgement on his imperialistic combination of science and politics. Most important to the development of his career was the fact that Muslims believed he converted, and even if he might not have done so, his knowledge of Islam was substantial enough for him to pass for a Muslim and converse on an academic level (quite essential for an anthropologist in a foreign culture). Snouck did not believe Islam to be a religion in the same sense as Christianity, for instance, because its belief system was less detailed and static; yet at the same time it covered a greater part of the life of its believers. Becoming a Muslim did not necessarily mean publicly making a confession of faith, but rather feeling the sincerity and acting on it by following the natural daily routine. Islam is a different kind of belief system, and the question of whether he did or did not become a Muslim is therefore too one-dimensional, assuming the Western idea of 'belief' and especially of 'church,' whereas the mosque played a much larger role in people's lives in its social function as meeting point and cultural centre. Christiaan was certainly deeply interested in this unknown world of ethics and stimulated by its curious entanglement with daily life – at times he was even euphoric, being so close to reaching his scientific goals and therefore emotional in his statements. But how important is it to know if he truly became a Muslim?

Historians took an interest in this mystery surrounding Snouck during the early nineteen eighties, a hundred years after his famous trip to Mecca. Schröder is the only one who believes that Snouck completely and honestly became a Muslim, yet he is not

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<sup>28</sup> Letter from consul-general J.A. Kruyt to the minister of Foreign Affairs 13<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1884 from Jeddah (ARA, dossier A74, box 148, *Politieke toestanden in de Hedjaz*)

able to make a strong case since he does not put forward unquestionable evidence.<sup>29</sup> Graf and Gobée both felt that deception by a personal friend like Snouck was completely out of the question in regard to his honest personality and that his deep respect for Islam would keep him from such ‘*haram*’ practices. Koningsveld, on the other hand, quotes Snouck himself from an article on the 27<sup>th</sup> of February in 1915 when he elaborates on his “appearance as a Muslim.”<sup>30</sup> His main argument is that joining is not the same as converting because the religious aspect one is expected to feel is lacking (he actually did a philological background check on the word to give his idea scientific basis). His research thus showed him that Snouck may have joined Islam, but never converted as such.<sup>31</sup> The minister of Foreign Affairs himself remembered Snouck Hurgronje in the European Arabic dialogue as an Islamic pilgrim, but one can interpret those words in many ways.<sup>32</sup>

After half a year in Jeddah, Snouck’s trip seemed to be able to proceed thanks to friendships with Muslims he had made during his time there. He became a guest at the consulate, where he would invite Muslim scholars as his guests. Apparently they had mentioned more than once that they had the distinct feeling “that thou art one of us,” which paved the way for Snouck to visit Mecca. Snouck tried to distance himself from the official political surroundings, perhaps out of a concern that they would diminish his chances of being accepted by the Muslim scholarly community. When he started looking for another place to stay, he cut himself off from the blossoming European enclave that existed in the city. This meant that he could participate in peace in the ritual routine Islam expects its believers to adhere to or have a better chance of assimilating with the local community, or both. Except for the occasional prayer, he portrayed no behaviour that could unmistakably prove he was Muslim, such as explicitly not drinking alcohol.<sup>33</sup>

In his diary he elaborates on one of “the great events in my life,” when he received a visit from a Muslim judge on the evening of the 22<sup>nd</sup> of February 1885 accompanied by two appointed witnesses – a necessary proceeding according to Muslim

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<sup>29</sup> F. Schröder, in *NRC Handelsblad*, 10.03.1984

<sup>30</sup> van Koningsveld, *Snouck Hurgronje en de Islam*, 24

<sup>31</sup> van Koningsveld, *Snouck Hurgronje en de Islam*, 189

<sup>32</sup> Sprenger van Eijck, in *NRC Handelsblad*, 23.10.1985

<sup>33</sup> F. Lanzing, *Gerucht op de wind: Van Heutsz, Colijn, Snouck Hurgronje & de kleine vrouw Siti: trawanten*, (z.p. 2002) 78

rule. Christiaan performed the septuple salutation circling the Ka'äba, after which he accepted the invitation to join the pilgrimage. It made him feel like he stood at “the beginning of a mediaeval dream,” knowing he was one step closer to his goal. Apparently a Muslim he had befriended remarked that the invitation was to be expected, “because you have made your conversion public and even scholars of Mecca confirm the authenticity of your conversion to Islam.”<sup>34</sup>

When Snouck Hurgronje arrived in Mecca in 1885 he was not the first non-Muslim who succeeded in penetrating this consecrated area. Before him there had been others who managed this risky enterprise: R.F. Burton, Von Maltzan and especially J.L. Burckhardt, who spent a number of months in Mecca in 1814. His description of the city is praised and even quite often used by Snouck Hurgronje himself. What made Snouck rise above his predecessors, however, was his distinct scholarship, his scientific knowledge of the Law and other sacred issues of Islam, and particularly the fact that he was known to Muslims to be an ulema, a Biblical scholar commanding a great deal of respect for knowledge of religious issues.<sup>35</sup> His diary tells of the persons with whom Snouck was in contact – fairly important Indonesian and Arabic scholars and *hajjis*.<sup>36</sup> This made it possible for him to gather ‘inside’ information and pass professional judgment on this society, which none of the others before him were qualified to do.

His most considerable source of information became Raden Aboe Bakar Djajadingrat, a theological student from West Java and a regular Muslim citizen who would be Snouck’s personal guide in the holy city of Mecca and who helped him put his observations into words. On meeting him Snouck wrote: “One of the easiest personalities to deal with of all those with whom I came in contact. With the prospect of moral support for obtaining a government position, he is inclined to gather all sorts of data, to supply information and to extend help. (...) He will be without a doubt of the greatest use to me.”<sup>37</sup> Raden Aboe Bakar saw in Christiaan a ‘brother in God’ as he states more than once in his letters, and he even asked him, soon after they had met, ‘if his feet didn’t

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<sup>34</sup> van Koningsveld, *Snouck Hurgronje en de Islam*, 63

<sup>35</sup> *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant*, 27 november 1885

<sup>36</sup> Chr. Snouck Hurgronje’s diary from Jeddah, Cod. Or. 7112, passim (Leidse University Library, Eastern Handwriting department)

<sup>37</sup> Cod. Or. 7112, 10-11

stagger.’<sup>38</sup> He could not believe that Snouck’s faith in Christendom was still as strong after directly experiencing the blessing of the pure religion of Islam. There were many more letters from various scholars to the Muslim theologian living in Jeddah, recognizing Snouck as a “brother in God.”<sup>39</sup>

On his own alleged conversion, Snouck himself says that “No conversion is made more easily than that to Islam; one becomes a member without proof of profundity, knowledge of law or loyalty in practice. There are only two words...” There is actually one single sentence that contains the two issues one has to declare faith in: “I testify that there is no God other than Allah and that Mohammed is Allah’s representative.”<sup>40</sup> “The enunciation of the ‘two words’ as confession of faith (...) makes the individual part of the Mohammedan community; none of its members has the right to test the sincerity of this testimony.”<sup>41</sup> The latter statement is quite eloquent of Snouck’s position, as it safeguards his security and reputation. Finally, the pseudonym people in Jeddah knew him by was Abd-al-Ghaffar, which translates as ‘servant from him who is forgiving.’<sup>42</sup> This might seem to be an insignificant detail, but it could also appear to evidence an ambiguous sense of irony toward those who might eventually test his genuineness.

During his stay in the Dutch Indies, years later, he more or less confessed he was counterfeiting the authenticity of his being a Muslim when he stated that he was performing “as if he were their equal.” In the article he said that neither the political aspect of his trip nor the conversion issue should be surrounded with any doubt. “Truth is the most simple (...) through more accurate knowledge of any form of worship (...) and guarding against harmful excesses.”<sup>43</sup> He succeeded in his goals by fully adjusting, by complete mastery of the language, by knowledge of law and by performing daily duties as if he were a faithful believer. Furthermore he listened to high-level discussions and had remarkable powers of observation. He found that the real-life routine of the law appeared to deviate from the Islamic ideal, and was intrigued by this.

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<sup>38</sup> van Koningsveld, *Snouck Hurgronje en de Islam*, 34

<sup>39</sup> van Koningsveld, *Snouck Hurgronje en de Islam*, 88

<sup>40</sup> www.islam-jihad.com, read on 23.05.2004

<sup>41</sup> van Koningsveld, *Snouck Hurgronje en de Islam*, 193

<sup>42</sup> F. Lanzing, ‘Snouck Hurgronje, schrijver’, in *Indische Letteren: documentatieblad van de Werkgroep Nederlands-Indische letterkunde*, vol.16, nr.4 (dec. 2001) 155

<sup>43</sup> ‘Conversations on Atjeh’, in *Locomotief*, 29 April 1889

### 1.3 Academic breakthrough

Snouck's 'medieval dream' only lasted a couple of months because of an unfortunate media affair as a result of international jealousy over the possession of the famous Taima stone, right before the beginning of the pilgrimage. His forced return to the Netherlands left Snouck with the disappointment of his desire to actually participate in the pilgrimage he had written numerous pages about remaining unfulfilled. His residence in the cosmopolitan centre of Islamic religion did not remain infertile, though, since it provided him with the first-hand information he needed to write the book that would give him international recognition. Furthermore, it would make him an exceptional authority on Muslim society which made him an interesting figure in the eyes of the Ministry of Colonial Affairs, since the uprisings in the overseas territories seemed to have a connection with misunderstanding of the religion.

In the winter of 1883 two scientists, the German Julius Euting and the Frenchman Charles Huber, were guests of Emir Ibn Rasjid, with whom they left a part of their luggage when they moved on.<sup>44</sup> When Huber was assassinated shortly thereafter, the Vice-Consul of the French embassy, Lostalot, was appointed to clear up the case. This responsibility included filing an official complaint with the government and reclaiming the luggage so that it could be shipped back to family in France. Because Lostalot spoke no Turkish or Arabic he asked Snouck to help him translating all of the letters. His direct involvement ended here, but Lostalot was an eager person who made up an untrue story to ensure his five minutes of fame, even if it was at the cost of Snouck Hurgronje's reputation. An item that had been in Huber's possession was a special encrypted stone of great archaeological value, called the Taima Stone.<sup>45</sup> Lostalot accused Snouck of violently pursuing this particular piece (for the Germans) and portrayed himself as a hero by successfully rescuing Huber's patrimony. But Snouck never saw the stone. The printed version of this imaginary event, including the exposure of Snouck's disguise, appeared in the French newspaper *Le Temps* on the 5<sup>th</sup> of July 1885.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> [http://answering-islam.org/Books/Jeffery/mecca\\_travel.htm](http://answering-islam.org/Books/Jeffery/mecca_travel.htm), read on 17.06.2004

<sup>45</sup> A. Pesce, *Makkah a hundred years ago, or, C. Snouck Hurgronje's remarkable albums*, London 1986, 10

<sup>46</sup> *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant*, 26 and 27 November 1885

When the story reached the intellectual elite of Mecca a couple of days later, they felt their trust had been betrayed, and Snouck was politely asked to leave the city, never to return. Sincerity and honesty are invaluable in Muslim society, and thievery does not fit an ulema. After five and a half months of residence, being asked to leave just before the Mecca festivities were to start must have been a horrific experience for the scientist whose dream it was to attend this event. Snouck did immediately write a heated letter, afraid he would not be able to finish his pilgrimage, but the harm had already been done and he was evicted from the country the next day. The Turks swiftly began an investigation that showed Snouck was indeed innocent of any criminal activity, but it was already too late. He arrived in Holland the day the Mecca celebration began. On this bizarre concurrence of circumstances, Snouck was to say: “This is the irony of Allah’s predestined faith.”<sup>47</sup>

In an article called “My Voyage to Arabia” that appeared in the *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* and the *Munchener Allgem. Zeitung* on the 16<sup>th</sup> of November in 1885, Snouck questioned the behaviour of the French Vice-Consul and set down his version of the ill-timed episode. This was the only piece he ever wrote on his personal experiences in Arabia, since Snouck was disgusted by the popularity of the adventurous travel story and afraid his expeditions might be misinterpreted as a result. He even made a sarcastic remark to the effect that he should have called his article “Snoekjes Mad Adventures in Arabia!” Even the lectures he gave in Berlin concerning his trip were advertised simply as ‘Über *eine* reise’ in Arabia.<sup>48</sup>

Around 1887 he received an offer to take the place of the deceased professor Dr. A.W.T. Juynboll instead of resuming teaching Islamic studies to future East Indies public servants, but he rejected taking up responsibility for the whole faculty and instead accepted the post of lector at the State University of Leiden.<sup>49</sup> In the meantime he was working on the book that would give him an international reputation. Nothing in his notes points to a social-anthropological study when he was in Mecca; they seem random and on various topics. It must have been after he returned that the idea of a scientific book on Mecca evolved, and notes that were taken by Raden Aboe Bakar, his personal guide in

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<sup>47</sup> A.J.P. Moereels, *Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje*, Amsterdam 1912, 16

<sup>48</sup> Drewes, *Snouck Hurgronje en de Islamwetenschap*, 9

<sup>49</sup> <http://www.dbnl.nl/auteurs/auteur.php3?id=snou004>, read on 23.06.2004

the Arabic society, were sent for. An enormous amount of material is not from the hand of Snouck himself, but although non-European informants were not usually made public by name and seen simply as instruments of research, Snouck did mention the names of some of them.<sup>50</sup>

In 1889 his book *Mecca* was published in German, a common language in the academic circuit, and even though the subject was still *terra incognita* it is significant to mention how quickly it was translated. The book consists of two parts and explains what Snouck's ideal of scientific knowledge of Islam was: complete control of the written sources, combined with encompassing knowledge existing realities. In the first part he gives an overview of the history of the City of Mohammed until 1887. Snouck recognizes something important in the city's connection to the religion itself.<sup>51</sup> The supposed advantage Allah gave its believers in comparison to other religions was the promise of absolute security within city boundaries. Even though Mohammed himself once violated this promise by conquering Mecca, he called this the religion's great strength.<sup>52</sup> In the second part of the work Snouck writes on regular family life and immediately attacks Europe's antislavery politics by stressing how well the slaves in Arabic countries were treated and even welcomed as part of the family. He underlines the fact that Westerners' first impressions of the East are most often wrong, yet Snouck does see slavery as one of humanity's great mistakes, even though its abolition has caused quite a lot of grief too.<sup>53</sup>

He goes into great depth about daily life, explaining the marital traditions of the population of Mecca, educational possibilities and children's games. He enlarges specifically on the *Djawah*, which is the annual flow of pilgrims who stay on a quarantine island before being allowed to enter the sacred city of Mecca. A significant number of Dutch Indies inhabitants partook in such group journeys, and Snouck belittlingly calls them "our brown brothers." If a *Djawah* stays in Mecca a longer time, he believes its participants become of greater importance to the Indies. Every anti-European movement and every ideal for the future that will spring up there, he felt, will do so with an Islamic undertone. "The person in question is not just a sheep, just an individual, but is subsumed

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<sup>50</sup> van Koningsveld, *Snouck Hurgronje en de Islam*, 119

<sup>51</sup> Snouck Hurgronje, *Mecca*, 35

<sup>52</sup> Moereels, *Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje*, 18

<sup>53</sup> Snouck Hurgronje, *Mecca*, 87

into to a mystic brotherhood which is the unity of Islam.”<sup>54</sup> Herein lies the danger of groups, which tend to be much more powerful than individuals. Snouck’s advice on the matter of the Dutch Indies is: Know what is happening in Mecca, inspect suspicious persons and know what pilgrims do when they return. “Islam, the grand International with the green banner, is a power which a colonial power like ours should study seriously and treat with great wisdom.”<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Moereels, *Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje*, 24

<sup>55</sup> Drewes, *Snouck Hurgronje en de Islamwetenschap*, 12

## 1.4 Dutch Indies

In Mecca Snouck met Indonesians from all walks of life and more than once exchanged ideas with them on the roots of the upheaval in the Dutch Indies. These conversations strengthened his opinion on the importance of knowledge of Islam, since the lack of it caused much confusion. Maintaining the colonial link with the Dutch Indies made the Netherlands clearly responsible for their well-being, according to Snouck. “On no nation does the duty of serious study of Mohammedanism rest more heavily than on ours.”<sup>56</sup>

The grand tour he proposed to the Minister of Colonial Affairs A.P.C. van Karnebeek got approved and had the Aceh’s as destination. Snouck was able to convince the Minister of the purpose it would serve and its necessity. It comprised basically the same ingredients as his Mecca voyage. According to secret notes, the Dutch government was fully aware of the vital importance of Snouck’s ‘Islamic method’ for his mission to be successful. His pending voyage to Batavia was not to be surrounded with any mystery, but Snouck would definitely not benefit either from an official attitude towards the local inhabitants. “Snouck will be more welcome to a school for [Islamic] priests when he personally prepares the visit than when the Board does so.”<sup>57</sup> This bold expedition was cancelled, but Snouck was given a politically related assignment anyway.

In 1889 he went to Java, that much is certain, although it is not completely clear what his goal was. Some sources say “Initially to investigate the role of Islam in the recent insurrection in Bantam, and in the future to eliminate the roots of discontent”<sup>58</sup>. Others say his career in the Dutch Indies started with the task of reporting on the supervision of Muslim religious education and advising on enhancing the performance of so-called priest councils.<sup>59</sup> During the two years he travelled in West and some parts of Middle Java, he wrote hundreds of pages with observations that remain an inexhaustible source of first-hand information that have as yet awakened too little interest. Aside from this, he regularly sent anonymous essays to a daily newspaper in the Dutch Indies called *de Locomotief*, mainly discussing the Javanese way of living, and to the Dutch daily the

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<sup>56</sup> Chr. Snouck Hurgronje. In *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant*, 16 November 1885

<sup>57</sup> van Koningsveld, *Snouck Hurgronje en de Islam*, 155

<sup>58</sup> Wertheim, *Snouck Hurgronje and the Atjeh War*, Brochure, 322

<sup>59</sup> <http://www.inghist.nl/Onderzoek/Projecten/BWN/lemmata/bwn2/snouckc>, read on 07.03.2004

*Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* under the pseudonym Toekoe Mansoer or Toekoe Si Gam.

Snouck finally got the chance to go to the Aches in 1891 thanks to a government-assigned exploration into religious and political circumstances. After seven months he returned to Java, but could not shake the unexplainable deep bond he shared with the Aches. The results were set down in the *Report on Religious and Political Affairs in Aches*, which sums up all the mistakes the Dutch had made where mutual understanding was concerned, and it gives plenty of advice. Soon Snouck Hurgronje had officially become the advisor to the Dutch Indies government. He transferred to the Indies permanently as ‘Advisor for Eastern languages and Mohammedan Law.’ He lived amidst the local community, quite apart from existing European society, just as he had done in Mecca. He again became involved in the administrative circuit concerning law and order and garnered a great deal of respect because of it. Of Doto Seunot (“doctor Snouck”) or Abeudo Gapha (from Abd al-Ghaffar), a local wrote: “Somebody who wanted a pleasant trial would turn to him. A case brought to his attention reached decision without long deliberation and discussion because he was extremely erudite! From East to West he was praised (...) everybody knew who Abeudo Gapha was. From Acheh to Batavia, all knew the great scholar.”<sup>60</sup>

In his study Snouck almost enfeebles the image of the local inhabitants being savages since his goal was ‘to understand their life in its primary manifestations.’ According to his friends he possessed an admirably open mind, but one can also find some stereotypes in his work. Using the terms “cheap” and “dabblers for fighting and robbing” apparently was not considered harmful generalizing in those days. Another personal favourite was “their proverbial ignorance” or remarks on their “naïve conceitedness and racial pride.”<sup>61</sup>

His research convinced him more and more that the general knowledge of the religious life of the local Ache population needed improvement, especially since it was curiously intertwined with political structures. In his book *The Acheh's* he describes the political structures and tracks how they evolved through time. The highest authority was

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<sup>60</sup> H.T. Damsté, ‘Mémoires van een Atjehsen balling’, in *Letterkunde van de Indische Archipel*, Brussel 1947, 253

<sup>61</sup> Chr. Snouck Hurgronje, *the Aches, part I*, Leiden 1889, 50, 74, 173

the Sultan, whose power was severely limited and in reality did not go beyond some kampongs outside of the palace. Snouck sarcastically called him ‘king of the harbour’ and other literature points out that the Sultans indeed were mainly trade-oriented, since this is where their power and fortune came from.<sup>62</sup> An ongoing communication with the local citizens and good inland governance would be necessary to create a peaceful population, but one could not communicate with everyone. Snouck advised against negotiating with unreliable individuals or groups, or paying any kind of serious attention to the Sultan's party. The ones who actually held power were the *oeleebalangs* (or ulema) who each had a jurisdiction they governed at will. They were organized into confederations, called *sagri*, with the so-called *panglima sagri* in top functions.

Snouck's greatest accomplishment was describing the political structure of Ache not as an entity with fixed ranks, but as a struggle for power in which every competitor was continually busy enforcing or defending his position. This kind of dynamic power play was thought to be Western and completely opposed to the immobility the majority of Europeans believed to be characteristic of the East. Instead of assuming everything was exactly as it had always been and thus focussing primarily on the history of the country, Snouck Hurgronje proved himself to be an objective observer able to detect tension and shifting balances of power. He called the ulema ‘fanatical’ political adventurers who did not belong to the natural political order as it would exist in times of peace. In times of peace they would only be engaged with religious issues.<sup>63</sup> He found that in Islam power did not depend on someone's descent or position, but on his personal qualities, and these could change – especially in times of war. His advice, therefore, was to support the natural leaders of the people, but to deny the biblical scholars any form of political power in an attempt to separate religious and secular affairs.

After this important practical partitioning, the government had to win the population over by improving education, improving the administrative system through the possibility of equal opportunities, controlling internal governmental correspondence and finding a better tone towards the citizens. These last rules in particular met with a lot of resistance internally, but Snouck persisted that these measurements were necessary for

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<sup>62</sup> Huub de Jonge, *Contradictory and against the grain. Snouck Hurgronje on the Hadramis in the Dutch East Indies (1889-1936)*, 224

<sup>63</sup> A.A. Trouwborst, *De Atjehers van Snouck Hurgronje*, Stichting van Vrienden van Bronsbeek, 21

a feeling of self-confidence that had to return to the people. “The Arabs were victims of countless extortions and useless bantering” and this contempt had made it almost impossible to find decent and reliable persons for formal leadership positions in the Muslim communities.<sup>64</sup> He instead recommended “a polite and dignified manner” of associating, but at the same time believed that Ache’s “deeply rooted contempt for Kefirs (disbelievers), the treacherous and utterly unreliable character of its population, cannot be won for a civilized intercourse, nay, cannot be made harmless except through complete submission”.<sup>65</sup>

Snouck recognized the people of the majority of the Indies as being purely Mohammedan, and even though he was intrigued by this religion and might even have been a Muslim, he still believed the Dutch to be in danger of fanatical outbursts of religious hatred. He made dozens of notes on newly arrived immigrants because their presumed influence on the process of Islamization in particular caused continuous anxiety. Although Snouck shared the opinion of the colonial government on the harmful influence of the Arabs, he was not an advocate of the existing restrictions on freedom. Foreign Orientals could enter the country without any problems, but were not able to move freely within the country. These measures were meant to protect the indigenous population against undesirable economic, political, and religious influences from outsiders. According to Snouck these regulations were unjust and dishonest. The evil, so to speak, had to be stopped at the border.<sup>66</sup> He pleaded more than once for improvement of these people's situation. He favoured a gradual relaxation, with the idea that in the long run the Arabs had to be assimilated into the society. Only in that way negative political and religious influences could be neutralized.

In the beginning, the Dutch government did not take any of Snouck’s advice seriously, or even treat him personally with the dignity he felt he deserved. “From the local Dutch government I did not receive the slightest cooperation,” Snouck writes in his Administrative Notes, and he portrays how “far from pleasant his first stay in Ache was.”<sup>67</sup> But when the situation worsened and the alleged colonial accomplice Teukoe

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<sup>64</sup> E. Gobeé and C. Adriaanse, *Ambtelijke Adviezen van C. Snouck Hurgronje*, ‘sGravenhage 1957-65, 1566

<sup>65</sup> Wertheim, *Snouck Hurgronje and the Atjeh War*, Brochure, 325

<sup>66</sup> de Jonge, *Contradictory and against the grain*, 224

<sup>67</sup> Chr. Snouck Hrugronje, *Ambtelijke Adviezen I*, 322-324

Oemar deserted, causing much confusion, political change seemed necessary. At this point, in 1898, Snouck got the chance to execute his plans and interfere directly with colonial policy. Snouck didn't agree completely with the subjection of Ache personally, but theoretically supported the decision. He preferred to work together with Colonel van Heutsz, whom he expected to apply the new policies most efficiently.<sup>68</sup> The “red rooster method” meant taking severe actions such as burning down villages in order to hunt down rebel leaders, and led to diverse military follow-up expeditions. This revolution in war strategy is called “*coup de theatre*,” meaning restlessly pursuing the enemy.<sup>69</sup> On more than one occasion Snouck would join these kinds of missions, sometimes even acquiring decisive information on the spot. The pacification they were striving for could not be reached without the necessary administrative assistance, and Snouck officially became advisor on Indigenous and Arabic Affairs for the next three years. Some praised his active statesmanship, saying he was born a great leader, a great general; yet he valued preparation far more than commanding a battle.<sup>70</sup>

Snouck's position in the Indies was consolidated by an official Islamic marriage to a Sudanese woman. There were severe objections to “having a native woman marry a European” in some social circles in 1900, demonstrating a typical attitude of superiority: “There is an immeasurable distance between the European and the native woman. This goes beyond being a racial difference. Mixture is a fatality!”<sup>71</sup> According to a letter he wrote to his friend Bavinck, his marriage took place on the 16<sup>th</sup> of July, 1890. It gave him credibility with Muslims, especially since Islamic women are not allowed to marry non-Muslims. Snouck could easily have kept up appearances with the European community through concubinage, but it seemed more important to be incorporated into the Muslim community.

The woman gave birth to four children and died in 1895 after a miscarriage. Snouck left his children behind when moving to Holland permanently several years later. His family was not even allowed to use his name out loud, just in case it would bring

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<sup>68</sup> de Bruijn and Harinck, *Een Leidse vriendschap*, 156

<sup>69</sup> P. van 't Veer, *De Atjehoorlog*, Amsterdam 1969, 273

<sup>70</sup> H.M. de Koningin, *Prof. Snouck Hurgronje's passing*, 25

<sup>71</sup> van Koningsveld, *Snouck Hurgronje en de Islam*, 177

about gossip, and his children were not allowed to come to Holland.<sup>72</sup> This particular detail is quite significant, considering how Snouck keeps highlighting the importance of education in the ‘association’ of the two races. He knew schools were much better in the Netherlands, but chose to ban his own children from the opportunity to enjoy such a high level of education. He even went so far as to pretend his children didn’t exist, as one can read in a letter to Nöldeke on 10 February 1893 from Batavia: “From my teachers in Leiden only few have remained, and from my best friends many have passed in the last four years. Half of my hairs are already grey, and I feel myself as someone who has just been taken by work. I do believe, that one lives physically faster than in the North, but while I have no children to cheer up my old days, I by no means hope to become an old man.”<sup>73</sup>

So far his private life remained invisible to the media, but this changed when he married again eight years later, this time to the daughter of a biblical scholar (also the judge of Bandung). Press releases announcing the wedding are correct, but the information from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was not. The new bride was not only noble of birth; she was also just thirteen years old. In the early days there was no evidence of this event, even though the press speculated at will in abundance. But oral sources confirm Snouck’s marriage in Tjiamis. The only son from this marriage, Joesoef, was willing to answer some of the questions Koningsveld prepared.<sup>74</sup> He says he tries not to pass judgment, although he does think it possible that Snouck married for the purpose of study. Through his marriage he inevitably became an insider in the East Indian culture, which sheds new light on his cultural-political pleas for unity in the Dutch Indies, and especially for what he calls ‘political association.’

In 1906 Snouck returned to the Netherlands to accept a professorship in Leiden, while he would remain Advisor to the Ministry of Colonial Affairs until 1933. In 1910 he married a Dutch woman called Ida Maria Oort and secretly led this polygamous life until he died in 1936. In the Islamic world this was widely accepted, but whether it was morally justified is another question. Ida became the proud mother of a daughter, the only

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<sup>72</sup> van Koningsveld, *Snouck Hurgronje en de Islam*, 135

<sup>73</sup> Chr. Snouck Hurgronje, *Scholarship and friendship in early Islamwissenschaft. The letters of C. Snouck Hurgronje to I. Goldziher*. Published by P. Sj. Van Koningsveld, Leiden 1985, 168

<sup>74</sup> van Koningsveld, *Snouck Hurgronje en de Islam*, 182

child that was acknowledged. On the academic level, he founded the ‘Dutch Indies Management Academy’ (*Nederlands-Indische Management Academie*), gave lectures on Holland and Islam and continued writing on his vision of how Western education and association, if genuinely desired from both sides, would automatically lead to the dismissal of the dualistic governmental structure.<sup>75</sup> Later in his life he reveals he would have preferred never to have left the Dutch Indies.

He consequently persisted that the Dutch government in the overseas territory had to convince the population of the benefits of their presence not only by force, but also by creating circumstances through which they could achieve wealth. This was only possible by developing a generation that was diverse as well as flexible through intellectual guidance, moral assistance and physical health.<sup>76</sup> Dr. Snouck Hurgronje keeps stressing the meaning that Islam had in reality in the life of the locals. He felt a certain respect for Islam, even though the religion was seen by most Dutch to be the most horrid form of paganism.<sup>77</sup> He emphasises that there is a difference between the theory and the practice of the religion, and this is one of his most revolutionary contributions to the discovery of Islam in the West. In reality, he maintains, written doctrine is not the same as the practical teachings and the law of Islam all over the world, but depends on ethnic variation and the political and social development of the different peoples who profess Islam. The doctrine of Islam is universal; that of life displays a local character, and might therefore be controllable.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Moereels, *Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje*, 42

<sup>76</sup> Moereels, *Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje*, 29

<sup>77</sup> van ‘t Veer, *De Atjehoorlog*, 191

<sup>78</sup> W.J., *Dr. C. Snouck Hurgronje*, 79

## CHAPTER TWO: SNOUCK'S VIEW ON THE ISLAM

### 2.1 The system of Islam

Snouck believed correct information to be very important for passing any kind of judgement. He repeatedly conversed about Islam and its misapprehension, with people from different continents. His research was consequently always based upon an abundant amount of literature, both European and Arabic. Determined to gather all data necessary for a comprehensive view, he mastered the basics of Islam within a few years. Snouck Hurgronje was able to present completely new information concerning Islamic Law, taxes and the belief system of Islam. He pointed out the *idjima*, the consensus that believed the teachings of the Muslim community infallible. Believing history essential in the attempt to shape an image, he often doubted whether historians can make solid predictions, however. This does not restrain him from having an opinion on what might happen between Islam and the West, given their dissimilarities.

Like Christianity, the religion of Mohammed had to pass through different stages of development before it adjusted to the strongly differing needs of its many adherents of different race and nationality. The growth of Mohammed's teachings into a full-grown system of Islam, including daily routines and Muslim Law, took approximately three centuries.<sup>79</sup> When Mohammed began sharing his prophesies with the world he believed God's revelations could differ in form (for example in language), but in essence they could not deviate from one other since there was only one God. But in the medina he came across a number of Jews who made him realize he had made an ideological mistake. Not only did Jews and Christians have different opinions on many aspects of his teachings, in addition they would not even consider acknowledging this new Islam as the only true religion. They could not accept Mohammed's holy mission mainly because of how they interpreted the content of their Holy Books. Mohammed found the simplest explanation for his unexpected discovery of this disappointing fact – namely that Jews

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<sup>79</sup> Chr. Snouck Hurgronje, *De islam en het Rassenprobleem, een Rede*, Leiden 1922, 8

and Christians must have strayed from the true path, twisted their revelations, and altered their Holy Scriptures.<sup>80</sup>

Of course one can see how this determination meant that Christendom and Jewry could no longer be the criterion for Islam, although they were all based on the same Scriptures, and Mohammed kept saying that he was not proclaiming a new religion.<sup>81</sup> After his numerous encounters with different believers around the holy city of Mecca, it struck Mohammed that he had to follow his own path, relying on his own faith. Snouck found it significant that many elements in the religion are from foreign origin gathered under the label of Islam, but that there was no denial of their descent. He submits that one cannot really speak of the teachings of Mohammed, only of his religion.<sup>82</sup> The Prophet did build himself a religious *Weltanschauung*, but he accomplished this with an enormous lack of system. Here we return to the question of whether one interprets 'teaching' in the sense of a coherent and well-thought-out set of convictions. Snouck conversed endlessly with his friends on this specific topic. Was Mohammed's intention 'ethical' reform, creating a better life in the future? Or did he mean to ignite a reformation of the religious customs and traditions known in those days, a dogmatic reformation?<sup>83</sup> Snouck liked to believe Mohammed's goals were aimed purely at a better future by staying true to himself and the metaphysical messages he claimed to receive.

Ultimately the Koran was meant to be the most perfect expression of Allah's word and to replace all previous revelations.<sup>84</sup> This meant making the Arab edition of the Holy Scripture as universal and absolute. When one is interested in Mohammed's personal beliefs, one should consult the Koran, which appears to contain his authentic speeches. Human artefact or not, it is almost the only source of information. Snouck's attitude towards Scriptures was sceptical, without wanting to make scepticism or agnosticism into a system of itself. The use of religious Scriptures as a reliable source, according to Snouck, was accompanied by tremendous difficulties that resulted in cautious historical critique. Ignoring those obstacles was impossible because "the objective tone of revelations, spoken by human mouths, written down by human hands,

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<sup>80</sup> Chr. Snouck Hurgronje, *Islam*, Rechtshogeschool Batavia 1941, 8

<sup>81</sup> W.J., *Dr. C. Snouck Hurgronje*, 72

<sup>82</sup> Chr. Snouck Hurgronje, 'De Islam', in : *De Gids*, Leiden 1886, II , 259

<sup>83</sup> de Bruijn and Harinck, *Een Leidse vriendschap*, 128

<sup>84</sup> Snouck Hurgronje, *De islam en het Rassenprobleem*, 10

canonised by human speech, in the end became subjective again, not to mention the diversity of opinion for which there is still room. Thus, the value of an infallible standard, quantitatively and qualitatively determined by subjects, remains as relative as any other irrefutable conviction.”<sup>85</sup> Snouck kept this in mind when deducing ‘facts’ about Mohammed’s views.

In accordance with older revelations, Mohammed taught that humankind descended from one couple, which principally meant equality among all human beings within the diversity of qualities that characterized individuals or groups. In an attempt to end the tribal wars that were dividing the Arabs once and for all, Mohammed said: *“People! We have created you from one man and one woman and made you in groups and tribes so that you would acknowledge each other; the most noble of you in Allah’s estimation is the most pious; Allah is omniscient, all-knowing.”*<sup>86</sup> But equality did not have the meaning it has now. Mohammed divided humanity in three categories, starting with the civilized – who of course are the Muslims. In the second place came the half-civilized people, who believed in a Holy Scripture, but who because they rejected the absolute truth embodied in Mohammed’s message walked in darkness. The civilized men could try to guide them towards the highest level of faith through moral means and were obligated to do so. And last but not least, there were the uncivilized or savages who, if necessary, had to be persuaded by violence to be incorporated into Islamic culture, or else were to be eliminated. This division was discussed by Snouck in one of his books on Islam, and the resemblance with the segmentation by superiority taught by the Christian ‘Modern theologians’ like A. Kuenen, C.P. Tielen and L.W.E. Rauwenhoff is striking. They all stress the different stages of moral awareness.

There is reason enough to assume that the first caliphs saw themselves not only as extremely civilized, but also as substitutes for God on earth and therefore authorized to command in his place. This so-called ‘fact’ was even written on coins they had minted;<sup>87</sup> yet their subjects agreed only partly. It didn’t take long for the biblical scholars to find an alternative to this title: substitute for God’s representative. This definition has been the common point of view among Muslims ever since. The ulema are not substitutes for God

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<sup>85</sup> de Bruijn and Harinck, *Een Leidse vriendschap*, 163

<sup>86</sup> Snouck Hurgronje, *De islam en het Rassenprobleem*, 11

<sup>87</sup> Hans Jansen, *Lezing gehouden voor de Arabische Vereniging*, 26.02.2002

on this earth, but heirs to Mohammed, who was sent by God. The period in which the caliphs were losing religious authority in favour of the ulema is set to be around 800-850 AD. During this period an intense struggle also erupted between the Charidjites and the official caliphs. Migrants who moved together with Mohammed to Medina ravaged villages and caravans on the way to Mecca, the main trade centre of the Northwest Arabs. The caliphs agreed that an established religion in a world of order could not approve of such inhumane, irresponsible behaviour, particularly not when it involved the abuse of Allah's name. This was an era that attracted Snouck's attention during his years at Leiden University and he had even played with the idea of writing his dissertation on the Charidjites.<sup>88</sup>

One of the most exceptional results of Snouck's scientific investigation was his assertion that orthodox Islam *never drew a line between religious and secular power*.<sup>89</sup> It is important to keep in mind that the term 'state' did not have the same meaning then as it has now, and could even be called a rather recent European discovery. Even though the Islamic world has known a long and impressive secular tradition, there has never been a 'state' to separate it from the mosque, the two being intertwined.<sup>90</sup> The government was the entity that collected taxes, and thus controlled all land the Islamized Arabs had conquered in the name of Islam after Mohammed's death. The decisions made by the first two successors of Mohammed implied therefore that Islam was to be not only a religion, but also a government or state. But Mohammed's successors were not entitled to explain or admit dogmas since they were not the ones with divine power, and therefore never drew up a clear and undisputable justification for the separation of heaven and earth.

The Islamic biblical scholars had a hard time coming to some kind of practical verbal agreement, and kept moulding words and interpretations until they came up with reasonable arguments we would now call 'opinion.' The consensus they arrived at remained, since the community as a whole was believed infallible. But in the theory of the Islamic orthodox philosophers, there simply exists no written justification for this so-called separation of heaven and earth, of mosque and state. The farther in the past the

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<sup>88</sup> de Bruijn and Harinck, *Een Leidse vriendschap*, 58

<sup>89</sup> Snouck Hurgronje, *Islam*, 16

<sup>90</sup> Michiel Leezenberg, 'Enlightenment Darkens', in *NRC Handelsblad*, 29.03.2002

formative period is, the longer certain presumptions will have been consensus and the harder it would be to enforce a change of direction in thought.

The philosopher Immanuel Kant described the Enlightenment as the liberation from self-imposed tutelage and critical thinking as an awakening from dogmatic religious and metaphysical systems. Islam knew such Enlightenment much earlier than Europe did. Already in the ninth century, Islamic rulers stimulated public debates on such religious issues as criticism of the Koran, showing an openness and political maturity the West could not even grasp yet. The Muslim equivalent of Kant is known as Farabi, who declared reason to be unambiguously superior to religious revelation as a source of knowledge and as a basis for political order.<sup>91</sup> However, with the proliferation of the profession of ulema, this kind of free thinking did not continue to be appreciated. When dealing with the interpretation of the Koran, ulema have the common problem that renunciation of Islam is liable to punishment and that this punishment should be the death penalty. The question they had to answer for themselves is how far one's thoughts should differ from the consensus before one actually renounces Islam. This so-called commandment (still known today) does not base itself on the Koran, but might help to explain why rebelliousness was so severely punished.<sup>92</sup>

During the ninth century, religious authority in Islam went from the caliphs to the guild of the biblical scholars, the ulema. These men of God were not organized in a structured hierarchy, but formed a free republic of quarrelling independent scholars. This was the complete opposite of what the West in those days believed the hierarchy in the East to be. Snouck Hurgronje's discovery of this constant tug-of-war for power was no less than revolutionary. Islam didn't establish a church organization since there was already one that emerged organically. This occurrence of ego-powered men looking for their own territory within the greater whole was not something Snouck could appreciate. He did not regard the ulema as objective or even reliable in leading discussion on important biblical issues. He has called the ulema the "Muslim rabies," because one didn't become an ulema by assignment or consecration, but by taking an examination. This approach results in an endless 'incestuous' circle, with the ulema declaring one

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<sup>91</sup> Leezenberg, 'Enlightenment Darkens', in *NRC Handelsblad*, 29.03.2002

<sup>92</sup> Snouck Hurgronje, *Islam*, 6

another qualified through examinations, leaving hardly any room for reformation. The ulema guarded without compromise what they saw to be the true Islam, which is exactly why Snouck was very cautious with trusting them in his work in the Dutch Indies.

Mohammed began preaching to the Arabs primarily because they were most open to his words, but when circumstances shaped the message into a universal one, the whole of the existing Islam was already so Arabic that non-Arabs had to submit more or less to a change of language or even life to feel comfortable within it. Everyone was welcome to pray in his or her own language, but people seemed to prefer praying in Arabic. Language is only one of the manifestations of the miraculous unity that the international community of Islam showed. What was remarkable to Snouck were the multitude of similarities that marked individual and communal behavior, and also the religious attitude of Muslims of different race and background.<sup>93</sup> The Arab language as well as the Arab army resulted in Islamizing a people being equal to Arabizing them in those first centuries. The speed and suppleness with which this nomad language evolved was amazing. When we speak of the rich Arab literature and of a scientific hegemony of Arabs in the Middle Ages, we mean *international Muslim* science and culture, which used the Arab language as vehicle.<sup>94</sup>

This Arabic supremacy laid heavy upon the oppressed people; especially on those who had had a developed culture before Islam. The artificial attachment of the genealogy of individuals, families and even whole peoples to the Arabic family tree took a certain amount of the pressure off, but not everyone wished to be naturalized in this manner. Those who didn't want to become Arabs began demanding that their equality be recognized on grounds of personal accomplishment. They recalled Mohammed's main argument being the principle of virtue and not descent, thus giving equal opportunity to all races. This uprising started a rich literature of racial struggle. "Islam has not been free from racial conflict - the racial literature is not the only testimony of this -, but it never reached dangerous proportions. Theory and practice have stayed aloof from the American type of exclusion."<sup>95</sup> Mohammed failed in his attempt to unify all humankind under one

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<sup>93</sup> Snouck Hurgronje, *De islam en het Rassenprobleem*, 16

<sup>94</sup> *Ibidem*, 14

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 21

banner with Islam, even though the only criterion that had to be met was that of a pious attitude towards life and thus towards Allah.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 20

## 2.2 The practice of Islam

“It is not just the language that initially seems strange and alienates us from Muslim society, but also the habits, the way of thinking, the ideas and of course the morals.”<sup>97</sup>

Without knowing where these ideas have their roots and how certain habits have formed, one might distrust Muslims without good reason and remain guided by prejudices.

Snouck found that in real Islamic life there was a visible separation between politics and religion. One could easily tell by the look of a person's clothes, for instance, whether he was a dignitary of God or a secular individual. Even though doctrine and daily routines vary enormously among Muslims, there is a great sense of unity that characterizes the lives of different Mohammedan people. Their acknowledgement of the same detailed system as a goal of life had become of eminent importance to their international society.

Snouck believed because early Islam had had less time than other religions to be applied to the life and the mind of its followers, it strove for expansion more diligently than for more intensive application of what had been achieved. Leaving a great deal of room for all kinds of interpretation given that certain commandments remained unexplained.<sup>98</sup> Just as for Christianity, the goal of Islam is conversion of all, and thus it was correctly seen as a fearsome competitor. Especially since the process of converting is so much easier with this Arabic variant of monotheistic religion. In real life becoming a Muslim did not only mean acknowledgement of the Koran and Allah, but also complete arrangement of one's life in accordance with the God-given laws.<sup>99</sup> Muslim Law, in theory, wants to bind the whole of life in all its expressions with the ties of its all-controlling regulation, although never and nowhere has this succeeded according to Snouck. He repeated over and over how regular Muslim life has always and everywhere fought the oppression of the straitjacket of Muslim Law, but at the same time he saw the beauty of this daily routine. When flicking through the pages of a Muslim law book, he stated how he understood how one could feel that this religion, imposed on those who are not born and raised into it, was an unbearable yoke; but one who is witness to the

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<sup>97</sup> Dr. C. Snouck Hurgronje, 49

<sup>98</sup> Chr. Snouck Hurgronje, *Islam in Nederlands- Indië*, Leiden 1913, 53

<sup>99</sup> Snouck Hurgronje, *Islam*, 1

conversion of individuals or tribes will come to the opposite conclusion.<sup>100</sup> This specific remark again fuels the mystery of whether he actually converted to Islam.

A theme Snouck keeps coming back to in his books is how the importance of education for religious life has been dramatically underestimated. Snouck felt it necessary to study Islam because in his days the religion already included millions of people and was an important world religion.<sup>101</sup> He found many deviations existed within Islam and tried to reconcile them by either putting them into his familiar historical context, or rooting the practise on the official and accepted Scriptures, thereby avoiding stepping on the toes of any fanatical Muslims. A religious environment which tolerates academic study tends to be moderate rather than fundamentalist. Snouck wanted his work to be practical, instead of speculating on topics that are not of much use to humankind. One of the reappearing misconceptions is on the veil Snouck saw Muslim women wearing internationally. These rules were not enforced by Mohammed or his law, but by the curious civilization of Islamic Eastern countries where men were jealous.<sup>102</sup> Another example was the importance of circumcision in the Dutch Indies, where it was of far greater importance than the published law acknowledged. For the population there, it was seen as a kind of local maturity ritual, while in the law it is only one of many prescriptions.<sup>103</sup>

On a more theoretical level it was necessary to understand some provocative principles of Islam like the *hidjrah* of Mohammed. His revelations were not intended to convert pagans, but to give the believer a pattern for organizing his or her life in a particular way. Mohammed revoked peace without declaring war towards disbelievers, because his movement was growing too fast and he needed to get rid of a substantial part of the population. With this particular action he was breaking off all connections with non-believers and renouncing all responsibility for them. Furthermore the Muslims did not feel the need to be a part of the decline of neighbouring powers. This kind of pious deceit belonged to the convention of that era.<sup>104</sup> In the Law, on the other hand, there was a section specifically aimed at the urge Muslims feel to expand their religion.

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<sup>100</sup> Chr. Snouck Hurgronje, *De Atjehers*, Batavia/Leiden 1893-1894, I, 317

<sup>101</sup> Moereels, *Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje*, 2

<sup>102</sup> *Ibidem*, 26

<sup>103</sup> Snouck Hurgronje, *Islam in Nederlands- Indië*, 74

<sup>104</sup> Snouck Hurgronje, *Islam*, 12

Interestingly Snouck found the principle of Jihad quite simple. According to him it means the earth has been divided in two areas: where there is Islam and where there is war. Snouck noted how debate on this specific subject was highly controversial in the nineteenth century, since it was quite possible that this particular principle would keep the Muslim community from transiting smoothly into international modernity.

Even though Snouck believed that there had been times early ages in which this principle of jihad was explicitly dangerous for non-Mohammedan states, and even if progressive individuals in the Mohammedan world would like to ignore it, it was part of the Law and the law is considered infallible.<sup>105</sup> Another aspect of this disputed ideology was that pagan tribes continued to be considered lesser humankind and Islam, with its teaching of the holy war, gave Muslims a welcome pretext to exploit them. Harsh taxation was not the only evil they enforced upon them. They applied control without governing or educating the suppressed people, which according to Snouck was not the right thing to do. One is only allowed to submit another when the purpose is purely to enlighten and bring about better circumstances.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Snouck Hurgronje, *Islam*, 32

<sup>106</sup> Snouck Hurgronje, *Islam in Nederlands- Indië*, 52

### 2.3 The future of Islam

“The people of the main part of the Indies are purely Mohammedan and the danger of fanatical outbursts of religious hatred continues to threaten us.”<sup>107</sup> So far Snouck has kept a relatively positive attitude towards Islam, but he also saw a possible danger in Muslims joining hands on an international level. He saw a danger in yellow, brown, black and red banding together and dominating the white race unless the latter would contemplate amalgamation, instead of wasting its strength on the relatively unimportant political strife that divided Europe after the First World War. The lack of unity could have disastrous consequences.

For Snouck this pan-Islamism was: “the feeling of belonging together (...) to a powerful unity (...) when their threatened political, social or economic interest had to be defended.”<sup>108</sup> In this light the concern of the local authority in the Dutch Indies with international Islamic matters was far from unselfish. As the worldly power of the Ottoman Empire crumbled, the aspirations in the religious field increased strongly. The Muslim Sultan of Aceh hoped to counteract the disintegration and seize part of the power, seeking support in his people's struggle against the oppressive treatment they experienced under Dutch colonial rule. Turkish and Arab newspapers published numerous negative articles about the harassments Muslim men in the Indies had to bear, but millions of Muslims in the colony were purposefully denied this information. Snouck feared that with the support of the Islamic world the Arabs would increasingly turn against Dutch colonial rule under the Islamic flag.

In his pieces on pan-Islamism it is an almost fanatical Snouck Hurgronje who speaks, attacking Arabs randomly without any hint of his usual objectivity. When he writes about ‘Arabs’ in the Indies, he primarily refers to Hadramis, an oppressed group of Arabs whose numbers migrating to the Indies had drastically increased since the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869. In particular their presumed influence on the process of Islamization caused continuous anxiety. Snouck even stimulated existing anti-Arab feelings by calling them ‘scum’ and ‘narrow-minded.’ He made extensive notes on this

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<sup>107</sup> W.J., Dr. C. Snouck Hurgronje, 52

<sup>108</sup> Gobeé and Adriaanse, *Ambtelijke Adviezen*, 1709

minority while questioning newly arrived immigrants on their motives, but he incorporated only a small part of the material into publications. Surprisingly he hardly put forward local data to support his fear of Muslims banding together throughout the world, especially since it was precisely this method of using abundant objective information that had given him his scientific recognition in the first place.<sup>109</sup>

Snouck admitted that pan-Islamism was not an organised power (yet), but the urge was clearly surfacing and there was reason enough to keep this extremely dangerous sentiment under control in the Dutch Indies. According to Snouck there were three ways to do so. First of all, rectification of incorrect information was important, because if not challenged on the correctness of information Dutch diplomats could lose their sense of proportion and stir up negative sentiments between local inhabitants and their rulers. Underlining how fact should be separated from fiction, he ironically seems to contradict his own fears concerning this pan-Islamism. A second step would be to refuse possible suspects admission to the colony. He pointed out that other countries had also closed their borders to certain population groups, and that the international community, Islamic countries included, had eventually tolerated this. In 1912 a start was made with excluding Hadramis as much as possible, but relatively soon the borders opened again as the government feared a colonial conflict with Great Britain. Without further explanation Snouck renounced all responsibility for further repercussions. The third step was striving for more unity and co-operation among and with Muslims, since politically they were only a risk as long as they were isolated from the society at large. Of course certain Hadrami were drawn to the pan-Islamic idea, but they constituted a minority. It seems peculiar that Snouck apparently saw the statements and actions of this small group as representative of the entire group.

An indication of the reality of his fears is how frequently he brings up the quantity of the Muslim subjects. “What will help us out if several millions of Muslims kept together by the force of zealotry no longer long for the blessings of our government?”<sup>110</sup> The fact remains that the proud doctrine of Islam holds that only Mohammedans, as the true believers, should rule here on earth, and this will be the biggest hurdle for a good

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<sup>109</sup> de Jonge, *Contradictory and against the grain*, 232

<sup>110</sup> Snouck Hurgronje, ‘De Islam’. In: *de Gids*, 14

understanding between the Muslim subjects and their unbelieving rulers, “until the former will have learned to bend unconditionally to strong European government.”<sup>111</sup> At that point Islam's expectations of greatness will have appeared vain and will evolve into a more innocent character, as with other religions. It was these circumstances that made it inevitable for the Netherlands to let the Aches feel the force of their government; a task that is not easy, and most certainly not enviable. “But it has to be fulfilled, and the way it goes relies on the Mohammedan subjects”.<sup>112</sup>

He ends his book *The Acheh's* with an interesting outlook on the future; although he often doubts whether historians can make solid predictions, he does have an opinion on what might happen. “How much I would love to show you, instead of such a horrid future image, a more encouraging picture of what we are to expect, but to that I do not see myself privileged. We could, however, find some encouragement in history, that teaches us, that in the past there have been race issues and that they have not always remained unresolved.”<sup>113</sup> Snouck's thoughts were linked to developments that were already in progress – for instance the Muslim world's being under the influence of international trade, which expected them to “follow cosmopolitan habits,” was seen as a positive trend.<sup>114</sup> Modernity could only be reached through better education and stable government, after bad elements had been removed from society. Only the inclination of a people can be the measure of the nature of their profession of Islam.

This idea of necessary subjection before emancipation is based upon the assumption that the local inhabitant sees Western culture as the path to becoming more developed.<sup>115</sup> Snouck shared in a letter to Th. Nöldeke his view that intimate exchange of ideas and a compromise between Islam and humanism is possible and that the true solution is to be found in the association of the Mohammedan subjects to Dutch culture.<sup>116</sup> But his good orthodox friend Bavinck believed civilization had less power than religion and that the masses had a greater impact than the intellectual elite. It was

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<sup>111</sup> W.J., *Dr. C. Snouck Hurgronje*, 79

<sup>112</sup> *Ibidem*, 81

<sup>113</sup> Snouck Hurgronje, *De islam en het Rassenprobleem*, 8

<sup>114</sup> Trouwborst, *De Atjehers van Snouck Hurgronje*, 377

<sup>115</sup> Moereels, *Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje*, 43

<sup>116</sup> van Koningsveld, *Snouck Hurgronje en de Islam*, 195

not Western ideas, but the Christian faith that could touch the soul of Islam .<sup>117</sup> Where he felt culture did not have that kind of strength, Snouck felt that it did. Christiaan believed that in times of peace Islam would leave its isolation and undergo a process of modernization under Western influence.<sup>118</sup>

Snouck had quite a futuristic vision when we consider that he already anticipated (but not in its complexity) the current process of globalization. He believed diversity could go hand in hand with unity, but since “the enlargement of the population of this earth equals with the decreasing of all distances, one could expect with certain sureness an escalation of the racial problem in the near future.”<sup>119</sup> Snouck’s view was that the Netherlands had taken up a very important part of the solution of this racial problem even without international assignment or appointment. The Dutch were privileged to have this exquisite opportunity in the troubles of Aceh in which “a small country could be great.” Snouck proposed they not wait for approval from larger powers, since the outcome could be revolutionary and could even set the example to those others. The principle of equality of all races finds its supporters and opponents, but generally the conviction of the desirability of a peaceful society for all those groups prevails. Instead of the political conflict of interest of the League of Nations, should we not found a League of Races to ensure peace and harmony for humanity? *General love for humankind* might be a strain for the human ego, but it is not negotiable.<sup>120</sup> The only difference between religions will be the way they pray.

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<sup>117</sup> de Bruijn and Harinck, *Een Leidse vriendschap*, 171

<sup>118</sup> Ibidem, 10

<sup>119</sup> Snouck Hurgronje, *De islam en het Rassenprobleem*, 6

<sup>120</sup> Ibidem, 23

## CHAPTER THREE: SNOUCK IN PERSPECTIVE

### 3.1 Veth

In order to put the main character of this thesis into a more Orientalist perspective and uphold his claim of exceptional authority in the Netherlands, it is necessary to introduce Pieter Johannes Veth, a scientist who developed an affection for the colonial country of the Dutch Indies long before Snouck Hurgronje was even born. This ‘unknown man of consequence’<sup>121</sup> will be seen to have a considerable number of ideas in common with Snouck when it comes to his ideas on superiority, the necessity of education and forceful imperialism, even though he never actually visited the Dutch colony. Additionally, he could not be classified as an innovator or said to have contributed directly to drastic changes in colonial politics. He did popularize the concept of the colony as being more than simply of economic benefit, and even considered the overseas properties the only source of pride at a time when the Netherlands were struggling with a national identity crisis after the succession of Belgium.

Pieter Veth was born on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of December in 1814 in the lower middle class, the son of a scrap-iron merchant in Dordrecht. His father wanted him to have a brighter future than he did and sent him to what we call nowadays a business school, founded on the principles of the Enlightenment. He appeared to be a clever student, eager to absorb all sorts of information, and was able to make the transition to an elite grammar school, where he was educated based on Latin and Greek. He did this with such ease that he was considered an exemplary candidate for the Leiden University, where he enrolled in 1832 as a theology student. This educational path would ordinarily have prepared him for a career as a clergyman; but during the first two years of his studies he was exposed to the writings of European Romanticism and developed the perception that intellectuals such as himself had a moral duty towards society to inform the public about social issues.

The enthusiasm Veth showed for the required Oriental languages such as Hebrew, Arabic and Syriac revealed his linguistic talent and made him realize that he was more interested in language than in theology. After reading “The Life of Christ” (*Das Leben*

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<sup>121</sup> P. van der Velde, *Een Indische liefde. P.J. Veth (1814-1895) en de inburgering van Nederlands-Indië*, 2

*Jesu*), a book by D.F. Strauss that applied the textual critical method to the historicity of the Bible, Veth became confused concerning his own faith. He decided not to enter the ministry, but instead abruptly ended his studies when offered a position as tutor at the prestigious Royal Military Academy (KMA) in Breda. He had already mastered English, but what is remarkable is that he also became a teacher of Malay, a language he was not able to read or write. Apparently the Orientalist of the Academy, P.P. Roorda van Eysinga, the head of the colonial section, had enough trust in his abilities to offer him the assistant's post anyway. When Veth was received in audience by King William I, who asked him how he was able to master all those difficult languages, he truthfully responded: "Your Highness, I yet hope to learn."<sup>122</sup> The officers he trained were sent to the Dutch Indies, and this was his first contact with the country that would play such an enormous role in his life.

Veth received a doctorate for a treatise on an Arabic manuscript, describing the rise and fall of the Arabic culture and pleading for practice of science free from theology and religious fanaticism. Such ideas – that science should not be hindered by theological concepts – were common in Veth's liberal academic surroundings. Knowledge of material matters had to be separated from that of the immaterial or supernatural. In 1841 he was appointed professor of Oriental languages at the Atheneum, preparing students for university, in Franeker, where he befriended the Dutch modern theologian J.H. Scholten. Scholten preferred to concentrate on the ethical and civilizing rather than the revelatory aspect of religion, and thus connected to Veth's vision in the sense that he hoped for a kinship between science and Christianity for the moral improvement of all lesser peoples. This urge to civilize should be seen within a broader European movement then gaining strength.

Just before the abolition of the Atheneum, a year later, he was relocated to the Atheneum Illustre in Amsterdam. Some new courses, such as logic and philosophy, were added to the curriculum of young students. But, according to his biographer Van der Velde, Veth did not expend any effort in gaining knowledge on these subjects and only used existing publications from his predecessors. Thanks to his marriage to Clara Büchler in 1845, Veth would come into contact with Thorbecke and would play an influential role

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<sup>122</sup> J. Blokker, 'Biografie van een Eeuw', in *de Volkskrant*, 17.11.2000

in the spreading of liberalism in the Netherlands. One of the reasons for the city's predominant conservative political outlook concerning the Dutch colony was the economic profits Amsterdam gained from the cultivation system imposed on the Dutch Indies. Veth, however, believed the Dutch to be indebted to the inhabitants of the colony specifically for all the material goods which had been collected over the past hundreds of years. They would be able to repay this debt with moral benefits, such as pure religion and Christian civilization, thereby fulfilling the Dutch destiny and reclaiming her identity. The Dutch Indies to Veth were an opportunity for the Netherlands to become great and internationally important again.<sup>123</sup>

He shared the views of W.R. van Hoëvell regarding the measures that had to be taken in order to achieve this moral liberalization, both of them being aware that this was not going to happen without a major political revolution. Van Hoëvell was a Batavian clergyman who clashed with the colonial government on the strict censorship they upheld on several occasions. This was also the reason for his return to the Netherlands in 1848, after which he became involved in politics as a colonial critic, pleading for openness in administration and government. Veth never became a politician because he thought the job to be cursed work.<sup>124</sup> One of the most important ways to achieve the goal of positive assimilation with the Dutch Indies, according to these men, was the improvement of educational opportunities overseas, but also expanding the knowledge of ordinary Dutchmen of their own colony. This knowledge would not be a goal in itself, but would serve the higher purpose of national identity. He was thus inspired to (co-)found many institutions. The Royal Institute for Linguistics and Anthropology (*Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land-, en Volkenkunde*, 1851) is still a bulwark of expertise on Oriental issues today.

His claim to fame no doubt stems from the highly regarded publication 'The Guide' (*De Gids*), an intellectual centre in itself, where Veth would be editor during the period 1843-1876. Even though the magazine had a rather small readership, the readers were all influential people able to stir up political debate. This is exactly what happened in 1860 when Veth introduced Multatuli to the public through a review of the book *Max*

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<sup>123</sup> B. Funnekotter, 'Een onbekende grootheid', in *Mare*, 10.10.2000, 13

<sup>124</sup> Van der Velde, *Een Indische liefde*, 129

*Havelaar*. He regarded the book as a powerful protest against repression by barbarous local rulers, whose behaviour was condoned by the colonial government. Expansion of Dutch rule at the expense of local rule was advocated, but the number of civil servants was too small to bring about such a change. Veth produced an enormous amount of articles on what only years later was officially labelled ‘ethical’ politics.

In 1864 he became a professor at Leiden University, immediately connecting with the progressive atmosphere at that institution. During the years to come he would begin writing his *magnum opus*, ‘Java’ (*Java, geografisch, ethnologisch, historisch*) on all aspects of this part of the archipelago. It was a magnificent piece of encyclopaedism, which some say was never to be matched. The proof of his authority, according to his biographer, would seem to be that he was never challenged during his lifetime and that no one seemed capable of following in his footsteps.<sup>125</sup> In 1873 the outbreak of the Aceh War forced the Netherlands into the political intensification Veth had pleaded for over and over again. The government decided to send an expeditionary force to reappraise the Dutch position in Aceh. But before it could do so, the local inhabitants felt threatened and violently defeated the ‘academic’ expedition. Veth believed the failure of the first Aceh expedition to be caused by lack of knowledge. He helped found the Royal Dutch Geographical Society (*Koninklijk Nederlands Aardrijkskundig Genootschap*, 1873) to fill in this gap. The success of the second expedition of the Dutch defenders of humanity against barbarism resulted in an explosion of nationalism in the home country. If it did not achieve anything else, it at least succeeded in increasing the awareness of the Dutch population. To embroider on this theme of Oriental success and accumulating interest, he took an active part in the organization of an international colonial exhibition in Amsterdam in 1883, which attracted the amazing total of two million visitors, unheard of in those days. Veth died in 1895, but remains the originator of widespread colonial sentiment in the Netherlands.

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<sup>125</sup> Van der Velde, *Een Indische liefde*, 20

### 3.2 Veth vs. Snouck

In excellence Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje did not differ that much from Pieter Johannes Veth, and their paths in life show an odd similarity. Both did not finish the study of theology and not became clergymen, although with Snouck this was not so much related to confusion concerning faith as it was to general scepticism. He was enthralled by a scientific fondness for the beauty of language and the secrets enclosed in it, especially Arabic, since it could help him understand a world religion that had not yet been mapped. Veth, too, appears to have had a liking and even an extraordinary talent for Oriental languages, but did not share the same specialized interest. When Veth finally received his doctorate on an Arabic manuscript, he was brutally criticized because of his random philological conclusions by an Arabist from Leiden, R.P.A. Dozy, who would later earn Snouck's admiration. Perhaps a little far-fetched, yet worth noting, is how J.H. Scholten, a professor of dogma during the years Snouck studied in Leiden, would be an influence on Veth, but not at all on Snouck. His good friend Bavinck, on the other hand, did admire Scholten, and asked him to promote his doctoral thesis.<sup>126</sup> This points up the differing attitude towards religion these men had. Snouck did not feel comfortable limiting himself to one specific religion, whereas Veth never doubted the civilizing potential of what he saw as his superior Christianity.

Their connection with the Dutch Indies also had different origins. Veth thought the Indies to be the solution for the national identity crisis the Netherlands found herself entangled in during the nineteenth century, whereas Snouck ended up researching the colony because of his interest in Islam. Both felt the problems during the Aches War had to do with a lack of knowledge, but Snouck tied this to the lack of knowledge of Islam and its influence on daily life. "To govern is to give and take, and meets hurdles daily for which a solution can not wait for a long-term, long-lasting effect from the best principles of law and administration. (..) For this, knowledge of existing Mohammedan attitudes is necessary. (...) They who walk the road need lanterns pointing out the dangerous places."<sup>127</sup> A parallel can be found in their tutoring experience; both educated officers

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<sup>126</sup> de Bruijn and Harinck, *Een Leidse vriendschap*, 30

<sup>127</sup> *Ibidem*, 195

before they were sent to the colony. Whether Veth would indeed provide a new generation of ‘ethical’ administrators, as his biographer would have us believe, can be questioned, but if he did, Snouck did so even more. Snouck used the opportunity of educating candidates for colonial government to initiate an accurate personal study of the history of the colony and its inhabitants. He much enjoyed Veth’s wonderful book *Java* and found the information very helpful, but would go beyond the topics portrayed. Instead of expanding his students’ knowledge of geographical issues alone, he would also educate them on the origin of the local community’s daily routine and the rules governing their human interaction.<sup>128</sup>

Veth adhered to the view that science stood in service of the social community, whether it was practised in order to keep nature and society under control or to stimulate moral enlightenment. Snouck was also interested in “what science in behalf of practice (...) has to offer”<sup>129</sup>, but Veth declared that the development of knowledge of the material and immaterial worlds should be completely separated. In this he represented the gradual emancipation of the Dutch Orientalists from supranaturalism, the ethic of divine revelation. In this respect Snouck also did not believe that the Holy Scriptures were given by God, but rather that they were human artefacts, making a clear distinction between the supernatural and the natural. He did not support Veth’s contention that all science should be treated separately. On the contrary, he believed the religious and non-religious elements in the lives of a people to be inseparably connected. It was therefore impossible to grasp the essence of a people or a country without understanding their relation with its religion. Veth upheld the idea of a non-religious science, while Snouck deliberately put religion back into the realm of scientific research. He also urged that it is not enough to know the ethical side of a civilization alone. This is one of the reasons why he took a particular interest in local juridical practice and thus discovered the *adat* law. He was the first to use this word to indicate those *adats* that had legal consequences. In order to engage in comparative research he used the anthropological method of participating observation.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 94

<sup>129</sup> Trouwborst, *De Atjehers van Snouck Hurgronje*, 10

<sup>130</sup> J.H.Kramers, *Diplomatie en Oriëntalistiek*, z.p. 1989, 23

Another idea on which the two men agreed upon was the importance of the colony for Dutch national identity. Veth in particular saw the Indies as being able to contribute to the improvement of the Dutch sense of self, yet Snouck again went just a little farther. They both acknowledged that there was an obligation towards the less fortunate people, and Snouck even saw the overseas property as a historical testimony to Dutch unselfish involvement.<sup>131</sup> “This is not a utopian ideal, but a goal which the Government and the people of the Netherlands will permanently blame themselves for not taking into account in time, since at present they are neglecting to pursue this urgent occasion.”<sup>132</sup> Snouck’s focus had also been on the improvement of education and “in the future even wished that one could go one step beyond,” eager as he was to found an official university for the Indonesian elite in the hope to bring them “as close to the position of the highly educated European as possible.”<sup>133</sup>

Where Veth pleaded for assimilation, Snouck pleaded for association, and in this respect he quotes Ernest Renan on several occasions: “What makes a nation is neither race, nor skin colour, nor language, nor religion, nor natural border. It is *le désir d’être ensemble* – the desire to be together.” According to Snouck, this desire to coexist should be the first step towards association as a great deed that would show that ‘our little people were still capable of something grand.’<sup>134</sup> Even though the Dutch citizens were quite late in becoming aware of their moral duty, he was pleased to see a rising tide of active interest in the life of this overseas territory that had been subjected to the Netherlands. Now that the consciousness of the Dutch nation had awakened, partly due to Veth's influence, he believed a period of transformation to have been reached during which these subjected people needed to be ‘emancipated.’

One could thus uphold the idea that Snouck in many ways followed in Veth’s footsteps yet surpassed him, not only his level of detail as some authors claim, but also as a successor in the comprehensive approach to work concerning the Dutch Indies. Christiaan paid attention to all aspects of culture systematically.<sup>135</sup> Snouck took Veth’s

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<sup>131</sup> Snouck Hurgronje, *De islam en het Rassenprobleem*, 24

<sup>132</sup> Snouck Hurgronje, *Nederland en de Islam*, 85

<sup>133</sup> M. Kuitenbrouwer, ‘Het ethisch Imperialisme van Snouck Hurgronje’ in *Nederland in de wereld*, z.p. 2002, 343

<sup>134</sup> Snouck Hurgronje, *Nederland en de Islam*, 101

<sup>135</sup> Trouwborst, *De Atjehers van Snouck Hurgronje*, 26

passion for the Indies even farther by actually going there and directly contributing to changes made in colonial politics. It is peculiar that a country with such a long tradition of colonial property would only have produced two men interested to research the archipelago and the nature of the Dutch entanglement with its overseas territory at this late date. In the sixteenth century the study of Eastern languages stemmed mainly from trade-related contacts and the value of the Arabic language for the study of Hebrew, but failed to progress. While knowledge finally began to extend in Europe in the eighteenth century, one could still find ‘exoticism’ in literature and art in the Dutch Republic. The image of sexual lawlessness and violence would even mature during the age of Romance, but did not initiate an interest in the colonial countries.

Veth was the one who started to discover the Dutch Indies in a more ethnological manner. In the nineteenth century the balance of power between Europe and the Islamic world shifted drastically, and it made scientists look at the differences between them. It made the religion relevant, since it was seen as a possible danger to the liberal European society.<sup>136</sup> Snouck was the first one to take an interest in the practice of Islamic studies. He wanted to find out what this religion actually meant to the lives of its believers, and he was even able to connect this with existing knowledge on the colony.<sup>137</sup> At the end of the nineteenth century the term “Orientalist” would emerge. Asian Studies in Europe (at least so it is maintained in a number of critical studies on Orientalism) were designed and practiced as part and parcel of colonial expansion. Both Snouck and Veth were part of this scientific imperialism, but were also pioneers, before the emergence of a large range of specialists, and their views would remain significant for the numerous so-called “Orientalists” until far in the twentieth century.

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<sup>136</sup> Kramers *Diplomatie en Oriëntalistiek*, 12

<sup>137</sup> W.J., *Dr. C. Snouck Hurgronje*, 47

### 3.3 Veth vs. Snouck vs. Said

The views of Veth and Snouck would remain current until the first major international critic of Orientalism appeared. Edward William Said was born in 1935 in Jerusalem; his family was part of a small Protestant Christian minority which decided to move to Cairo. His parents send him to the United States, where he did very well, receiving his B.A. at Princeton and his M.A. and PhD in Literature at Harvard. From 1963 he was a professor of English and Comparative Literature at Columbia University. He wrote seventeen books and numerous articles on music, literature, social science and politics. His most famous book, without doubt, is *Orientalism*, published in 1979, concerning the style of thought based upon “ontological and epistemological distinction made between ‘the Orient’ and (most of the time) ‘the Occident’.”<sup>138</sup> In his book Said attempts to describe Orientalism as a discourse that consists of a “whole network of interests,” inevitably brought to bear whenever the Orient versus the Occident is in question. He considered Orientalism to be an “enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage – and even produce – the Orient,” based on a feeling of confrontation.<sup>139</sup> He makes two major claims; firstly, that Orientalism, although purporting to be an objective and rather esoteric field, in fact functioned to serve political ends, because by studying the Orient the West was collecting information in order to conquer and dominate the other. Inspired by Foucault’s work on the connection between knowledge and power, Said concerns himself with the way in which Orientalism was legitimized by expanding colonial power and the way in which it lent legitimacy to the imperial project in its turn. Lastly, Said argues that Orientalism as an academic tradition, including all teaching about the Orient, has produced a false description of Arabs and Islamic culture and that the most important task ahead is to “undertake studies in contemporary alternatives to Orientalism, to ask how one can study other cultures and peoples from a libertarian, or a non-repressive and non-manipulative perspective.”<sup>140</sup> Whether you agree with him or not, what is important is that Said has opened up a whole new area of discussion.

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<sup>138</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism*, New York 1979, 2

<sup>139</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, 201

<sup>140</sup> *Ibidem*, 24

And indeed, Pieter Johannes Veth was personally politically involved with the Dutch colonial repression, although he did stress that the Dutch had an obligation towards their colony due to the enormous economic extortion they had practiced. He saw the solution as the moral benefits of pure Christian religion and civilization. The fact that Veth did not learn any of the colonial languages or make a serious study of the beliefs and practices of Islam, the main religion in the Dutch Indies, other than was available to him in Europe, makes him a genuine Orientalist in the eyes of his critic. Even Snouck himself was not in the least sympathetic when dealing with scientific literature written by such writers, as in 1884 when he accused a textbook writer of inaccurate argumentation and showed some wonder at the fact that after ten years of public service in the Indies “he was still unfamiliar with the basic elements of his profession” and “instead of using Arabic sources, copying popular European books.”<sup>141</sup> Furthermore the scholastic Dutchman had never even travelled to the country that was the subject of his many articles and represented exactly the idea Edward Said thought so horrid: that the colony was essential in the process of creating the Dutch national identity. His pleas for assimilation and attention for the overseas territories are perfect examples of a situation in which “the East has been domesticated for local European use,” especially since Veth continued to assert the superiority of the West.<sup>142</sup>

Veth was also the founder of numerous institutes concerned with the gathering of information on the overseas property and other ‘exotic,’ geographically interesting foreign topics. Scholars have a moral duty to give an objective version of reality, according to Said, and he is of the opinion that Orientalists like Veth betrayed their calling by consequently supplying “the corporate institutions” with data and thereby aiding Westerners in their practice of “dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient.”<sup>143</sup> His intention with the book *Orientalism* is not to expose the “truth” behind the Orient, but the “representation” of the East in Western texts. Said insists that it is “fundamentally a political doctrine.”<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> Drewes, *Snouck Hurgronje en de Islamwetenschap*, 6

<sup>142</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, 4

<sup>143</sup> *Ibidem*, 2-3

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, 207

In order to make a clear distinction, Said argues the difference between knowledge of other people and other times and knowledge that is part of an overall campaign of self-affirmation. It is quite clear how Veth, concerned with the potential purpose of the Dutch colonial territory, collected knowledge as part of the promotion and affirmation of the Dutch self and consequently fulfilled his moral duty and that of the Dutch. Said continues to explain the difference between knowledge stemming from the will to understand for purposes of coexistence and humanistic enlargement of horizons, and that stemming from the will to dominate for purposes of control and external dominion.<sup>145</sup> The most important reason for Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje's engaging in a comprehensive study of Muslim society was sincere interest and the desire to invalidate existing false prejudices. His research could therefore be classified as 'of other times,' although he did provide more information that directly resulted in violence (Ache) than Veth.

Edward Said claims that there is little point in studying the writings of scholars from countries other than England, France and America because they are generally the creators of the imperialistic discourse known as Orientalism.<sup>146</sup> But with this decision he unfortunately leaves out a veritable army of luminaries such as Goldziher, Snouck Hurgronje, Becker, Nöldeke, etc. He does mention them briefly, yet was reluctant to use statements that did not fit his view of colonial science. Of course Theodore Nöldeke did declare in 1887 that the sum total of his work as an Orientalist was to confirm his "low opinion" of the Eastern peoples, but this did not conflict with his ambition to describe his discoveries as accurately and objectively as possible.<sup>147</sup> Since the first international Orientalist Congress in 1873, most scholars had known each other, and even though they may have had a wide influence in government circles throughout the Western world, this does not mean that all had the same opinions. If anything, a careful study of their work would indicate consistent resistance to the themes of denigration and characterization of Eastern peoples of which Said complains. Snouck Hurgronje, for instance, felt the same

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<sup>145</sup> Ibid., xix

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 4,15,17,19

<sup>147</sup> J. W. Fuck, "Islam as an Historical Problem in European Historiography since 1800", in *Historians of the Middle East*, by Bernard Lewis and P.M. Holt, London 1962, 309

sense of responsibility towards humankind as Edward Said, and was aiming in his work at a mutual understanding of different races and religions.

When Snouck had just returned to the Netherlands in 1906 from his overseas expeditions he came up with a synthesis of colonial and Islam policies. His pleading for the ‘association’ of the Indies to the Dutch culture as part of the political philosophy he developed included their subjection, yet the intention of emancipation was idealistic and rather the opposite of what critics like Said see Orientalists as pursuing. “Islamic history is primarily determined by the philological paradigm and the Eurocentrism in which the Aryan and Semitic language groups are opposed to each other. Semitic stands for Jew, Islam, and therefore stagnation, intolerance, dogmatism and fanaticism whereas Aryan stands for tolerance, reason and progress.”<sup>148</sup> The ideological school Snouck started was indeed based on a philological-historical research method combined with a shared set of values on ‘the East’ and Islam, and it might be true that Islamic history is determined by the separation of East and West in terms of good and evil. However Snouck, definitely advocated coexistence.<sup>149</sup>

Instead of stressing the contrast between cultures and policies, he wanted to overcome the differences, just as Said does. The distinction that needs to be made, though, is that Edward Said states that everyone should embrace human variety and religious diversity as signs of uniqueness, whereas Snouck dares to paint an even bigger picture by claiming that the only difference between religions is the way in which they pray, and thus tolerates all dissimilarities.<sup>150</sup> Perhaps in this idea one can find an explanation for the collection of the most diverse disciplines that were within the Leiden School he founded, varying from Arabic to Malaysian Literature, the history of living and dead religions and cultures of ‘the East.’

It could be said that the knowledge Snouck Hurgronje collected was ‘of other people and other times,’ since the times were colonial and so was his mindset. He combined the virtues and the faults of the ‘moral policy’ by wanting to enlighten and assimilate the local population, but at the same time proposed that they had to be

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<sup>148</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, 169

<sup>149</sup> Drewes, *Snouck Hurgronje en de Islamwetenschap*, 14

<sup>150</sup> Trouwborst, *De Atjehers van Snouck Hurgronje*, 308, 377

(violently if necessary) subjected in order to achieve the goal of mutual understanding.<sup>151</sup> The intentions are to enhance the lives of the native peoples with a perspective of independence in the (far) future, but since this was only possible if the country was at peace, this originally positive policy often began with military submission in order to create the necessary stability.

Said concludes that human beings tend to see what they want to see, rather than what is real, and that the European scholars who journeyed so eagerly to Arab lands were particularly self-serving. Some say Said has fallen into the same trap he attributes to Orientalism by not attempting to explore Arab writings of the periods he discussed nor presenting (possibly even reading) work by Egyptian and Arab historians.<sup>152</sup> This is something Snouck did do; so well, even, that it was exactly what caused him to be accepted by great Arab scholars themselves. Edward Said condemned the non-objective methods of the nineteenth-century scientists, but admits the ‘Orient’ cannot be studied in a non-Orientalist manner. According to Said, the scholar is obliged to study in a more manner focused and in smaller, culturally consistent regions. Snouck did not portray this specialist approach, since he was one of the first in this Islamic field to engage in constructive research, and even if he saw ‘the Upper lands through Lower lands glasses,’ he did provide an abundant amount of factual knowledge.<sup>153</sup>

Even though the general public mainly associates Edward Said with ‘politics,’ he is clearly opposed to politics and political analysis. Said was a scientist who became a political activist, not necessarily by preaching or teaching a certain view, but by carrying out his own – that culture has been the key to understanding and solving problems throughout history. In fact, culture has almost acquired the status of secular sacredness in his writings. This is remarkable if we remember Snouck and his conviction that all Holy Scriptures were manufactured by humans, and it was thus the human and its interpretations that needed to be studied. “Even though the term ‘culture’ was not used

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<sup>151</sup> K. Steenbrink, ‘Snouck Hurgronje en Atjeh’. In L. Dolk, *Atjeh, de verbeelding van een koloniale oorlog*, Amsterdam 2001, 77

<sup>152</sup> <http://www.secularislam.org/articles/debunking.htm>, read on 17.05.2004

<sup>153</sup> Moereels, *Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje*, 34

very often in those days, Snouck Hurgronje systematically paid attention to all of its aspects.”<sup>154</sup>

On the alleged (political) superiority of the white men so many scholars upheld during those colonial years, Snouck had a somewhat deviating opinion. “American writers originate their proposal from the dogma of the complete superiority of the white race. They urge putting up barriers, but they fail to see that these would not turn the tide, but more likely would spring a battle of life and death, compared to which the youngest war was just child’s play.”<sup>155</sup> Instead of putting up barriers, which would only emphasize the existing contrasts and encourage hatred instead of a general love for humankind, Snouck’s solution lay more along the lines of honest assimilation – quite similar to what Edward Said would suggest years later. “Rather than the manufactured clash of civilizations, we need to concentrate on the slow working together of cultures that overlap, borrow from each other, and live together.”<sup>156</sup> Said saw it to be our role to widen the field of discussion, which is exactly what both Snouck and Said did. By providing first-hand factual material about a country where few Westerners had gone before, Snouck had helped to create an academic forum in which discussion concerning Islam could take place.

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<sup>154</sup> Trouwborst, *De Atjehers van Snouck Hurgronje*, 26

<sup>155</sup> Snouck Hurgronje, *De islam en het Rassenprobleem*, 7

<sup>156</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, xxix

## CONCLUSION

The current social panic that is related to Islam unfortunately turns out to be based upon a “reinvention of the wheel.” Instead of progressing to another level of understanding by learning from history, the main issue nowadays in the Dutch debate is trying, once again, to define the religion of Mohammed and its intense entanglement with the daily life of the believers. In the nineteenth century the balance of power between Europe and the Islamic world shifted drastically, causing scientists to look at the differences between them. It made religion relevant, since it was seen as a possible danger to the liberal European society, and this is exactly what is happening once again. The arena Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje opened in the nineteenth century by undertaking comprehensive study has apparently still not been fully explored. The discussion nowadays likes to focus on the Muslim rejection of the modern world in the name of an alleged authentic Islamic culture. Even though some might call this sentiment ‘backward,’ such protests are inspired by precisely the same Romantic notion of self-preservation that inspired the nationalism Europe has also known.

Snouck personally felt a responsibility towards society to educate and stimulate citizens in an attempt to overcome differences and therefore difficulties. Snouck realized while still quite young that he liked his work to be practical, and attempted to gather information in such a way that it could improve relations between Muslims and the government. One of the most exceptional results of Snouck’s scientific investigation was his demonstration that orthodox Islam never literally drew a line between religious and secular power. Without an Islamic government, Islamic laws will not be applied the way they are intended, and governments that refuse to apply Islamic laws are therefore rejecting Islam, which is theoretically punishable by the death penalty.

But Snouck also discovered something else on his travels: there is a distinct difference between the theory and practice of the religion. This is perhaps one of his most ground-breaking contributions to the discovery of Islam in the West. In real life Snouck found the doctrine not to be the same as the dogmatic teachings and the controlling law of Islam all over the world. He concluded that the implementation of the religion depended on ethnic variations and on the political and social development of the different people

who profess Islam. The doctrine of the Islam is amazingly universal, but the day to day life demonstrates a definite local character, and might for that reason be controllable. Snouck did not find Islam to be a religion in the way Christianity is, because the belief system is much less detailed and static, yet at the same time covers a greater part of the life of its believers. Assuming the Western idea of 'belief' and especially of 'church' could therefore create an even greater misunderstanding. Snouck deeply respected the way the mosque, for instance, played a considerable part in people's lives in social functions as meeting point and cultural centre. Islamic Law as specifically studied by Snouck aimed to cover all of life's expressions with its regulation, but has not succeeded anywhere in entirely subjecting its believers. Snouck appreciated the beauty of the comprehensive set of rules, since the intention was to bring the Muslim believer certainty and safety. The numerous articles he wrote on the principles and the content of Islamic Law would prove to be highly significant to the development of this particular branch of learning, and thanks to them he is known to be one of the founders of contemporary Islamic studies.

Snouck's greatest achievement was not describing the political structure of Ache as an entity with fixed ranks, but as a struggle for power in which every participant was persistently busy enforcing or defending his position. This type of dynamic power play was thought to be exclusively Western and completely contradictory to the inactivity the Europeans believed characteristic of the East. He found that in Islam authority did not depend on someone's origin or social position, but on his personal qualities, and that these were liable to change – especially in times of conflict. His research convinced him more and more that broad-spectrum knowledge of the religious life of the local Ache population needed improvement, especially since it was curiously intertwined with its political structures. He called the ulema 'fanatical' political adventurers who did not belong to the natural political order, since in times of peace they would only be concerned with religious issues. His advice, therefore, was to support only the natural leaders of the people, but to deny the biblical scholars any political power in an attempt to separate religious and secular affairs. This would automatically lead to the dismissal of the dualistic governmental structure.

The emancipation of the native community he ultimately strove for could only be reached if resistance was overcome through complete submission. Only then could circumstances be created through which the people could achieve wealth. Accordingly, Snouck continued to insist that these measures could not be separated. The fact remains that the proud doctrine of Islam holds that only Muslims, as the true believers, should rule here on earth. Snouck acknowledged that this would be the biggest hurdle for good understanding between the Muslim subjects and their unbelieving rulers. “Until the former will have learned to bend unconditionally to strong European government,”<sup>157</sup> the vanity of the greatness of Islam will stand in the way; but when subjected Islam will evolve into a more innocent character. This idea of necessary subjection before emancipation is based upon the assumption that the local inhabitant feels the urge for development on the model of Western culture.

The knowledge he gained and the experiences he encountered during his life strengthened him in his opinion that there is no absolute superiority of the white race or even the Christian religion. This assertion counters the allegation that his work is only a part of colonial history and Orientalism. Instead of putting up barriers, which would only emphasize the existing contrasts and encourage hatred instead of a general love for humankind, Snouck’s solution lay more along the lines of honest union. Recognizing the irony of the similarities between all religions, the only difference he saw was in the manner of praying. Mutual willingness to understand was his ultimate goal, or in more spiritual words, universal human love; yet this does not restrain him from having an opinion on what might happen between Islam and the dissimilar West. He also recognized possible difficulties by pointing out the consensus that the teaching of the Muslim community is infallible. Furthermore, Snouck noted how debate on the most difficult principle, that of jihad, was highly controversial in the nineteenth century. It was quite possible that this particular principle would keep the Muslim community from transiting smoothly into international modernity, but according to Snouck times had passed ages ago in which this specific commandment was “explicitly dangerous for non-Mohammedan states.”<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> W.J., *Dr. C. Snouck Hurgronje*, 79

<sup>158</sup> Snouck Hurgronje, *Islam*, 33

Snouck truly believed racial and religious diversity could go hand in hand with unity, but also acknowledged how the global decreasing of distances could cause an escalation of fundamental contradiction between principles in the future. He therefore continued highlighting the importance of culture, the necessity of communication, and moreover how knowing a person's history can help in the process of understanding and living together.

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