Cut Nyak Din (1848–1908): A Study of Female Heroism in Indonesia

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Declaration

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university. To the best of the author's knowledge, it contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

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Abstract

This is a study of how female heroism has been produced through commemorative processes in Indonesia. I trace the historical processes and the cultural and political narratives that inform what constitutes a female hero in Indonesia. The evolution of heroism in Indonesia has been shaped by images of anti-colonial military force highlighting specific visions of ideal masculinity. The amalgamation of militarised masculinity and nationalism has created the criteria for how women can be commemorated as heroes, revealing how the valorisation of women as heroes can also reinforce hierarchies of masculinity. I investigate this phenomenon through a case study of Cut Nyak Din (1848–1908), an elite woman from Aceh who played an important role in the Acehnese resistance to the Dutch in the late nineteenth century. Drawing on concepts from the field of gender, memory and Indonesian studies, I evaluate the importance of Cut Nyak Din's construction as one of Indonesia's most prominent female 'national heroes' (*Pahlawan Nasional*), a category officially legislated as the archetypal model of heroism in Indonesia. By understanding the evolution of Indonesian concepts of heroism, we can see how nationalist ideology, centralised state education, and regional political struggles work to produce 'heroes', and what this means in gendered terms. This study reveals the complexities and contradictions in commemorating women as national heroes.

Although today Cut Nyak Din is considered a national hero, this commemoration conceals, even as it relies on, alternative visions of her heroism created through imperial and regional perspectives. Within this case study, I look at various historical constructions of Cut Nyak Din to analyse how she has been co-opted by Indonesian nationalism as a 'national hero'. My research draws upon archival evidence and popular culture ranging across Dutch, Indonesian, and Acehnese sources from 1880s to the 1980s. I examine textual, cultural, and state representations of Cut Nyak Din, including imperial records, early journalistic and fictional accounts by Dutch writers, popular Indonesian film and fiction, political speech and Acehnese separatist drama. The comprehensive account of the competing gender and national politics involved in commemorating Cut Nyak Din as a female hero reveals tensions in Dutch, Indonesian, and Acehnese ideologies of gender.

This study argues that the Indonesian narrative of an anti-imperial national female hero is composed of competing and sometimes contradictory political voices. The female hero is presented differently depending on a need to respond to the shifting currents and priorities in modern Indonesian and local history. Indonesian and Acehnese nationalist commemorations of female heroes engage on Dutch representations of Indonesian female fighters for their own purposes, while the commemoration of female heroes in Indonesia, which seems on the

surface to support ideals of gender equality, has in fact replicated gender hierarchies within diverse Indonesian narratives. Such rhetoric remains a limited way of commemorating women's contributions. As a result, Cut Nyak Din has been imagined in ways that speak to the anxieties of Dutch imperial administrators, the aspirations of European feminism, national visions of Indonesia's search for unity, separatist goals for Cut Nyak Din's region of Aceh, Islamist visions of religious piety, and modern Indonesian women's search for powerful connections to the past.

To examine this case study of one specific female hero, this study deploys methods of archival, textual, and cultural-historical analysis of specific commemorative sites. I draw upon archival sources written in four languages: Acehnese, Dutch, Bahasa Indonesia, and English. This approach allows my thesis to identify the diverse forms of public memory and how they are politically constructed within intertwined colonial, official and vernacular perspectives. While this research specifically concerns the region of Indonesia, it contributes to the growing literature in interdisciplinary field of gender, postcolonial society and memory studies.

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Chapter 1 Prologue
Cut Nyak Din: Female Heroism, Politics and Memory

1.1 Background

Cut Nyak Din[1] (1848–1908) has become one of Indonesia's most recognised and celebrated female heroes throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. She occupies a notable place as one of the few female historical figures in Indonesia who have been recognised as regional and national heroes. This research aims to reveal why Cut Nyak Din became the subject of commemoration to understand whom the commemoration serves. This research offers the first full-length account of the complex processes that have shaped a female hero at different historical points from the 1880s to the 1980s and sets forth a comprehensive analysis of the competing gender and national politics involved in commemorating one of the most prominent contemporary Indonesian national heroes. Investigating the case of Cut Nyak Dien can shed a broader light on the question of female heroism in Indonesia's modern history.

Cut Nyak Din is concurrently celebrated intercontinentally, particularly in the Netherlands. In a 1948 autobiography, Madelon Szekely-Lulofs, a Dutch-born Indonesian author, called Cut Nyak Din *De Geschiedenis Van een Atjehse vorstin* or 'The Queen of the Aceh War' in the novel of a similar title. Cut Nyak Din was recognised as a significant woman in Dutch history[2] by the Amsterdam Museum in 2019. While this acknowledgement is new, Cut Nyak Din's unique role in the Aceh-Dutch struggle from 1873 to 1904 was extensively documented in Dutch imperial records. Simultaneously, several scholarly works have built on and discussed her role as a female commander and warrior in their academic research.

This research examines the phenomenon of national hero cultures in Indonesia and the process by which a historical figure evolves into an official national hero. The inclusion of a female hero into Indonesia's overwhelmingly male-dominated nationalist narrative might be seen as an attempt to increase women's representation. What seems to be progress towards gender equality has reproduced the gender hierarchy that exists inside the Indonesian national

[1] Cut Nyak Din is a modern version of spelling. The early sources write her name with Tj and Oe (Tjoet Nja Din). The official *Ejaan Bahasa Indonesia yang disempurnakan* (Perfected Indonesian Spelling) was introduced in 1972 and had an impact on the spelling of the name, although the way it is pronounced remains the same.
[2] The exhibition celebrated individuals like Queen Juliana, Anne Frank and other women in Dutch History whose names aren't so well-known -- https://theculturetrip.com/europe/the-netherlands/articles/women-from-dutch-history-are-showcased-at-the-amsterdam-museum/

narrative. Simultaneously, a close examination of the archive indicates that the nationalist narrative is constructed of several national and colonial voices.

The study makes arguments by tracking the contentious status of a female hero and concentrating on Cut Nyak Din's representation in several texts and multifaceted sites of memory. I illustrate how diverse collective memories and ideologies shaped Cut Nyak Din's memory, the critical values and concepts of which are emphasised in her numerous representations, and which political interests impact those different representations. I argue that, despite the idea of heroism evolving in a more inclusive and expansive direction, nationalist attitudes continue to fall short of offering the sort of heroism that really empowers a female hero. Instead, the female hero is manufactured in response to changing historical circumstances in contemporary Indonesian history and made to serve those needs.

As the brief overview of Cut Nyak Din's background indicates, two factors have played a significant role in her memory and reputation: first, her involvement with an anti-imperialist Islamic struggle, and second, her association with notable elite male figures. These two characteristics have long been the key attributes of an Indonesian national hero. Because she appears to possess these two qualities, she fits the stereotype of an Indonesian hero. Cut Nyak Din acts as a role model for Aceh and the rest of Indonesia. However, it is often the case that the history has been constructed, used, and memorialised in ways that are inconsistent and contradictory to fulfil political demands and interests.

This research aims to examine diverse political, cultural, and historical representations of Cut Nyak Din from 1890 to 1980s. It seeks to understand how different actors and authors pursue their own interests as they appropriate the representation of Cut Nyak Din for different ends. The analysis is relevant to broader conversations on gender, nationalism, and (post)colonial and memory studies in Indonesia. This study contributes by offering an integrated approach that evaluates Cut Nyak Din’s public commemoration within colonial, regional, and national visions. In doing so, the thesis addresses contested issues around how a hero should be conceptualised in Indonesia. Tensions addressed include the hegemonic masculine model of the hero, the striving of female heroes to fit into this dominant narrative, and the complex reception of the hero’s memory that manifests in numerous commemoration and historical sites. The study also evaluates the prolonged tensions between national and regional visions that have existed between Indonesia and Aceh in various aspects and sectors. The investigation was conducted in chronological sequence to highlight the hero's evolution and how conceptions change over time.

Traditionally research has emphasised official sources, and now the importance of looking at broad commemoration is being noted. By and large, researchers have mostly investigated visions of history of specific Indonesian national heroes via the analysis of official commemoration, such as national heroes from the province of Riau and Lombok as well as the investigation of the school curriculum. This kind of research tends to assume that official commemoration or historical lessons are the sole elements that constitute historical awareness by focusing only on their content.[3] However, other significant sources, such as representations of public space, museum displays, memorial sites, films, and social media conversations, are sometimes overlooked. This research investigates several sources to comprehend how historical representations develop with ambivalence, highlighting complexity in both the past and present. We can only discern how the historical narrative was produced by carefully examining multiple sources. I suggest that by examining numerous recollections and media we can gain insight into the numerous ways in which media impact and shape the collective history.

The following chronology illustrates how Cut Nyak Din has been remembered historically and how she has been imprinted in the public memory as a national evolution of the concept of the exemplary female hero woman. By tracing how Cut Nyak Din's memory was presented over time, my thesis can chart key changes in the values, priorities, and political projects that her memory was used to serve.

1.2 Key timeline: Who and Why is Cut Nyak Din?

I based the following summary of Cut Nyak Din's life on her official biography by Muchtaruddin Ibrahim[4], published by the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture as part of a series on Indonesia's designated national heroes. This narrative is approved and taught in the Indonesian educational system. It is the predominant way Cut Nyak Din is remembered in Indonesian society today.

Cut Nyak Din was born in the Aceh Besar village of Lampadang. Cut Nyak Din and her family had a major influence in this region. She was the daughter of *Uleebalang*[5] Teuku Nanta Setia, who controlled the region of Mukim IV. Cut Nyak Din's parents anticipated her from an

[3] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *The Past within Us: Media, Memory, History* (New York: Verso, 2005).
[4] Muchtaruddin Ibrahim, *Pahlawan Nasional Cut Nyak Dien* (Jakarta: Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 1979).
[5] *Uleebalang* is a title for nobleman or hereditary chief who ruled a specific territory in Aceh until 1945.

early age to continue as ruler of the district.[6] Like many others in Aceh at the time, Cut Nyak Din was educated and nurtured in an Islamic environment. Over time, she was commemorated as an intelligent and devout Muslim in diverse sources.

Cut Nyak Din is remembered for her participation in the Aceh war (1873–1904),[7] the longest war in Dutch colonial history. Additionally, through marriages to the commanders of Acehnese guerrilla groups (Teuku Ibrahim Lamnga and Teuku Umar),[8] Cut Nyak Din became more actively involved in the military effort against the Dutch. As Acehnese men and women formed a resistance movement against the Dutch imperial forces, Cut Nyak Din is considered one of the heroes 'born' of this war.

When the Dutch-Aceh conflict broke out in 1873, Cut Nyak Din and her first husband, Teuku Ibrahim Lamnga, both participated in the resistance movement against the Dutch, or *kaphe* as they were known (which literally means disbeliever). Cut Nyak Din wed Teuku Umar (1854–1899) after Lamnga was killed in an ambush. Teuku Umar was a prominent guerrilla leader and yet for a critical period an ally of the Dutch.

Umar was Cut Nyak Din's cousin, and most accounts suggest that Cut Nyak Din wished to wed another combatant to continue the battle. Teuku Umar was popular among the Dutch, as shown by the abundance of documented sources. When Teuku Umar submitted to the Dutch, the Dutch government formally appointed him as Aceh's *Panglima Prang Besar* (great commander). Teuku Umar's "crimes" are recounted in 1896 in De Atjeh-Onlusten (The Aceh Troubles), authored by a Dutch East Indies Army officer, and contain the detrimental repercussions and losses caused by the Dutch alliance with Teuku Umar. Teuku Umar's partnership with the Dutch seems to be one of his political strategies.

Cut Nyak Din is a notable figure for the Acehnese people in politics and other spheres. She was in the vanguard of the anti-Dutch struggle. She was agile, fierce, and tenacious in her defence of her homeland, nation, and religion against the Dutch. The Aceh-Dutch conflict was a war to defend Aceh's sovereignty and independence from the Netherlands, which

[6] Cut Nyak Din had a brother named Teuku Rajoet. However, it was also stated that Rajoet was not as intelligent as Cut Nyak Din, so that she was projected to continue the family tradition as the ruler of the region.
"As suggested by Muchtaruddin Ibrahim, Nanta did not anticipate Teuku Rayut to be capable of taking over as uleebalang in VI Mukim. The result is that Teuku Nanta was more likely to favour Cut Nyak Din, expecting that Cut Nyak Din could maintain the leadership position in VI Mukim." The Dutch source also mentioned Cut Nyak Din had an 'idiot' brother.
[7] Also named the *Dutch War* or *Infidel War,* lasting from 1873–1904.
[8] Cut Nyak Din was married to Teuku Ibrahim Lamnga from 1860–1878 and to Teuku Umar from 1880 to 1899.

wanted to extend its territories. Together with Teuku Umar, Cut Nyak Dien devised a strategy of struggle. She raised the spirits of the residents of VI Mukim so that they fought to defend their area from Dutch attacks. She died as a prisoner of the Dutch East Indies government at Sumedang on November 6, 1908, following years of fighting against Dutch colonialism in the Aceh region.

Cut Nyak Din's struggle ended when she became physically weak due to rheumatism and cataracts/blindness. In 1906 she was imprisoned and banished to Sumedang, West Java, by Dutch forces. She died in 1908 and was buried with Sumedang's royals and nobility. Her graveyard remained unknown until 1959 when the Governor of Aceh ordered a recovery mission. Subsequently, Cut Nyak Din was recognised as a national hero by Indonesia's first president, Sukarno, in 1964. Cut Nyak Din's legacy can currently be found in many sites, including in the Netherlands, Aceh, and Java.

Cut Nyak Din’s story has become a model for struggles in the region of Aceh and Indonesia. Yet her narrative has been shaped and commemorated differently, often by actors who are at cross-purposes with each other. As the brief sketch of Cut Nyak Din’s biography suggests, two elements have been particularly important in the way in which she has been remembered: first, her association with an anti-imperialist Islamic struggle, and second, her association with powerful notable male figures. I here set out key moments in the historical process of how Cut Nyak Din is remembered and how she has been established in the public memory. These are the key moments that chapters of my thesis will explore in detail.

1.3 How Cut Nyak Din Enters the Spotlight

The development and commemoration of Cut Nyak Din are divided into different key periods in which the memory of Cut Nyak Din has been activated. My thesis reconstructs the processes of commemoration that have shaped Cut Nyak Din’s image over time. I address three problematic periods in Cut Nyak Din commemoration and seek to understand the politics of memory by interpreting various constructions of a hero from one social group or institution into another. The pre-independence, post-independence, and regional conflict periods have all produced a hero-centred discourse. Accordingly, I divided the commemoration of Cut Nyak Din into different elements of commemoration, where every element has a complex interrelation and is in continual interaction with each other.

As a result, I approached this subject from a range of perspectives, including national and regional dimensions, as well as contemporary and historical sources. This provides the

opportunity to define the concept of heroism and see how it relates to these textual sites and sources. Additionally, this research is not concerned with authenticity or veracity but rather with how all information about Cut Nyak Din is accepted as factual and historical.

1.3.1 Cut Nyak Din in Dutch Commemoration[9]

Since the late nineteenth century, Dutch literature has been instrumental in identifying Cut Nyak Din. There are several reasons why the Dutch are drawn to Cut Nyak Din. Her family history is noteworthy and so was her status as the wife of Teuku Umar. Cut Nyak Din is portrayed and compared to Teuku Umar as equally formidable in commanding during the Aceh war. Newspaper searches from the early twentieth century show numerous articles in the mass media reporting on the Dutch pursuit and arrest of Cut Nyak Din.[10]

The Netherlands has a rare collection of documents related to Cut Nyak Din, especially those preserved in the National Archive, The Hague and Leiden University Library. There is only one surviving picture of Cut Nyak Din. It was taken in 1905 when the Dutch arrested her. This picture is well-kept in a special collection of Leiden University Library under the subject of women prisoners.

Figure 1-1 Cut Nyak Din, sitting in the middle when arrested by Lieutenant E. van Vuren in 1905

The caption for this photograph reads: *Tjoet Nja Din, de vrouw van Teukoe Oemar, (zittend in het midden) gevangengenomen door luitenant E. van Vuren* (Tjoet Nja Din, wife of Teukoe Oemar, (sitting in the middle) imprisoned by Lieutenant E.van Vuren). It is viewable online but not accessible in person. Due to the scarcity of documentation, the photographs

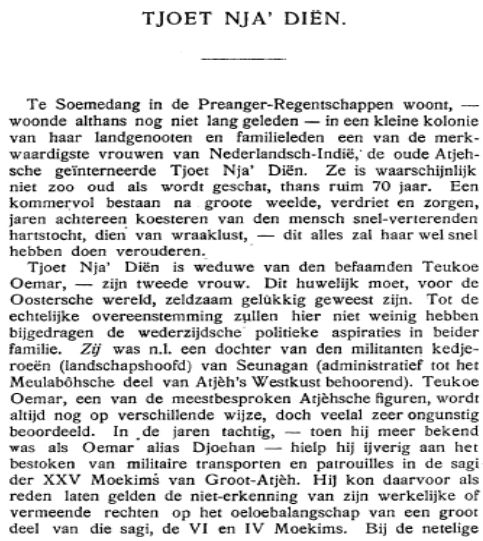
[9] In this thesis, I differentiate between commemoration and memorialisation. The “commemoration” focuses on more formal, public events, whereas “memorialisation” can occur in a broader range of contexts that activate public memory.
[10] See Peter van Zonneveld, "De Arrestatie Van Tjoet Nja Din : Een Atjehse Vorstin in De Literatuur En in De Pers," (2013).

circulating in Indonesia are far from the originals. During the Suharto regime, the Indonesian painter master Taufik Abdullah restored and repainted portraits of heroes. This photograph of the artwork served as the reference for Cut Nyak Din's picture.

In my chapter on Dutch accounts of Cut Nyak Din, I explore how she was first represented in Dutch colonial accounts, often in ways that were connected to military intelligence and speculation about Teuku Umar. I then examine how she became a figure of interest beyond the colonial apparatus. For instance, in the biographical novel by Indonesian-born Dutch writer, Madelon Szekely-Lulofs, *Tjoet Nja Din: de geschiedenis van een Atjehse vorstin* (Tjoet Nja Din: The History of Aceh's Aristocrat women)[11] and many more. These archival and published accounts offer important foundations for the ways in which a woman was able to become visible as a hero.

One of the earliest accounts of Cut Nyak Din appears in 1918, 10 years after her death, in *De Gids,* an influential late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century Dutch journal. C. van der Poel in 1918 wrote an article praising Cut Nyak Din as "one of the most remarkable women of Netherlands-Indonesia".[12] Both Cut Nyak Din and Umar fought valiantly against the Dutch but Cut Nyak Din was often described more favourably. Van der Poel writes that "until November 1905 she drew upon her hatred and desire for revenge an energy far beyond the power of a normal human being, an energy that, had she lived in a better-known part of the world, would undoubtedly have given her international fame".[13] This piece is in volume 82 of *De Gids* Magazine, which contains a collection of writings primarily about the Dutch Indies (or now Indonesia).

[11] In 1954, Indonesian writer and nationalist, Abdul Muis (1883–1959) translated it into Bahasa Indonesia. The book was published in 1954.
[12] C Van der Pol, "Tjoet Nja' Dien," *De Gids* (1918): p.334.
[13] Ibid. p.338.



TJOET NJA' DIËN.

Te Soemedang in de Preanger-Regentschappen woont, — woonde althans nog niet lang geleden — in een kleine kolonie van haar landgenooten en familieleden een van de merkwaardigste vrouwen van Nederlandsch-Indië, de oude Atjehsche geïnterneerde Tjoet Nja' Diën. Ze is waarschijnlijk niet zoo oud als wordt geschat, thans ruim 70 jaar. Een kommervol bestaan na groote weelde, verdriet en zorgen, jaren achtereen koesteren van den mensch snel-verterenden hartstocht, dien van wraaklust, — dit alles zal haar wel snel hebben doen verouderen.

Tjoet Nja' Diën is weduwe van den befaamden Teukoe Oemar, — zijn tweede vrouw. Dit huwelijk moet, voor de Oostersche wereld, zeldzaam gelukkig geweest zijn. Tot de echtelijke overeenstemming zullen hier niet weinig hebben bijgedragen de wederzijdsche politieke aspiraties in beider familie. *Zij* was n.l. een dochter van den militanten kedjeroeën (landschapshoofd) van Seunagan (administratief tot het Meulaboh'sche deel van Atjèh's Westkust behoorend). Teukoe Oemar, een van de meestbesproken Atjèhsche figuren, wordt altijd nog op verschillende wijze, doch veelal zeer ongunstig beoordeeld. In de jaren tachtig, — toen hij meer bekend was als Oemar alias Djoehan — hielp hij ijverig aan het bestoken van militaire transporten en patrouilles in de sagi der XXV Moekims van Groot-Atjèh. Hij kon daarvoor als reden laten gelden de niet-erkenning van zijn werkelijke of vermeende rechten op het oeloebalangschap van een groot deel van die sagi, de VI en IV Moekims. Bij de netelige

Figure 1-2 The article in De Gids, Dutch magazine written by C Van Der Pol in 1918

Numerous books in Dutch literature have mentioned Cut Nyak Din. While they do not focus exclusively on her, they provide a favourable portrayal of Cut Nyak Din's participation throughout the Aceh war. H.C. Zentgraaf is another notable Dutch author who has written extensively on Aceh. *Atjeh* (1938), one of his masterpieces, has become a cornerstone of Cut Nyak Din's subsequent narrative. Although the book is not entirely about Cut Nyak Din, he devotes a special chapter, *De Vrouwen* (The Women), where he mentions Cut Nyak Din as she “stood next to the highest women in this country in her glory times.” Not only does this book summarise and report on several facets of Acehnese history, but Zentgraaf also presents an in-depth examination of the subject of Acehnese women. Cut Nyak Din is used as the vehicle through which he expresses his epitome of exemplary Acehnese womanhood.

In 1948, Madelon Szekely-Lulofs, an Indonesian-born Dutch writer, published a historical book titled *Tjoet Nja Din: de geschiedenis van een Atjehse vorstin* (Tjoet Nja Din: The History of Aceh's Aristocrat Women). Despite her prolific output of fiction, Lulofs intended *Tjoet Nja Din: De Geschiedenis van een Atjehse Vorstin* (1948) to be a historical biography. This book does not have the same readership or critical acclaim as her previous books. This was largely because the book was published at an inopportune time, when the Netherlands had recently launched its second military aggression in Indonesia against Indonesian independence fighters. As a result, the biography did not sell well, and Lulofs' fame faded away. She died as a forgotten writer five years later, in 1958. Abdul Muis, an Indonesian

nationalist and writer, is responsible for producing the Indonesian (adapted) version of this biography in 1954, allowing it to reach a broader Indonesian audience.

Lulofs' work became a major reference in the process of Cut Nyak Din's canonisation as an official Indonesian national hero (Pahlawan Nasional) in 1964, even though it was not the first publication on the subject. Lulofs' work is worth examining because of the rich context it gives on several crucial historical events in the Aceh-Dutch war (1873–1904), which is considered the longest war in Dutch colonial history. *Tjoet Nja Din* (1948) by Lulofs has probably given prior pieces a new cultural life. Lulofs has greatly enhanced the memory and imagination about Cut Nyak Din by crafting a distinctive account in the form of a biography. In the Netherlands, memorials and publications about Cut Nyak Din's life continue.[14]

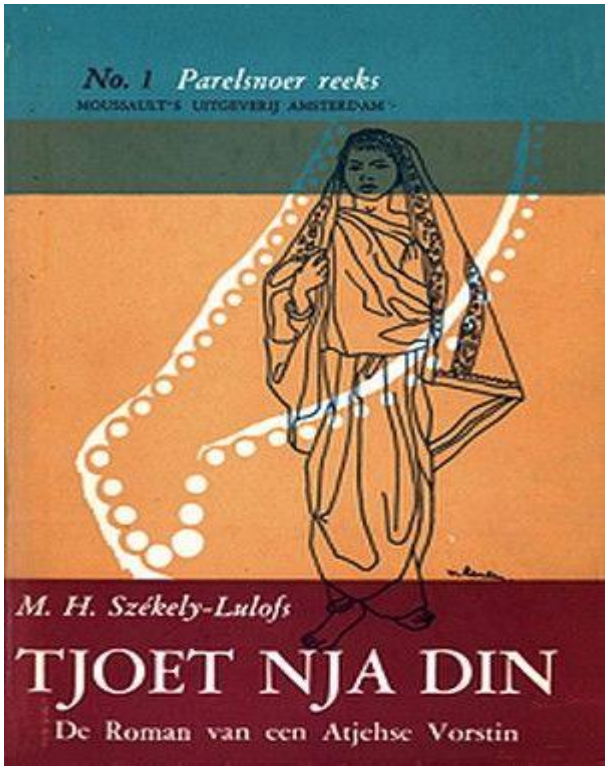


Figure 1-3 Historical Novel of Tjoet Nja Din written by Dutch author M.H. Madelon Szekely-Lulofs[15]

In the Netherlands, between 1948 and the 2000s, there has been little to no publishing on Cut Nyak Din. The representations of Cut Nyak Din surged again in the 21st century as part

[14] Including Zonneveld, "De Arrestatie Van Tjoet Nja Din : Een Atjehse Vorstin in De Literatuur En in De Pers."; Pamela Pattynama, "'Tjoet Nja Din En Tjoet Nja' Dhien Her-Herinneringen Aan De Atjeese Verzetsheldin in Boek En Film Pamela Pattynama," *In: Indische Letteren. Jaargang 30* (2015); Judit Gera, "Structures of Subjugation in Dutch Literature," (2016); Els Kloek and Anna de Haas, *Vrouwen Uit De Nederlandse Geschiedenis* (Nijmegen: Vantilt, 2013).
[15] Image credit: https://www.boekmeter.nl/book/76582

of a broader Dutch interest in women in history. In 2013 Peter van Zonneveld wrote *De Arrestatie van Tjoet Nja Din Een Atjehse Vorstin in de literatuur en in de pers* (The Arrest of Tjoet Nja Din: An Acehnese Princess in literature and in the press). Zonneveld tracks Dutch correspondence, reports and mass media as primary sources. He recounts how the Dutch military infiltrated Aceh, raiding Acehnese strongholds and apprehending Cut Nyak Din. Furthermore, in 2013, Els Kloek included Cut Nyak Din in her book *Vrouwen uit de Nederlandse geschiedenis* (1001 Women from Dutch history).[16] In 2019, the book was reimagined as an exhibit at Amsterdam's Museum of the same name, highlighting Cut Nyak Din as one of 1001 women in twentieth-century history. Additional Indonesian national heroes are included, such Cut Meutia and Kartini.[17]

Nieuws / 17 augustus 2018

1001 vrouwen in de 20ste eeuw

door Redactie Pluswijzer

Verhalen van inspirerende, beroemde en beruchte vrouwen

Vanaf 4 oktober 2018 tot en met 10 maart 2019 is in het Amsterdam Museum de tentoonstelling *1001 vrouwen in de 20ste eeuw* te zien. Samen met Els Kloek, de initiator en samenstelster van het gelijknamige boek, presenteert het Amsterdam Museum meer dan 125 bekende en minder bekende vrouwen die,

Figure 1-4 Cut Nyak Din was mentioned in a media article about her feature in an exhibition at the Amsterdam Museum.

[16] Kloek and Haas, *Vrouwen Uit De Nederlandse Geschiedenis*. *Vrouwen uit de Nederlandse geschiedenis.* The book was republished in October 2018: 1001 Women in the 20th Century. Literally the compilation of 1001 biographies of women.

[17] Els Kloek, Maarten Hell, and Vrouwen Stichting, *Vrouwen in De 20ste Eeuw* (Nijmegen: Uitgeverij Vantilt, 2018).

Te zien in Amsterdam Museum: 1001 vrouwen in de 20ste eeuw

Foto: Biljet van 10.000 roepia met het portet van Tjoet Nja Din (1998). Tjoet Nja Din ca.1850-1908. Leidt een klein guerrillaleger tegen de Nederlandse troepen die Atjeh willen onderwerpen. Ze wordt in 1905 door Nederlandse manschappen gevangen genomen en een jaar later naar Java gebracht. Daar leeft ze in ballingschap tot haar dood en geeft koranlessen. Cut Nyak Dhien (haar naam in Indonesische spelling) wordt in 1964 uitgeroepen tot nationale heldin van Indonesië.

Figure 1-5 Media coverage on the exhibition in Amsterdam Museum that features Cut Nyak Din

Although my thesis does not analyse contemporary representations, Dutch society continues to remember Cut Nyak Din. Cut Nyak Din has thus become an important part of Dutch postcolonial memory practices in the twenty-first century.

1.3.2 National Commemoration

As part of broader practices of colonial modernity, Indonesian nationalists, notorious for anti-Dutch colonialism sentiments, relied extensively on Dutch documentation and commemoration of Cut Nyak Din. Cut Nyak Din, who was portrayed as a Dutch opponent, inspired Indonesians to commemorate her as a hero. The translation of a Dutch biography of Cut Nyak Din by Madelon Székely-Lulofs[18], originally titled: *Tjoet Nja Din: de geschiedenis van een Atjehse vorstin* (1948) appears into Bahasa Indonesia version in 1954 by Abdul Muis called, *Tjoet Nja Din: riwajat hidup seorang puteri Atjeh* (Tjoet Nja Dhien: the biography of an Atjeh princess) made a substantial weight in enhancing Cut Nyak Din's visibility in the Indonesian public memory.

In this chapter of my thesis, I examine how Cut Nyak Din became important to Indonesian nationalists in the early decades of independence, especially through the lens of the National Heroes program.1964 was the year that Cut Nyak Din reached the pinnacle of

[18] Madelon Székely-Lulofs (1899-1958) was a Dutch novelist and journalist of Indonesian origin, renowned for her literary works that mostly revolved around the historical context of the Dutch East Indies, now recognised as Indonesia. Following the publication of her first book, "Rubber," in 1931, she attained widespread recognition as a renowned author. The piece afterwards adapted into both a theatrical production and a cinematic rendition.

her public recognition. Her renown and reputation have spread beyond Dutch allusions and literature to include a larger audience and more exposure among the Indonesian population. In 1964, Cut Nyak Din, along with two other women, Cut Meutia and Kartini, were the first females to be named in the national hero register.

The next surge of national popularity for Cut Nyak Din came in the 1980s, when she became the subject of a popular biographical film. In the 1980s, Cut Nyak Din became important as a national hero because of the broader political tensions between the Indonesian government and the province of Aceh. In this period, nationalist visions recruited Cut Nyak Din as a figure who could represent Indonesian anticolonialism, thus concealing some of the tensions between the centre and the region. At what was her place of exile, the central government began to care for her burial site in Sumedang, West Java, with more devotion. Cut Nyak Din's grave was repaired and refurbished in 1987 at the initiative of then-Governor Ali Hasyimy. The existence of Cut Nyak Din's grave in West Java was used to symbolise the unity between Aceh Province and the central government of Indonesia.[19]

Figure 1-6 Cut Nyak Din's tomb in Sumedang, West Java (Image: personal collection)

Following this occurrence, in 1988, Cut Nyak Din was again resurrected by Eros Djarot in a film titled *Tjoet Nja Dhien* (1988). This movie was a critical and commercial triumph, garnering national and international accolades. Christine Hakim, an award-winning actress, portrayed Cut Nyak Din.

[19] George Quinn, "Diplomasi Kubur: Makam Cut Nyak Dien Dan Upaya Menyelesaikan Konflik Di Aceh," *Beranda PPIA* no.1, no. June 2005 (2005).

Figure 1-7 Tjoet Nja Dhien (1988) Image Credit: https://www.themoviedb.org

Figure 1-8 Indonesian banknote in 1998 featuring Cut Nyak Din[20]

[20] https://anterokini.com/2018/11/29/bi-cabut-uang-kertas-10-ribu-bergambar-cut-nyak-dien-mulai-31-desember/

Figure 1-9 Cut Nyak Dien appears on Indonesian stamps respectively in 1969 and 2008.

Figure 1-10 KRI Cut Nyak Dien (Indonesian navy vessel) (Image source: viva.co.id)

This rise of nationalist emphasis on Cut Nyak Din, occurring in a period where Acehnese discontent with being part of Indonesia was growing, marks the desire of the Indonesian state to maintain control over her memory and in doing so, to remind the Acehnese that they, too should belong to Indonesia.

1.3.3 Acehnese/Regional Commemoration

However, regional memories have also turned to Cut Nyak Din to assert particular visions of ideal political identity. Despite the nationalist co-optation of her memory, Cut Nyak Din has been held in high regard in her community. In this thesis, I trace how she has appeared in Acehnese texts from the late nineteenth century to the late 1970s. I show how she figured in oral traditions during the Aceh-Dutch War. I then examine how she was reimagined by the leader of Aceh's resistance, Hasan Tiro, in the 1970s as an ancestor who helped to legitimate his claim for a separate state of Aceh. In the 1980s, the government of Aceh continued to promote the memory of Cut Nyak Din, where numerous public places in Aceh bear her name. A museum was established in the facsimile of her previous home with Teuku Umar. Initially, the home was a gift from the Dutch government to Teuku Umar. It was destroyed by Dutch colonialists in 1896 when it was determined that Teuku Umar was feigning submission to Dutch rule. In 1981, the home was renovated and converted into a museum. It was launched in 1987 by Fuad Hasan, Minister of Education and Culture. Each year, many national and international visitors visit the museum. My thesis thus investigates the ways in which regional visions have sought to assert themselves by presenting Cut Nyak Din as a specifically Acehnese hero.

1.3.4 Acehnese Ideologies of Gender

In order to understand how Cut Nyak Din became visible as a female hero, it is important to understand the broader gender ideologies that shaped her as a woman from Aceh. Aceh is a distinctive part of Indonesia for two reasons. First, Aceh is renowned for the extensive historical importance of Islam. Second, the region is also known for a range of elite and popular practices where women have wielded considerable power. Consequently, the gender ideology seen in Aceh displays divergences compared to the prevailing gender ideologies throughout Indonesia or other regions within the nation.

When engaging in scholarly pursuits or scholarly studies, it is essential to consider the complex and multifaceted nature of gender relations in Aceh. Furthermore, socio-gender relations in Aceh have undergone significant changes throughout its historical shifts. This evolution can be traced from the period of Islamic kingdoms to the era of colonial occupation, which the Acehnese people often refer to as the Dutch and Javanese occupation. Furthermore, the significance of Islamic beliefs has had a pivotal bearing on the formation of societal attitudes and norms pertaining to gender relations. However, it is widely

agreed upon by academics that Islam does not hinder the presence of women in diverse roles by subjugating them to domesticity and subservience. [21]

Aceh is known for matrifocal practices in which women held positions of authority within domestic space. Scholars have noted how the term "wife" in Aceh (in Acehnese *po rumoh*, literally means homeowner) explains the significance of Acehnese women in Aceh's societal and political life and reflects the autonomy and agency in Aceh. This term also implies that men are guests in their spouses' homes.

For instance, Snouck Hurgronje observed:

> "…the fact that the woman is owner of the house (po rumoh), the efforts of the men to obtain wives of social standing not inferior to their own, all this and much more besides testifies to the position of the woman in Achehnese society, a fairly high one for a Mohammedan country. This is indeed what we should expect in a country where the throne was occupied for more than half a century (1641-1699) by four successive female rulers."[22]

James Siegel, in his much-referenced research on the anthropology of Aceh, has similarly asserted that:

> "From the women's point of view, the family consists of the people who occupy the house compound - themselves, their sisters, mothers, and children. Their husbands have no place and hence no right to make decisions…
> One reason for the powerlessness of men could be their prolonged absence. It is true that women must make many decisions when men are gone, but even when men are home, they have no power.[23]
>
> The idiomatic expression for wife is, in fact, "the one who owns the house" (*njang po rumoh*). Women acquire a house, or at least a portion of one, at the time of their marriage. The house is a gift from the woman's parents. …[24]
> Women were independent of them, even if men could pay their own way.[25]

[21] See James Siegel, *The Rope of God* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969); C. Snouck Hurgronje, *The Achehnese Vol.1* (Leyden: E.J. Brill, 1906); A. L. Khan Sher Banu, *Sovereign Women in a Muslim Kingdom: The Sultanahs of Aceh, 1641−1699* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2017).
[22] Hurgronje, *The Achehnese Vol.1*, 371.
Further study on by four successive female rulers/Sultana see Sher Banu, *Sovereign Women in a Muslim Kingdom: The Sultanahs of Aceh, 1641−1699*.
[23] Siegel, *The Rope of God*, 77.
[24] Ibid., 51.
[25] Ibid., 54.

This description of domestic arrangements suggests that women experienced more autonomy than in other societies. Anthony Reid argues that “[m]uch more important until very modern times …was the pan-Southeast Asian pattern of female autonomy which meant that divorce did not markedly reduce a woman's livelihood, status, or network of kin support”.[26] These gender ideologies helped to shape expectations for Cut Nyak Din.

I propose that the concept of 'po rumoh', a term denoting a wife in Aceh, possesses a paradoxical association. On one hand, it signifies the power and influence that Acehnese women hold within the socio-political sphere. On the other hand, it also implies the domestication of women, suggesting their confinement to the domestic or rumoh (rumah in Indonesian or home) realm. The use of the term "*po rumoh*" by men to refer to their wives has an amusing and satirical connotation. This term not only signifies the role of being the owner of the household, but also implies the notion of being an owner or inhabitant of the home, someone who constantly stays or belongs there.

My investigation of Acehnese gender ideology focused on the years between 1880 and 1988. During this period, the mainstream literature began to discuss the increasing prominence of Acehnese women in political and economic spheres. Different cultures throughout the globe are constantly evolving because of the interplay between globalisation, local culture, and Islam. However, in Aceh, Indonesia, all these global influences have taken place contemporaneously, and they may compete or complement one another along a continuum. According to research by Siti Kusujiarti et al., the Acehnese have traditionally followed unique religious and cultural practises that exhibit an inclination towards a matrifocal, matrilineal society. Women in Aceh have held powerful positions for four centuries, including as sultanas, military generals, and political leaders.[27] These people have contributed to a living legacy that shapes how we see women now and establishes important norms for the advancement of women and gender equality. Property inheritance through women and spouses moving into the wife's family home are two concrete examples of this phenomenon. Since women are not uprooted from their communities and social networks and community when they get married, this practise inherently provides them more emotional and financial stability.

[26] Anthony Reid, "Female Roles in Pre-Colonial Southeast Asia," *Modern Asian Studies* 22, no. 3 (1988).p.631.
[27] Siti Kusujiarti et al., "Unveiling the Mysteries of Aceh, Indonesia: Local and Global Intersections of Women's Agency," *Journal of international women's studies* 16, no. 3 (2015).

The considerable political power exercised by Acehnese women is another important feature to highlight regarding Acehnese gender ideology. This phenomenon is evident during a distinctive period referred to as the golden age in the history of Aceh, which has relevance not only within the context of Aceh itself but also within the broader scope of Indonesia and Southeast Asia. A study by Sher Banu has shown empirical data suggesting that the presence of female rulers does not conflict with Islam's principles. During this era, the Sultanah had extensive support from many influential ulama in Aceh, indicating that their existence and leadership were not met with opposition from religious scholars. “The sultanahs [queens] of Aceh chose to be more collaborative than coercive, preferring to gain the loyalty and respect of the elites rather than their fear.”[28]

Compared to societies in the Middle East, women's access to political authority in Aceh has proved to be extremely unusual.[29] Aceh was already a cosmopolitan centre of Islamic learning when it was governed by a succession of four Acehnese female chiefs of state in the seventeenth century.[30] According to Reid, this queen's leadership maintained Aceh's position as the most significant independent port in island Southeast Asia. [31]

In a more recent publication, Anthony Reid highlights the enduring Islamic commitment among the Acehnese people, emphasising its integral role in shaping their collective identity. Reid argues that this religious devotion has not resulted in a reduction in the economic independence of Acehnese women[32], hence preserving their relative autonomy within society. This sense of identity continues to be a significant factor to consider while studying about and understanding the Aceh society. The emergence of Islamic principles at various stages in Aceh's history has resulted in implications that include the process of compromising and impacting conduct, expectations, and cultural norms to align with this ideology. In addition, Aceh has a rich historical background in political Islam, including many events spanning from the armed conflict known as the "holy war" (jihad) waged against the Dutch colonial force from 1873-1942. The Darul Islam revolt against the newly established Republic from 1953 to 1962, along with other movements that emerged afterwards such as its successor The Free Aceh Movement, known as GAM/ Gerakan Aceh Merdeka in Indonesian, was active from 1976

[28] Sher Banu, *Sovereign Women in a Muslim Kingdom: The Sultanahs of Aceh, 1641−1699*, 17.
[29] Fatima Mernissi, *Forgotten Queens of Islam* (Polity P, 1993).
[30] Tajul A lam Safiatuddin (r.1641-75), Nur Al-Alam Nakiyyat al-D in Shah (1675-78), 'Inayat Shah Zakiyyat al-Din (1678-88) and Kamalat Shah (1688-99). See Jacqueline Aquino Siapno, "The Politics of Gender, Islam, and Nation-State in Aceh, Indonesia: A Historical Analysis of Power, Co-Optation and Resistance" (1997).
[31] Reid, "Female Roles in Pre-Colonial Southeast Asia," 641.
[32] *Verandah of Violence: The Background to the Aceh Problem* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006), 9.

until 2005. It is important to note that GAM's ideology did not primarily revolve on Islamic-oriented nationalism. Nonetheless, Aspinal argues that Islam continued to serve as a unifying factor rather than a distinguishing characteristic in majority-Muslim Indonesia.[33] Acehnese women have been actively involved in all these movements. The people of Aceh strongly adhere to Islamic principles while also being firmly rooted in a complex system of kinship and traditional customs known as "adat" or hereditary practises.[34] Furthermore, the patriarchal ideologies propagated by the government and political Islam continue to be significantly countered by women's relative economic independence traditional status, and major engagement in local ritual activities, including religious and spiritual ones.[35] Due to the matrifocal pattern of the Acehnese inheritance system, the position of women in the local Aceh community is profoundly engrained as a manifestation of women's forces. In addition, it has played a significant role in elevating the status of women throughout history, as evidenced by their participation in various movements.

I build from Siapno's assertion that the rise of patriarchal practises in present-day Aceh cannot be solely attributed to Islam, Islamic fundamentalism, fanaticism, or terrorism. Rather, the violent tendencies shown by the New Order administration led by Suharto are primarily responsible for this phenomenon.[36] The implementation of state ideology about womanhood is evident via the use of government programmes like PKK (Pembinaan Kesejahteraan Keluarga or "Family Welfare Guidance"). These programmes have faced accusations of promoting gender ideologies that are seen as non-empowering, not just in the province of Aceh but throughout the nation. Moreover, it is noteworthy that in the specific context of Aceh, the programme is executed with the objective of fostering the notion that the attainment of an elevated status for "ideal" Muslim women may be realised via the active promotion of their involvement in domestic or home affairs. Cut Nyak Din has been recontextualised and appropriated in this instance by highlighting her role as a female combatant who not only actively participated in the resistance movement but also assumed the nurturing responsibilities of a mother figure, caring for children at home while her husband, Teuku Umar, engaged in the struggle.

[33] Edward Aspinall, "From Islamism to Nationalism in Aceh, Indonesia," *Nations and Nationalism* 13, no. 2 (2007).
[34] Reid, *Verandah of Violence: The Background to the Aceh Problem*, 9.
[35] Ma Theresa R. Milallos, "Women and Islam in Pre Nineteenth Century Aceh," *https://biblioasia.nlb.gov.sg/* 5, no. 1 (2009).
[36] Siapno, "The Politics of Gender, Islam, and Nation-State in Aceh, Indonesia: A Historical Analysis of Power, Co-Optation and Resistance," 61.

Additionally, she served as a supportive and companionate partner to Teuku Umar. This study demonstrates that the commemoration of Cut Nyak Din mostly attracts those with a significant inclination towards the concept of masculine power. The observed pattern has a high degree of consistency, spanning from the hikayat through the film produced in 1988.

1.4 Research Aims and Research Questions

1.4.1 Research Aims

The main objective of the research is to trace the contested status of Cut Nyak Din. Although it cannot analyse every single Cut Nyak Din commemoration, it offers the first extensive full-length account of her various commemorations and brings to light numerous primary sources that have not gotten systematic attention. This research examines how a heroine is constructed in Indonesia by collective memories and ideologies using various media, historical sites, and political propaganda. It aims to ascertain the values and political objectives shaping the memory of (female) heroes in Indonesia. Cut Nyak Din's legacy and memory have taken on a variety of memorial sites. This study explores how these various textual sites are utilised to create a collective memory of Cut Nyak Din and how these disparate sites can reflect conflicting visions and importance. Cut Nyak Din's historical sites have reached a significantly large population segment. Her memory is deep-seated in everyday life. Additionally, it is integrated as a reference in the wider public conversation.

I integrate my analysis of various memorial sites into a wide range of disciplines and angles, drawing on knowledge from the intersecting and multidisciplinary areas of cultural studies, gender studies, and history. The objective of this combination is to have a better understanding of the relevance of numerous and conflicting representations found in various historical texts and sites. Only a thorough examination of a diverse range of sources can deepen our knowledge of the construction of historical representations and the intricacies of their reception by various groups.[37]

I build on earlier research that has focused on heroes and commemorative practices. Earlier research has focused on heroes as historically and culturally significant figures.[38] I study

[37] Yoram Meital, "Who Is Egypt's "Hero of War and Peace"?: Article View," *History and Memory* 15, no. 1 (2003): p.150.
[38] Reuben Arthur Brower, *Hero and Saint: Shakespeare and the Graeco-Roman Heroic Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971); Diana Adesola Mafe, ""We Don't Need Another Hero": Agent 355 as an Original Black Female Hero in Y: The Last Man," *African American Review* 48, no. 1/2 (2015); Silvia Montiglio, *Myth of Hero and*

heroism as a phenomenon and will also look at an individual hero and trace the various (re)constructions and representations of Cut Nyak Din. This study analyses the implications of this construction for broader subjects in heroism studies to extend and complement the existing studies on mythic and fictional heroes by looking at a historical figure. Looking at one individual figure, I offer a comprehensive account of the diverse forces shaping commemorative processes. Examining one instance of a contested hero sheds light on the broader questions of Indonesian culture, politics and beyond.

My central research findings are: 1. The notion of female heroism in Indonesia has evolved over time in accordance with contemporary political ends and can involve contradictory political processes. 2. The contested memory across numerous sites and texts demonstrates how a hero's social and cultural construction unfolds. The construction of female heroes usually entails contests over the values and legitimacy they uphold. Politicians, nationalists, authorities, and other cultural actors in Indonesia use Cut Nyak Din and historical figure commemoration as a potent instrument to build the narrative, particularly by designating the national female heroes. This commemoration has been influenced by many key political forces that have either directly fuelled the need to remember her or contested the commemorative practice. The celebration of Cut Nyak Din via state-led and cultural forms is the focus of one of the state's commemoration efforts. 3. Dutch sources and representations were important ways through which Cut Nyak Din was commemorated in print, and they offered some resources for Indonesians to access this part of their past. Indonesian nationalists actively drew on and remediated Dutch sources to help them shape effective anti-colonial heroes.4. The Indonesian narrative of an anti-imperial national female hero comprises competing and sometimes contradictory political voices. Although today Cut Nyak Din is considered a national hero, this commemoration conceals, even as it relies on, alternative visions of her heroism created through imperial and regional perspectives. 5. The inclusion of female hero figures in the mainly male-dominated nationalist narrative is a deliberate effort to enhance the gender balance in Indonesia's historical narrative. The commemoration of female heroes in Indonesia, which seems on the surface to support ideals of gender equality, has in fact replicated gender hierarchies within diverse Indonesian narratives.

The memory of Cut Nyak Din is constantly reconstructed over time. Different key political forces have driven her commemoration or the contests over memory that have shaped

Leander : The History and Reception of an Enduring Greek Legend, vol. 19. (LONDON: I B TAURIS, 2018); Lindsay L. Penn, "The Cowboy Hero in American Fiction: Myth and Realism in "the Virginian" and "Lonesome Dove"" (ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2012)..

this commemoration. In this study, Cut Nyak Din is the subject of an in-depth historical and discourse analysis to deconstruct pre-existing preconceptions about female heroism. The second step is to examine how norms favour or disfavour Cut Nyak Din's status. Finally, the thesis seeks to identify which values privilege or undermine her standing for groups at particular times.

In this thesis, I aim to compile evidence concerning Cut Nyak Din's commemoration that I unearthed from the late nineteenth century to the late 1980s. I present the first comprehensive documentation and archive of her commemoration.

1.5 Theorising Hero(ism)

In this thesis, I seek to uncover some of the underlying cultural logics of Indonesian concepts of heroism by examining how a female hero fits, or does not fit, within commemoration regimes. My work places particular emphasis on the idea of heroism prior to Indonesian independence and offers a close look at the practice of commemoration through a focused case study.

1.5.1 Hero

The term hero comes from the Greek (*hērōs*); "hero" literally means "protector" or "defender". Heroism has been addressed in a variety of disciplines, spanning history, psychology, gender, regional and cultural studies. These diverse fields provide unique viewpoints and insights into how the term hero is multidimensional and entails complex processes. The hero or heroism specifically examined in this research is the one established by the Indonesian state, which is associated with anti-colonial sentiment and resistance through different commemorative instruments and sites of commemoration. My theoretical approach in this thesis is informed by the ongoing study highlighting the critical link between the notion of a hero and national identity and nationalism.[39] I apply critical concepts drawn from

[39] Linas Eriksonas, "National Heroes and National Identities: A Comparative Framework for Smaller Nations" (ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2002); Kevin W. Fogg, "Making an Indonesian National Hero for Lombok: The Shifting Category of Pahlawan Nasional," *Indonesia and the Malay World* (2019); Klaus H Schreiner, "The Making of National Heroes Guided Democracy to New Order, 1959-1992," in *Outward Appearances: Dressing State and Society in Indonesia*, ed. Henk Schulte Nordholt (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1997); Anthony Reid, "The Quest for an Indonesian Past," in *To Nation by Revolution: Indonesia in the 20th Century* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2010).

interdisciplinary scholarship on collective memory, masculinity, and colonial and cultural history.[40]

The notion of hero, or *Pahlawan*, has been central to Indonesia's national memory and historical commemoration. The designated heroes exemplify the patriotism and nationalism that the authority in power seeks to instil in its people. According to a famous phrase from Indonesia's first president and nationalist, of Indonesia, "*Bangsa yang besar adalah bangsa yang menghargai jasa para pahlawannya"* (The great nations are those that respect their heroes).[41] This thesis investigates the process through which Indonesian national identity is formed through the commemoration of national heroes. It becomes critical, especially for a diverse archipelago like Indonesia, where different polities were brought together under the sign of the nation, as the concept of the hero loomed large as a unifying subject of national identity.

In order to approach this topic, I have consulted a wide range of literature, which contributes to my larger perspective of the conception of hero. This corpus of literature reveals the complexities inherent in hero conceptualisation around the globe. This literature generally shows three key findings: first, the concept of hero is continually evolving. Second, masculine attributes and cultures have been inextricably intertwined to imaginative ideals of what a hero should be across diverse historical periods and in different societies. Finally, hero remembrance is both historical and political. A hero is an embodiment of historical events. Heroism is continually contested and reinterpreted, shaped by the bearing of memory politics. Because of the contestation of memory politics, the notion of heroism is continually challenged and given new meaning. My study examines the construction of a hero in Indonesia through the lens of numerous critical perspectives and a gender studies approach. I am particularly interested in how female heroes have been constructed by different social and political actors over time, culture, and society. This perspective enables us to comprehend the complex historical processes that transform female figures into national heroes. Simultaneously, it demonstrates the influence of privilege on persons upon their canonisation. Incorporating a

[40] Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); R. W. Connell and James W. Messerschmidt, "Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept," *Gender and Society* 19, no. 6 (2005); Thomas Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, & the Heroic in History : Six Lectures ; Reported, with Emendations and Additions* (D. Appleton & Co., 1841, 1841); Eriksonas, "National Heroes and National Identities: A Comparative Framework for Smaller Nations.".

[41] This statement was conveyed by President Sukarno in a speech commemorating Hero's Day on November 10, 1961.

distinctly Indonesian perspective enables us to draw similarities and contrasts with Western traditions of heroism, which I discuss following.

As in many other postcolonial societies, projects of commemoration gained a new intensity in Indonesia through the anti-imperial struggle against the Dutch and the movement to unify a diverse archipelago into an independent nation of "Indonesia.". As scholars have shown, modern nationalism often revives figures from the past and produces narratives of heroism that are relevant to current political demands.[42] Heroes in various countries are commemorated as freedom fighters, military icons,[43] or even gods.[44] Education curricula have often been utilised as major tools by governments to unify the state.[45] Such findings suggest how the search for heroes is not static. Instead, it is often a contentious process that animates competing gender norms and ideologies. Masculine culture has impacted the way heroism is valued for centuries, and women are often politically sculpted to fit a certain masculine ideal. My study aims to decipher this spectrum of constructions and to expose the complexities and contradictions inherent in the process of building female heroes.

Theories and mythologies of heroism have often been invested in Western ideals of civilisational power, elite social order, and male supremacy. The concept of the hero was important in Greek mythologies, where the category of "hero" could indicate a variety of positions, including that of a free man or a demigod. Greek visions of heroism were indebted to idealised masculinity that often focused on military deeds or those requiring great strength. As Dean Miller argues in his genealogy of Indo-European heroism, one of the crucial elements of being a hero was to die. In the world of Homer, "the heroic ideal" could be "the physically perfect young man dying for fame and escaping maturation," while "the cult of the dead hero…becomes guarantor and defender of that vital social unit [the Greek city-state]."[46] Heroism asserts strong ties to political order, with commemoration processes serving to legitimise, support, and define certain political views. In the Indonesian setting, heroes are prone to be reconstructed to suit the complex needs of a postcolonial nation, much more so as they are honoured or named after their demise. They are memorialised in various ways

[42] Liam C. Kelley, "From Moral Exemplar to National Hero: The Transformations of Trần Hưng Đạo and the Emergence of Vietnamese Nationalism," *Modern Asian Studies* 49, no. 6 (2015); David R. Marples, "Stepan Bandera: The Resurrection of a Ukrainian National Hero," *Europe-Asia Studies* 58, no. 4 (2006).
[43] Bastian Matteo Scianna, "Forging an Italian Hero? The Late Commemoration of Amedeo Guillet (1909-2010)," *European Review of History: Revue européenne d'histoire* 26, no. 3 (2019).
[44] O. Milburn, "From Hero to Ancestor, God, and Ghost: The Posthumous Career of Han Shizhong," *ARCHIV ORIENTALNI* 84, no. 1 (2016).
[45] Barbara Leigh, "Female Heroes in School Examinations: Traditions and Tensions in Creating a Gendered State," *Asian Studies Review* 17, no. 3 (1994): p.24.
[46] Dean A. Miller, *The Epic Hero* (London;Baltimore, Md;: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), pp 4-5.

subject to the person or group of people who have connections with them and exploit these ties for their advantage.

Over time, in Western cultures, the “hero” took on the connotation of an elevated individual who could be contrasted with, yet could also instruct, the rising middle classes. The concept of the hero gained new vitality in Romantic theories as a symbol of emerging national identity. Writing in the nineteenth century, Thomas Carlyle, in his most cited work: *On Heroes, Hero Worship and the Heroic in History (1841)*, proposed a paradigmatic model of the hero that responds to the question about the role of the individual in history after the Napoleonic war that swept over Europe.[47] He provides six types of hero, ranging from Shakespeare, the hero as poet and Muhammad the hero as prophet, along with other visions. He suggests that all histories and civilisations produce great persons with supreme power. He is inclusive in recognising many types of heroes from different professions, including poets and prophets, thus going beyond the military origins of the word. However, none of the heroic figures he refers to are women.

Thus, heroism was considered a form of ideal masculinity that legitimated societies based on gendered hierarchy. During the Victorian period, Carlyle's writing was influential, as he attempted to convince Victorians that the religious institutions of Britain were no longer in line with the divide but rather represented a type of idolatry that should be condemned.[48] Through his work, Carlyle tried to highlight moral commitment as the quality of a hero.[49] Nineteenth-century Western discourses of heroism, in which the hero was an exceptional and elite figure, allowed societies ways of grappling with social change by idealising heroes as figures of greatness. This scenario demonstrates that heroes are thought to possess real moral grandeur, while religious institutions are corrupt or inadequate; the heroes' greatness stems from their ability to transcend religious institutions. It is a substantial departure from the Indonesian context, which reveals a quite different story altogether. Heroes are considered as being entirely compatible with national institutions rather than being seen as transcending these institutions.

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[47] Ilia Stambler, "Heroic Power in Thomas Carlyle and Leo Tolstoy," *The European legacy, toward new paradigms* 11, no. 7 (2006).
[48] Frank M. Turner, "Victorian Scientific Naturalism and Thomas Carlyle," *Victorian studies* 18, no. 3 (1975): p.335.
[49] Apart from Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, & the Heroic in History : Six Lectures ; Reported, with Emendations and Additions*.,the classical work of William Lyon Mackenzie King, *The Secret of Heroism : A Memoir of Henry Albert Harper* (Ontario: Thomas Allen, c1919, 1916). and Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (Pantheon Books, 1949). to F. R. R. S. Raglan, *The Hero: A Study in Tradition, Myth, and Drama* (Vintage Books, 1956). are frequently cited by scholars in the study of heroism.

The idea of the hero has also lent itself to essentialised concepts of archetypes that supported mid-century views of normative psychological journeys that could be found across cultures. Americans like Joseph Campbell drew upon these frameworks in works like *The Hero with A Thousand Faces* (1949), in which myths from around the world were used to support the idea of the hero's journey as a symbolic quest for greater spiritual insight into the world. Unlike the elite forms of heroism, Campbell's understanding of heroism was symbolic and thus available to everyone. Produced at the end of the Second World War at a time of significant global crisis and transformation, Campbell's ahistorical and psychological vision of heroism spoke to mid-century fantasies of a peaceful world.

By the mid-twentieth century, scholars began to consider heroism as a social construction rather than an organic civilisational essence. Parodying the formulas found in science, Jones (1971) proposed a math formula for making a hero (PC +CB) x SD (R +1 + E) — Hero (translated as Personal Charisma plus Credulous Biographer times Social Definition including Recognition plus Imputation plus Expurgation produces HERO).[50] This parodic definition notes the importance of memorialising processes – the "credulous biographer" – to the making of a hero, suggesting how heroism is a social process in which particular polities project their own desires onto the body of a particular individual. In other words, heroes are "produced" through a range of social forces, rather than simply "being" heroes.

Western scholarly treatments of heroism have thus tended to draw upon these legacies in ways that emphasise masculine and Western dimensions of heroism. How have women been positioned within and through the concept of heroism, and how has heroism been understood beyond a Western context? The corpus of work so far has a disproportionate emphasis on male heroes and a dearth of hero notions from and in non-Western places.

1.5.2 Female hero

In Greek, the word hero was originally used for any gender. The linguistic characteristics of the English word 'hero' have established the idea as male in gender. Only in the early nineteenth century did the word 'heroine' comes into being and differentiate the hero vs heroine as the result of the women's movement in England.[51] The central narratives of female heroism have emphasised greatness, militarisation and nationalism. Around the globe, there has been a degree of complexity in defining female heroism. The female hero is defined

[50] As cited in Cathy Madora Jackson, "The Making of an American Outlaw Hero: Jesse James, Folklore and Late Nineteenth-Century Print Media" (Ph.D., University of Missouri - Columbia, 2004).
[51] Patricia Thomson, *The Victorian Heroine: A Changing Ideal, 1837-1873* (London1956).

as a heroic female with masculine identities. In the ancient world, a hero was virtually always remembered as such because he was a man and the attributes of a 'real' man were connected to heroic virtues.[52] Over the decades, the more social prominence female heroes attained or were permitted, the more the notion of female heroism started to form and become ingrained in collective memory. The notion of female heroism is centred on the framework of hegemonic masculinity, or a form of masculinity that is considered superior to other gender norms. As R.W. Connell argues, “to be culturally exalted, the pattern of masculinity must have exemplars who are celebrated as heroes”.[53]

Studies of female heroism have often romanticised women in male-dominated warfare.[54] In the societies where they are revered, these exceptional female heroes generally tend to reaffirm rather than overturn gendered hierarchies. In this thesis, I show how elements of these processes apply in Indonesia. I build on significant scholarship on female warriors in Southeast Asia, which examines how women warriors were active in a traditionally male-dominated domain. Tobias Rettig and Vina A. Lanzona, who undertake studies on women warriors in Southeast Asia, examine how women warriors fought in a traditionally male-dominated world. They argue that conceptualising warfare as the preeminent but male-dominated arena for displaying national allegiances has had significant implications for the place of women in regional historiography. This Southeast Asia region's history has been shaped by men who have generally regarded women's activities as irrelevant to the national narrative.[55] Only women who have conformed to male-oriented expectations have been visible in this narrative.

The work of Jacqueline Siapno has also been central to this study. Scholars likel Anthony Reid[56] and Jacqueline Siapno[57] supported the notion that the anti-colonial fight against the Dutch is remembered most prominently in Acehnese (and Indonesian) political memory as a physical revolution led by a woman. She continued by asserting that when Acehnese and Indonesians think about the Aceh war against the Dutch, Cut Nyak Din is the first person they think of. There are other largely unexamined sources that we can turn to

[52] Philippa Read, "Female Heroism in First World War France : Representations and Lived Experiences" (ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2016). p.11.
[53] R. Connell, *The Men and the Boys* (University of California Press, 2000)., p.84.
[54] For example, Rani of Jhansi in India, Joan of Arc in France and Kurmanjan Datka in Kyrgistan and many more.
[55] Tobias Rettig and Vina A. Lanzona, "Women Warriors in Southeast Asia," (Florence: Routledge, 2020), pp.285-86.
[56] Anthony Reid, "The Nationalist Quest for an Indonesian Past," in *Perception of the Past in Southeast Asia* (Singapore: Heinemann Educational Books, 1979).
[57] Jacqueline Siapno, *Gender, Islam, Nationalism and the State in Aceh: The Paradox of Power, Co-Optation and Resistance* (New York;London;: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002). p.xvi.

understand better the historical and political context in which she lived – that is, the daily reports of the Dutch colonial police.[58] Through fieldwork in the Netherlands and Indonesia, my study contributes by investigating a number of these significant unexplored sources. Many academics, including Siapno (2002), have paid attention to the phenomenon of women who play central roles in warfare comparable to those of their male counterparts. In addition to Cut Nyak Din, other prominent women at the time were Cut Meutia, Pocut Baren, Teungku Fakinah, and Malahayati; all were wives of deceased male nationalist leaders. Despite the fact that many scholars have claimed that the ideology of a sacred line of succession and status has been a major support for women's positions, this research has shown that other factors, such as the politicisation of memory, are more crucial to the position of female heroism in Aceh and Indonesia.The stories of great women leaders, such as Cut Nyak Din, have encouraged Aceh's people to integrate with movement forces and made them more militant. People in Aceh have gone from fearing or avoiding the Indonesian government and military to directly confronting, protesting, rejecting, and taking up arms against it. Examples include female widows from numerous villages travelling all the way to Jakarta to protest in Parliament and drivers going on strike to protest violence.[59] According to Siapno, the fact that Aceh was the site of a protracted thirty-year war against Dutch colonialism (the previously mentioned Aceh War, 1873–1903), as well as the source of conflict and rebellion, shaped the Acehnese people to go from fearing or avoiding the Indonesian government and military to confronting, protesting, rejecting, and taking up arms against it. And I contend that the fact that so many women engaged in this lengthy, bloody war in the past, like Cut Nyak Din, has significant ramifications for the current discourse, tension, and position for women in politics, society, and movements. Previous scholars' study numerous types of heroines: fictional heroines in movies and literature, non-fictional figures in history, and heroines as national heroes.[60] These studies essentially investigate how these female heroes attempt to fit into a certain type of contemporary heroism model and how they are missing in the commemoration while the male hero doesn't seem exposed to this concern. These studies demonstrate that the regions where the research is conducted have a considerable gender egalitarian practice; however, broadly speaking, the participation and the act of commemoration by a country for a woman in the

[58] Ibid., 25.
[59] Ibid., 32.
[60] Rikke Schubart, *Super Bitches and Action Babes: The Female Hero in Popular Cinema, 1970-2006* (Jefferson, N.C: McFarland & Co, 2007); Jacqueline Siapno, "Alternative Filipina Heroines: Contested Tropes in Leftist Feminisms," (1995); Richard Rossiter, "'Heroines' in Australian Fiction: 'Myths' of Adolescence," (1992); Danilyn Rutherford, "Unpacking a National Heroine: Two Kartinis and Their People," *Indonesia* 55, no. 55 (1993); Janice Hume, "Defining the Historic American Heroine: Changing Characteristics of Heroic Women in Nineteenth-Century Media," *Journal of Popular Culture* 31, no. 1 (1997); Joyce Lebra-Chapman, *The Rani of Jhansi: A Study in Female Heroism in India* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1986).

history of revolution remains limited. My research suggests that the gender egalitarianism often doesn't apply in the act of commemorating women in history.

Similarly, in Indonesia, designating a female as a national hero can be understood as a progressive step made by an authority towards promoting gender parity. However, the "hero" category often asks women to conform to standards of military prowess based on ideals of masculinity and the social role of men. In this thesis, I show how the bias of "hero" towards normative ideas of masculinity and gender hierarchies is also at work in commemorating an Indonesian female hero. By analysing the case of Cut Nyak Din as the case study of female warriors in Indonesia, I offer a nuanced vision of how this process works.

Female heroism and warrior literature have predominantly featured figures from the West. And scholars' interest in this new subject is still confined. My work seeks to fill a void in the literature on women in the revolutionary struggle in Indonesia. This research contributes to the body of knowledge by elucidating and analysing the phenomenon and role of women in revolutions.

Women can become leaders in contexts where their status, particularly in respect to strong males, was apparent. This phenomenon has reverberated across Southeast Asia, as shown by Reid (1988) with the account of "two sisters who led the victorious defence of Phuket in 1785: Queen Suriyothai, who was murdered defending Ayutthaya in 1564; and Lady Mo, who recovered Khorat in 1826." He argues that it was customary for prominent rulers in the area to surround themselves with enormous numbers of women, some of whom served as bodyguards. Reid especially highlights the situation of Aceh, where Iskandar Muda of Aceh had 3,000 women in his corps, and many later Acehnese kings similarly had women as commanders of his naval force "for he will trust no other".[61] This adds another item of substantial evidence that the women who are recognised in Southeast Asia are often of elite status. My research extends Anthony Reid's argument that "If such militant heroines played a larger role in Southeast Asia than elsewhere, it is most likely because status was more prominent than gender, and women were not excluded from taking the lead if the occasion required it."[62] Histories of commemoration show the larger conundrum of women in politics in Asia, where the comparatively high number of women in important positions is proof of the

[61] See Reid, "Female Roles in Pre-Colonial Southeast Asia," pp.637-38.
[62] Ibid. p.637.

relevance of elite status (kin to renowned men) rather than a reflection of gender equality in general.

Male culture has impacted the way heroism is viewed for centuries. Women are constructed politically to conform to a particular masculine archetype. My study aims to decipher this spectrum of constructions and expose the complexities and contradictions inherent in making female heroes.

1.5.3 The Hero (*Pahlawan*) in Indonesia

Indonesian ideas of heroism have taken shape within a broader regional context. Southeast Asian cultures have heroes in ways that are quite similar to one another. Shaharuddin bin Maaruf examines the notion of the hero in Malay culture via the lens of three great Malay figures: Malay warrior Hang Tuah, Filipino patriot Jose Rizal, and Indonesian General Sudirman.[63] It can be seen these three masculine personalities represent important aspects of Malay society's vision of heroism. In both premodern and modern hierarchies, Malay ideas of heroism often associate the term with elite social status. Shaharuddin bin Maaruf states, “The Malay elite’s prevalent conception of the hero is a combination of the feudal and materialistic types...” [64] Similar to Western concepts, Malay discourses normalised male characters as heroes. Concepts of heroism in Indonesia arose from broader Malay cultural discourses that combined feudal aristocratic status with postcolonial resistance. These discourses influenced the evolution of Indonesian conceptions of heroism.

In Indonesia, the term for “hero” is usually “Pahlawan.” The term *Pahlawan* in Indonesia draws upon a lexical genealogy from Persian, where it is defined as “hero,” and from Sanskrit, where it is defined as “a mighty man."[65] *Pahlawan* is a loanword from Persian that translates as "wrestler”.[66] In Indonesia, “Pahlawan” is a specifically nationalist construction.

The evolution of the established and bureaucratic program, National Hero, with the term both in Malay and Bahasa Indonesia[67] highlights how the term *Pahlawan* (hero) has grown to

[63] Shaharuddin bin Maaruf, *Concept of a Hero in Malay Society* (Singapore: Eastern University Press, 1984).
[64] Ibid.
[65] *Orang pahlawan* (Persian), *orang perkasa* (Sanskrit), *orang perwira* (Sk), *anak laki-laki*. W. G. Shellabear, *An English-Malay Dictionary* (1916).
[66] G. E. Marrison, "Persian Influences in Malay Life (1280-1650)," *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 28, no. 1 (169) (1955). pp.52-69.
[67] Malay and Bahasa Indonesia stem from the same source and are mutually intelligible.

imply an idea that is bold, powerful, and highly masculine.[68] Exemplary visions in such dictionaries as Choy Lai and Wilkinson present normative visions of a *Pahlawan* as a male historical personage, such as Iskandar Muda and Hang Tuah (historical figures from Aceh and Malaysia)[69]. In the twentieth century, the concept of *Pahlawan* was redefined to specify participation within resistance struggles and anti-colonial activism. By the 1950s, the term began to signal not simply martial excellence, but also anti-imperial resistance. This shifting connotation made it suitable to become the keyword of Indonesia's national hero program.

While the term hero "*Pahlawan*" can denote any gender in Bahasa Indonesia, it is anchored in linguistic categories that privilege masculinity. The suffix 'wan' indicates male reference in Bahasa Indonesia.[70] Hence the word appears in male form. "While these words can be used as generics, corresponding female parallels do not exist".[71] Marlis Hellinger and Hadumod Bussmann suggest that it can perhaps be assumed that the professions or activities indicated by this generic noun have generally been performed by men and have "not considered being important to name women".[72]

Pahlawan's feminine equivalent is *Srikandi*. Later, this term was also used for female athletes, particularly female archers; in fact, the name *Srikandi* was derived from the name of one of Arjuna's wives (a puppet character from the Javanese epic *Mahabharata*) who had great bravery and archery prowess. This variously gendered conception of the hero is tapped into and complicated by the term *Pahlawan.*

Benedict Anderson explores Javanese *wayang* (puppet) figures in his book *Mythology and the Tolerance of the Javanese*. He describes *Srikandi* as:

> Talkative, strong willed warm, hearted fond of hunting and an excellent archer …. She enjoys travelling about Java, either in search of her periodically missing husband or seeking adventures of her own. In the Indian original of the Mahabharata, Srikandi is really a man who has been changed into a woman. In Java, this is not the case; but perhaps the "masculine "side of her character owes something to this long-

[68] Hoesein Djajadiningrat, *Atjehsch-Nederlandsch Woordenboek* (Batavia: Landsdrukkerij, 1934); W. J. S. Poerwadarminta, *Kamus Umum Bahasa Indonesia*, Tjet ke-2. ed. (Djakarta: Perpustakaan Pergaruan Kementerian Pengajaran Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan., 1954); R. J. Wilkinson, *A Malay-English Dictionary (Romanised)* (New York;London: Macmillan, 1959).
[69] Choy Lai, *Kamus Kembangan : Bahasa Malaysia, Bahasa Cina, Bahasa Inggeris* (Seri Kembangan, Selangor: United Pub. House, 2010). and Wilkinson, *A Malay-English Dictionary (Romanised)*.
[70] Wan for male and Wati for female reference, as Wartawan-Wartawati, Sastrawan-Sastrawati, etc.
[71] Marlis Hellinger and Hadumod Bussmann, *Gender across Languages: The Linguistic Representation of Women and Men*, vol. 9-11. (Amsterdam;Philadelphia;: J. Benjamins, 2001). p.207.
[72] Ibid.

> forgotten source. For the Javanese, Srikandi is the honoured type of the active, energetic, disputatious, generous, go-getting woman.[73]

Although *Srikandi* was taken from the Javanese epic puppet character in *Mahabharata*, this term has been used and recast generally to imply a brave female warrior. *Srikandi* is portrayed as a dangerous woman in all versions of the story since she has equal armed skills as males (in archery). Additionally, it was reported that since her marriage to Arjuna did not have a son, *Srikandi* assumed the role of a soldier to go to battle. *Srikandi* is regarded as a model of female prowess, particularly in military matters.[74] The Indonesian army has appropriated *Srikandi* as a model. President Sukarno and the general populace of Indonesia have popularly referred to the first female guerrilla who arrived in West Irian (West Papua) during the liberation battle as "our *Srikandi*".[75]

Figure 1-11 Herlina Kasim, Srikandi Trikora (fourth from left) during the West Irian liberation operation.[76]

Appreciation for female commanders labelled *Srikandi* is generally motivated by their military qualities, which are typically comparable to those of men. Additionally, as Anthony Reid

[73] Benedict Anderson, *Mythology and the Tolerance of the Javanese* (New York: Modern Indonesia Project, Southeast Asia Program, Dept. of Asian Studies, Cornell University, 1965), pp.21-22.
[74] Peter Carey and Vincent Houben, "Spirited Srikandhis and Sly Sumbadras the Social, Political and Economic Role of Women at the Central Javanese Courts in the 18th and Early 19th Centuries," in *Indonesian Women in Focus: Past and Present Notions*, ed. E. Locher-Scholten, A. Niehof, and Werkgroep Indonesische Vrouwenstudies (Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Foris, 1987), p.13.
[75] Anderson, *Mythology and the Tolerance of the Javanese*. p.26.
[76] https://www.malangtimes.com/baca/24367/20180124/145234/si-pending-emas-asal-malang-dari-kuli-tinta-menjadi-pejuang-trikora

puts it, “Semi-legendary warrior women from the less patriarchal remote past, like…sexually-ambiguous *Srikandi* of the Javanese wayang [puppet] … recycled only to show that women too could sacrifice for the nation.” [77] It would seem, "sacrifice for the country" is the cornerstone of all forms of heroism in Indonesia. The definition of heroism promoted by the state is narrowed down. The conception of "hero" has been confined by the government to mean "sacrifice in military terms for the nation."

Arjuna, accompanied by his panakawan (clown-retainers), Semar, Garèng and Petruk, instructs his wife, Srikandhi, in the art of archery. A scene from the wayang plot (lakon), 'Srikandhi maguru manah'.
From J. Kats, Het Javaansche Toneel; I. De Wajang Poerwa (Welte-vreden: Volkslectuur, 1923), p.327.

Figure 1-12 Picture taken from Carey, P., & Houben, V. (1987)

In this regard and drawing on Barbara Watson Andaya , I argue that women have been marginalised in two ways throughout Indonesia's national history. To begin, Indonesia's national history narrative emphasises male-dominated themes such as inter-state diplomacy, political leadership, and combat, all of which are dominated by males and in which recorded

[77] Anthony Reid, "Urban Respectability and the Maleness of (Southeast) Asian Modernity," (2014): p.161.

sources place a priority on male actions.[78] Second, incorporating female viewpoints into a history often depicted in terms of an oppressed group, the rise of leaders, a popular awakening, and a victorious revolution has proven to be exceedingly challenging. I seek to elaborate on this conclusion in my study, which finds that most of the written or recorded commemorations of Cut Nyak Din between the 1880s and 1980s were produced by men. In my conclusion, I suggest the importance of future research that looks at women's perspectives, particularly Acehnese and Indonesian women's perspectives, which may exist in oral rather than written form. In Indonesia, women writing history is a rarity in terms of quantity and interest; male authorship predominates in official Indonesian history. Southeast Asian historians rarely felt compelled to incorporate a "female" perspective, and when they did, it was almost always as an appendix to the national epic.[79]

In this study, I analyse Indonesian concepts of female heroism within the larger framework of postcolonial conceptions of female heroism. A global study explored how nationalists use female heroes. In India's Rani of Jhansi, a female hero from the past was recreated to serve as a national symbol. Similarly, Agustina de Aragon, Spain's national hero, was invoked. History and literature typically involve female heroes to address the interests and concerns of certain interest groups.

In Indonesia, citizens are considered heroic if they are willing to die for their country's independence. To provide more background for the concept of female heroism in Southeast Asia, the distinction is evident in discussion of a Philippine alternative heroine. Siapno discovered that the traditional trope of martyred women in Philippine literature has been reversed. Writers create an alternative heroine who will not merely "die for," but will "kill for," independence. She observes that these heroines do not fit the current political order, particularly in terms of patriarchy and class struggle.[80]

Similarly, Cut Nyak Din embodies this subversive ideal, since she is not only prepared to die, but also to kill. Indonesian and Acehnese troops, on the other hand, are constantly devising new strategies to suppress this gender subversion. Cut Nyak Din kills, but she is also a devout Muslim, a good wife, and other identities that fit into Indonesia's gender hierarchy. Similarly, Cut Nyak Din used and created narratives for two dominant cultures. The first is to preserve Indonesian nationalism; the second is to be utilised by Acehnese to spark Acehnese

[78] Barbara Watson Andaya, "Studying Women and Gender in Southeast Asia," *International journal of Asian studies* 4, no. 1 (2007): p. 114.
[79] Ibid. p.115.
[80] Siapno, "Alternative Filipina Heroines: Contested Tropes in Leftist Feminisms," p.236.

nationalism, which is related to anti-Indonesian separatists. My study draws not only from a central perspective but also from a regional perspective, and shows how the national and regional perspectives interweave and interact with each other. And I further argue that the political dominance in the central administration and bureaucracy has somehow excluded the local history of myth that in some ways is essential as the base knowledge to understand the national heroes who are essentially cultural heroes in Indonesia.

Female heroism, especially in the pantheon of Indonesian national heroes, draws a very minimal number of scholars. Barbara Leigh is the only author who investigates the representation of female heroes in educational materials. She discovered that education was a vital tool that the New Order Government used to unify the people and carry out national objectives in Indonesia. Additionally, the inclusion of female heroes is a requirement of the centralised obligatory curriculum. Their characteristics, emphasised in schoolbooks, include "love of country, love of husband, and love of children”[81].

Rutherford and Jean Gelman Taylor are interested in deconstructing national heroes in Indonesia. The focus of their attention is on Kartini, a national hero from Central Java who is well-known for her efforts as an activist for women's emancipation.[82] Kartini has served as an emblem for female heroism in Indonesia in several ways. The national hero program has been criticised for being both male-dominated and Java-centric. Scholars' attention to the question of national heroes has also been concentrated on themes and concerns relating to the Java region. Kartini was often criticised and compared with Cut Nyak Din, especially during celebrations of Kartini Day, which honours her birthday every April 21. The Indonesian people found Kartini's heroism, which did not include the use of force, to be atypical. One of the most frequent contrasts is typified in the figure below.

[81] Leigh, "Female Heroes in School Examinations: Traditions and Tensions in Creating a Gendered State."
[82] Rutherford, "Unpacking a National Heroine: Two Kartinis and Their People."; Jean Gelman Taylor, "Kartini in Her Historical Context," *Bijdragen tot de taal-, land- en volkenkunde* 145, no. 2 (1989).

Figure 1-13 Cut Nyak Dien: Hated by Coloniser vs KartiniL Loved by Coloniser[83]

The commemoration of heroes has always been a male-dominated phenomenon. Research on the national heroes of the Indonesian islands of Riau, Lombok, and Sumba[84] demonstrates that the protagonists of the vast majority of Pahlawan Nasional works are men. The most frequently discussed female hero in literature is Kartini (1879–1904), a Javanese royal princess who advocated for women's emancipation and was a pioneer in the field of women's education in the Java region. Kartini stood out for her refusal to conform to Javanese cultural norms and her exceptional achievements in the field of women's emancipation. Some letters and papers from Kartini's personal life have been left behind. Numerous scholars have dissected her writings and legacy.[85] Kartini is celebrated and portrayed as a feminist activist and role model due to her various writings and activism on behalf of women. Mahy concludes that commemorating Kartini entails "reproducing generic notions of Indonesian femininity; most problematically, with women shown as either heroes or victims."[86]

On the same day as her nomination as a national hero on 2 May 1964, President Sukarno established Kartini Day as a national holiday. Kartini's heroism, which did not include being in the armed forces, struck the Indonesian community as exceptional since Kartini, particularly on Kartini Day, was constantly criticised and compared to Cut Nyak Din. Despite the general trend toward masculinising female heroes, Kartini stands out as an exception.

[83] https://steemit.com/story/@jhonpower/why-the-netherlands-prefer-kartini-not-cut-nyak-dien-or-dewi-sartika-c678f4b706ebc
[84] Timothy P. Barnard, "Local Heroes and National Consciousness; the Politics of Historiography in Riau," *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 153, no. 4 (1997); Fogg, "Making an Indonesian National Hero for Lombok: The Shifting Category of Pahlawan Nasional."; J. A. Hoskins, "The Headhunter as Hero - Local Traditions and Their Reinterpretation in National History," *Amer. Ethnol* 14, no. 4 (1987).
[85] Paul Bijl and Grace V. S. Chin, *Appropriating Kartini: Colonial, National and Transnational Memories of an Indonesian Icon* (ISEAS–Yusof Ishak Institute, 2020); Petra Mahy, "Being Kartini: Ceremony and Print Media in the Commemoration of Indonesia's First Feminist," *Intersections: Gender, History & Culture in the Asian Context*, no. 28 (2012); Rutherford, "Unpacking a National Heroine: Two Kartinis and Their People."; Taylor, "Kartini in Her Historical Context."
[86] Mahy, "Being Kartini: Ceremony and Print Media in the Commemoration of Indonesia's First Feminist," p.13.

Women who serve in traditionally male-inspired military roles are celebrated as heroes. Nonetheless, Kartini is more renowned than Cut Nyak Din.

After 21 national heroes had been chosen by 1959, it took another five years, in 1964, for the first female hero to be featured in the program. Two individuals from the Aceh region (Cut Nyak Din and Cut Meutia) and two from central Java (Kartini and Dr. Tjipto Mangunkusumo) were the four national heroes of the period. Nationalists have made acknowledging the three female heroes (Kartini, Cut Nyak Din and Cut Meutia) a central tenet of their movement for a more gender-egalitarian society. The year 1964 was not only pivotal because she became a national hero, but also because it was the year, she first began to get widespread critical acclaim. This recognition was very meaningful for the legacy of Cut Nyak Din. Because of this, it wasn't until 1959, at the governor of Aceh's behest, that her burial site was unearthed in the remote town of Sumedang in West Java, where she had been exiled before her death in 1908.

Cut Nyak Din is renowned as a female anti-resistance fighter who battled along with Teuku Umar, both made national heroes, respectively, in 1964 and 1973. She was a guerrilla leader and is sometimes represented as Umar's companion. Sarah Nicholson found that "Female always defined by her sexual difference, tend to be in contrast or relation to the active [male] hero, she 'represents' something for him: it is she who waits …, she who receive…and she who is abducted…"[87] Similarly, the female heroes in Indonesia are constantly associated with and related to their significant male. In this regard, Leigh draws the particular conclusion "love of nation, love of husband and love of children" are at the heart of the Indonesian female hero discourse.[88] Female participation in battle is remarkable in many cultural contexts. Even if women participate in the process, their elevated social position due to their families' stellar reputations makes that fact easy to establish. Considering this, Reid argues:

> "[E]very culture is probably inclined to romanticize and celebrate those exceptional women who emerge to save a desperate situation …If such militant heroines played a larger role in Southeast Asia than elsewhere, it is probably because status was more prominent than gender, and women were not excluded from taking the lead if the occasion required it" [89]

In many other regions, male nationalists urged women to downplay their rights to form a cohesive nationalist movement. However, there is little indication that Cut Nyak Din fought

[87] Sarah Nicholson, "The Problem of Woman as Hero in the Work of Joseph Campbell," *Feminist Theology* 19, no. 2 (2011).
[88] Leigh, "Female Heroes in School Examinations: Traditions and Tensions in Creating a Gendered State," p.26.
[89] Reid, "Female Roles in Pre-Colonial Southeast Asia," p.637.

for women's rights. She differs from Kartini in that she is a powerful woman who does not seem to be driven by anything like feminism (i.e., protests against patriarchy, broader claims for the rights of or opportunities for women, or other projects of gender emancipation). None depict Cut Nyak Din in the 1960s as a "feminist" or "women's rights" figure. Commemorating Cut Nyak Din as a hero accomplishes nothing to enhance the position of women in general; she is celebrated as a hero because she does the same actions as men.

1.6 Critical Concept

1.6.1 (Collective) Memory

The interdisciplinary field of memory studies has formed the methodological and conceptual foundations of this thesis. I use the notion of "collective memory" in particular. I analyse the operations of "memory works" throughout time, culture, and society in this research by examining a variety of commemorative devices that represent tension over culture and society.

This chapter defines a new set of terms that refute some assumptions and arguments for the general perspective of collective memory. I base my work on the notion that "history" and "collective memory" are separate entities. We learn about histories, but we also have memories because "collective memory," as opposed to "history," suggests a relationship of descent and intimacy that links the past to the present. Collective memory's entire premise is that not every individual possesses the memory. However, because they are a member of a group culture that holds the memory, the mechanisms that define the boundaries of collective memory reflect those we associate with ethnic and national communities.

The German religious historians Jan and Aleida Assmann confirmed the notion of "communicative memory" in the late 1990s. They called communicative memory a "collective notion for all knowledge that governs conduct and experience within a society's interactive framework and that is handed down through generations via repeated social practise and initiation". "Communicative memory gives no stable point which would tie it to the ever-expanding past in time."[90] They claim it shows a fluid, unstable, and unified memory. However, memory may be permanent or stable via a cultural construction, separating it from ordinary memory.

[90] Jan Assmann and John Czaplicka, "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity," *New German Critique* 65, no. 65 (1995): p.127.

Lynn A. Struve, Melody Niwot, Judith Tydor Baumel, and Kevin Bruyneel,[91] for example, examine the concept of collective or cultural memory in their respective countries and demonstrate how the tools of cultural formation have been integral to memory formation. According to Assmann and Czaplick, memory is constructed through cultural realisations such as text, rites, monuments, and institutional communication such as recitation, practice, and observance.[92] Numerous terms for collective memory are interchangeable, including special, public,[93] and cultural memory.[94]

1.6.1.1 Commemoration

My thesis is concerned to the notion of "commemoration" as a subset of memory practice. Commemoration is distinct in that it is a formal, organised activity, frequently associated with the state or an institution, that intentionally encourages reflection on the past for the purpose of advancing the present. According to the accounts of memory by eminent French historians Nora (1997) and Hartog (2012), commemorations are seen to be epiphenomenal of a larger historical transition and are stated to be 'symptoms' that reflect a particular connection to time.[95] However, in practice, this idea has become universal and is no longer only a French phenomenon. One can see that the idea is used not just in matters pertaining to France-related issues but also in other regions of the globe. This study examines a variety of commemoration activities, such as fiction, the national heroes' program, film, and museums. In terms of methodology, I start my investigation by looking at representations of Cut Nyak Din that are not official commemorations (colonial archives), but which serve as the basis for future formal commemorative endeavours. Scholars have been keen to show that collective memories are made in partial and selective ways, often conspicuously eliminating important legacies for political purposes. I follow in the tradition of memory studies in evaluating the power battles that are fought over commemorative sites. The commemoration practice is social and political since it includes the coordination of individual and collective memories, which can appear consensual but are actually the consequence of contention, struggle, and even destruction. This result informs this study's argument. And while commemorative practice

[91] Lynn A. Struve, "Chinese Memory Makes a Martyr: The Case of Huang Chunyao (1605–1645)," *History & Memory* 25, no. 2 (2013).; Melody Niwot, "Narrating Genoa: Documentaries of the Italian G8 Protests of 2001 and the Persistence and Politics of Memory," *History and Memory* 23, no. 2 (2011).; Judith Tydor Baumel, "The Heroism of Hannah Senesz: An Exercise in Creating Collective National Memory in the State of Israel," *Journal of Contemporary History* 31, no. 3 (1996).; Kevin Bruyneel, "The King's Body: The Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial and the Politics of Collective Memory," *History & Memory* 26, no. 1 (2014).
[92] Ibid. p.129.
[93] John Bodnar, *Remaking America - Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (1992).
[94] Assmann and Czaplicka, "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity."
[95] Kenan Van De Mieroop, "The 'Age of Commemoration' as a Narrative Construct: A Critique of the Discourse on the Contemporary Crisis of Memory in France," *Rethinking History* 20, no. 2 (2016): p.180.

is a worldwide phenomenon, this research examines it in Indonesia. The process of selecting what to remember/celebrate involves ambivalence, inconsistency, and conflicting interests.

Commemorative projects are inherently representational in nature. In cultural studies, the notion of representation has taken a significant place in debates. In this research, I examine the representation of the variety of historical texts and sites to get a comprehensive understanding of Cut Nyak Din's historical representations, particularly the complexities surrounding her acceptance and idealisation by different political forces. An examination of verbal, visual, and architectural texts is conducted, with consideration given to the processes by which these texts were produced and/or received. Cut Nyak Din's representation as an Indonesian national hero and a symbol of heroism in Aceh is examined in this research due to the collective memory established by the nation, different people and institutions in the aftermath of her death in 1908. Memory is investigated through the lens of representation.

The thesis traces Cut Nyak Din's historical evolution into a hero across time, society, and culture. Accordingly, I chronicle the construction's history through various forms of commemoration. "Commemorative activity is by definition social and political in nature, as it entails the coordination of individual and collective memories, the outcomes of which may seem to be consensual but are really the consequence of severe contestation, conflict, and, in some cases, annihilation."[96] Two central principles of this work that underlie my thesis are that commemoration is a representational record across time and that it intersects with personal and political decisions over what to remember and what not to remember.

1.6.2 Hegemonic Masculinity

R. W. Connell coined the term hegemonic masculinity in the early 1980s. It is broadly defined as a tradition that justifies men's predominance and legitimises women's subjugation and other marginalising practises in society. According to Connell and Messerschmidt, hegemonic masculinity embodied the most venerated aspect of male identity at the time.[97] All other men were compelled to situate themselves in relation to it. It conceptualised and justified women's global subordination to men. It was supremacy achieved through culture, institutions, and persuasion.[98]

[96] Doreen Lee, "Styling the Revolution: Masculinities, Youth, and Street Politics in Jakarta, Indonesia," *Journal of Urban History* 37, no. 6 (2011).
[97] Connell and Messerschmidt, "Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept."
[98] Ibid.. *Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept*. p.832.

Sonja van Wichelen[99] and Doreen Lee[100] have examined the application of this notion in Indonesia. According to Wichelen three distinct, interrelated aspects contribute to the formation of hegemonic masculinity in Indonesia: first, the concept of "fatherism" (bapakism); second, the strong dominance of Javanese-centric ethnicity; and third, nationalism. Concerning the third concept, she clarifies that it was not Islam or culture, race, or ethnicity that were invoked to oppose the Dutch, but a "modern" sense of nationhood inspired by Western concepts of nationalism. Thus, Javanese bapakism and “Indonesiannes” established and moulded hegemonic masculinity.

Furthermore, Lee (2011) in an article on the evolution of Jakarta's urban political culture, notes how *Pemuda* [youth] historical narratives have favoured the memorialisation of masculine political heroic ideals.[101] She argues that women were deemed incapable of being brave and committed (in Indonesian, *militan*, from the English "militant") enough to be trusted on the front lines, despite the fact that a number of prominent female activists emerged from the 1990s student movement, and several prominent student organisations self-identified as radical included at least a few female members.[102] Throughout history, the celebration of Cut Nyak Din has often served to legitimise and expand certain expressions of hegemonic masculinity. She may seem to be an independent, militant woman, but she really exhibits "hegemonic masculine" characteristics that argue for the importance of both militant men and devout women.

I build on Wichelen[103] and Lee’s[104] model of hegemonic masculinity in an Indonesian context. In this research, since Cut Nyak Din is one of the few women included in the canon, I investigate whether her inclusion corresponds with hegemonic masculinity that operates in Indonesia. Most scholars use the term "hegemonic masculinity" to describe men's actions. However, I examine how "hegemonic masculinity" influences how women are presented. Cut Nyak Din is commemorated in ways that reaffirm many of Indonesia's hegemonic masculinity concepts, while also sometimes being constructed in opposition to them. My thesis advances understanding of how female figures contribute to comprehending the structure and dynamics of hegemonic masculinity that operates in Indonesia.

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[99] Sonja van Wichelen, "Polygamy Talk and the Politics of Feminism: Contestations over Masculinity in a New Muslim Indonesia," *Journal of International Women's Studies* 11, no. 1 (2009).
[100] Lee, "Styling the Revolution: Masculinities, Youth, and Street Politics in Jakarta, Indonesia."
[101] Ibid. p.937.
[102] Ibid. p.944.
[103] Wichelen, "Polygamy Talk and the Politics of Feminism: Contestations over Masculinity in a New Muslim Indonesia."
[104] Lee, "Styling the Revolution: Masculinities, Youth, and Street Politics in Jakarta, Indonesia."

The concept of exemplary women apparently serves as the antidote to hegemonic masculinity. This thesis demonstrates that Cut Nyak Din is constructed as an exemplary woman while simultaneously being inclined to conform to hegemonic masculinity. Cut Nyak Din is constantly described in relation to powerful men (the first and second husbands: Teuku Ibrahim Lamnga and Teuku Umar. As well as her father, Teuku Nanta Setia). And now to other male figures in the lineage. Therefore, it can be suggested that Dutch narratives constantly evaluate Cut Nyak Din in reference to masculinity (ideal or non-ideal).

The role of Cut Nyak Din's lone brother, Teuku Rajoet, has not received much attention. As was already reported, Teuku Nanta, the father of Cut Nyak Din, would rather invest in Cut Nyak Din, his daughter, than his son. According to the early Dutch texts, Cut Nyak Din was "against" her brother. Teuku Rajoet's place in history is not as well established as his sister Cut Nyak Din. It is partially due to him being described pejoratively as an "echte idioot" (‘real idiot’). According to Hooijer (1895); Langen (1897) and Heutsz (1893), Rajoet is known as the "Uleebalang doll" because, while being a pure Uleebalang by ancestry[105], Cut Nyak Din takes on a more dominant role in the clan. In Uleebalangship, this is an exceptional phenomenon. Cut Nyak Din was reared in line with hegemonic masculinity ideals since her brother was deemed unfit for leadership and her family selected her for this position. This kind of interaction continues to exist in subsequent accounts of Cut Nyak Din. How Cut Nyak Din is defined in the early Dutch narrative is reflected in the later Aceh and Indonesian accounts, where Cut Nyak Din is pictured flanked by influential male people in politics and government. Her eventual visibility resulted from this association. The Dutch treatment of Cut Nyak Din with respect may also shape the reputation of the Dutch in history as a ‘good’ and ‘civilised’ coloniser.

1.7 Methodology: Culture historical analysis of sites

While this study is limited to the Indonesian region, it advances the increasing body of knowledge in the multidisciplinary fields of gender, postcolonial society, and memory studies. By evaluating a single female hero as the case study, this research employs multiple methods, including cultural-historical analysis of commemoration sites and archival research. These approaches enable my study to uncover several forms of public memory and their political construction within the contexts of colonial, official, and vernacular viewpoints. I employ a

[105] Karel Frederik Hendrik van Langen, *Beknopt Alfabetisch Informatieboekje Betreffende Groot Atjehsche Personen En Aangelegenheden*, ed. Karel Frederik Hendrik van Langen ([Kota-radja : s.n.], 1897); G. B. Hooijer, *De Krijgsgeschiedenis Van Nederlandsch-Indië Van 1811 Tot 1894* (Den Haag : Van Cleef Batavia : G. Kolff & Co, 1895). and J. B. van Heutsz, *De Onderwerping Van Atjeh* ('s-Gravenhage : Van Cleef Batavia : Kolff & Co, 1893)..

cultural studies approach that incorporates a variety of analytical methods. These approaches combine archival and popular cultural evidence from Dutch, Indonesian, and Acehnese sources, imperial records, early journalistic and fictional accounts by Dutch writers, key translations of such sources into Bahasa Indonesia, popular Indonesian film and fiction, to provide a comprehensive account of the competing gender and national politics underlying the commemoration of a female hero.

This thesis primarily analyses textual forms of commemoration and relies on textual evidence, supplemented by interviews and participant observation. Most of these textual sources reflect male perspectives. My thesis focuses on these textual sources because they form an important basis for understanding influential commemorations of Cut Nyak Din. However, as I note in my conclusion, understanding the full range of voices, especially from women and from Aceh, will require us to look at oral and other sources. Although this work is outside the historical scope covered by my thesis, it is an important direction for my future research.

The approach relies on cultural memoryscapes and multi-sited methodologies. Cultural memoryscapes constitutes not only different sites and social frameworks of memory, but also different regimes of memory.[106] Additionally, Paul Basu proposes that cultural memory can be successfully comprehended by examining several memory sites linked by a certain associational logic (national, ethnic, religious, village, etc.). The objective of this research can be achieved by studying a wide variety of sources. Only by looking at multiple texts and sites can I understand the constitution of historical memory and more importantly the complexity of commemoration of these memories by various parties and group of people.

The study's fieldwork took place in November and December 2017 in Banda Aceh, the capital city of Aceh province. During this time, I concentrated on developing relationships with academics, attending seminars/scholarly forums, and paying casual visits to museums (including Cut Nyak Din Museum) and several ancient cemeteries of Aceh's eighteenth-century kingdom leaders' historical locations. This preference is because these are the people most involved in developing and legitimising the representations that eventually become national currency. To supplement, the data were also gathered from articles published in the media, such as newsletters and magazines on the subject. I followed the representation and transformation that occurred in the aftermath of Cut Nyak Din's death.

[106] Paul Basu, "Memoryscapes and Multi-Sited Methods," in *Research Methods for Memory Studies*, ed. Emily Keightley, Michael Pickering, and Jstor (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), p.130.

In addition to Indonesian locations, another critical location for conducting this research was Leiden, The Netherlands. Numerous scholars have documented Indonesia's wealth of historical documents (and Aceh specifically) in Leiden. The historical archives and records from the Dutch occupation and Aceh war (1873–1904) are dispersed throughout the world. Many documents, particularly those located in Aceh, were destroyed when a giant tsunami swept through Aceh in 2004. As a result, a more comprehensive archive is now preserved in Leiden. Certain locations in the Netherlands, such as the Leiden library and the national archive, keep most of the collection on Aceh.

Informed by knowledge in the multidisciplinary fields of cultural studies, history, and anthropology, I approach my work from a variety of directions and angles. The objective of this combination is to have a better understanding of the relevance of numerous and contested representations involved in different historical texts and sites. Meital argues that “only the study of wide variety of sources can enrich our understanding of the constitution of historical representations, as well as the complexities of reception of those historical representation by different groups”.[107]

There has been no systematic set of methodologies in the field of collective memory. Roediger and Wertsch also found that "One challenge we see for the future of memory studies as a discipline is to develop a rigorous and systematic set of methodologies that will provide for a wide range of analyses."[108] They also add, as memory is used so widely, it is still a critical issue to provide a more systematic foundation to this new discipline.

Consequently, many scholars examine a wide range of objects in performing research in the field of memory and history. For example, personal writing/diaries,[109] newspapers,[110] monuments, [111] school-book history, [112] film documentary, [113] interview and ethnography projects,[114] etc. The scholarly studies have been most coherent in how they choose objects for analysis – these are the sites we think of carrying/constructing collective memory. I apply

[107] Meital, "Who Is Egypt's "Hero of War and Peace"?: Article View."
[108] Henry L. Roediger and James V. Wertsch, "Creating a New Discipline of Memory Studies," *Memory studies* 1, no. 1 (2008): p.18.
[109] Struve, "Chinese Memory Makes a Martyr: The Case of Huang Chunyao (1605–1645)."
[110] Élisabeth Le, "Collective Memories and Representations of National Identity in Editorials: Obstacles to a Renegotiation of Intercultural Relations," *Journalism Studies* 7, no. 5 (2006).
[111] Jan C. Jansen, "Creating National Heroes: Colonial Rule, Anticolonial Politics and Conflicting Memories of Emir ‘Abd Al-Qadir in Algeria, 1900–1960s," *History and Memory* 28, no. 2 (2016); Nurit Peled-Elhanan, "Legitimation of Massacres in Israeli School History Books," *Discourse & Society* 21, no. 4 (2010).
[112] Nurit Peled-Elhanan, "Legitimation of Massacres in Israeli School History Books."
[113] Niwot, "Narrating Genoa: Documentaries of the Italian G8 Protests of 2001 and the Persistence and Politics of Memory."
[114] Mariana Achugar, Amparo Fernández, and Nicolás Morales, "Re/Constructing the Past: How Young People Remember the Uruguayan Dictatorship," *Discourse & Society* 24, no. 3 (2013).

concepts of “collective memory” and “hegemonic masculinity” to understand empirical sites where Cut Nyak Din has been commemorated as a hero.

Cultural memory can be effectively understood by studying multiple sites of memory, which are connected by a particular associational logic such as national, ethnic, religious, village, etc).[115] In accordance with this objective, the methodology of this chapter has explored a vast array of textual sites featuring Cut Nyak Din representation. I can only comprehend the construction of historical memory and, more crucially, the intricacy of commemoration of these memories by diverse parties and groups by examining multiple texts and sites. Examining a variety of textual materials and memorial locations, I am researching the ongoing remaking of Cut Nyak Din’s memory. In order to accomplish this objective, the research itinerary has encompassed many sites in places which include the Netherlands and Indonesia.

To accomplish the study objective, the number of approaches that I deploy in this thesis encompasses:

1.7.1 Archival Research

This research relies on European sources to augment indigenous ones to examine the memory and representation of Cut Nyak Din from the viewpoint of the Dutch colonial power. The Dutch government and scholars who operated in Aceh documented the region's history down to the level of individual people. These are the most extensive and precious records; the Dutch were the most diligent recorders, and the Nationaal Archief in The Hague and the Library of the University of Leiden are home to many of their original versions. Beautifully written by government scribes, yet opaque to the untrained eye, these texts are inaccessible to anyone who do not speak Dutch, particularly classic Dutch. In order to carry out this study, I have studied the Jawi script, since this skill, along with learning to read Arabic and the Quran, has always been part of the supplementary curriculum in Aceh. In addition, in 2019 and 2022, I registered in and completed a course in Dutch for Reading Language taught by Professor Robert Cribb, a professor in Asian history at the Australian National University. Due to my training, I can decipher these documents, interpret them, and extract relevant data. While researching the Dutch and English archives, I was fascinated by the prominence of female warriors, notably Cut Nyak Din, and by the vivid descriptions of events provided by Dutch authorities about Aceh. This research draws from a variety of primary sources, including the Dutch colonial record known as the *kolonial verslag*, Aceh indigenous manuscripts and

[115] Basu, "Memoryscapes and Multi-Sited Methods," p.130.

publications, and accounts that focus exclusively on Cut Nyak Din. This thesis attempts a more comprehensive and focused study of Cut Nyak Din than has previously been available.

As a result of the Dutch authorities' diligent record keeping, which gives in-depth information on Aceh's politics, the Dutch colonial documents form the basis of this research. The material provided by Dutch commanders and authorities is supplemented by the accounts of Dutch troops, academics, and residents in Aceh. It is necessary to put together the facts to acquire a more comprehensive view of this history to determine how appropriately Cut Nyak Din has been evaluated historically given fresh information that suggests a changing picture of her throughout time. Learning more about the historical roles and accomplishments of women could serve as an inspiration as well as a history lesson given the present discussion on the status and role of Acehnese women in a newly emerging independent Aceh. A study of Cut Nyak Din heroism can offer some insights into what makes it possible for women to hold the highest positions in politics, regardless of whether they do so because of association with significant male, history, custom, institutional structures, the capacity to adapt to and localise external influences, or their own exceptional abilities.

Inspired by some *hikayat* of Aceh, which subsequently provides the basis of Cut Nyak Din, a biographical novel by M. H. Székely-Lulofs (1948) has been the primary Dutch work on the subject. It is titled Tjoet Nja Din: de geschiedenis van een Atjehse vorstin, was initially rather popular. It was inspired by a specific *hikayat* of Aceh, which afterwards supplies the foundation of Cut Nyak Din's historical book. Even though Cut Nyak Din has been the focus of several studies in a range of publications, this thesis is the first to exclusively look upon Aceh hikayat's portrayal of her. It depicted the phenomena of Acehnese women in leadership roles and provided a convincing account of the many positions and places women occupied within traditional power systems. In this thesis, I examine *hikayat* Aceh manuscripts that served as the primary source for the Dutch author's biography of Cut Nyak Din. My thesis shows how different sources remediate earlier sources, such as Dutch novels that were inspired by the Acehnese hikayat and storytelling traditions, and Indonesian nationalist translations of such Dutch novels. The story of how Cut Nyak Din’s commemoration changed over time shows a complex interplay between different sources, languages, and perspectives.

This thesis seeks to perform a more thorough and narrowly focused research of Cut Nyak Din than has previously been done. The documents held by Dutch colonial officials, which serve as the main source for this examination of Aceh's political history, are heavily consulted in this research. The information provided by Dutch officers and authorities is

reinforced by the recollections of Dutch soldiers, academics, and Dutch residents in Aceh. It is necessary to piece together the facts to analyse how adequately history has evaluated Cut Nyak Din considering recent evidence that reveals that she has been portrayed in various ways across time. The study of Cut Nyak Din heroism can shed light on the factors that enable women to attain the greatest political power.

1.7.2 Text analysis

I read key texts with a focus on what they prioritise in the representation of Cut Nyak Din, the political investments of their authors, and their broader socio-political contexts. I investigate each "text" to see who constructed this image of Cut Nyak Din, why, and for whose benefit. I use the concepts of "collective memory" and "hegemonic masculinity" to examine how these texts concurrently construct both. This method will enable this study to compile the first comprehensive literary and cultural history of the commemoration of Cut Nyak Din.

The investigation of several textual sites of Cut Nyak Din is motivated by a variety of factors. Arguably the most productive sources of cultural study are novels and films, since they provide a huge repertory of images and representations of the culture in which they are created.[116] In a similar spirit, Ariel Heryanto notes the critical link between films and social representation, stating that films (like other narratives) are assertions about certain parts of social life, they may be instructional for political and cultural study, they pose problems about which facets of a culture are emphasised, which are exaggerated, twisted, disregarded or eliminated, or which are obliterated.[117]

I draw more extensively on Ariel Heryanto's work on Indonesian popular culture in my conceptual framework because it can: 1) provide a conceptual model of popular culture; and 2) argues that, given the nature of Indonesia's political development, cultural sites are frequently effective places to understand key ideologies and transformations in an Indonesian context.

Not only does this research delve closely into the texts, but it also examines the context as a vital component of the analysis. Additionally, I study the context of these works' development, the author, as well as the discussion and controversy surrounding these texts.

[116] Meghan Downes, "(Un)toward Progress: Stories of Modernity and Development in Indonesian Film and Fiction" (Australia National University, 2016), p.29.
[117] Ariel Heryanto, "Upgraded Piety and Pleasure: The New Middle Class and Islam in Indonesian Popular Culture," (2011), p.64.

The context is critical for comprehending the representations in the texts. William Lawrence Neuma emphasises the critical role of social context in understanding the social world; she contends that the meaning of social action or utterance is context-dependent. When a researcher abstracts an event, social action, response to a question, or discussion from its social context of occurrence, social meaning and importance are distorted.[118] My analysis is situated within a range of historical iterations, each of which is characterised by significant power struggles.

1.8 Thesis Overview

My thesis is divided into five chapters: an introduction (Chapter 1), a body (Chapters 2-4) that traces how the concept of the hero has changed through time, and conclusions that sum up what I've discovered (Chapter 5).

The second chapter is an empirical chapter examining the pre-national (pre-Indonesian Independence) period. It pursues who Cut Nyak Din (1848–1908) was through the eyes of the Acehnese and through the eyes of the Dutch, utilising Dutch archives and literature from the 1890s to the 1940s. My third chapter addresses the national phase, from the Indonesian national revolution through the post-Independence period between the 1950s and 1960s. This chapter focuses on the concerted and systematic effort by nationalists to designate annual national heroes through bureaucratic procedures called *Pahlawan Nasional* (national hero). The following chapter 4 discusses how Cut Nyak Din is depicted in the 1970s and 1980s. I analyse a historical play and an acclaimed movie that have served as a backbone for Cut Nyak Din commemoration national and international wide. Popular memory appears to have differed from elite memory in important ways. While the latter attempted to create a consecutive account of all that happened from a particular point in the past, popular memory made no efforts to fill in all the blanks.[119]

Chapter 1: Prologue Cut Nyak Din: Female Heroism, Politics and Memory

This chapter aims to display the rigorous description of Cut Nyak Din, sketch the undisputed facts about Cut Nyak Din, and point out where there are gaps and doubts about her life story. This chapter is a prologue to introduce the discussion on the idea of hero in Indonesia and introduce the case study, namely Cut Nyak Din. I presented how she came to

[118] William Lawrence Neuman, *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*, 6th ed. (Boston: Pearson/A and B, 2006), p.158.
[119] John R. Gillis, *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1996).

be the subject of a commemorative commemoration and discussed the concept of national heroes in Indonesia. I then proceeded to describe the key texts and media being examined in this thesis and highlight the scholarly literature around these texts and discussions.

Chapter 2: Cut Nyak Din in Acehnese and Dutch Colonial Eyes: An Honoured 'Enemy' (1880–1950s)

Since the 1880s, there have been a large volume of published texts produced recounting her leading role in the Aceh war (1873–1904). These important Dutch records demonstrate how Cut Nyak Din was seen by Dutch colonial officials. Some of the earliest sources that mention Cut Nyak Din come from the Acehnese oral tradition of the hikayat. I explore how the hikayat tended to represent women in battle and search for early evidence of how Acehnese people spoke of Cut Nyak Din" before the sentence that starts "Since the 1880s. How does this affect the establishment of the concept of the female hero in Indonesia? It is worth noting that Cut Nyak Din was a renowned heroine well before 1964, when Indonesian nationalists recognised her as an official national hero. I also address the present-day implications of these accounts for Cut Nyak Din. This chapter then investigates how the Dutch provided some of the first forms of systematic Cut Nyak Din representations.

How was Cut Nyak Din viewed by her own people in this period? I analyse the *hikayat* indigenous manuscript of Aceh as the earliest Cut Nyak Din narrative within the setting of Aceh. I discuss the ramifications of these accounts for Cut Nyak Din in relation to her subsequent depiction in the vast corpus of Dutch sources. I examine two *hikayat*s from the time of the Aceh war: *Hikajat Prang Sabi* (The Epic of Holy War) and *Hikayat Prang Gompeuni* (The Epic of the CompanyWar). I examine how women's involvement in warfare is portrayed from a local viewpoint and whether female heroism is equally acknowledged in the *hikayats.*

The main sources analysed for this chapter include Kolonial Verslaag or Colonial reports from the years 1890 to 1908. This period is chosen since it was at this time that Cut Nyak Din was deeply involved in the Aceh struggle, and she died in 1908. Additionally, this chapter looks at the exclusive photograph of Cut Nyak Din that has survived to the present day is held in the special collection of the University of Leiden library. This photograph depicts Cut Nyak Din being arrested by the Dutch and was taken at the time of her arrest. The report provided by C. van de Pol (1918) titled 'Tjoet Nja Din' in the Dutch monthly, De Gids and the historical novel by Madelon Szekely-Lulofs titled *Tjoet Nja Din: De Geschiedenis van een Atjehse vorstin* (1948) (Tjoet Nja Din: The History of an Acehnese Princess) are both significant Dutch sources on Cut Nyak Din. These two accounts centre on a single Cut Nyak Din figure

and are frequently cited in subsequent depictions of Cut Nyak Din. Moreover, although not specifically focusing on Cut Nyak Din, Zentgraaff's (1938) 'Atjeh' has a section on Cut Nyak Din and Acehnese women in general, highlighting their significant role throughout the Aceh struggle. Dutch sources demonstrate how Cut Nyak Din initially appeared to European observers.

Chapter 3: Cut Nyak Din and The Making of the (Female) Hero in Indonesia 1950s–1970s

This chapter focuses on the construction of Cut Nyak Din in relation to Indonesian nationalist ideology. Following Indonesia's independence in 1945, political actors in Indonesia honoured Cut Nyak Din. Influential Indonesian nationalists, such as Abdul Muis, translated Dutch novels to create an image of Cut Nyak Din in Bahasa Indonesia. Nationwide, the national hero program included Cut Nyak Din in ways that supported its conception of heroism as aristocratic and militaristic. Her role as a woman, far from challenging either of those planks, reinforced them and helped legitimise the idea of “Indonesia” as a unified nation. This chapter focuses on the ideological construction of Cut Nyak Din by Indonesian nationalism. This chapter addresses the national phase, from the Indonesian national revolution through the post-Independence period between the 1950s and 1960s. It focuses on the concerted and systematic effort by nationalists to designate annual national heroes through bureaucratic and ceremonial procedures, the so-called *Pahlawan Nasional* (national hero).

Chapter 4: The Heroism of Cut Nyak Din: The Role of Popular Culture in the Collective Memory and the Resurrection of Cut Nyak Din as an Acehnese Patriot (1970s–1980s)

The representation of Cut Nyak Din was not limited solely to the Indonesian national heroes’ program. In this chapter, I use popular culture from the 1970s and 1980s to analyse how Cut Nyak Din became a divisive symbol for the burgeoning Acehnese nationalist movement and the consolidation of central state power. While Cut Nyak Din was often resurrected in the 1950s as a generic "Indonesian hero," the 1970s revealed cracks in this ideal. At this period in her history, she was conceived of in closer connection to Aceh than at any other time. I examine how Cut Nyak Din was pushed by GAM (*Gerakan Aceh Merdeka*, or Free Aceh Movement) and its followers as an emblem of anti-Indonesian patriotism and a symbol of Acehnese heroism.

This chapter examines the significance of Hasan Tiro's *The Drama of Acehnese History 1873–1978* (1979) and *Tjoet Nja Dhien* (1988) films in constructing Cut Nyak Din as an Acehnese and Indonesian female hero. It evaluates a popular film for Indonesian audiences

that seeks to show Acehnese resistance as part of a larger Indonesian narrative, as well as a closet drama for the global market that is aimed to justify Acehnese separatism. I seek to identify the changing importance of her construction in popular culture to demonstrate the visions of Cut Nyak Din that emerge outside formalised state projects.

Both state projects and popular culture have a key role in preserving and propagating the memory of Cut Nyak Din in the consciousness of Indonesians and Acehnese. By comparing and contrasting these two sites of memory, we may get valuable insight into the gendered dynamics and structures of power in Aceh and Indonesia. By making use of these memory repositories, I can track the ebb and flow of Cut Nyak Din memoralisation across time. The film and the play have been critical in shaping the persona of Cut Nyak Din as a heroic female protagonist. While Cut Nyak Din was being imagined as “national” in one part of Indonesia, she was also aggressively constructed as “Acehnese” in another. This tension, which emerges in mid-century, becomes a defining part of Cut Nyak Din’s commemoration and indicates the stakes of historical memory: how she was remembered, and for what ends, could vary depending on whether one supported the Indonesian centre or the Acehnese resistance. Additionally, this chapter compares the construction of Cut Nyak Din by Indonesian and Aceh nationalism ideologies. Henceforth, to detail the various ways in which GAM and its supporters promoted Cut Nyak Din as an icon of anti-Indonesian patriotism and a symbol of Acehnese heroism. This chapter also discusses the Acehnese independence struggle led by GAM, which elevated Cut Nyak Din to the status of a distinctively Acehnese heroine, "stolen" (as it were) by "Indonesia”.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

In Chapter 5, which serves as the thesis's conclusion, I first summarise the important points presented in the prior chapters. This chapter concludes that after studying a wide range of sources, it is evident that historical representation consists of many voices and views, including those from the colonial era. Furthermore, the nation-building process should be based on a gender-inclusive historical narrative and importance. The integration of female hero figures into Indonesia's nationalist narrative is a notable attempt to increase gender equality in Indonesia's historical narrative, but there is still much need for improvement. Additionally, this research proposes a reimagining, revisiting, and re-gendering of the conceptual hero story and process in national discourse to produce a more gender-inclusive, varied, and egalitarian hero and heroine.

a. At the scholarly level, it can enrich the development of research in the field of Indonesian history, specifically in the field of history and memory of Indonesia's national heroes. Additionally, the analysis and findings can become the preliminary basis for upcoming research in similar field.

b. At a practical level, the research finding can become the basis for public policy decision making about who is in charge in the program of national hero.

Chapter 2
Cut Nyak Din in Achenese and Dutch Colonial Eyes (1880–1950s)

Overview

Cut Nyak Din appears to have left no writing of her own. I thus begin by exploring how she was represented in the earliest available sources from Achenese and Dutch observers. One of the first Achenese perspectives to commemorate Cut Nyak Din comes from the tradition of the hikayat, or oral poems on military heroism that were composed and performed around the time of the Aceh-Dutch War. I look broadly at the genre of the hikayat to understand how hikayats tended to represent women in the context of Islamic struggle against the Dutch infidels. I then look at two hikayats which specifically mention Cut Nyak Din. These references give us the first available Achenese perspective on her life. They show that she was admired largely as a devoted wife who mourns her dead husband. These sources do not portray Cut Nyak Din as a military fighter or strategist.

To complement this Acehnese perspective, I analyse how Cut Nyak Din was represented in a range of Dutch sources in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. I draw upon a large body of unpublished Dutch sources from the 1880s that detail her involvement in the Aceh-Dutch war. In these colonial reports, Cut Nyak Din is portrayed in relation to complex political alliances, especially concerning her husband Teuku Umar. These reports begin to introduce a tone of respect for a woman who is perceived as a reliable Dutch adversary. In the following decades, Dutch writers and journalists began to represent Cut Nyak Din as a noble anti-imperial figure. In 1918, I argue, Dutch writers commemorated Cut Nyak Din for the first time as a hero. I then show how these early depictions helped to shape the first available female perspective on Cut Nyak Din: a 1948 work of fiction written by the Indonesian-born Dutch writer Madelon Szekeley Lulofs. As a book that would eventually be translated into Bahasa Indonesia by Indonesian nationalists, this Dutch novel reveals key tensions that shape important patterns in how Cut Nyak Din has been commemorated. On the one hand, Cut Nyak Din is presented as an exceptional figure. On the other hand, she is also presented largely in relation to her husband. These different Dutch sources show how the figure of Cut Nyak Din began to take shape in relation to discourses of gender, elite status, and anti-imperialism.

2.1 Women in Acehnese Indigenous Literature

This chapter begins with the early Cut Nyak Din accounts in the context of Acehnese gender hierarchy and oral storytelling, and ancient cultural traditions. Furthermore, this chapter investigates how the Dutch provided some of the first forms of systematic representations of Cut Nyak Din.

The relative absence of exemplary women in older Acehnese literature was by no means derived from a lowly or oppressed place in society. On the contrary, scholars and historians have shown that women were commonly in positions of economic and sometimes political authority in Aceh, within what Anthony Reid refers to as "a 'Southeast Asian' pattern of relatively balanced roles and economic autonomy for women and men."[1] James Siegel showed in his study village in the early 1960s that women owned the majority of rice land in the village and controlled almost all of it. Within the village household, "men are powerless"; they were expected to provide cash goods by leaving the village to trade.[2] The word wife in Aceh is *po rumoh* (homeowner). This tradition has impacted their roles in everyday life. The status and prominence of Acehnese women were notably powerful. Furthermore, although warfare, statecraft and especially formal Islam were considered the business of men, Aceh also produced four consecutive female rulers in 1641–1699, a period in which Aceh alone of Indonesia's great commercial city-states maintained its freedom and commercial centrality despite the rise of Dutch power.

This economic and political context is important because, as I will discuss in the next section, textual sources from Aceh show that gender ideologies promoting male military strength were also very prominent. The image of Cut Nyak Din has taken shape in the dynamic relationship between these two elements of Aceh's history: on the one hand, women could engage in significant practices of economic and political power, but on the other hand, women could also be expected to serve patriarchal practices and uphold values of male military strength.

2.1.1 Hikayat as an Acehnese literary tradition

An often overlooked yet crucial source for studying the Aceh war is the tradition of *hikayat* or Acehnese heroic poetry, written in the *Jawi* (modified Arabic) script in the Acehnese language. Most Acehnese *hikayat* were initially composed for oral performance and often

[1] Reid, "Urban Respectability and the Maleness of (Southeast) Asian Modernity," p.147.
[2] Siegel, *The Rope of God*, pp.142-44.

written down only when a later generation, or a foreigner, required it. "The Achehnese apply the term *hikayat* not only to tales of fiction and religious legends but also to works of moral instruction and even simple lesson-books".[3] The *hikayat* form was developed as a variant of Malay literature from about 1500, with written Acehnese texts only appearing later.[4] Snouck Hurgronje, like many other colonial authors, was critical of *hikayat* utilisation by historians: "it is indeed impossible to determine with certainty what the facts really are which are presented to us in so fantastic a form, so widely does the story diverge from reliable historical facts".[5] In addition, divergences were caused by repeated copying, so that the older texts underwent changes through the generations.[6] Nevertheless, Amirul shows that by studying Acehnese *hikayat* one can gain an insight into indigenous perspectives on historical events as well as the beliefs and cultural context of the Acehnese in the early period, including their perspective on war and peace.[7]

Most of the Acehnese indigenous literature glorified the power of men in the military. This literary tradition provides overall evidence that the *hikayat* is patriarchal and male oriented. Indigenous Aceh literature did not recognise even militant women as the type of warrior leader whose glory should be celebrated in the *hikayat* verse epics. The best-known Acehnese texts, *Hikayat Aceh, Hikayat Pocut Muhammad, Hikayat Malem Dagang, Hikayat Meukuta Alam*, all depicted and celebrated the success of male figures, such as the kings of Aceh and their rivals since Iskandar Muda (1607–1636).Jacqueline Siapno in her book *Gender, Islam, Nationalism and the State in Aceh* reveals that, in the *hikayat* tradition, the story of the four Queens of Aceh who led the Aceh kingdom successfully in the seventeenth century "is usually eliminated from the story after fulfilling her procreative function – giving birth to the heir to the throne. After she has delivered the babies, she usually disappears from the text".[8] It is, in other words, difficult to discern a category we might equate to the modern idea of female

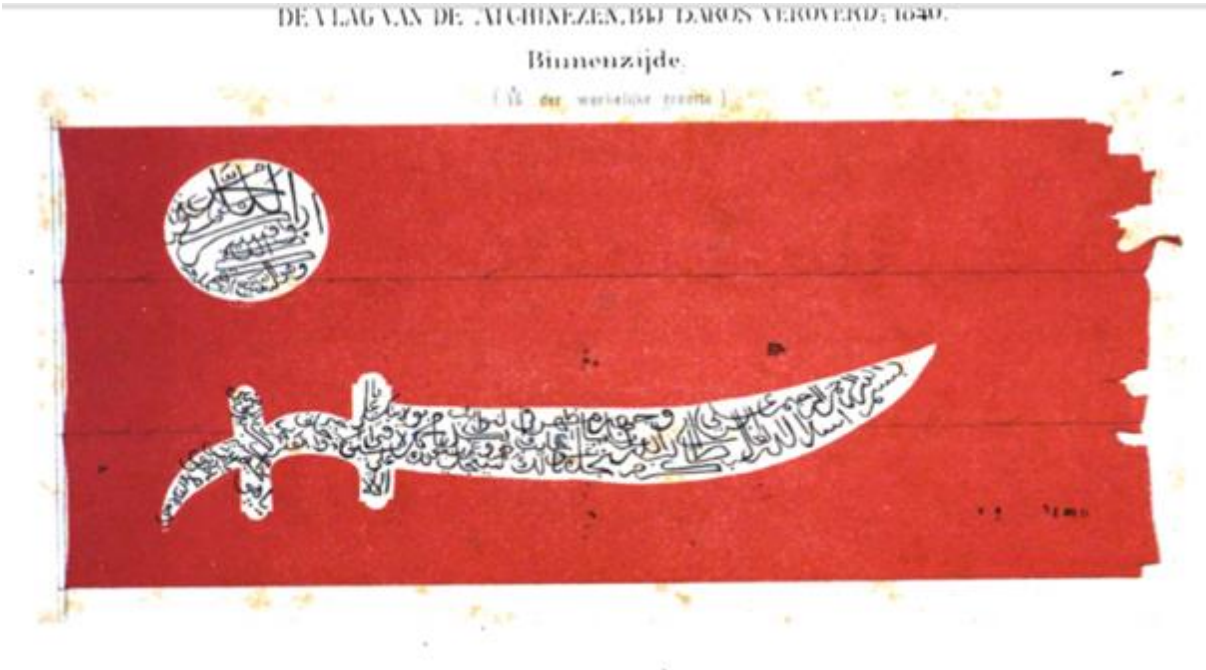
[3] Hurgronje, *The Achehnese Vol.1*, p.77.
[4] Ibrahim Alfian, *Sastra Perang: Sebuah Pembicaraan Mengenai Hikayat Perang Sabil*, Cet. 1. ed., vol. no. 3815. (Jakarta: Balai Pustaka, 1992), p.11.
[5] Hurgronje, *The Achehnese Vol.1*, p.80.
[6] Alfian, *Sastra Perang: Sebuah Pembicaraan Mengenai Hikayat Perang Sabil*, no. 3815., p.11.
[7] Amirul Hadi, "Chapter Ix: Exploring Acehnese Understandings of Jihad: A Study of the Hikayat Prang Sabi," in *Mapping the Acehnese Past* (Leiden: KITVL Press, 2011), p.184.
[8] Siapno, *Gender, Islam, Nationalism and the State in Aceh: The Paradox of Power, Co-Optation and Resistance*, p.77. Though this is unfair in the case of Raniri's *Bustan as-Salatin*, the only major historical text written under the patronage of the first queen, whom it celebrates. For the queens, see T. Ibrahim Alfian, Ismail Sofyan, and M. Hasan Basri, *Wanita Utama Nusantara Dalam Lintasan Sejarah = Prominent Women in the Glimpse of History* (Indonesia1994); Sher Banu, *Sovereign Women in a Muslim Kingdom: The Sultanahs of Aceh, 1641−1699*; Anthony Reid, "Charismatic Queens of Southern Asia," (London: History Today Ltd, 2003), pp.30-35.

hero within the older Aceh literature. Such literature offers a very limited space where figures like Cut Nyak Din could be commemorated.

I review here two *hikayat* of the Aceh war period -- *Hikajat Prang Sabi* (The Epic of Holy War) and *Hikayat Prang Gompeuni*[9] (The Epic of the Company War). These two *hikayat* were composed by illiterate Dokarim during the Dutch War, and soon after, they were written, transliterated, translated, and made accessible to a wider audience in the early twentieth century. I particularly look at how women's participation in the war is depicted from a local perspective. Was female heroism recognised in these *hikayats*?

Hikayat Aceh is an oral tradition that is usually anonymous. The copying and translation of the above *hikayat* took place in the early twentieth century. According to Imran T Abdullah, the date on the manuscript that had been copied merely reflects the year of copying, but the creation was long before that.[10] The major theme of Aceh's *hikayat* is the order to battle against the Kaphé (Disbeliever), and those who perished in the conflict are deemed martyrs; all their sins will be forgiven, and they will be able to join paradise and enjoy many benefits thereafter.

2.1.2 Hikayat Prang Sabi



[9] *Gompeuni* comes from the Dutch word for company, referring to the Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie (Dutch East India Company) or VOC, an appellation for Dutch colonial government that continued to be used long after the VOC was taken over by the state.
[10] Imran T Abdullah, "Terjemahan Dalam Sastra Aceh Dari Masa Ke Masa," in *Sadur: Sejarah Terjemahan Di Indonesia Dan Malaysia*, ed. Henri Chambert-Loir (Jkt [i.e. Jakarta]: Kepustakaan Populer Gramedia, 2009).

Figure 2-1 Aceh's Flag 1840

Even before the Dutch-Aceh war battle, armed resistance in Aceh was primarily driven by the spirit of *jihad fisabilillah* (fighting in the path of Allah) and dying as a martyr. This is clearly reflected in an Aceh flag of 1840, when an Aceh-Dutch border clash occurred on the West Coast. This bright red flag contains Arabic prayers, praise to Allah and some slogans. The other side of the flag reads:

> *Wa yä qädiran ahlik aduwwl wolanda bi-kaidihi, Aw muqtadiran arrazi 'l-kadzüba 'l-muqawilla wolandû Wa yä qädiran ahlik aduw- wi wolanda bi-kaidihi wa muqtadiran arrazi .l-kadqüba 'l-muqaw- wila wolanda,*
>
> And O Lord Almighty please destroy the enemy the Hollanders with their deception, or the [evil] spirit that rules these despised people, who are liars and loudmouths, namely the Dutch. [11]

The Dutch war was characterised by two major power shifts: first, a struggle between Acehnese and Dutch soldiers, and second, a rivalry between two noteworthy holders of Achenese power, notably the *uleebalang* (noble families) and the *ulama* (Islamic religious scholars). Both movements occur during the Dutch war. The exceptional armed resistance to

[11] The Romanisation and my English translation is derived from the Bahasa Indonesia rendering by Ibrahim Alfian, *Perang Di Jalan Allah: Perang Aceh 1873-1912*, Cet. 1. ed. (Jakarta: Pustaka Sinar Harapan, 1987).. The flag was originally published by Abraham Wilhelm Theodorus Juynboll, *[Verzameling Overdrukken, Recensies En Geschriften* ([Div. pl. : div. n.], 1860).

the Dutch invasion of 1873–1874 was triggered by the antipathy of Acehnese people to being ruled by the Dutch and their hatred of the Dutch. The activity of the *ulama*[12] who led the later stage of the war created a rich literary work namely *Hikayat Prang Sabi* or the epic of the holy war. The authorship of *Hikayat Prang Sabi* is often contested. The tradition of acknowledging authorship was relatively new in Aceh, as in other Asian societies. *Hikayat Prang Sabi* was essentially oral in nature, and therefore there are several versions.

According to testimony from people who were involved in the Dutch war, the *Hikayat Prang Sabi* 's author was an *ulama*, Teungku Chik Panté Kulu.[13] The majority of the *Hikayat Prang Sabi* writings were written by *ulama* as a reinforcement and development of the preaching they presented. The author of the *hikayat* observed that the most efficient approach to accomplish da'wa (invitation or call to Islam) is via methods that are already well-known and accepted by society. Teungku Chik Panté Kulu chose the *hikayat* method of presenting a message as the best due to its uniqueness.[14] Since the *Ulama* were leaders of the *tarekat* (school or order of Sufism) or *dayah* (Islamic boarding school) in Aceh, their position was very authoritative, causing followers to obey and follow orders, including those transmitted via the *hikayat*.[15] The author wrote this epic *hikayat* on his journey from Jeddah to Penang to help his fellow *ulama*, Tengku Tjik Ditiro, who commanded the Holy War against the Dutch.[16] The main goal of the *Hikayat Prang Sabi* essentially was to increase *ulama* authority and legitimise the Holy War against the Dutch. The *Hikayat Prang Sabi* had considerable influence and impact even long after the war was over. Its key message was the command to fight against Kaphé (Unbeliever),[17] instilling the spirit of *jihad fisabilillah* (struggle in the way of God) with the promise of reward and heaven. Those who died in the war were considered martyrs (*shahid*);

[12] According to Alfian, "The Ulama in Acehnese Society a Preliminary Observation," *Asian Journal of Social Science* 3, no. 1 (1975). The *ulama* initially and fundamentally saw themselves as reformers and assumed this position. It explains why the recurring recurrence of the *ulama*-led reform movements has been one of the most defining characteristics of Acehnese history. These reform initiatives always had a lot of appeal in Acehnese society, particularly among the rural peasants, even if they never succeeded in achieving their stated aims.
[13] A. Hasjmy, *Hikajat Prang Sabi Mendjiwai Perang Atjeh Lawan Belanda* (1971), p.37. Anthony Reid, *The Blood of the People: Revolution and the End of Traditional Rule in Northern Sumatra* (Kuala Lumpur: Oup, 1979). also accepts that at least the Hasjmy version was probably written by Teungku Cik Pante Kulu in 1881. One other scholar suggests: " The Hikayat Perang Sabil ("Story of the Holy War")—or a version of it—was composed by a certain Dokarim (Abdul Karim)" According to D. Kloos, "From Acting to Being; Expressions of Religious Individuality in Aceh, Ca. 1600-1900," *Itinerario* 39, no. 3 (2015): 448.
[14] Syukri Rizki, "Hikayat Prang Sabi: Acehnese Jawi as a Medium of Successful Da'wa," *Proceedings of International Conference on Da'wa and Communication* 1, no. 1 (2019): p.174.
[15] Teungku Chik Pante Kulu cited texts from the Koran and *hadith* (prophets' sayings) according to I. T. Abdullah, "Ulama Dan Hikayat Perang Sabil Dalam Perang Belanda Di Aceh," (2000).
[16] Suryaman, A. M. "Hikayat Prang Sabi; Pengobar Semangat Perjuangan Teungku Tjik Ditiro"(2012).
[17] *Kaphé* is the Acehnese variant of Arabic *kafir* (disbeliever). It was widely used to refer to the Dutch colonisers.

all their sins would be forgiven so that they could enter heaven and attain its various enjoyments.

Cut Nyak Din was descended from an elite family in Aceh. She was the daughter of Teuku Nanta Setia, an *uleebalang* who succeeded Teuku Raja Nanta Tjik, the ruler of the Moekim VI territory in Aceh Besar.

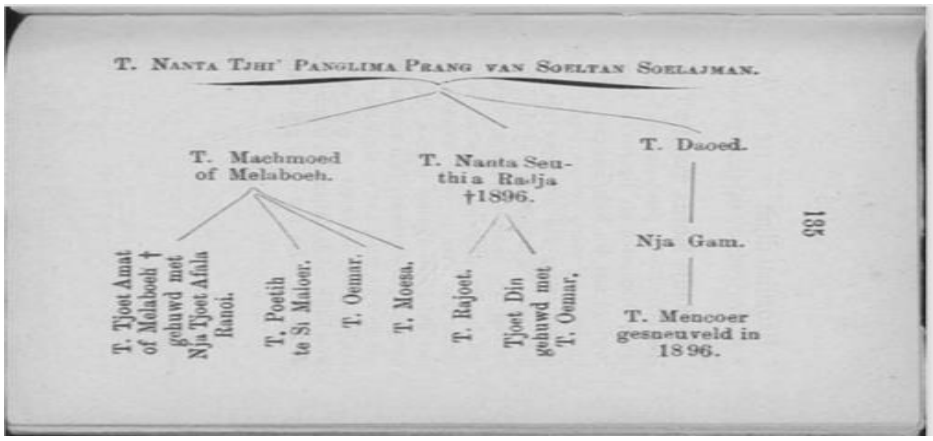


Figure 2-2 Tjoet Nja Dien (here as Tjoet Din) family tree[18]

As van Langen's tree above shows, Cut Nyak Din's grandfather had been the war leader for the boy-king Suleiman, who fought to wrest control of the Sulatanate from his powerful uncle and guardian Ibrahim in 1850–1857.[19] Snouck defined them as "the lords of the country, the territorial chiefs *par excellence"*.[20] The *uleebalang*s were the statesmen who played a variety of roles in Acehnese society including judge, landowner and military leader. Among them were several influential female figures besides Cut Nyak Din in the war years, including Tjoet Nyak Asiah, Potjoet Meuligoe, Tjoet Nyak Keureuto and Tjoet Fatimah, and many more. [21] Aceh had numerous female rulers who were revered throughout the seventeenth century, when the kingdom was at its heyday as a centre of commerce and Islamic civilisation. Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, some Acehnese women retained leadership roles, including those of *uleebalang*.

[18] Langen, *Beknopt Alfabetisch Informatieboekje Betreffende Groot Atjehsche Personen En Aangelegenheden*.
[19] Anthony Reid, *The Contest for North Sumatra: Atjeh, the Netherlands, and Britain, 1858-1898* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), p.11.
[20] C. Snouck Hurgronje, *The Achehnese Vol 2* (Leyden: E.J. Brill, 1906), p.88.
[21] *Uleebalang*s carried the titles of Tjoet for female and Teukoe for male (or now Cut and Teuku). Despite losing their influence during the 'social revolution' of 1945-6, these titles are still used by many of the current generation of their descendants.

The Dutch army believed that this *hikayat* was a major cause of the Aceh people's resistance. The *Hikayat Prang Sabi* inspired mortal fear among Dutch leaders and the soldiers of the colonial army.[22] H.T. Damsté, the Dutch officer who transliterated and translated the *Hikayat Prang Sabi*, suggests that the Dutch army was hunting for copies to burn or confiscate. Only due to his request, some copies were saved and sent to Leiden.[23]

For the sake of my research, I am using the version edited by Damsté, the scholar-officer fluent in Acehnese and who translated several Aceh *hikayat* preserved in Leiden University library. The version provided by Damsté is written in both Acehnese and Dutch. I am an Acehnese speaker with limited knowledge of Dutch. Therefore, in this chapter, I offer the Acehnese text along with my English translation. Damsté explains that he extracted material from various manuscripts and gives its essence concisely, with appealing examples of the good teaching it contains.[24] There are two aspects I focus on in this analysis: the *Hikayat Prang Sabi* record of Dutch misconduct; and secondly, its attitude to women. Despite acknowledging the 'equality' between women and men in battle, the *Hikayat Prang Sabi* tends to focus on glorifying men. The heavenly rewards it offers are distinctly those of male fantasy, hardly likely to appeal to women.

The *hikayat* acknowledges in a general sense the appeal for all Acehnese, regardless of gender, to engage in combat without exception.

Beudo'ih haj po tadja poeprang - beusa seudang alem djahe
…. wadjib meuhat tjit prang kaphe
oereueng gasien oereueng kaja - laeh teuga baranggari
bandoem wadjib geudja moeprang - inong agam bandoem sare
meuhan tadja po meutoeah - saleh teulhaih oeroe page

Rise up gentlemen and go to war – young, old, devout and apathetic
It is mandatory to fight the infidels;
poor and rich, weak and strong, whosoever,
all must fight, women, men, all are equal.
If you do not go, you may regret it on Judgment Day![25]

The *hikayat* gives the impression to testify that to fight in the battle is mandatory for all Acehnese, regardless of gender or age, as evident with the expression: *bandoem wadjib*

[22] Hasjmy, *Hikajat Prang Sabi Mendjiwai Perang Atjeh Lawan Belanda*, p.37.
[23] H. T. Damsté, "Hikajat Prang Sabi," *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde van Nederlandsch-Indië* 84, no. 1 (1928): p.545.
[24] Ibid.
[25] ibid., p.545.

*geudja moeprang - inong agam bandoem sare*e (all must fight, women, men, all are equal), recognising the equality of participation in jihad/martyr. However, the martyr notion seems to be intended for male fighters. To put it in another way, although it invites women to get involved, it does not picture them as the ones who will be martyred in the battle.

The invitation appears exclusive to male fighters in other parts. If they die as martyrs, they will be rewarded with pleasures in heaven, such as a *boediadari/bidadari* (beautiful woman, angel), as indicated in the verse below:

360.beuthat abeh njawong simpan - wadjib talawan kaphe tjilaka
padoem-padoem hadih saheh - hana rot weh ba prang blanda
dja tamoeprang haj boh ate - djakalee mate pi tarila
beukit haj po keunong beude - tjit ka troih le djoedo gata
boediadari keunan sampoe - dja toeeng lakoe asoe tjeuroega[26]

Even if you protect your life - we are obligated to fight those wretched infidels
Several *Sahih hadith*[27] have stated there is no way to escape the war against the Dutch.
Let's go and fight, sweetheart, and if you must die, let it go
If hit by a bullet, there will be an angel
who comes there to pick up her husband, the inhabitants of heaven

Women in the *Hikayat Prang Sabi* were depicted primarily as vulnerable victims, helpless, humiliated and damaged when faced with the system imposed by the Dutch.

510*. ban djileungö oereuëng inöng — djitamöng djitala' hawa*
hanpeuë sidé' hanpeuë tan jong — akaj inöng meung na söë ba
di kaphé pi tamöng ladjoe — lam kleumboe sapat doea
dji'éh sadjan djibeuradoe — djipeulakoe ban njang hawa
515. singöh beungöh lom djijoeë dja' — inöng gala' löm djiteuka
meunan-meunan geunab oeröë — djidja' djiwöë dalam koeta
beukit djitham oelé laköë — salah doedöë ba' beulanda
djikheun hoeköm kón ba' agam — pakön tatham oelé gata
njöë saböh treu' pi meuseuké — hoeköm kaphé bië' beulanda
saré hasé ban njang kheunda' — ma djitoela' djijoeë gisa

510. The [Acehnese] woman, once she hears [the invitation] she goes in blindly without investigating or asking anything. Such is the nature of the woman if there is someone who leads her astray. The Kafir [unbeliever Dutch] also responds quickly, and so they [Acehnese woman and the Dutchman] get together behind the mosquito net. They sleep together and do whatever they want. Having obtained what he wished, he sends her away, asks her to go home.
515. Again the next morning he tells her to come; the woman is happy and comes again; and so it goes on, she walks in and out of the camp, and if her husband forbids her, the Dutchman blames him. He [the

[26] Ibid., p.582.
[27] The authentic prophet Muhammad sayings.

> Dutchman] says: "It is not for the man to dictate! Why did you forbid her?"
> This is how the Dutch unbelievers make their rules.

Women and their sexual connections with the Dutch are a major focus of the *Hikayat Prang Sabi*. In the hikayat, the Dutch see women as followers who are readily deceived, not as important foundations of Islamic piety but as easily led off track. Women are portrayed as being complicit with the Dutch, not as centres of resistance ("the woman is happy and comes again"). Furthermore, the hikayat critiques the Dutch not for devaluing the sexual autonomy of women, but for infringing on Islamic husbands' authority over their wives. The hikayat thus reflects a complex gender ideology that at some points can recognise women as powerful, but at other points portrays them largely in terms of religious and political conflicts between different groups of men.

The Damsté adaptation of *Hikayat Prang Sabi* that I look at does not feature any discourse that focuses on the experiences of women who participate in armed conflict as part of their daily lives. In the *hikayat*, women generally fall into one of two categories: they are angels sent from heaven to serve as compensation for a man who has martyred or sacrificed his life during the battle, or they are adulteresses who serve as hapless enslaved people to the desire of the Dutch army. There is little mention of women engaging in violent conflict, and the names of notable female combatants active during that time are never specifically acknowledged.

2.1.3 Hikayat Prang Gompeuni

Hikayat Prang Gompeuni, literally 'the Story of the Dutch War', is also an oral work written by an Acehnese poet named Teuku Abdul Karim, better known as Dokarim. Dokarim composed the *hikayat* throughout the Dutch war (1873–1913) until he was executed in 1897 on Teuku Umar's orders for serving as a guide to Dutch forces.[28] Dokarim established his reputation by celebrating the courageous conduct of the rebel commander Teuku Umar, one of Dokarim's most generous patrons.[29] Umar is a hero in Dokarim's eyes. Yet he died at Umar's hands, accused of being a pro-Dutch sympathiser and traitor.[30]

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[28] Hurgronje, *The Achehnese Vol 2*, p.101.
[29] Edwin Wieringa, "The Dream of the King and the Holy War against the Dutch: The Kôteubah of the Acehnese Epic, Hikayat Prang Gômpeuni," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 61, no. 2 (1998): p.56.
[30] Dokarim was executed on Umar's orders in September 1897 for acting as a guide to the Dutch forces during their operations after Umar's second defection. If he had lived longer, he would have undoubtedly immortalised in song the vast changes that have occurred since Teuku Uma's second desertion and death.
See Hurgronje, *The Achehnese Vol 2*, 102.

Figure 2-3 Dokarim from Snouck Hurgronje The Achehnese

Dokarim was illiterate and performed his poetry orally. "He…gradually compos[ed] this poem in celebration of the heroic deeds of the Achehnese in their conflict against the Dutch, adding fresh matter from time to time as he gained enlightenment from eye-witnesses."[31]

Dokarim witnessed first-hand the course of Aceh war as indicated in the verse:

> *Di gob laloe teungoh geumuprang, di lon lon karang seun sibanja*
> (Others are absorbed in their military operations, but I, I only compose verses, one line at a time)
>
> *Di lon lon karang dalam ate, limong thon sabe lon kira-kira*
> I compose verses in my heart. (For five years I have been forever busy thinking them out.)[32]

Dokarim was described as patron to Teuku Umar, the husband of Cut Nyak Din, who had a significant influence on him.[33] In the *hikayat*, Teuku Umar is one of Dokarim's hero. [34]

[31] Ibid., p.100.
[32] Transliterated and translated by Edwin Wieringa, "The Dream of the King and the Holy War against the Dutch: The Kôteubah of the Acehnese Epic, Hikayat Prang Gômpeuni."
[33] Hurgronje, *The Achehnese Vol 2*, 102-03.
[34] Wieringa, "The Dream of the King and the Holy War against the Dutch: The Kôteubah of the Acehnese Epic, Hikayat Prang Gômpeuni," 299.

He had the opportunity to meet Cut Nyak Din in person.[35] Therefore, this hikayat represents the closest text we have to a contemporary eyewitness Acehnese account. Although we cannot assume that the hikayat is always factually accurate, it provides important evidence about how Cut Nyak Din was commemorated in her lifetime in Aceh.

By the efforts of the Dutch scholar Snouck Hurgronje and his Acehnese scribe, Teungku Muhammad Nurdin, the Hikayat was written down. Snouck Hurgonje mentions "until I had it taken down from the poet's lips, there was not a single copy extant in writing". [36] *Hikayat Prang Gompeuni* is now extensively stored at the Leiden University Library. I found eight versions there, all of which are not original but translations or transliterations of either Damsté's or Snouck Hurgronje's written version. Only one copy survives in Aceh, conserved in a deteriorating, worrisome state in the Aceh Museum.

For the purposes of this research, I review two versions of *Hikayat Prang Gompeuni*, found in Leiden and the Aceh Museum respectively. For a copy of the Banda Aceh Museum I use the script that has been transcribed and romanised by Achmad Zaki[37]. Due to the deterioration of this copy, some pages have missing parts.

[35] Rob Nieuwenhuys, "Mirror of the Indies: A History of Dutch Colonial Literature," ed. E. M. Beekman (1982), 176.
[36]Hurgronje, *The Achehnese Vol 2*, p.101.
[37] Achmad Zaki, "Formasi Ideologi Dalam Hikayat Prang Gompeni Karya Abdul Karim Kajian Filologi Dan Analisis Hegemoni Gramsci" (UNIVERSITAS GADJAH MADA, 2016).

Figure 2-4 Hikayat Prang Gompeuni page 1. Foto by Achmad Zaki

At Leiden, I selected one of the eight *Hikayat Prang Gompeuni* manuscripts in Leiden University Library, with inventory number 8041. This was a romanised Malay version by Prof. Snouck Hurgronje. The entire transliteration is written in the handwriting of Snouck Hurgronje himself on paper. According to the inventory of Leiden, the paper was from Aceh, meaning that the transliteration process was also probably done in Aceh. Before becoming a Professor of Islamic Studies at Leiden, Snouck Hurgronje visited Mecca in 1888 and spent several years in Aceh in the 1890s, becoming a key advisor to the Dutch government.[38] Therefore, this manuscript is the nearest equivalent I can get to indigenous Acehnese literature of the period. These manuscripts are available through the intermediation of Dutch colonial agents.

The content of the *hikayat* is about the heroic action of Acehnese during the conflict with the Dutch. After appearing in the *Hikayat Prang Gompeuni*, images of Cut Nyak Din went on to have a long and influential afterlife in Dutch literature.

My focus was to see how an Aceh female fighter was depicted by an Acehnese poet before her myth began to build after independence. But I could not find much of a story of Cut

[38] He studied Islamic scholarship and converted to Islam as part of this agenda. The first ever photo of Mecca in history is believed to be taken by him in 1888 during his pilgrimage.

Nyak Din in this *hikayat*. In fact, it is Cut Nyak Din's last husband, Teuku Umar, who was the centre of the story. It is easy to find Teuku Umar in the *Hikayat Prang Gompeuni*, like other *hikayats* concerned primarily with prominent aristocrats. However, women, even Cut Nyak Din, are hardly mentioned.

In the package of items regarding *Hikayat Prang Gompeuni* that I borrowed at the Leiden University Library was a piece of paper listing which pages in the *hikayat* contain the story of Cut Nyak Din and Teuku Umar. It is unknown to whom this handwriting belongs, but at least one previous scholar must have looked for a specific story about Cut Nyak Din and Teuku Umar. From this note can be seen at the glance that Teuku Umar appears more frequently than Cut Nyak Din.

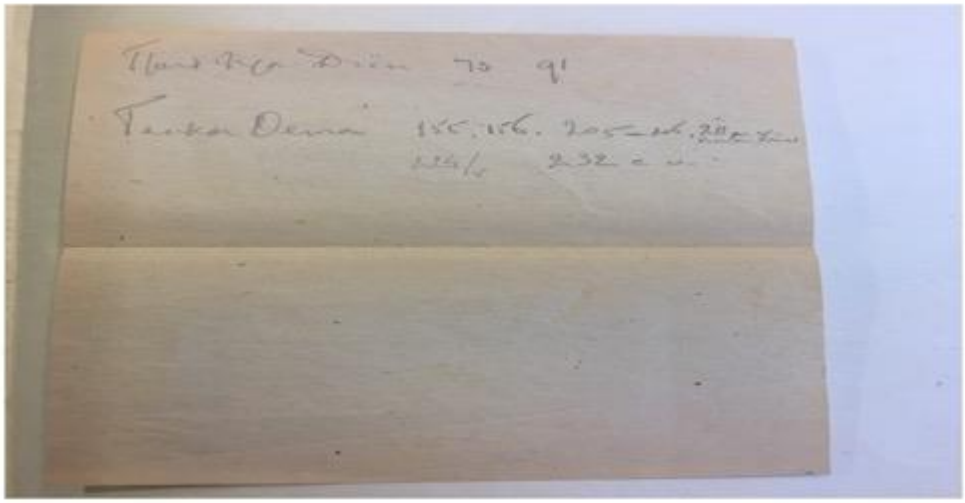


Figure 2-5 A loose page from the Hikayat Prang Gompeuni copy in the special collection at Leiden University Library

The only two verses of *Hikayat Prang Gompeuni* which feature Cut Nyak Din concern the moment of death of her first husband, Teuku Ibrahim Lamnga.

> *Handjeuet takalon handjeuet tangieng, tareukeu Nja Dien tro ie mata (p. 73)*
> *Thae Tjoet Nja Dien di moe thabe thabab hana le teungku lamnga (p.91)*
> Neither can be seen nor stared, when we see Nja Dien this tear is falling….
> When we look at Tjoet Nja Dien, she has always cried because Teuku Lamnga has gone.[39]

She is described conventionally as a pathetic figure whose only role is to exalt her husband by displaying grief at his death. There are no references in this hikayat to Cut Nyak

[39] 'Hikayat Prang Gompeuni', pp. 73 and 91.

Din as a fierce fighter. Cut Nyak Din's absence from the *hikayat* and her relative lack of prominence compared to Teuku Umar can be explained by the fact that she did not assume her commanding post until 1899, long after the *Hikayat Prang Gompeuni* had ended with Dokarim's death in 1897. However, as was said at the beginning of this chapter, I propose a different explanation: the positions of women in Acehnese literature are often relegated to the background and the genre of the hikayat did not tend to glorify women for their military strength, even when they were called to fight on behalf of Islam. This is particularly obvious in *Hikayat Prang Gompeuni.*

These early Acehnese sources suggest that although Aceh had numerous forms of female agency, women were not commonly commemorated as military heroes. Cut Nyak Din is mostly visible in the hikayat as a devoted wife mourning her husband's death. As I will show, this portrayal of her as a wife shaped many later visions of Cut Nyak Din in relation to powerful men.

2.2 Cut Nyak Din in the Dutch Record

2.2.1 The Koloniaal Verslag (Colonial Report)

In contrast to the slight reference to Cut Nyak Din in the *hikayat*, Cut Nyak Din became a focus for the Dutch in the colonial administration's records. The Colonial Report (*Koloniaal Verslag*) was an annual report about the Dutch East Indies (Indonesia) that covered various issues such as economic enterprise, mining and agriculture, administration, and politics. The report was compiled by the Minister of Colonies as an annual report to be submitted to parliament. The *Verslag* used statistical data from questionnaires that were administered at the village level and accumulated up the administrative chain to the capital of Dutch East Indies, Batavia (now Jakarta). The report was produced between 1852 and 1939.[40] The printed *Koloniaal Verslag* has been a readily available source for commentators and later scholars, covering as much detail about the Dutch East Indies as the officials felt it prudent to reveal. In formal terms it was the King's annual accounting to the States General (Parliament) of the management of the overseas colonies and possessions. It was published by the Netherlands government for the States General, and ultimately the Dutch public.

[40] Together with the appendices, the reports were published as part of the proceedings of the Dutch parliament. I consulted only the years 1866 to 1923 available in Leiden University Library. Specific regions such as Aceh are given explicit sections. I tracked Cut Nyak Din's account in the Aceh section, where her name starts to appear in the report from 1892.

Cut Nyak Din first appeared in the *Koloniaal Verslag* in 1892, as the wife of the well-known Teuku Umar. In this year, the officials sought to present the political situation as stable, with no change in the political situation of this region,[41] while also identifying small but persistent attacks by a small group of *uleebalang* from particular territories. This was still the stage of the struggle when the secular aristocracy of *uleebalang* (often spelled at the time in the Malay form, *hulubalang*), before their defeat or submission led to the dominance of intractable *ulama*. The *Koloniaal Verslag* states:

Onder den invloed van zijne vrouw TJOET NJA DIN, eene dochter van den zooeven genoemden hoeloebalang der VI Moekim, liet TOEKOE OEMAR niet af bij herhaling zijne onderwerping aan te bieden, maar, ofschoon deze gevaarlijke partijganger zoowel door zijne persoonlijkheid als door zijne familierelatiën grooten invloed onder het Atjehsche volk heeft, kan er, zoolang hij uit eigen beweging geene afdoende bewijzen van de oprechtheid zijner aanbiedingen van onderwerping heeft gegeven, geen sprake van zijn op zijne voorslagen in te gaan.

> Under the influence of his wife Tjoet Nja Din, a daughter of the above-mentioned Hulubalang of the VI Mukim, Toekoe Umar did not fail to repeatedly offer his submission [to the Dutch]. But although this dangerous partisan has influence among the Acehnese people through his personality as well as through his family relationships, so long as his own actions have not given sufficient proof of the sincerity of his offers of submission, there can be no talk of accepting his proposals.[42]

This brief mention of Cut Nyak Din already hints that she was perceived as a key political player in the complex chessboard or political landscape of Aceh Besar. The report suggests Cut Nyak Din was behind Umar's changing stance. Her influence as a well-connected noblewoman was a major boost to Umar's fame and prestige. While Cut Nyak Din is depicted as influential, Teuku Umar was a "dangerous partisan" (*gevaarlijke partijganger*) who had already caused considerable losses to the Dutch cause. Among the Dutch, Cut Nyak Din is renowned for her privileged kinship relations and her capacity to exercise influence over prominent men in society.

Following the death of Teuku Nanta, Cut Nyak Din had become more influential than her elder bother Teuku Rajeu as mentioned by Hooijer in his work, *De krijgsgeschiedenis van*

[41] Minister of Colonies, "Koloniaal Verslag," in *Koloniaal verslag van* ('s-Gravenhage : Algemeene Landsdrukkerij, 1892), p.5.
[42] Ibid., p.9.

Nederlandsch-Indië van 1811 tot 1894 (The military history of the Dutch East Indies from 1811 to 1894).

> [Teuku Nanta Setia] had a lot of influence. His son, a semi-idiot, who was confirmed by us as Uleebalang of the VI Moekims after his death, does not have that influence. His sister, Tjoet Nja Din, the wife of Toekoe Oemar, is now the person who has the biggest say in that area.[43]

Cut Nyak Din had been only twelve when she was married to Teuku Ibrahim Lamnga, a prominent *uleebalang* and guerrilla leader who died in 1878. In 1880 she married Teuku Umar, a prominent *uleebalang* and guerrilla leader of the West Coast pepper producing area (north of modern Meulaboh), six years younger than Cut Nyak Din. Why did she marry a cousin six years younger than herself? In Dutch eyes Umar was a party goer, opium addict and polygamist with as many as seven wives. From a traditional Acehnese perspective, the marriage was ill-omened as it is taboo for the son of an older brother to marry the daughter of younger brother as in his case. Teuku Nanta was the paternal uncle of Umar. Generally, this type of marriage is contentious and controversial, predicted to end unhappily with the husband dying early.[44] Given the later evidence of her stern resistance, she may have accepted T. Umar's proposal because she wished to continue the battle after the death of her first husband, Teuku Ibrahim Lamnga, who was also a guerrilla commander, in an ambush.[45]

Dutch reportage for the remainder of the 1890s was heavily concerned with Teuku Umar, whose offers to cooperate with the Dutch were finally accepted by the Dutch governor in 1893. The alliance appeared to work well for both sides. Umar became the dominant figure in both his own West Coast and much of Aceh Besar, where Cut Nyak Din's links to powerful *uleebalang*s were helpful. This influence came in part from the money and weapons the Dutch provided him, but also by his tactful alliances, notably with one *ulama*, Teungku Kutakarang, a rival of the Tiro group of *ulama* further east. When this influential figure died in 1895 it became more difficult for Umar to justify his stance in Islamic terms. Umar defected from the Dutch side in March 1896 after being provided with abundant arms for an attack on Lam Krak. For the

[43] Hooijer, *De Krijgsgeschiedenis Van Nederlandsch-Indië Van 1811 Tot 1894*.
[44] Julius Jacobs, *Het Familie- En Kampongleven Op Groot-Atjeh : Eene Bijdrage Tot De Ethnographie Van Noord-Sumatra* (Leiden : Brill, 1894), pp.20-21.
[45] Muchtaruddin Ibrahim, *Pahlawan Nasional Cut Nyak Dien* (1996), 2; Hazil Tanzil, *Teku Umar Dan Tjut Nja Din, Sepasang Pahlawan Perang Atjeh* (1952), 54-55.

next three years Dutch reportage was all about the threat of Umar and their attempts to hunt him down.[46]

Cut Nyak Din was mentioned again in the 1899 *Verslag*, in connection with the death of Umar on 17 February 1899, shot to death in a Dutch ambush. Although largely concerned with the successful Dutch hunt for Teuku Umar, the report does mention Cut Nyak Din, along with one of Umar's other wives, Tjoet Meuligoi. It was reported that they were in a different place of hiding, after the Dutch had transported Umar's corpse to the former shelter of Cut Nyak Din.

Umar's death became a turning point for Cut Nyak Din. She was trusted by Umar's most militant followers to succeed to the leadership. From this moment onwards, Cut Nyak Din became increasingly visible to the Netherlands and was constantly a target for Dutch pursuit.[47] She began to live a constantly nomadic life with her followers as she was no longer safe in one place. Although Teuku Umar had had multiple partners, Cut Nyak Din was Teuku Umar's main political companion, and she became heir to the anti-Dutch aspect of his struggle.

On the other hand, the defection committed by Teuku Umar not only destroyed the trust given by the Dutch but also his entire reputation in most Dutch documents and literature. Teuku Umar was thereafter remembered as a *verrader* (betrayer). By contrast, this narrative of changing sides tends to be veiled in Indonesian literature ever since Sukarno hailed him in the 1930s as one of Indonesia's nationalist heroes. The Dutch literature absorbed by Sukarno's generation treated Umar as the main enemy, who committed defection and defeated the Dutch on several occasions. This helped him emerge first among Acehnese resistance figures as a national hero in Indonesian nationalist literature. He became one of the celebrated and iconic Indonesian national heroes.

The 1899 *Verslag* concentrates on Teuku Umar's pursuing story, but also mentions the consequences of this pursuit on Teuku Umar's second wife, Tjoet Meuligoi. But the attention of the Dutch soldiers was more directed to Cut Nyak Din who hid with her followers as depicted below. It mentions that the Governor heard reports that "Tjoet Nja Dien was staying with Umar's

[46] Reid, *The Contest for North Sumatra: Atjeh, the Netherlands, and Britain, 1858-1898*.
[47] "Militair Weekblad, Gewijd Aan De Belangen Van Staat, Leger, Marine En Schutterij," 1899, 87. https://www.delpher.nl/nl/tijdschriften/view?identifier=MMNMM02:000414026:00003

bands in Upper Meulaboh", and so ordered Lt.Col. van der Dussen to take the 6th Battalion there "to seek and attack them".[48]

Subsequent reports in the *Koloniaal Verslag* reveal that Cut Nyak Din continued to be considered a major upholder of resistance, though without significant attacks on Dutch posts. "Tjoet Nja Dien remained exclusively in the highlands of Meulaboh...Little activity was shown by Tjoet Nja Dien and the bands of Teuku Umar after their leader was killed, shocking the inhabitants of the highlands considerably."[49] The report does shed light on the people around Cut Nyak Din, including two *ulama* as her advisors, Teungku Kadli and Habib Oesen, and three "guardians" of her under-age son Radja Batah. Cut Nyak Din was still regarded as a key embodiment of resistance at this point, even though there were no substantial assaults on the Dutch side during this period.

From the 1905 report came the strongest evidence of Cut Nyak Din as an irreconcilable enemy of Dutch rule, which by then had been accepted by most of the *uleebalang* leadership and the sultan after the militant campaigns of General van Heutsz.

In het gebied aan de Boven-Meureubò kwamen bijna alle mindere hoofden en het grootst gedeelte der bevolking successievelijk terug. Hier was het de invloed van Tjoet Nja' Dén, die de oelèëbalangs, zoomede die van Meukò en de Moegò-streek, verre van ons hield. De energieke weduwe van T. Oema' liet hen een duren eed zweren, dat zij zich nooit aan het Gouvernement zouden onderwerpen. Dat zij zich hieraan hielden, bleek uit het feit, dat zij, noodgedrongen, hunne naaste familieleden zonden, doch zelf wegbleven. Eerst na den goed gelukten overval van Tjoet Nja' Dén's broeder, T. Rajeu', kwam de oelèëbalang T. Tandi met plannen tot onderwerping. Ook Panglima

> In the area of the Upper-Meureubo almost all lesser chiefs and the greater part of the population progressively returned [to at least nominal submission]. Here it was the influence of Tjoet Nja Dien which kept the uleebalangs, and the people of the Meuko and Moego districts, far from us. The energetic widow of T. Umar made them swear a long oath that they would never submit to the (Dutch) Government. That they adhered to it is clear from the fact that, when forced, they sent their close relatives but themselves stayed away.[50]

[48] Minister of Colonies, "Koloniaal Verslag," in *Koloniaal verslag van* ('s-Gravenhage : Algemeene Landsdrukkerij, 1899), p.65.
[49] "Koloniaal Verslag," in *Koloniaal verslag van* ('s-Gravenhage : Algemeene Landsdrukkerij, 1900-02), p.21.
[50] "Koloniaal Verslag," in *Koloniaal verslag van* ('s-Gravenhage : Algemeene Landsdrukkerij, 1905), p.34.

These sources suggest that Cut Nyak Din was not a highly militarised figure, contrary to her later representation. She was dangerous because she commanded loyalty from her followers. So, it was her influence among Acehnese fighters and the uleebalang, rather than her physical prowess, that made an impression on the Dutch colonial administration.

The *Verslag* suggests during this period that the political situation in Aceh Besar became more 'favourable' and 'improved'. Religious movements no longer occurred, there was less resistance, and more Acehnese political leaders were arrested, which "contributed a lot to restoring peace".[51] This *verslag* (report) suggests that the existence of Cut Nyak Din sparked some resistance movements in the area. Therefore, she continued to be a focus for the Dutch.

The 1908 Report celebrated the arrest of Cut Nyak Din, which finally took place in 1905. She was in detention in Kuta Raja for a while and later exiled to Sumedang in Java, where she died in 1908 and was buried. The banishment triggered a backlash in the form of an attack on the incumbent *uleebalang* of the VI Mukims (the replacement for Cut Nyak Din) by former supporters of T. Umar. "The direct reason for this revenge exercise is the banishment from Atjèh of the widow of T. Oema, Tjoet Nja' Dén".[52] After the event of Cut Nyak Din's exile to Sumedang, she hardly appears in the *Kolonial Verslag.* Publication of her banishment in newspapers and magazines was also minimised.

The Dutch reports thus establish several important factors that helped to shape the early commemoration of Cut Nyak Din. First, these reports emphasise her social status. She was of interest because she came from a high-born family, and in the reports, other women of *uleebalang* descent are also mentioned as playing critical roles as the heads of territory (Tjoet Nja Asiah, Pocut Baren etc). Second, the reports establish her as a more predictable figure than Teuku Umar. She was consistently perceived as anti-Dutch in her political position. Third, although some aspects of Cut Nyak Din were represented as very exceptional, her prominence was also understood considering the relative empowerment of Acehnese women. The reports acknowledged that Cut Nyak Din's political influence was not a surprising phenomenon "since women's government often occurs there".[53] These reports gave a certain amount of respect to Cut Nyak Din because of these three factors.

[51] "Koloniaal Verslag," in *Koloniaal verslag van* ('s-Gravenhage : Algemeene Landsdrukkerij, 1907), p.28.
[52]"Koloniaal Verslag," in *Koloniaal verslag van* ('s-Gravenhage : Algemeene Landsdrukkerij, 1908), p.22.
[53] *Limburger Koerier* , 28-02-1899.

2.2.2 The Press and Mass Media

Cut Nyak Din as a leading resistance hold-out, 1896–1900s

In the 1890s, Cut Nyak Din began to be represented in Dutch media. She became a figure of interest to the Dutch public when her husband Teuku Umar defected in 1896 to become the leading resistance figure, and still more when he was killed in 1899. As shown by these images, newspaper and magazine articles on Cut Nyak Din became more common, she was featured on the front page of Dutch newspapers and in magazine articles notably in the years aftermath Teuku Umar's death in 1899.[54] Listed below are a few of them:

[54] From range or sources:, , and Het nieuws van den dag : kleine courant 15-11-1905

BINNENLAND.

AMSTERDAM, Dinsdag 14 November.

Tjoet Nja Din.

Onze correspondent te Batavia seint:

„Tjoet Nja Din is niet gesneuveld, doch gevangen genomen".

Tjoet Nja Din was de weduwe van den uit de Atjeh-geschiedenis bekenden Toekoe Oemar. Beweerd wordt dat deze vrouw, aan wie Oemar zeer veel te danken had, haar man steeds flink onder de pantoffel had. Haar invloed was steeds zeer groot en na den dood van haar man behield zij aan de Westkust steeds een grooten aanhang. Jaren lang wist deze energieke vrouw het verzet gaande te houden.

Luitenant Christoffel heeft haar en haar aanhang in 1900 reeds vervolgd en later in 1902 met de marechaussées onder bevel van kapitein Heldens, werd haar schoonzoon achterna gezeten.

De vroegere berichten dat Tjoet Nja Din gesneuveld zou zijn, worden door bovenstaand telegram te niet gedaan. De zekerheid haar thans in handen te hebben, is voor de rust in Atjeh van groote beteekenis. Red. *Hdbl.*

Figure 2-6 Algemeen Handelsblad 14-11-1905

Tjoet Dja Din.

De correspondent van het „Alg. Hbl." te Batavia seint:

„Tjoet Nja Din is niet gesneuveld, doch gevangengenomen."

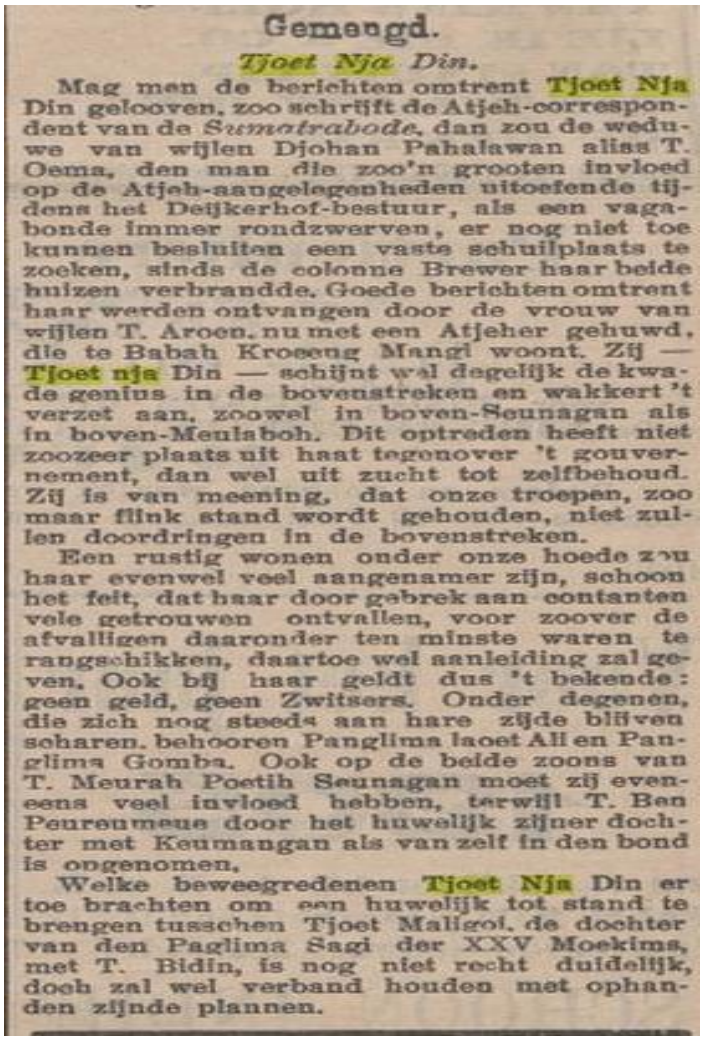
Het blad teekent hierbij aan:

Tjoet Nja Din is de weduwe van den uit de Atjeh-geschiedenis bekenden Toekoe Oemar. Beweerd wordt, dat deze vrouw, aan wie Oemar zeer veel te danken had, haar man steeds flink onder de pantoffel had. Haar invloed was steeds zeer groot en na den dood van haar man behield zij aan de Westkust steeds een grooten aanhang. Jaren lang wist deze energieke vrouw het verzet gaande te houden.

Luitenant Christoffel heeft haar en haar aanhang in 1900 reeds vervolgd en later in 1902 heeft hij met de marechaussees onder bevel van kapitein Heldens, haar schoonzoon Toekoe Ali Baet achterna gezeten.

De vroegere berichten, dat Tjoet Nja Din gesneuveld zou zijn, worden door bovenstaand telegram te niet gedaan. De zekerheid haar thans in handen te hebben, is voor de rust aan de Westkust van beteekenis.

Figure 2-8 De locomotief 10-06-1904



Gemengd.

Tjoet Nja Din.

Mag men de berichten omtrent Tjoet Nja Din gelooven, zoo schrijft de Atjeh-correspondent van de *Sumatrabode*, dan zou de weduwe van wijlen Djohan Pahalawan alias T. Oema, den man die zoo'n grooten invloed op de Atjeh-aangelegenheden uitoefende tijdens het Deijkerhof-bestuur, als een vagabonde immer rondzwerven, er nog niet toe kunnen besluiten een vaste schuilplaats te zoeken, sinds de colonne Brewer haar beide huizen verbrandde. Goede berichten omtrent haar werden ontvangen door de vrouw van wijlen T. Aroen, nu met een Atjeher gehuwd, die te Babah Kroeeng Mangi woont. Zij — Tjoet nja Din — schijnt wel degelijk de kwade genius in de bovenstreken en wakkert 't verzet aan, zoowel in boven-Seunagan als in boven-Meulaboh. Dit optreden heeft niet zoozeer plaats uit haat tegenover 't gouvernement, dan wel uit zucht tot zelfbehoud. Zij is van meening, dat onze troepen, zoo maar flink stand wordt gehouden, niet zullen doordringen in de bovenstreken.

Een rustig wonen onder onze hoede zou haar evenwel veel aangenamer zijn, schoon het feit, dat haar door gebrek aan contanten vele getrouwen ontvallen, voor zoover de afvalligen daaronder ten minste waren te rangschikken, daartoe wel aanleiding zal geven. Ook bij haar geldt dus 't bekende: geen geld, geen Zwitsers. Onder degenen, die zich nog steeds aan hare zijde blijven scharen, behooren Panglima laoet Ali en Panglima Gomba. Ook op de beide zoons van T. Meurah Poetih Seunagan moet zij eveneens veel invloed hebben, terwijl T. Ben Peureumeue door het huwelijk zijner dochter met Keumangan als van zelf in den bond is opgenomen.

Welke beweegredenen Tjoet Nja Din er toe brachten om een huwelijk tot stand te brengen tusschen Tjoet Maligoi, de dochter van den Paglima Sagi der XXV Moekims, met T. Bidin, is nog niet recht duidelijk, doch zal wel verband houden met ophanden zijnde plannen.

Figure 2-7 Het nieuws van den dag : kleine courant 15-11-1905

Cut Nyak Din wa continuously compared to Teuku Umar. While Cut Nyak Din was represents as “een zeer schrandere vrouw” (a very clever woman), Teuku Umar is depicted in more contemptuous manner, compared unfavourably to Teuku Umar.

> Tjoet Nja Din was de weduwe van den uit de Atjêh-geschiedenis bekenden Toekoe Oemar. Beweerd wordt dat deze vrouw, aan wie Oemar zeer veel te danken had, haar man steeds flink onder de pantoffel had. Haar invloed was steeds zeer groot en na den dood van haar man behield zij aan de Westkust steeds een grooten aanhang. Jarenlang wist deze energieke vrouw het verlet gaande te houden. (Algemeen Handelsblad, 14-11-1905)
>
> (Tjoet Nja Din was the widow of the Toekoe Umar known from Atjêh history. It is said that this woman, to whom Umar owed a great deal, always had her husband well under the slipper. Her influence was always very great and after the death of her husband she kept a large following on the West Coast. For years, this energetic woman managed to keep it going.)

The defection of Teuku Umar to the resistance in 1896 was very big news in the Indies and the Netherlands, putting Aceh back in public interest. It seemed to mark the defeat of the 'soft' policy of governor Deijkerhoff, and greatly strengthened the influence of those, like General J.B. van Heutsz and Islamist C. Snouck Hurgronje, who sought an outright conquest. Civilian experts were few, but one soldier managed to publish a pamphlet anonymously in 1897 that made the case for a change of policy. *De Atjeh-Onlusten in 1896* (The Aceh Troubles in 1896) contains revelations of the 'crimes' that Teuku Umar committed. The pamphlet argues that the Dutch alliance with Teuku Umar was the cause of Dutch setbacks. His defection also impacted his father in-law Teuku Nanta (Cut Nyak Din's father), who was declared deposed from the government of the VI Mukims.[55]

It's likely that this article was the first one to suggest that Cut Nyak Din was the driving force for Teuku Umar's decision to switch sides and rejoin the Acehnese resistance. According to an anonymous serving KNIL officer,[56]

> The reason for his defection is unknown, but it is suspected. His wife was pregnant and the religious party had been able to influence her to make Umar defect from 'the [Dutch] Company' and join the war party, after which, if her child was a son, he would be enthroned as a Sultan...

The Dutch perspective presented does not portray Cut Nyak Din as a warrior or ascribe her struggle to Islamist principles. According to thus Dutch source, Cut Nyak Din had the potential to attain a position of high social standing if her family chose to dissociate from the Dutch authorities and align themselves with the Sultanate. The credibility of this concept is

[55] Hurgronje, *The Achehnese Vol.1*, p.138.
[56] een Officier van het Nederlands-Indisch Leger in actieven dienst, *De Atjeh-Onlusten in 1896* (Rotterdam : Nijgh & van Ditmar, 1897), p.22.

questionable, since Cut Nyak Din's age of 48 at the mentioned period raises doubts. However, this source presents a portrayal of her via the lens of a Dutch observer, inside the complex political landscape of Aceh.

DE ATJEH-ONLUSTEN
in 1896
een Officier van het Nederlandsch-Indisch Leger in actieven dienst.

Figure 2-9 De Atjeh Onlusten in 1896

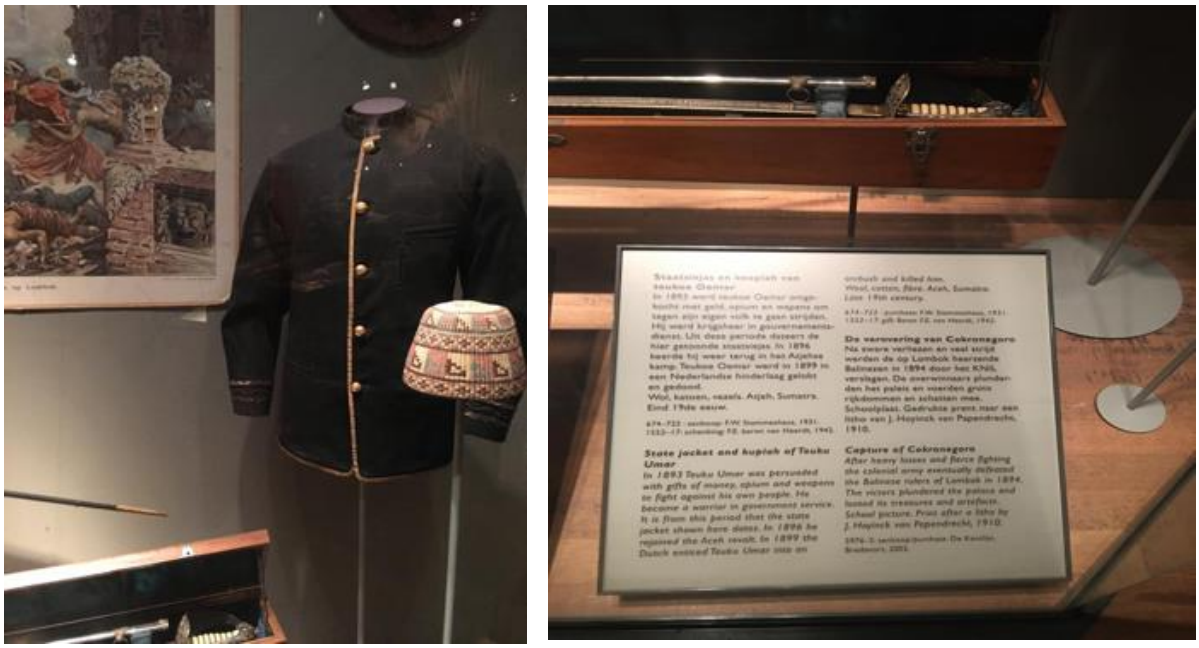


Figure 2-10 Teuku Umar costumes display at Tropen Museum, Amsterdam. Image from personal collection[57]

Hereafter Cut Nyak Din appears more explicitly in Dutch sources. The earlier reports were reassuring to Dutch fears, as the government *Koloniaal Verslag* had been. The Dutch military weekly *Magazine* reported that "Tjoet Nja Din, the principal and most influential wife of T. Oemar, who will neither submit nor desist from the resistance, continues to live in Upper Melaboh, but her following is drastically reduced." Her principal *panglima* (war leader) had submitted, another had left her, and still others were scattered about the West Coast. "All in all therefore, it may be safely said that there is little more to fear from the former following of Teuku Oemar."[58]

Once the most senior secular leaders of resistance, the Sultan and Panglima Polem, had submitted to the Dutch in 1903, Cut Nyak Din stood out more visibly as a source of contention for the Dutch soldiers. She remained elusive, but reports trickled out, like this one for the Medan *Sumatrabode*, picked up in turn by the leading Indies daily, *De Locomotief*:

> If the reports about Tjoet Nja Din can be believed…the widow of the late T. Oemar…is moving around like a vagabond, and still cannot decide to look for a permanent hiding place since the Brunner column burned both of her houses…. Tjoet Nja Din appears indeed to be the evil genius of the upland

[57] The belongings and legacy of Teuku Umar are preserved in several public museums in the Netherlands. This State jacket and kupiah (cap). The description says “In 1893 Teuku Umar was persuaded with gift of money, opium and weapons to fight against his own people. He became a warrior in government service. It is from this period that the jackets shown here dates. In 1896 he re-joined the Aceh revolt.”
[58] *Magazine*, 20-07-1899.

> districts and stirs up resistance both in Upper-Seunagan and Upper-Meulaboh. This conduct is motivated less by hate of the government than by self-preservation. She believes that our troops will not penetrate to the uplands so long as she holds firm there.[59]

Even though she was difficult to locate, people continued to report about her. It demonstrates how the Dutch did not see her as an ideological leader but rather as someone who was clinging to power.

2.3 The Depiction of Women in Dutch Reports

Some key points here resonate with the reports and documents from the colonial administration. Cut Nyak Din is chiefly seen in this period in comparison with the significant male. The negative and contemptuous way these sources describe Umar suggests he is emasculated compared to Cut Nyak Din who by contrast has an undue influence. While various Dutch sources construct Cut Nyak Din in a positive light as a "good", or at least consistent, enemy, the opposite applies to Umar, who is depicted as more effeminate (such as being “under the slipper”). This is evidently a device used by the colonial ruler in representing the men from the colonised/ruled country.

Cut Nyak Din was also represented in these sources through an implicit contrast with European women. The Dutch portrayals of Cut Nyak Din were also shaped by the Dutch people's preconceived notions about the roles that women can play Cut Nyak Din is anticipated as ‘de energieke weduwe van T. Oema’ (Teuku Umar's energetic widow) One of the most common words used to describe her was "energetic" (*energieke*).This adjective stands out in contrast to the European women in the Netherlands Indies, whom historians have described as "idle ladies."[60].Women like Cut Nyak Din were not the norm found in the Netherlands or in European society. Elsbeth Locher-Scholte argues that:

> European women generally enjoyed a life of leisure, with four to ten servants to do the house work…In practice, most European women – again women in missionary circles were often an exception – remained focused on their own group, concentrating on refining the manners and habits of their own community. Husband and children came first. For these women, the Western image of the ideal woman prevailed, in theory and in practice. They remained at home without a profession,

[59] *De Locomotief*, 10-06-1904.
[60] Elsbeth Locher-Scholten, *Women and the Colonial State: Essays on Gender and Modernity in the Netherlands Indies, 1900-1942*, 1st ed. (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2000), p.121.

> devoted to their loved ones, doing welfare work in women's organisations or they led a life of social outings, tennis, and parties.[61]

Locher-Scholten notes that "Marriage turned European colonial women into housewives", and it was highly unusual for them to be employed. In the Netherlands itself the participation of women in the work force was unusually low even for Europe.[62] Therefore, Dutch male perceptions of women in other countries were likely influenced by the Dutch colonial discourse on women. This background perception thus may have shaped their representation of a political figure like Cut Nyak Din.

2.4 Posthumous Celebrations of Cut Nyak Din

In the years following her death in 1909, as the bitterest part of the war receded into memory, more detailed and appreciative portraits of Cut Nyak Din appeared in the work of Dutch authors. The emphasis of these portrayals is a growing admiration for a woman who was behind male resistance fighters. These men were her father Teuku Nanta Setia and her two husbands, Teuku Ibrahim Lamnga and Teuku Umar, who all died on the battlefield. Since the arena of war in Europe had been wholly dominated by men, what seemed remarkable was that Cut Nyak Din played a role as important as men, facing danger as they did. Two aspects of Cut Nyak Din that are outlined in these posthumous Dutch records are: elite female relationships to male resistance fighters, and military heroism. This period is the moment when Cut Nyak Din begins to be commemorated as a heroic figure.

One of the first of the 'looking-back' studies of the war to mention Cut Nyak Din was a study of the events of 1896 by A. Kruisheer (1913), an infantry captain of the colonial army (KNIL) who wrote extensively on detailed incidents in the war.[63] The foreword mentions that his books resemble the *Koloniaal Verslagen* though in the form of brief episodes. He chose 1896 as the crucial year when a policy of forceful "pacification" was undertaken. As a result of Teuku Umar's defection, Dutch policy was fundamentally changed.[64]

> One of our greatest opponents has always been Tjoet Nja Din, one of his wives, daughter of Toekoe Nanta Toeha of the VI Moekims. She always urged Umar to resist the government, just as she herself continued for a long time. She was then in a state that made people think of pregnancy; but

[61] Ibid., pp. 125-26.
[62] Ibid., p.124.
[63] The other books are: *Samalanga--Februari 1901* (1941), and *Uit den pioniertijd: Temiang, het land tusschen Atjeh and Deli* (1932).
[64] A. Kruisheer, *Atjeh '96*, Atjeh 1896 (Weltevreden : Visser en Co., 1913), p.1.

> later it turned out not to be so. Her counsellors predicted that a son would be born to her who would come to occupy a high position in the Aceh kingdom, provided that her husband broke ties with the Dutch-Indies government as soon as possible. This is a sufficient explanation of her actions in the matter.[65]

This account resembles the earlier source *De Atjeh-Onlusten in 1896.* The book is supplemented with appendices displaying several letters written by Teuku Umar to the Dutch Governor, as well as a letter when he was officially appointed as *Panglima Prang Besar* (great commander) of Aceh working for the Dutch government. The book details the period chronologically all the way to the defection. While Teuku Umar is the main subject, this paragraph is allotted to Cut Nyak Din, appreciating Umar's wife as a steadfast opponent. Yet there is also a more self-serving explanation of her actions. This view of Cut Nyak Din – that she was someone who was attempting to obtain power (through a son) inside Acehnese institutions of authority – is supported by this narrative. It is also crucial to note that Cut Nyak Din was used here by counsellors, who told her that she will get pregnant if she persuades Umar to break with the Dutch.

The first serious attempt to single out Cut Nyak Din as a notable character in her own right was made by C. Van der Pol in 1918, a critical year in which both Holland and its colony were shaken by revolutionary stirrings at the end of the Great War. Since he writes as if Cut Nyak Din were still alive, it seems likely that the piece was written long before but only published after the war at this time of radical new thinking. Van der Poel was an Indies journalist, one of the first civilians to write about Cut Nyak Din. The article appeared in *De Gids* (The Guide),[66] an influential monthly journal published in the Netherlands in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

This article highlights and sympathises with the sacrifice encountered by Cut Nyak Din as the result of colonisation. Van der Poel begins the article in Sumedang, as if he may have visited her there in exile.

> In Soemedang in the Preanger Regencies {West Java] lives, at least not long ago lived, in a small colony of her compatriots and relatives one of the most remarkable women of the Dutch East Indies, the old Atjehnese internee Tjoet Nja 'Diën. She is probably not as old as estimated, now about 70 years.[67] A woeful existence after great wealth,

[65] Ibid., pp. 25-26.
[66] Later known as *De Nieuwe Gids* (The New Guide) published up to 1943.
[67] In fact, she is now understood to have died aged 60, in 1908.

> sorrow and worry, cherishing one of man's most consuming passions for years on end, that of revenge, this all must have quickly aged her.
>
> Tjoet Nja 'Diën is the widow of the famous Teukoe Umar, his second wife. This marriage can, for the Eastern world, seldom have been a happy one. The respective political aspirations in both families would have had no small role in marital harmony. She was namely a daughter of the militant kejuruan (district head [equivalent to Uleebalang]) of Seunagan (administratively belonging to the Meulaboh part of Atjèh's West coast). Teukoe Umar, one of the most talked about Atjèhnese figures, is always judged in different ways, but often very unfavorably.[68]

Van der Pol was the first to put her on a real pedestal as a fighter.

Cut Nyak Din had to meet the tragic end of life by losing families and belongings, and living in exile away from the homeland she strove for.

> Until November 1905, raging in hatred and revenge, she derived an energy far beyond the strength of an ordinary human being, an energy which, *had she lived in a more well-known part of the world, would undoubtedly have made her an international celebrity***.**[69]

1918 is the first moment where Cut Nyak Din is represented in a manner that could be described as 'heroic'. The Dutch saw her as a political manipulator and a recognised adversary before this moment (i.e., during her lifetime), rather than as a hero in the traditional sense.

It seems that an effort was made to portray Cut Nyak Din as being something exceptional. In that light, the Dutch may have apprehended an aged, blind, and weakened Cut Nyak Din who had few supporters, and even if other sources have shown how helpless Cut Nyak Din was when she was caught, slain, and deported, the portrayal of her as extraordinary was necessary for the purpose of creating a major ‘accomplishment’ for the empire.

Despite being aware that Cut Nyak Din was blind and had diminished followers (consisting of 13 men and 20 women), Van der Pol presents Dutch forces imagining Cut Nyak Din as a dangerous individual. They anticipated the arrest with a proper plan. The article suggests that the troupe came with six brigades (a brigade with 20 guns or carbines) and marched along a mountain path according to the directions provided by Cut Nyak Din's

[68] Van der Pol, "Tjoet Nja’ Dien," p.334.
[69] Ibid., p.338. [my emphasis].

confidant who revealed the hiding place. Following the capture, Cut Nyak Din was treated as a noblewoman. He portrayed the military excursion as a dignified one.[70]

When found and captured, Cut Nyak Din said: "Just shoot me dead right now; then cast me into the sea at Meulabôh!"[71] Cut Nyak Din and other Aceh combatants believed that when they died in the middle of the struggle, they would die as martyrs and enter paradise. As a result, Cut Nyak Din had nothing to be concerned about even if the Dutch decided to take her life.

Unlike the existing literature depicting Cut Nyak Din as uncompromising leader, Van der Pol (1918) suggests that Cut Nyak Din slowly became reconcilable and approachable. He described: "...when the old soul (Cut Nyak Din) began to feel at ease, she became communicative, even talkative. She told Veltman (the captain who captured Cut Nyak Din) mind-boggling stories about 'friendly' heads who had shrouded with resistance fighters.…"[72] This is counter to how Cut Nyak Din is often portrayed in earlier accounts...

At the end of article, van der Pol suggests "…we can recognise in our enemy, a woman, standing high above the many slavish, often false friends". This expression reflects the belief that Cut Nyak Din, a woman who played a significant role in the devastating Aceh War, deserves respect for her sacrifice. It was the defection of her confidant and allies that led to Cut Nyak Din's imprisonment. In contrast to other Achenese, Cut Nyak Din is envisioned as the perfect foe. She is not the exemplar of Aceh; rather, she is seen as elite, distinct, and superior. In making her seem noble, the Dutch are attempting to appear noble themselves, as part of a 'clean' epic battle rather than as part of shifting political alliances.

From these Dutch sources, we have discovered several things up to this point. First and foremost, they provide more elaborate accounts Cut Nyak Din than the portraits that are available in Acehnese sources such as the hikayats. Second, they are typically concerned with her position within Acehnese elite politics and how she compares to males. Finally, she does not become "heroic" until the retrospective 1918 accounts, when her heroism is used to make the Dutch seem "good" imperialists. Based on the Dutch accounts, we have an important look into Cut Nyak Din's role as a key and powerful actor in the Aceh Dutch War. Her heroic status among Dutch authors rises as time passes and with increasing distance from that war.

[70] Ibid., p.350.
[71] Ibid., p.349.
[72] Ibid., pp. 352-53.

2.5 The Celebration of Cut Nyak Din in the Mid-twentieth Century

Even though Cut Nyak Din was a consistent adversary, her glorification in the early Dutch sources found Cut Nyak Din intriguing and created her as a kind of hero. It demonstrates how they approached the idea of a woman as a hero. Clearly, the early male authors were more interested in the fact that she was a fierce opponent despite being a woman than in her gender. They do recognise quite early, however, that Acehnese women had considerably more influence than Dutch women of the nineteenth century, as do anthropologists from Kruijt and Kreemer to James Siegel. As has often been the case in Indonesia and the rest of Southeast Asia, Cut Nyak Din's exalted ancestry clearly took precedence over her gender in this situation.[73]

2.5.1 *Atjeh* (1938)

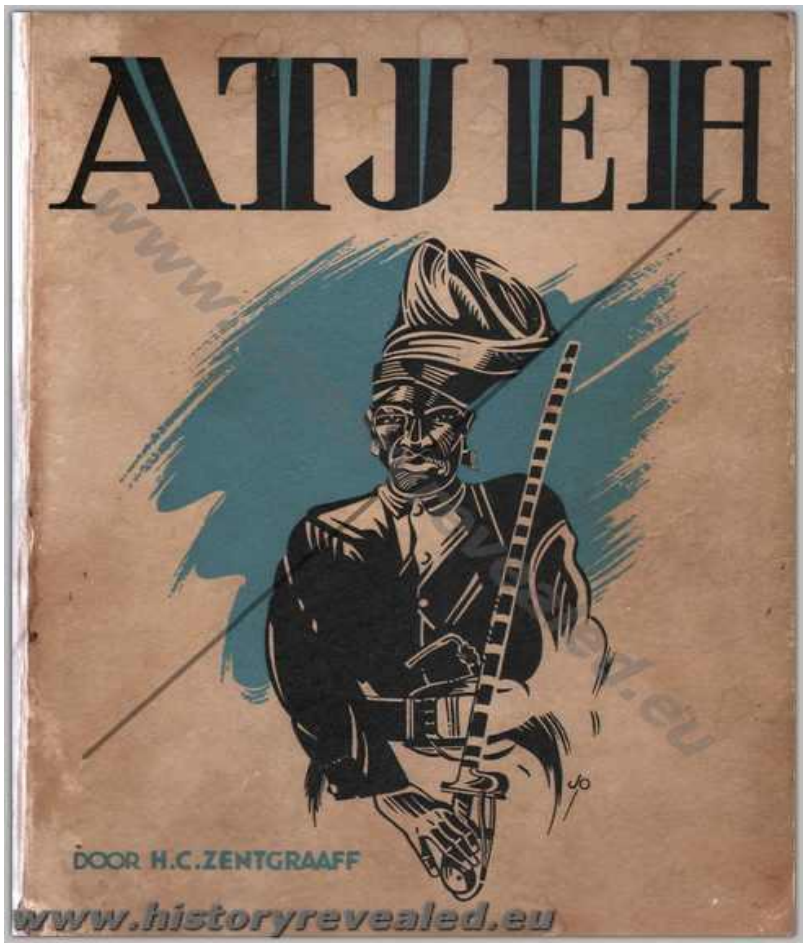


Figure 2-11 Zentgraaff, H. C. Atjeh. (1938)

[73] Reid, "Female Roles in Pre-Colonial Southeast Asia."

The idea of Cut Nyak Din as a hero, which was initially put forwards in 1918, gained more traction in the 1930s. The next significant Dutch portrayal of Cut Nyak Din came from the writings of H.C. Zentgraaff,[74] a former Dutch soldier. In his book *Atjeh* (1938),), he detailed how Acehnese women stepped up to play a role in the struggle. Cut Nyak Din is one among them. *Atjeh* (1938) was one of the most popular books on Aceh-related research, particularly on studies of Acehnese women, which devoted a special chapter to *De Vrouwen* (The Women). In a short amount of time, 13,000 copies were sold, making it a bestseller.[75] Later in 1983, the Bahasa Indonesia version was released.

H. C. Zentgraff (1874–1940) was a journalist and military officer from the Netherlands who participated in the Aceh war and a number of expeditions. He is well-known for his works on the subject of Sumatra. *Atjeh* (1938) is the last book he released before his death in 1940. It is regarded as his magnum opus. In this chapter, I exclusively discuss the chapter mentioned above, *De Vrouwen* (The Women). Zentgraaff juxtaposed the positions of Aceh women with European women during the Aceh war. He asserts that they both met with unexpected incidents and felt the same degree of terror. In addition, he describes:

> Wat de Atjehsche vrouwen betreft, haar rol in den krijg is zelfs thans moeilijk te schatten, maar het was meestal eene zeer actieve. De Atjehsche vrouw, fier en dapper, was de ver- persoonlijking van den bittersten haat jegens ons, en van de uiterste onverzoenlijkheid, en als zij medestreed, dan deed zij dit met eene energie en doodsverachting welke veelal die der mannen overtroffen.[76]
>
> As for the Acehnese women, her role in war is difficult to estimate even today, but it was usually a very active one. The Acehnese woman, proud and brave, was the personification of the bitterest hatred for us, and of the utter irreconcilability, and when she fought, she did so with an energy and scorn for death that often exceeded those of the men.

This description seems to have borrowed elements of the early Aceh *hikayat*'s ideals on women and resistance, with its insistence that all Muslims must engage in jihad or die as martyrs. Still, it also differs significantly by depicting women in a military role. Contrary to what is discovered in Acehnese literature, there is no mention of women having sexual encounters with members of the Dutch military. In contrast, strong female opponents to the Dutch are

[74] Zentgaaff as editor of the Dutch newspaper of Medan, Deli-Courant, launched the fiercest attack on Lulofs in 1938 for her negative portrayal of Dutch colonialism in East Sumatra. (based on article by Gerard Termorshuizen (2016), '*H.C. Zentgraaff contra het echtpaar Székely-Lulofs. Wie was die man?*' translated with the help of Prof. Anthony Reid).
[75] Bosma, 2005, p.61 as cited in Paul Bijl, "Emerging Memory Photographs of Colonial Atrocity in Dutch Cultural Remembrance," (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2015).
[76] H. C. Zentgraaff, *Atjeh*, 2. druk. ed., vol. Batavia (Batavia: Koninklijke Drukkerij "De Unie", 1938), p.44.

celebrated. Although it does not include references, Zentgraaff's work seems to be built from previous literature on Cut Nyak Din as well as from his own observations when spending time in Aceh. The emphasis on “energy” echoes language in earlier accounts that stressed how “energetic” Cut Nyak Din appeared. The significance of Cut Nja Din in Zentgraaf is:

> …..she who had stood next to the highest women in this country in her glory times, and one can guess at the size of the sacrifice she made her national thought[77]
>
> (…zij die in de tijden harer glorie naast de hoogste vrouwen in dit land had gestaan, en men kan gissen naar de grootte van het offer dat zij haar nationale gedachte bracht.)

This portrayal deepens and broadens Van der Pol's frame of reference. The term "national," which did not have the same significance in the 1890s as it did in the 1930s, was also first used at this time. It suggests that the Dutch were among the first to link Cut Nyak Din with representing a "national" ideology. Zentgraaf devised *Atjeh* (1938) as a means of advocacy for Aceh’s broader improvement.[78] As he stated concerning the grounds for authoring the book:

> In de meeste verhalen over of uit den Atjeh-oorlog is zelden een goed woord over onze vijanden te vinden. Bijna zonder uitzondering zijn de heldenrollen voor de onzen; de Atjehers die tegen ons vochten zijn „sloebers, vuilbuiken”, althans gemeene verraders.
>
> (Most stories about or from the Aceh war rarely contain a good word about our enemies. Almost without exception, the hero roles are for our people; the Acehnese who fought against us are "skunks, scumbags," at least generally traitors.)

> In this period, it became possible for writers like Zentgraff to see the Acehnese in a more positive light.De waarheid is: dat de Atjehers, mannen en vrouwen, in het algemeen schitterend hebben gevochten voor wat zij zagen als hun nationaal of religieus ideaal. Er is onder die strijders een zeer groot aantal mannen en vrouwen die de trots van elk volk zouden uitmaken; zij doen voor de schitterendste van onze oorlogsfiguren niet onder.
> (The truth is, that the Aceh men, men and women, have generally fought brilliantly for what they saw as their national or religious ideal. There is a very large number of men and women among those fighters who would be the pride of any people; they are not inferior to the most beautiful of our war figures.)[79]

[77] Ibid., p.64.
[78] P.J. Drooglever, "Zentgraaff, Henri Carel (1874-1940)," Huygens ING, https://resources.huygens.knaw.nl/bwn1880-2000/lemmata/bwn4/zentgraaff.
[79] Zentgraaff, *Atjeh*, Batavia.

Cut Nyak Din comes to be seen as a symbol of both "sacrifice" and "national thought." As time passes, Dutch writers begin to attribute grand causes to Cut Nyak Din. These grand ideas seem very different from the early colonial reports, which are more likely to represent Cut Nyak Din in the context of elite power struggles between different Acehnese factions.

2.5.2 *Tjoet Nja Din: De Geschiedenis van een Atjehse vorstin*

Up to this point, every author who has written or spoken about Cut Nyak Din had been male, which is not exceptional. It was not until 1948 that the first female author's perspective became available. Of all the dossiers from the Dutch writers I reviewed in this chapter, the work of Madelon Székely-Lulofs is atypical. It is the sole piece of literature created thus far by a female author and is also the only piece classified as fictional. Additionally, she is the first author who is not a direct agent of the Dutch Imperial government and the first author born and raised in Indonesia.

Madelon Hermine Szekely-Lulofs was born in Surabaya, Indonesia in 1899 and passed away there in 1958. She was the daughter of Claas Lulofs (1873–1922), a Dutch officer who held important positions in the colonial service (Binnenlandse Bestuur), including Advisor on Government Policy for the Dutch East Indies. Due to her father's work, the Lulofs were itinerant around Indonesia, notably in Aceh.

In 1900, she was only one year old when her family went to Aceh. When she began school, she moved to Minangkabau, central Sumatra. During the years 1908 and 1909, she dwelled in Bogor, a city close to Jakarta. Her works were significantly influenced by and reflected these migratory experiences. Deli, East Sumatera, is another place in Indonesia where she spent most of her time.

Lulofs left Indonesia in 1930 but she continued to create works about Indonesian life after she left the country. These works include *Rubber* (1931), *Koolie* (1932), *Emigranten*, and *De Andere Wereld* (1933). She grew especially intrigued by the subject of colonial exploitation and became a critic of the practice. *Tjoet Nyak Din* (1948) was the novel that had the most influence on Lulofs' status as a writer, despite the fact that *Rubber* is generally acknowledged as the work that brought her instant fame.

Lulofs had a strong attachment to this particular historical novel, especially in its Indonesian version. According to Nieuwenhuys, "One does not need to regard *Tjut Nyak Din* as a masterpiece nor even her best book, to realise that the author herself was most deeply

attached to it among all of her works." [80] This is particularly the case after the book was translated into Bahasa Indonesia in 1954 by Indonesian nationalist and writer Abdul Muis.

László Székely, a Hungarian coworker of her husband's who had been close to her when she was actively writing for the local planter's periodical Sumatra, became Lulofs' spouse. Székely influenced Lulofs' critical outlook by encouraging her to question the values she had been taught and the social mores she had been instilled with throughout her upbringing. According to Olf Praamstra, based on what Lulofs mentioned in an interview, she and Lazlo had a similar worldview.

> Mijn man als iemand, in Europa opgevoed zag Indie altijd met andere oogen aan dan ik als in Indie geborene. Voor mij was vroeger alles gewoon en daarim zag ik in het begin veel niet, wat hij wel zag. Ik vond alles doodgewoon. Hij wees me op tal van bijzonderheden, die ik zoo geleidelijk ging leren zien.[81]
>
> My husband as someone, brought up in Europe, always looked at Indie with different eyes than I did when I was born in Indie. Everything used to be normal for me and in the beginning, I didn't see much at all, which he did see. I thought everything was ordinary. He pointed out many details that I came to see so gradually.

Reid (1979) argues that "[Lazlo] was among the few Europeans of that period who could see that the invasion of western plantations had not really done the natives a particular favour".[82] Lulofs combines an insider's perspective gleaned from her childhood with the more critical perspective shaped by her husband.

European anti-colonialism in the 1920s and 1930s and the rise of new feminist beliefs inspired Lulofs's approach for *Tjoet Nja Dhien* (1948). For insight into Lulofs's thought process as she created the exemplary woman in Cut Nyak Din, it's worth to investigate more about the Dutch notion of ideal femininity. While white women remain cultural icons in Indonesia, their positions and extent of power are complex. White women belonged to the colonial Indonesian upper class, as argued by Frances Gouda[83]. Still, they also faced subjection from within, or as

[80] Nieuwenhuys, "Mirror of the Indies: A History of Dutch Colonial Literature," p.176.
[81] Olf Praamstra, "Begraven En Weer Opgestaan, De Literaire Waardering Van Madelon SzéKely-Lulofs," *Praagse perspectieven 4. Handelingen van het colloquium van de sectie Nederlands van de Karelsuniversiteit te Praag. Universitaire pers, Praag* (2006).
[82] Anthony Reid, "Introduction" in L. Székely, Marion Saunders, and Anthony Reid, *Tropic Fever: The Adventures of Planter in Sumatra* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1979), p.68.
[83] Frances Gouda, "Nyonyas on the Colonial Divide: White Women in the Dutch East Indies, 1900-1942," *Gender and History* 5, no. 3 (1993).

Margaret Strobel refers to them, as “the inferior sex inside the superior race.”[84] Although Dutch women held privileged positions in the early twentieth-century Dutch East Indies (Indonesia) racial economy, they were also subject to significant limits on their lives. White European women in Indonesia were able to raise awareness about many issues affecting Indonesian women, but they remained set apart from Indonesian women due to their colonial racial and cultural hierarchies, in particular the Dutch female writers and academics who wrote and studied during the colonial period to bring attention to issues including women's economic independence, exclusion, and level of participation. Women's literature and art contributed to a shift in gender norms.

The appearance of Lulofs's novel *Tjoet Nja Din* in 1948 marked a major turning point since it became the first major text devoted exclusively to Cut Nyak Din. Lulofs was the first to establish Cut Nyak Din as a prominent historical figure in her own right. Nonetheless, the book contains surprisingly scant details on Cut Nyak Din, which stands in stark contrast to its title. It continues to define Cut Nyak Din largely through the lens of prominent aristocratic males. Teuku Umar, her husband with whom she is often affiliated, plays the key male role in the story and as the most prominent male character in the story, is the story's centrepiece.

Cut Nyak Din does not appear in the text as often as Teuku Umar, however, with the purpose of bringing the figure from the background into the limelight. She appears for the first time on page 88 in the text. Cut Nyak Din first appeared in the novel's ninth chapter, *De Vlucht* (The Flight), out of its seventeen chapters.

1. De Aanleiding	1. The Reason
2. De Vestiging	2. The Location
3. De Carriere	3. The Career
4. Laatste Kinderjaren	4. Last Childhood
5. De Volwassenheid	5. Adulthood
6. Het Verraad	6. The Betrayal
7. De Oorlog	7. The War
8. De Oude Oorlog	8. The Old War
9. De Vlucht	9. The Flight
10. De Guerilla	10. The Guerilla
11. Oemar	11. Oemar
12. Het Einde Van De Oorlog	12. The End of The War
13. De Thuiskomst	13. The homecoming
14. Herdenking	14. Commemoration
15. De Oemar-Comedie	15. The Oemar Comedy
16. Oorlog Tegen Oemar	16. War Against Umar
17. Het Einde	17. The End

[84] Ibid., p.319.

In "*De Vlucht*" (The Flight), Lulofs gives his readers their initial encounter of Cut Nyak Din. Story-wise, Cut Nyak Din wed Teuku Ibrahim Lamnga before she wed the legendary Teuku Umar. Lulofs implies in the conversation between Cut Nyak Din and Ibrahim that Cut Nyak Din did not take part in the physical battles but did contribute her views and thoughts. The following exchange between Cut Nyak Din and Ibrahim demonstrates this.

> Ibrahim: "Wat is het vrouw? Is het u zwaar te moede?"
>
> Cut Nyak Din: "Het is mij zwaar te moede en toch ook weder niet, Brahim, want ik heb vertrouwen in Allah, die almachtig is. Maar wel zou ik willen, dat Habib Abdoerrahman terug wavan zijn zending en dat wij wisten, hoe en wat."
>
> Ibrahim: Waarom? Vertrouwt ge hem niet, zoals uw vader hem niet vertrouwt?" .
>
> Cut Nyak Din: "Jawel, Brahim, jawel. Ik vertrouw de Habib. Zeker! Ik deel niet de argwaan mijns vaders. Ik geloof aan zijn oprechtheid en vooral aan zijn verlorenheid om ons te redden. Alleen wilde ik, dat hij er was! Ik vrees soms, dat die Hollanders hem vóór zullen zijn en hoe dan?"
>
> Ibrahim: "Dan vechten wij zolang zonder hem. Hij zal wel komen."
>
> Cut Nyak Din: "Tegen hen te sneuvelen is zaligheid ... "(zegt Din, en een vrome emotie doortrilt haar stem)
>
> Ibrahim: "Dat is het Din! Maar niet dààrover denk ik nu. Ik lig te rekenen, hoeveel weerbare mannen wij in de strijd kunnen werpen"
>
> Cut Nyak Din: 'En...hoeveel denkt ge?"

> Ibrahim: "What is that, women? Are you too tired?"
>
> Cut Nyak Din: "It is too much for me, Brahim, for I have faith in Allah, which is all-powerful. But I would like Habib Abdoerrahman to return from his mission and for us to know, how and what."
>
> Ibrahim: Why? Don't you trust him like your father doesn't trust him?"
>
> Cut Nyak Din: "Yes, Brahim, yes. I trust the Habib. Sure! I don't share the suspicion of my fathers. I believe in his sincerity and, above all, his loss to save us. Only I wanted him to be there! I sometimes fear that these Dutch people will be ahead of him, and how?"
>
> Ibrahim: "Then we fight without him. He'll come."
>
> Cut Nyak Din: "Against them to die is salvation ... “(says Din, and a pious emotion vibrates through her voice)
>
> Ibrahim: "That's it Din! But not that way, I guess. I'm counting how many surviving men we can throw into the struggle."
>
> Cut Nyak Din: 'And... how much do you think?"

This long-running dialogue is between Cut Nyak Din and Ibrahim about resisting the Dutch strategy. Cut Nyak Din, a woman from the east, is seen through the eyes of Lulofs, a western writer. She is also depicted discussing strategies in this exchange, although she is reliant on her husband. For the first time, Cut Nyak Din is predominantly presented as a figure of Islamic piety. note of expressions such as "faith in Allah," "against them to die is salvation," and "a pious emotion." So, in this case the image of Din as not only heroic, but a figure of Islamic piety, comes from Lulofs' novel.

Even though Lulofs was capable of writing in Bahasa Indonesia, all her works are in the Dutch language and are specifically aimed at Dutch audiences. When she spent her youth in Meulaboh, Aceh, her awareness and memory of the Aceh conflict began to form. Lulofs went to Meulaboh in 1900 when she was one year old and stayed for a few years before being relocated to Manindjau, West Sumatera. Teuku Umar, Cut Nyak Din's spouse, had recently been killed in an ambush in Meulaboh that year. As Lulofs said in the novel's prologue:

> Zó en aldus leefde destijds Oemar in een donkere uithoek van mijn wezen, als een schim, die werd tot een dogmatisch, overgedragen begrip van valsheid en trouweloosheid. Als een overgedragen begrip! Niet als een zelf doorleefde ervaring of zelfs maar als een zelf doordachte wezenlijkheid.
> Váák dragen wij zo door ons leven de mensen, dingen en gebeurtenissen mee uit het onbewuste begin van ons bestaan en uit het leven van onze ouders en voorouders en veel daarvan bezinkt in de lagen van ons groeiend Ik en wordt daarin tot fossiel, maar soms, plotseling, blijkt iets daarvan in ons opnieuw gekiemd, in alle stilte, in de donkerte, en op het moment, dat wij licht en warmte toelaten, ontplooit het zich tot nieuwe bloei.
>
> So and thus Oemar lived in a dark corner of my being, like a shadow, which became a dogmatic, derivative understanding of falsehood and disloyalty. As a derivative concept! Not as a self-lived experience or even as a self-thought-out essentialness. Through our lives, we carry people, things and events from the unconscious beginnings of our existence and from the lives of our parents and ancestors and much of it settles into the layers of our growing Self and becomes a fossil in it, but sometimes, suddenly, something of it in us is re-germinated, in silence, in the darkness and at the moment, when we allow light and heat, it develops into new blooms.

When she initially arrived in Aceh, Lulofs was a young woman. Nevertheless, it is evident from her tone that the memory is still quite vivid. According to her letter, Teuku Umar's issue was still being discussed among her father's Dutch relatives. She points out that she had to carefully evaluate this prior incident since it subconsciously formed in her memory during her formative years. Moreover, Umar is the most influential character in her thoughts. Besides

that, her portrayal of Umar is consistent with Dutch colonial histories that highlight treason and disloyalty. In fact, it is apparent that Lulofs is exploiting a childhood memory to justify her authority to write about this period in Aceh's history. She was too young to have any historical recollection of it, but her emotional connection to the location is used to establish her credibility as a writer among the Dutch.

2.6 Szekeley-Lulofs and "Cut Nyak Din"

The author of this work penned it at a period of both personal and international turmoil. The figure of Cut Nyak Din, as imagined by Lulofs, offers a way for the author to make sense of the contradictions shaping her own life. Cut Nyak Din offers Lulofs a way to conceptualise her own self and feminist predicament. Lulofs expressed her preconceived aims, criticism, and dissatisfaction on various subjects via Cut Nyak Din.

The first key tension that shapes Lulofs novel is the paradox that although she is most interested in Cut Nyak Din, she can only access Cut Nyak Din's story through that of Teuku Umar. Lulofs, like every other Dutch author, was familiar with Teuku Umar before she had heard of Cut Nyak Din. Lulofs (1948) stated "*Want zij was in de achtergrond van het Drama. Al was zij een der hoofdfiguren, zij was in de achtergrond*."[85] (Because she was in the background of the Drama. Although she was one of the main characters, she was in the background). Lulofs thus presents herself as the person who can rescue Cut Nyak Din from obscurity. The book's first chapter, titled *De Aanleiding* (The Reason/The Background), is followed by 16 more chapters. The first chapter is dedicated particularly to giving Lulofs a chance to introduce herself and explain why she chooses to write about Cut Nyak Din, an adversary of her country. In the first sentence of this chapter, Lulofs wrote: *Eens maakte ik mijn boekenkast schoon* (Once I cleaned my bookcase). Cleaning the bookshelf seems to have metaphorical significance. She deviates from her initial goal of cleaning the bookshelves and ends up spending more time perusing the volumes until her attention is drawn to the name Tjoe Nja Dien (the old spelling of Cut Nyak Din). This demonstrates that Cut Nyak Din has been extensively discussed in literature for a long time but has not yet been truly "found."

> …., want deze keer is het toen gelezene de achtergrond geworden voor de weinig bekende en toch zo dramatische Levensgeschiedenis van een

[85] M. H. Székely-Lulofs, *Tjoet Nja Din: De Geschiedenis Van Een Atjehse Vorstin* (Amsterdam: Moussault, 1948), p.12.

> Indonesische vrouw, de Atjeh vorsten dochter Tjoet Nja Din, die tijdens de Atjeh oorlog een van onze felste tegenstandsters is geweest.[86]
>
> (…because this time, the then-read has become the background for the little-known yet dramatic life story of an Indonesian woman, the Aceh princess, Tjoet Nja Din, who was one of our fiercest opponents during the Aceh war).

The narrative structure of *Tjoe Nja Dien* revolves around the female author's concern and sense of connection with historical female figures whose services are overlooked or overshadowed by males.

> Ik kan haar niet anders zien dan zó: de ongeslagen overwonnene, tot in de dood onze vijandin. Alleen zó ook kan ik haar liefhebben, met die liefde, die dezelfde mens eert in haar als ik zou willen eren in mijzelf.
>
> I can't help but see her as undefeated, to the death of our enemy. Only so can I love her, with that love, which honors the same mensch in her as I would like to honor in myself.[87]

Lulofs introduces new terms did not exist in older Dutch texts, such as "undefeated". Military intelligence in the Netherlands wrote about defeating (and eventually capturing) Cut Nyak Din. Later texts portrayed her as strong and honourable. Now, Lulofs goes one step farther and imagines her as "undefeated," even though she has been vanquished on several occasions. I argue that this is a crucial way of thinking about Cut Nyak Din for a woman writer. This terminology provides Lulofs with a means to envision women (including herself) as being imprisoned by circumstance (such as an unwanted first marriage), but as being ultimately "undefeated" despite their circumstances.

Lulofs stresses the importance of acknowledging heroic qualities even when these figures cannot accomplish their political aims. InI an interview with the editors of *Morks Magazijn*, Lulofs declares “the heroic to her not necessarily means the hero’s success”.[88] “It is precisely her defeat, however, that constitutes her humanity and tragedy”.[89] This perspective tries to reconcile the historical fact that Cut Nyak Din failed politically with the idea that she nonetheless remains “undefeated” in spirit. This vision offers a useful perspective for women

[86] Ibid., p.6.
[87] Ibid., p.13.
[88] Nieuwenhuys, "Mirror of the Indies: A History of Dutch Colonial Literature," p.174.
[89] Ibid. p. 175.

seeking to see themselves as heroic even when they are constrained by male-dominated institutions and patriarchal views.

Lulofs presents Cut Nyak Din the protagonist, as a forceful heroine who is both an idealised loving wife and a figure for more egalitarian marriage relations:

> Mijn spionnen horen is nog niet hen meer vertrouwen dan u, Oemar!" zegt Din rustig, in haar koele waardigheid, "Want aan uzelf vraag ik mij te verklaren, de aard van uw plan tot onderwerping aan de kaphé. En mij, uw echtgenote, met liefdevolle toewijding u genegen, mij moogt ge toch niet verwijten, dat ik mij jegens u bezorgd maak! Ik verneem, dat gij verzoeken richt tot onderwerping aan het Gouvernement; dat men u gezien heeft in heimelijke beraadslaging met een ambtenaar der Hollanders; ja, zelfs zijt ge gesignaleerd te Kota Radja ... En ik ken toch zo goed als gij de Atjehse handleiding tot de Heilige Oorlog, waarin geschreven staat:- Hij, die omgang houdt met de Ongelovigen, hem zal God straffen met vreselijke folteringen! - Wat wilt gij? Toch niet ook, gelijk de oude Nèh, zódanig te schreeuwen liggen in uw graf, dat het omwonende volle uw lichaam zou opgraven en het in zee doen afdrijven, alwaar geen engel der wederopstanding u meer vinden zou. [90]
>
> “Hearing my spies is not trusting them more than you, Umar!" says Din quietly, in her cool dignity, "For I ask you to explain to me the nature of your plan of submission to the kaphé [infidel]. And me, your wife, with loving devotion to you, you must not reproach me for worrying about you! I hear that you are making requests for submission to the government; that you have been seen in secret deliberation with an official of the Dutch; yes, you were even seen at Kota Raja... And yet I know as well as you do the Acehnese manual to the Holy War, in which it is written: - He who associates with the Infidels, God will punish him with terrible torments! - What do you want? Yet not also, like old Neh [one of uleebalang member], so cry in your grave that the inhabitants of the neighborhood should dig up your body and cast it into the sea, where no angel of the resurrection should find you anymore.”

In this scene, Lulofs adds several new dimensions to the commemoration of Cut Nyak Din. First, she imagines Cut Nyak Din as a speaker representing her own point of view and asking her husband to justify himself to her. Second, Lulofs presents Cut Nyak Din as someone who is above or beyond politics, instead standing up for her religious beliefs and Acehnese identity. In this way, Lulofs’ account is different from earlier Dutch portrayals that emphasise power plays over ideology. At the same time, this portrait also continues the key theme that was important in the hikayat, which is Cut Nyak Din’s devotion as a wife. This portrait of a

[90] Székely-Lulofs, *Tjoet Nja Din: De Geschiedenis Van Een Atjehse Vorstin*, p.180.

woman who could speak freely and pursue higher ideals in the context of her marriage can be seen as an ideal that Lulofs sought in her own life.

To sum up, various pivotal moments in Dutch history give Cut Nyak Din her place in Dutch literature and popular culture. She was thus seen as a person of fascination in her own right by the Dutch military and the Dutch public, who were anxious for news about this long-running problem of colonial policy in the 1890s, Cut Nyak Din was first mentioned in Dutch colonial reports and media outlets, with an emphasis on her position within elite politics. At around the same time, Cut Nyak Din made her first appearance in *hikayat*, although as a somewhat trivial footnote. Cut Nyak Din was initially conceived of as a "hero" by a Dutch author in 1918, and from that point on, Cut Nyak Din was being built up as a major protagonist. It wasn't until the year 1938 that the public began to acknowledge Zentgraff's account of Cut Nyak Din's heroism. However, the first text to present Cut Nyak Din from a female perspective was Lulofs's *Tjoet Nja Dien* (1948). As the first effort to do so, it also helped legitimise Cut Nyak Din as a historical figure. These Dutch texts do give a textual foundation for viewing Cut Nyak Din as a hero, but their application is limited by the fact that she is always placed in the context of aristocratic male heroes.

The portrayal of Acehnese women in Dutch literature and records is heavily influenced by the fact that Dutch society does not have a similar degree of female heroism. In the eyes of the Dutch, Cut Nyak Din remains a fierce resistance fighter. The Dutch are often taken aback by her ability to inspire loyalty among those around her and mobilise resistance. This ability was remarkable since she constantly associated with her spouse Teuku Umar and other prominent men.

The plentiful Dutch sources honouring Indonesian women and the later reliance on these materials by Indonesians (nationalists, knowledge producers) have considerably influenced the concept of the ideal female hero in Indonesia. I argue that Dutch sources provide the perspective for subsequent Indonesian writers to negotiate.

Chapter 3
Cut Nyak Din and the Making of a (Female) Hero in Indonesia

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I examined how Achenese and Dutch writers portrayed Cut Nyak Din. In this chapter, I show how some of these texts were translated into Bahasa Indonesia in the 1950s by Indonesian nationalists in ways that could support emerging nationalist understandings of her heroism. I then show how Cut Nyak Din became officially recognised as a national hero by the Indonesian state through the formal Pahlawan Nasional program in 1964. This state-led commemoration reflects an important systematic Indonesian effort to construct Cut Nyak Din as a hero of the postcolonial nation.

This commemoration recontextualised Cut Nyak Din in relation to the challenge of postcolonial unification in an ethnically diverse Indonesia. As her Acehnese identity was both highlighted and assimilated into a broader Indonesian framework, she was constructed as a symbol that could foster national unity in a time when prominent Acehnese figures were expressing opposition over Aceh's integration into the newly formed Indonesian nation. This state commemoration also presented her in ways that acknowledged women as national heroes, but through criteria that were influenced by dominant masculine ideals rooted in anti-colonial armed resistance and warrior identity. This chapter argues that these processes of nationalist commemoration engaged with a combination of Dutch and Indonesian constructs of heroism in ways that were largely designed to serve the patriarchal interests of the Indonesian state.

This chapter demonstrates the post-independence transformation of Cut Nyak Din from a minor figure in the Acehnese hikayat and a feisty opponent interesting to the Dutch as a woman, to a nationalist icon made to fit into the pantheon of government-sanctioned official National Heroes (*Pahlawan Nasional*). In the 1940s and 1950s there was much writing in the new national language as both government-commissioned and independent writers debated who should be considered exemplary figures for the new nation. The most influential was the radical Dutch-educated Sumatran writer, journalist and *Volksraad* member Abdul Muis, who in 1954 published a reworking (more than a translation) of Madelon Lulofs' 1948 Dutch historical novel. Once the programme of officially-sanctioned Pahlawan Nasional began in 1959, with Abdul Muis himself among the first named immediately after his death, the search began for

historical figures who could be defended as eligible for nationalist commemoration. Cut Nyak Din was one of the three first women so proclaimed, in 1964.

I begin by first examining how selected Indonesian nationalists referred to Cut Nyak Din as a “hero” in print culture in the 1950s. I show how writers such as Abdul Muis saw Lulofs’ Dutch novel as an important resource to help Indonesians access their own past, leading him to translate the work into Bahasa Indonesia. Muis’ translation, along with other works, placed Cut Nyak Din into the Indonesian category of “pahlawan,” or “hero” in the traditions of heroism common across Southeast Asia. I then show how the Indonesian state under Sukarno officially commemorated Cut Nyak Din through the categories of “pahlawan”, describing her in the gendered language of “Srikandi.” By looking at the speech that commemorated Cut Nyak Din, as well as exploring the broader context of how she was categorised within the program, I show how Cut Nyak Din was reimagined to suit the needs of the state. Indonesian categories were used to help position Cut Nyak Din as an emblem of the postcolonial nation who was both an exceptional woman and a figure compatible with ideals of hegemonic masculinity based in anti-imperial struggle.

3.2 Abdul Muis's Cut Nyak Din

Cut Nyak Din was commemorated as a public figure by the Dutch Indonesian-born writer Szekely-Lulofs in the historical novel *Tjoet Nja Din: de geschiedenis van een Atjehse vorstin* (*Cut Nyak Din: The History of an Aceh princess*) in 1948. In the 1950s, Indonesian writers began to develop their own representations of Cut Nyak Din in relation to the portrait that Madelen Szekely-Lulofs had created. Many Indonesian nationalists were Dutch educated. Like nationalists in other colonized countries, they engaged with Western modes of knowledge and commemoration as part of their search to present Indonesia as a modern nation. At the same time, they introduced their own priorities and vocabularies into this process. Because earlier forms of knowledge production, such as the hikayat, were not recognised as modern sites of knowledge in the same way as the Western genre of the novel, historical fiction became an important way for Indonesian nationalists to show their interest in Cut Nyak Din.

In 1952, Hazil Tanzil published a book titled "Teuku Umar dan Tjut Nja Din: Sepasang Pahlawan Perang Atjeh" (Teuku Umar and Tjut Nja Din: A Pair of Heroes of the Aceh War). Hazil Tanzil (1918–1990), was a Dutch-educated nationalist, author, and a director of a publishing house in Jakarta. Hazil (1952) utilised Lulofs's work (1948), the Dutch version, as

its main reference.[1] This book shows the way in which Cut Nyak Din continued to be remembered in relation to her husband Teuku Umar.

Lulofs' book was also translated into Bahasa Indonesia as *Tjoet Nja Din: riwajat hidup seorang puteri Atjeh* (Tjoet Nja Dhien: the biography of an Atjeh princess) in 1954 by Abdul Muis, an Indonesian journalist and nationalist. Muis is renowned as the first official national hero in 1959. He was designated as Pahlawan Perintis Kemerdekaan (Heroes of Independence Peacemaker).[2] His initiation as an official National Hero came posthumously two months after his death. Sukarno took this move to recognise Muis's contributions to the pursuit of Indonesian independence. Muis's writing has become a significant document and reference for Cut Nyak Din's national commemoration. Because of his own posthumous status as an official national hero, Muis's interest in Cut Nyak Din could be seen to validate her as a nationalist hero as well.

Muis, in his capacity as a nationalist figure, wrote about Cut Nyak Din from a different perspective from that of earlier Dutch writers. Lulofs wrote her book as a way of navigating the complexities of an idealised feminism that could be useful to her as a writer of Dutch heritage raised in Indonesia. For Muis, Lulofs' work offered a way to provide generations of post-independence Indonesians with the opportunity to engage with a significant aspect of their national past. His translation of her novel is a notable milestone as it presents one of the first substantial commemorations of Cut Nyak Din in Bahasa Indonesia.

It was important to Muis to stress that although Lulofs wrote in Dutch, she was sympathetic to Indonesian nationalism and could help Indonesians access their own history. In the foreword, Muis provides an introduction to Lulofs and highlights her strong connection to Indonesia. He notes that she was the daughter of a Dutch citizen and had the opportunity to visit Aceh during his posting. Muis tries to persuasively convince Indonesian readers that she is a reliable source, rather than a symbol of colonial oppression. He highlights Lulofs' firsthand knowledge of Indonesia and Aceh, which provides a solid foundation on which to build Lulofs' writings on the Aceh setting.

> Because she was not a member of the colonial Dutch officials who exploited their position to destroy and oppress innocent people, Mrs

[1] Tanzil, *Teku Umar Dan Tjut Nja Din, Sepasang Pahlawan Perang Atjeh*.
[2] This designation was quite personal for Sukarno. He recognises Muis' contribution; Muis tirelessly argued for Indonesian Independence and wanted the younger generation to equally appreciate what he had done for Indonesia.

> Szekely, for example, grew up in the Atjeh region. Her father began working as a public servant in Meulaboh around 1900.

Muis appears to wish to explain this topic in order to persuade the audience that Lulofs is a part of the Indonesian nation amidst the animosity of the Indonesian people against the Dutch. He went so far as to emphasise that she (Lulofs) was not part of the "colonial" Dutch official organisation.[3] Muis therefore showed a nuanced relationship to Dutch sources.

One important aspect of Hazil and Muis's writings is that they both described Cut Nyak Din as "pahlawan," or hero, in their titles ("Teuku Umar dan Tjut Nja Din: Sepasang Pahlawan Perang Atjeh" (Teuku Umar and Tjut Nja Din: A Pair of Heroes of the Aceh War) by Hazil (1952) and Tjoet Nja Din : Riwajat Hidup Seorang Puteri Atjeh Tjoet Nja Dhien: the biography of an Atjeh princess). The book's cover however used "*Hikajat Pahlawan Puteri Atjeh*" (The Tale of an Acehnese Female Hero)."[4] The term *Pahlawan* has a lexical genealogy from Persian, which means "hero," and in Sanskrit means "a powerful man".[5] *Pahlawan* is a loanword from Persian that means "wrestler."[6] The evolution of the term resides both in Malay and Bahasa Indonesia.[7] *Kamus Umum Bahasa Indonesia* by W. J. S. Poerwadarminta demonstrates how the term has come to symbolise an idea that is bold, strong, and highly male.[8] Similarly, such dictionaries present normative visions of a *Pahlawan* as a male historical personage, such as Iskandar Muda and Hang Tuah (Aceh and Malay historical figures). When the term "pahlawan" is used to praise women, thus, it usually relies on reference to norms associated with masculinity. In the twentieth century, the concept of *Pahlawan* became used to specify participation within resistance struggles and anti-colonial activism.The titles of both Hazil's and Muis's works contain the world "pahlawan." Their works thus show how two nationalist writers began to actively engage with Dutch sources by recategorizing Cut Nyak Din with an important Indonesian understanding of heroism. This evidence suggests that in the 1950s, Cut Nyak Din was recognised as a "pahlawan" in Indonesian print culture.

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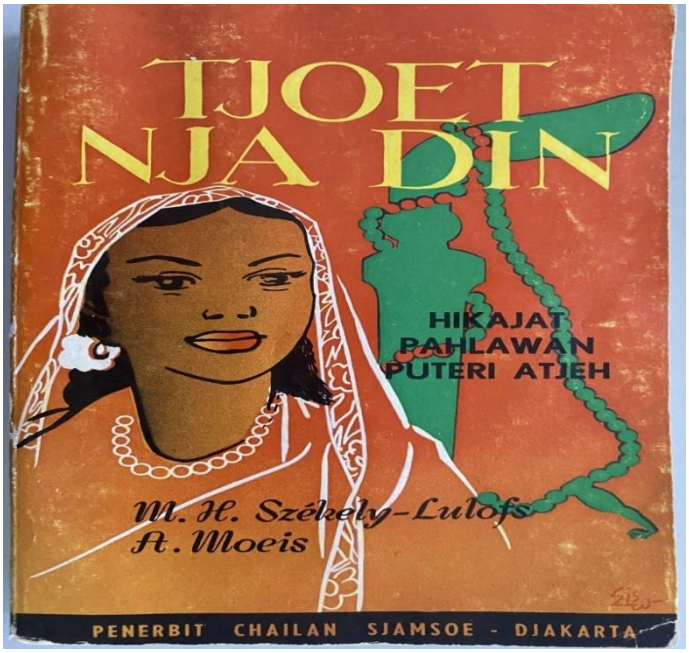
[3] Székely-Lulofs and Moeis, *Tjoet Nja Din : Riwajat Hidup Seorang Puteri Atjeh*, 3; ibid.
[4] M. H. Székely-Lulofs and Abdul Moeis, *Tjoet Nja Din : Riwajat Hidup Seorang Puteri Atjeh*, trans. A. Moeis (Djakarta: Penerbit chailan sjamsoe, 1954).
[5] *Orang pahlawan* (Persian), *orang perkasa* (Sanskrit), *orang perwira* (Sk), *anak laki-laki*. Shellabear, *An English-Malay Dictionary*.
[6] Marrison, "Persian Influences in Malay Life (1280-1650)."
[7] Malay and Bahasa Indonesia stem from the same source; both languages are mutually intelligible.
[8] Poerwadarminta, *Kamus Umum Bahasa Indonesia*; Wilkinson, *A Malay-English Dictionary (Romanised)*; Djajadiningrat, *Atjehsch-Nederlandsch Woordenboek*.

Muis's translation of Lulofs' work emphasised particular aspects of Cut Nyak Din's identity. Some of these similarities and differences are shown on the covers of the two books. Muis's book's cover has a different layout from the original. The cover of the translation appears emblematic of the story of Cut Nyak Din, a noblewoman who is both militant and pious. In both Muis's and Lulofs' books, Cut Nyak Din is portrayed as a youthful figure, in contrast to the Dutch photography of her as a frail elderly captive. On both covers, Cut Nyak Din is shown as a woman wearing a scarf and jewellery. The fact that both Muis and Lulofs depict Cut Nyak Din as a devout and noble woman remains constant. It is evident from the slack-fitting long gown that she wears on both book covers. However, the cover of Muis's translation emphasises the cultural and nationalistic dimensions of the battle by including a prominent depiction of the *rencong*, a traditional dagger from Aceh. She is portrayed as a Muslim woman, along with *rencong* and *tasbih* (string of beads). Swords and beads are entwined behind her. This imagery alludes to a narrative about a struggle between Islam and unbelief. It makes a subtle suggestion that the battle in which she is involved is a holy war.



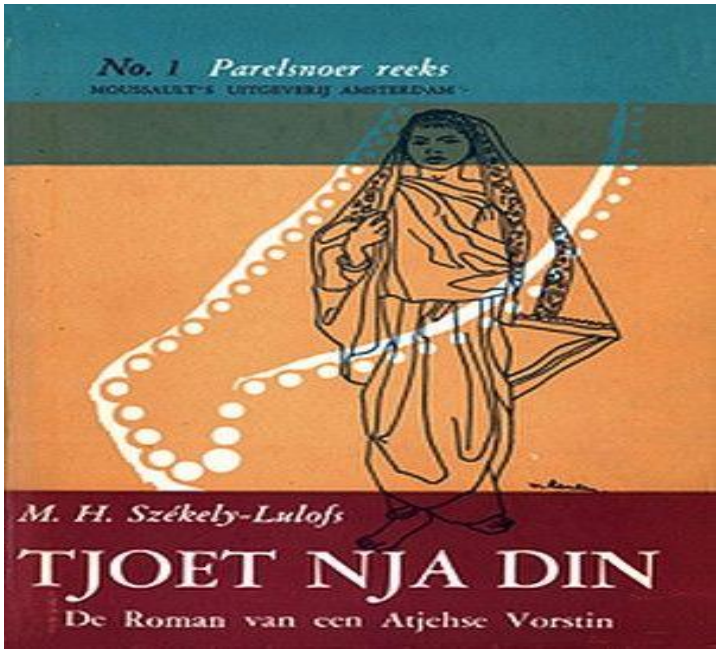


Figure 3-1 The adapted novel translated by Abdul Muis in 1954 vs The Original novel by Lulofs in 1948

Like many of the earlier representations of Cut Nyak Din, Muis represented her in relation to her husband Teuku Umar. Cut Nyak Din is referred to as Teuku Umar's widow in the preface of the novel. She is depicted as being as fierce as her deceased spouse and determined to become a guerilla war leader.

> Laki-laki perempuan tidur bersiap pistol disisi ditempat tidurnja. Teuku Oemar memang sudah gugur, setahun kebelakang. Ia tidak berbahaja lagi. Tapi djandanja, Tjoet Nja Din jang sama tangkas dan gagah berani dengan almarhum suaminja, telah mengundurkan diri kedalam hutan, membawa sepasukan kawan-kawan Teuku Oemar jang tidak hendak tunduk kepada ,,kape". Pimpinan peperangan beralih ke tangan Tjoet Nja Din, jang mendjalankan siasatnja dari hutan-hutan. Pengikutnja kian hari kian bertambah djua.[9]
>
> Men and women both sleep with a pistol beside the bed. Teuku Oemar has indeed died, a year ago. He is not dangerous anymore. But his widow, Tjoet Nja Din, who was just as dexterous and brave as her late husband, had retired to the forest, bringing with her an army of Teuku Oemar's friends who did not want to submit to the 'Kape'. From the forests his followers are increasing day by day.

After Teuku Umar's death, the guerrilla war continued with Cut Nyak Din as its leader. The use of the term "Kape," which means "unbeliever," suggests that she is willing to stand up to foreign forces. The resistance has taken on symbolic meaning for the people of the Aceh region. The picture of a man and a woman sleeping together with a pistol beside their bed symbolises the inherent equality of resilience and resistance. This reveals a setting of Acehnese of both sexes fighting in the battle. Cut Nyak Din's identity represents Acehnese resistance to external forces and displays women as leaders and active participants in the resistance movement via her role as a female guerrilla war commander, highlighting women's active involvement and leadership in the resistance initiative.

Muis was very interested in linking Cut Nyak Din to the concept of a 'homeland.' In the introduction, he wrote:

> "Dari banyak Pahlawan yang berjasa dalam perang Aceh, buku ini hanya khusus mennceritakan tentang Cut Nyak Din. Bukan karena kisah kepahlawanan mereka tidak dianggap berarti, tapi karena cerita ini khusus dimaksudkan untuk menceritakan hidup Cut Nyak Din. Dia adalah Pahlawan wanita yang patut dikenang bagi seluruh tanah airnya. Dialah wanita yang dapat dibanggakan sebagai seorang pahlawan tanah airnya." (Muis (1954) in Foreword)
>
> Of the many heroes who contributed to the Aceh war, this book is only specifically telling about Cut Nyak Din. Not because other heroic stories are not considered meaningful, but because this story is specifically intended to tell Cut Nyak Din's life. She is a female hero who should be remembered for all her homeland. She is the woman we can be proud of as a hero of her homeland.

[9] Székely-Lulofs and Moeis, *Tjoet Nja Din : Riwajat Hidup Seorang Puteri Atjeh*.

In addition to the word "Pahlawan" (hero), Muis uses the phrase and "tanah air" (homeland) multiple times. This homeland can be assumed to be Aceh. But Muis also turns it into a word that can mean “Indonesia.” In the preface, he writes “Tjoet Nja Dien, a female hero, who should be a memory for all Indonesian children. That they can be proud of as a hero of their homeland”. [10] In Muis’s translation, he appears to be very interested in both acknowledging Cut Nyak Din as a specifically Acehenese resistance fighter and at the same time turning her into a symbol who can stand for all Indonesians.

3.3 Cut Nyak Din in the National Heroes Program

The chapter's core concern is with how Cut Nyak Din is perceived and depicted in Indonesia's nation-building process. I now examine how Cut Nyak Din was officially commemorated by the state. In Indonesia, the state-run program called *Pahlawan Nasional* (national hero) is the major effort that infused the notion of heroism into postcolonial state-building and identity development. Annually, the government of Indonesia honours a different individual as the country's national hero. Through the course of this yearly event in Indonesia, a national hero is established. The importance of the national hero narrative is promoted via multiple mechanisms, including an annual national hero day on November 10, national hero biographies that are incorporated into the national education curriculum across the archipelago, national stamps and bank note series, and other forms of commemoration.

In this section I will argue that Cut Nyak Din's memory was used by the state to promote certain expressions of hegemonic masculinity as well as ideas of national Indonesian identity. She embodies particular attributes of hegemonic masculinity that encourage both the need for militant men and pious women, as she appears to be a pious and militant woman. Rather than challenging or upending the gender hierarchy, her identity as a female hero was utilised to maintain it. Similarly, I will show how Cut Nyak Din’s Acehnese identity was highlighted in the program mostly as a way to support the goal of unifying Indonesia as a multiethnic nation. This part of the chapter highlights the state-led and highly centralised nature of national hero commemoration, where the state has the capacity to construct a shared memory, regulate commemorative rituals, and shape the narratives around historical figures or events with the goal of establishing a particular national identity.[11]

[10] Ibid., p.6.
[11] A. Erll, *Memory in Culture*, 1 ed., Palgrave Macmillan Memory Studies (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2011).

There were several different ways in which people could come to be considered national heroes. In the twentieth century, the concept of *Pahlawan* was redefined to specify participation within resistance struggles and anti-colonial activism. Before Indonesian independence, Sukarno in the 1930s designated certain people as *Pahlawan Tiga Sekawan*, or “Three Heroic Friends”. They were a group of three prominent notable male heroes who serve as a symbol of resistance across Indonesia’s different regions: Dipanagara (Java), Teuku Umar (Aceh), and Tuanku Imam Bondjol (West Sumatera). The definition of "pahlawan" also expanded to include not only a military fighter but also a nation-builder. On November 10, 1951, President Sukarno made a speech that emphasised a shift from revolutionary hero (*Pahlawan Revolusi*) to development hero (*Pahlawan Pembangunan*).[12] As I have described, earlier in this chapter, some Indonesian nationalists also wrote and translated books to showcase people like Cut Nyak Din as heroes in the 1950s.

The most official way in which Indonesian national heroes were constructed was through what became known as the *Pahlawan Nasional* program. In 1957, Sukarno formalised November 10 as National Heroes Day (Hari Pahlawan Nasional). In 1958, the idea of a national hero began to be classified. The categories evolved and there have been several categories, such as *Pahlawan Kemerdekaan Indonesia* (Heroes of Indonesian Independence), *Pahlawan Perintis Kemerdekaan* (Heroes of Independence Trailblazer), *Pahlawan Revolusi* (Heroes of the Revolution), and *Pahlawan Proklamasi* (Heroes of the Proclamation).[13] Presidential decrees were issued to designate people as national heroes. In particular, Presidential Decree No. 217/1957 governs the status of a *Pahlawan Kemerdekaan Nasional* (National Independence Hero), and Presidential Decree No. 241/1958 rules the procedure for naming National Independence Heroes. Later, this National Independence Hero status became more specific as a *Pahlawan National* (National Hero), still used today. All declared heroes are deceased, and their nominations are made by their heirs or the government or regional communities.

The years 1958–1959 were critical in the development of Indonesia's national hero program. In 1959, the first national hero was named, Abdul Muis. He was designated as Pahlawan Perintis Kemerdekaan (Heroes of Independence Trailblazer). Abdul Muis was a personal designation for Sukarno. He recognised Muis' unwavering dedication to Indonesian

[12] *Guide* Arsip Presiden RI: Sukarno 1945-1967.
[13] Keputusan Presiden (presidential decree) Republik Indonesia no. 241 year 1958 as described by Schreiner, "The Making of National Heroes Guided Democracy to New Order, 1959-1992." Presently, the category is no longer used. All categories merge into one category, namely, *Pahlawan Nasional* (National Hero).

independence and expected future generations to share his appreciation for what Muis achieved for the nation. Today, the government designates heroes in the following manner:

> Pahlawan nasional adalah gelar yang diberikan kepada warga negara Indonesia atau seseorang yang berjuang melawan penjajahan di wilayah yang sekarang menjadi wilayah negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia yang gugur atau meninggal dunia demi membela bangsa dan Negara, atau yang semasa hidupnya melakukan tindakan kepahlawanan atau menhasilkan prestasi dan karya yang luar biasa bagi pembangunan dan kemajuan bangsa dan Negara republic Indonesia. (Peraturan Menteri Sosial no. 15 tahun 2012)
>
> National heroes are titles given to Indonesian citizens or someone who fights against colonialism in an area that is now the territory of the Republic of Indonesia who died defending the nation and the state, or whoever, during his lifetime, carried out acts of heroism or produced achievements and works extraordinary for the development and progress of the nation and republic of Indonesia. (Social Minister Regulation No. 15 of 2012)

This definition combines warrior ideals with nation-building ones. The search for heroes was not a neutral endeavour but was designed for particular political purposes. As scholars have shown, modern nationalism often revives figures from the past and produces narratives of heroism relevant to current political demands.[14] Heroes in various countries are commemorated as freedom fighters, military icons,[15] or even gods.[16] Governments have often utilised education curricula as major tools to unify the state.[17] Such findings suggest that the search for heroes is not static. Instead, it is often a contentious process that animates competing gender norms and ideologies. In the period following its independence, Indonesia turned to the concept of *Pahlawan* to shape a national canon of heroes that was disseminated through official means, such as the Heroes Day commemoration on November 10 and the nation's national hero awards.

The enterprise of constructing national heroes is continuously political. Commemorating particular individuals in public memory inherently diminishes the visibility of others. Heroism discourses have the potential to marginalise the contributions of different

[14] Kelley, "From Moral Exemplar to National Hero: The Transformations of Trần Hưng Đạo and the Emergence of Vietnamese Nationalism." Marples, "Stepan Bandera: The Resurrection of a Ukrainian National Hero."
[15] Scianna, "Forging an Italian Hero? The Late Commemoration of Amedeo Guillet (1909-2010)."
[16] Milburn, "From Hero to Ancestor, God, and Ghost: The Posthumous Career of Han Shizhong."
[17] Leigh, "Female Heroes in School Examinations: Traditions and Tensions in Creating a Gendered State," p.24.

groups, particularly those who are not well-known public figures, martyrs, or intellectuals.[18] A nation's endeavour to create a militarised hero might effectively dismiss the alternative virtue or contribution a citizen can make to history. Generally, the title of hero is bestowed on a person who is already well-known and renowned. Therefore, canonising someone other than a prominent public person, martyr, or national cause may be contentious and disputed.[19]

Similarly, in Indonesia, the pre-existing paradigm or discourse of heroism privileges and emphasises primarily those heroic characteristics linked with anti-imperial and patriotic allusions. Accomplishments outside this framework are not always legible in public discourse. This approach tends to be centred on manhood and masculine characteristics. "The warrior character, particularly among males, has served as the epitome of masculinity in a variety of countries".[20] The first heroes designated through the National Heroes program, such as a writer and nationalist, Abdul Muis, were men who could fit this ideal of an anti-imperial.

The politics of hero designation is an area with which only a limited number of Indonesian scholars engage, including Taufik Abdullah and Adam Asvi Warman. They both suggest that the nomination and designation process of a national hero must reflect contemporary values while remaining true to the values of the past. Adam Asvi Warman further suggests that unarmed civilians or non-military can also be national heroes.[21] It is not only scientists and doctors that deserve national acclaim; athletes and artists do, too.

The concept of *Pahlawan* is a central idea in Indonesia's anti-imperialist effort to unify the country. As in many other postcolonial societies, projects of commemoration gained a new intensity in Indonesia through the anti-imperial struggle against the Dutch and the movement to unify "Indonesia" into one independent nation. Without the Dutch to act as a uniting adversary, the postcolonial state needed a means to demonstrate disparate areas of Indonesia

[18] Richard Parfitt, "Reclaiming an Irish National Hero: Seamus De Búrca's Biography of Peadar Kearney, the Soldier's Song (1957)," *Journal of Musicological Research* 38, no. 3-4 (2019).
[19] Katia Dianina, "The Making of an Artist as National Hero: The Great Karl Briullov and His Critical Fortunes," *Slavic Review* 77, no. 1 (2018).
[20] Joshua S. Goldstein, *War and Gender: How Gender Shapes the War System and Vice Versa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).
[21] Asvi Warman Adam, *Membongkar Manipulasi Sejarah: Kontroversi Pelaku Dan Peristiwa* (Jakarta: Penerbit Buku Kompas, 2009).

cooperating together. Scholars agree that the National Hero is a platform to give space for all geographical areas in Indonesia to be represented, and also as a means to form unity.[22]

Aceh was particularly important in this program because of its ambivalent relationship to the postcolonial state of Indonesia. In order to create modern Indonesia, multiple areas had to submit to a new authority, the Java-based Indonesian state. In the mid-century period after independence, major questions arose about how, or even whether, Aceh should belong to Indonesia. Daud Beureu'eh, a former military governor of Aceh and an advocate for Indonesian independence, first proposed the idea of making Aceh an independent state in 1955. Reid argues that in Aceh "[t]he rhetoric also became steadily more nationalist, appealing to Acehnese as descendants of the heroes and martyrs of Aceh, who were martyred defending the Islamic religion and their *bangsa* (nation)".[23] During this period, therefore, important figures in Aceh encouraged the Acehnese to understand their fight against the Dutch as a specific battle for Islam and for Aceh rather than for Indonesia, and to see continuities between the Javanese and the Dutch.

To counteract this tendency, the Indonesian state took pains to include Acehnese in its national programs. The National Heroes program was a crucial instrument for policymakers to handle these often strained ties. Aceh was very important to commemorations of Indonesian heroism because, as Anthony Reid notes, Aceh's singular achievement in eluding Dutch reconquest in 1946–1949 made it the "model" for how the revolutionary era was envisioned, particularly by Suharto and the military. Aceh was the ideal representation of the military's interpretation of the revolution. Additionally, Reid adds that Aceh was the excellent representation for the generation that was raised in this manner, being the only region in Indonesia whose history came close to the ideal of armed resistance.[24] According to Schreiner, these Acehnese fighters were notable among those who were canonised as official "national heroes" during the 1950s under Sukarno's "Guided Democracy" rule.[25]

For what Benedict Anderson calls the postcolonial nation's "imagined community," the state looked for measures to convince disparate parts of the country that they belonged to

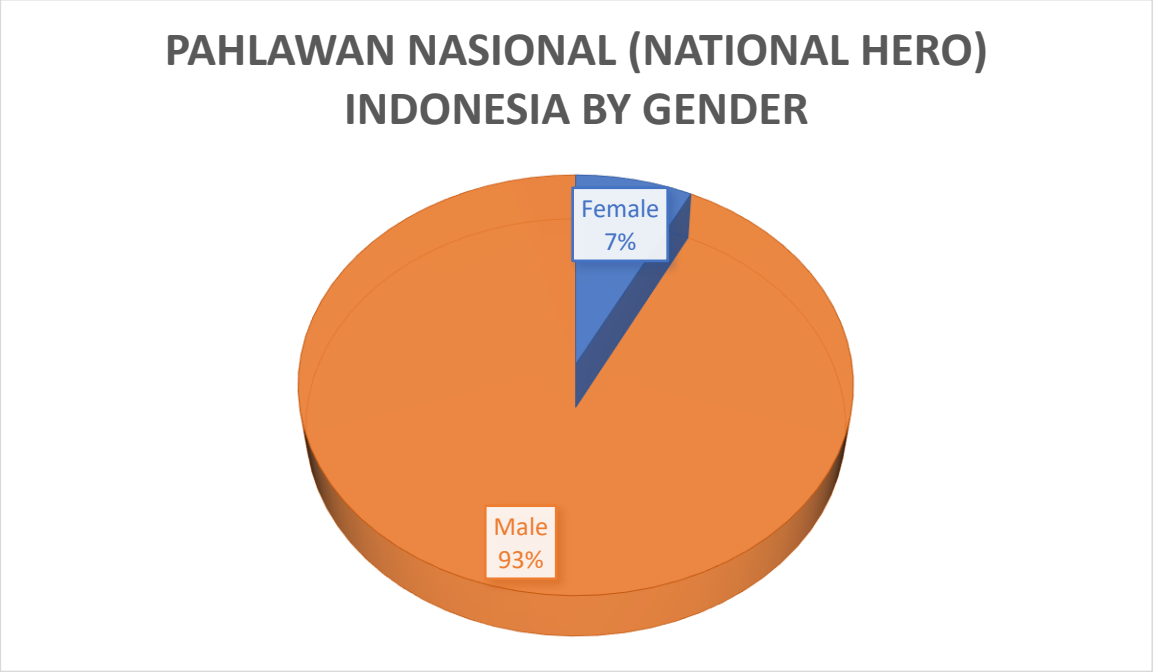
[22] Anthony Reid and David G. Marr, *Perceptions of the Past in Southeast Asia*, vol. no.4. (Singapore: Heinemann Educational Books (Asia) for the Asian Studies Association of Australia, 1979); Fogg, "Making an Indonesian National Hero for Lombok: The Shifting Category of Pahlawan Nasional."; Schreiner, "The Making of National Heroes Guided Democracy to New Order, 1959-1992."; Fogg, "Making an Indonesian National Hero for Lombok: The Shifting Category of Pahlawan Nasional."
[23] Anthony Reid, *Imperial Alchemy : Nationalism and Political Identity in Southeast Asia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p.132.
[24] Ibid., pp. 129-30.
[25] See Schreiner, "The Making of National Heroes Guided Democracy to New Order, 1959-1992."

Indonesia. Acehnese leaders were given national recognition under the heroes program in an effort to further integrate Aceh into a postcolonial Indonesian identity. I argue that to strengthen its own site of authority and to restrict Acehnese resistance against an Indonesian national movement, the Indonesian state gave major status to Acehnese individuals and soldiers in the Indonesian national register of heroes, even though they had battled the Dutch as part of their own holy war, rather than for the sake of the idea of "Indonesia." All of these factors explain why Aceh is the second most represented ethnic group after Javanese in Sukarno's pantheon of national heroes (*Pahlawan Nasional*), which Suharto perpetuated."[26] Aceh is so visible in the list precisely because the relationship between Aceh and Java could be so contentious.

For the state, the commemorative project could promote a sense of commonality and solidarity between diverse ethnicities in Indonesia, especially by focusing on opposition to the Dutch. Aside from instilling a sense of sacrificial patriotism among Indonesians, the anti-Dutch approach aimed to unite the archipelago's citizens under a shared nationalist ideology. Every link to a foreign power is seen as anti-nationalist. This is one reason why ethnicities such as the Chinese have rarely found a place in hero veneration in Indonesia.[27] Even after seven decades of Indonesian independence, this anti-imperialism is still firmly in place and extends to anti-foreign and nativist sentiments. Through inclusion in the national heroes program, local heroes and ancestors were elevated to the status of national resistance fighters.

Women were not officially recognised in the program until 1964. Cut Nyak Din was one of these women, along with Kartini and Cut Meutia. They were honoured as the first batch of female national heroes on 2 Mei 1964. Cut Meutia was an Acehnese guerrilla leader who fought against the Dutch colonial troops. Incorporating the uncompromising Cut Nyak Din into the canon of Indonesian national heroes overcame the problem of naming one of the many anti-Dutch Acehnese male warriors who had changed sides at some time during the long struggle. Raden Ajeng Kartini was a pioneer of indigenous (*pribumi*) women's revival. Through letters she sent to her friend Stella Zeehandelar in the Netherlands, she was an eloquent advocate for elevating women's position via education. That is why Kartini is regarded as a pioneer in the fight for women's independence. From 1959 until 2022, 201 people were honoured as heroes, but only 15 of them were women. This is less than 7% of the total. Women were thus visible in the National Heroes program but remained minorities.

[26] Anthony Reid, "Aceh and Indonesia : A Stormy Marriage" (paper presented at the Iaha Conference, [Taipei?], 2001).
[27] To date, only one Indonesian citizen of Chinese ancestry has been recognised as a national hero: John Lie or Lie Tjeng Tjoan.



In 1964, Cut Nyak Din was recognised as a national hero in the Indonesian national heroes' program, which heavily influenced her status in the eyes of broader communities. She had passed away in 1908, when she was exiled from Aceh to a distant rural community in West Java, Sumedang. Her burial site was not discovered until 1959, notably at the initiative of Aceh governor Ali Hasjymi.[28] She was therefore of interest to both Acehnese and Indonesian governments in service of their own modern national and regional strategic goals.

Cut Nyak Din and Cut Meutia were not only the first women, but also the first individuals from Aceh province to become official national heroes. This moment was thus an important time when the Indonesian state became interested in commemorating women and fighters from Aceh. During this era, there were two significant achievements that might be seen as constituting women as heroic figures. The first accomplishment pertains to military resistance, shown by the notable figures of Cut Nyak Din and Cut Meutia as guerrilla leaders. The second achievement relates to the promotion of women's education, as demonstrated by the efforts of Kartini. This trend remains consistent throughout the 1960s.

[28] Badan Penghubung Pemerintah Aceh (2022) “Napak Tilas Perjuangan Pahlawan Nasional Cut Nyak Dhien, BPPA Ziarah ke Sumedang”, https://penghubung.acehprov.go.id/.

Cut Nyak Dhien	02 Mei 1964
Cut Meutia	02 Mei 1964
R.A. Kartini	02 Mei 1964
Dr. Ciptomangunkusumo	02 Mei 1964
H. Fakhrudin	26 Juni 1964
KH. Mas Mansyur	26 Juni 1964
Alimin	26 Juni 1964
Dr. Muwardi	04 Agustus 1964
KH. Abdul Wahid Hasjim	24 Agustus 1964
Sri Susuhunan Pakubuwono VI	17-Nov-64
KH. Hasjim Asjarie	17-Nov-64
Gubernur Surjo	17-Nov-64
Jenderal Sudirman	10-Nov-64
Jenderal Urip Sumohardjo	10-Nov-64

Figure 3-2 The list of National Heroes named in 1964

Cut Nyak Din was commemorated in ways that could suit emerging nationalist narratives. Sukarno praised Cut Nyak Din for opposing imperialism in his 1964 address. He stated:

> …, bahwa Tjut Njak Dhien, ketjuali ia berdjoang untuk agama, iapun berdjoang untuk tanah-air, jang pada- waktu itu, jah, Tjut Njaik Dhien menganggap tanah-airnja adalah Atjeh. Sultan Hasanuddin menganggap tanah-airnja ialah Sulawesi Selatan. Sultan Agung Tirtajasa menganggap tanah-airnja ialah Banten. Diponegoro menganggap tanah-airnja ialah tanah Djawa, dan lain-lain sebagainja. Tetapi tidak bisa disangkal lagi bahwa Tjut Njak Dhien, ketjuali ia adalah pahlawan agama, adalah djuga pahlawan bangsa, pahawan tanah-air, pahlawan nasional.[29]
>
> ..., that Tjut Njak Dhien, apart from fighting for religion, she also fought for her homeland, which at that time, well, Tjut Njaik Dhien considered her homeland to be Aceh. Sultan Hasanuddin considered his homeland to be South Sulawesi. Sultan Agung Tirtajasa considered his homeland to be Banten. Diponegoro considered his homeland to be the land of Java, and so on. But it cannot be denied that Tjut Njak Dhien, even though she is a religious hero, is also a national hero, a hero of the land, a national hero.

[29] Soekarno, *Srikandi Tjut Njak Dhien : Pahlawan Nasional* ([Djakarta]: Departemen Penerangan, 1964). President Sukarno's speech on the evening of National Independence Hero Tjoet Njak Dhien on December 8, 1964 at Istora Gelora "Bung Karno" Senajan Djakarta.

This emphasis on the concept of “tanah-air” or “homeland” echoes the way that Abdul Muis wrote about Cut Nyak Din in his translation of Lulofs’ novel. Sukarno clearly acknowledges that Cut Nyak Din would have seen her homeland as Aceh. He emphasised the distinctive characteristics of the Acehnese people, who exhibit a notable fearlessness towards mortality. This phenomenon is driven by their tradition of the Achenese culture, whereby it is believed that those who die as martyrs would be transported to the heavenly realm by angels. Due to the influence of this tradition, Acehnese were thought to have a notable tendency for engaging in combat without succumbing to the fear of death. At the same time that he shows her as Acehnese, he also constructs Cut Nyak Din as “a national hero, a hero of the land.” In this way, Sukarno’s speech shows how a specifically Acehnese resistance could also serve a vision of a unified Indonesia.

Sukarno also created some possible links between Cut Nyak Din and Java. He made reference to the surname of Cut Nyak Din, which was formerly spelt as Tjut Njak Dhien. It is worth noting that the term "Dhien" may also be interpreted as a word “Dhian” in Javanese, meaning illumination, despite its origin as an Arabic word denoting religion. Thus, he treated Cut Nyak Din like a light, and as she dies away, the light "dhian" also goes out. Furthermore, he equated religion with light, both of which serve as illuminators. Sukarno attempts to discover a connection between Cut Nyak Din and Java in this way.[30]

Cut Nyak Din was also described in gendered terms as a “Srikandi,” or female version of *Pahlawan*. Srikandi is deemed as the archetypical female warrior with considerable prowess, especially in military roles.[31] This character comes from the *Mahabharata* and is a figure commonly seen in Javanese puppet theatre. In his book *Mythology and the Tolerance of the Javanese*, Anderson depicts Srikandi as:

> Talkative, strong willed warm, hearted fond of hunting an excellent archer …. She enjoys travelling about Java, either in search of her periodically missing husband or seeking adventures of her own. In the Indian original of the Mahabharata, Srikandi is really a man who has been changed into a woman. In Java, this is not the case; but perhaps the "masculine "side of her character owes something to this long-forgotten source. For the Javanese, Srikandi is the honoured type of the active, energetic, disputatious, generous, go-getting woman. [32]

[30] Ibid., p. 7.
[31]Carey and Houben, "Spirited Srikandhis and Sly Sumbadras the Social, Political and Economic Role of Women at the Central Javanese Courts in the 18th and Early 19th Centuries," 13.
[32] Benedict R. O'G Anderson, *Mythology and the Tolerance of the Javanese* (Ithaca: Modern Indonesia Project, Southeast Asia Program, Dept. of Asian Studies, Cornell University, 1965), 21-22.

Figure 3-3 Picture taken from Carey, P., & Houben, V. (1987), Arjuna instructs Srikandhi, his wife, in the archery skill

The term has been recast generally to imply brave female warriors. Female leaders referred to as Srikandi are often praised because of their military-like qualities.

Sukarno referred to Cut Nyak Din as *Srikandi Nasional* in his 1964 address, citing her role in opposing imperialism.[33] He entitled the speech "Srikandi Tjut Njak Dhien seorang pahlawan (Srikandi Cut Nyak Dien, a hero)." He stated:

> ….kita bangga bahwa rakjat Atjeh mempunjai pahlawan sebagai Tjut Njak Dhien, bahwa rakjat Atjeh tahu bahwa ini adalah perbuatan imperialis, dan kita bangga bahwa Tjut Njak Dhien berkata: Djangan membiarkan rakjat Belanda ini mengindjak tanah Atjeh![34]
>
> ....we are proud that the people of Atjeh have a hero as Tjut Njak Dhien, that the people of Atjeh know that this is an imperialist act, and we are proud that Tjut Njak Dhien said: Don't let the Dutch people step on Aceh's land!
>
> …Srikandi Tjut Njak Dhien. Srikandi itu apa? …Pahlawan Wanita…Srikandi adalah pahlawan Wanita dalam tjerita kuno, ia adalah pahlawan.
>
> Namanya Shikandien..., Sanskritnja, kemudian di Indonesian mendjadi Srikandi/
>
> Srikandi Tjut Njak Dhien. what is Srikandi? …a female hero…Srikandi is a female hero in ancient stories, she [srikandi] is a hero.
>
> she is Shikandien… in Sanskrit, then Indonesianised as Srikandi.[35]

[33] Soekarno, *Srikandi Tjut Njak Dhien : Pahlawan Nasional*.
President Soekarno's Message on the Night of National Independence Hero Tjoet Njak Dhien on December 8, 1964, Djakarta.
[34] Ibid., 13-14.
[35] Ibid.

This idea of Srikandi served the needs of nationalist leaders seeking a way to commemorate female sacrifice and struggle. As Reid proposes, “[s]emi-legendary warrior women from a less patriarchal past, such as the sexually-ambiguous Srikandi of the Javanese wayang tradition, were revived solely to demonstrate that women, too, could sacrifice for their country.[36] Sukarno carefully placed Cut Nyak Din inside the domain of Pahlawan by utilising the term "Srikandi," which signifies the feminine incarnation of Pahlawan. This approach allowed the Indonesian government to commemorate a woman while simultaneously preserving masculine norms associated with military heroism by using Indonesian practices that promote female heroics while also maintaining the male-oriented values connected with military attributes. This highlights the significance of the Indonesian state's use of a legendary figure from Hindu and Indonesian tradition to create a modern category for a female combatant opposed to colonial rule.

Cut Nyak Din’s commemoration was also possibly created in relation to the establishment of Gerwani in 1963. Gerwani is an acronym for Gerakan Wanita Indonesia, which literally translates to the Indonesian Women's Movement.[37] Gerwani reached its peak in the 1950s and 1960s by pressuring Sukarno to reverse his earlier opposition to highlighting women’s issues.

> With the rise of the nationalist movement, male leaders like Soekarno argued that women should postpone all talk of their rights until after independence was gained, since the only relevant right was that to national self-determination a clear case of communitarianism.[38]

Cut Nyak Din was a member of a cohort of women who were collectively recognised and celebrated at the same time. The timing of women being honoured shortly after the establishment of Gerwani is not merely coincidental. This occurrence marked a significant juncture wherein the state aimed to acknowledge women as integral participants in the nationalist movement. By naming the three very different women (Kartini, Cut Meutia and Cut Nyak Din) at once it also provided balance against protests that the most admired woman of

[36] Reid, "Urban Respectability and the Maleness of (Southeast) Asian Modernity," 161.
[37] "The Nationalist Quest for an Indonesian Past," p.135.
[37] This group evolved from Gerwis (Gerakan Wanita Sedar, Movement of Conscious Women), formed in 1950 with just 500 members. Affluent, politically aware members made up the majority. Some of them had participated in the guerilla battle against the Dutch before the war of independence in the radical women's group Isteri Sedar (Conscious Wives). Some of them were PKI (Indonesian communist party). Together, they fought for "democracy, women's rights, and a better quality of life.”
[38] Colin Brown, "Sukarno on the Role of Women in the Nationalist Movement. -Indonesia," *Review of Indonesian and Malayan Affairs* 15, no. 1 (1981) as cited in Susan Blackburn, *Women and the State in Modern Indonesia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

the national awakening, Kartini, was problematically strongly pro-Dutch. However, it is important to note that this recognition was primarily intended to emphasise women's contributions to nationalism, while simultaneously discouraging any aspirations for rights that could potentially create tensions with Indonesian men.

The National Heroes program also served as a place to emphasise Cut Nyak Din's similarities with male heroes. During his address, Sukarno acknowledged the significant contributions of Cut Nyak Din, a female hero, by placing her on same standing with other male heroes like Teuku Umar (Aceh), Diponegoro (Yogyakarta), and Hasanuddin (Makasar). Sukarno emphasised that these individuals symbolise regions that remained unconquered by the Dutch. This list of heroes accentuated masculine attributes as they were simultaneously inclusive of female attributes that were compatible with national independence.

The twelve women who have been canonised as National Heroes since the initial three of Sukarno's time suggest that there has been an unimpressive record of progress towards a balanced honouring of notable and exemplary women for their diverse achievements. Under Suharto the major shift of emphasis was to reward particular provinces or interest groups who pushed their candidates. While the six women named Pahlawan in the early Suharto period (1966-74) included education pioneers, for the reminder of the Suharto period women appear to have been forgotten until Suharto insisted on his wife being declared a national hero immediately after her death in 1996. After Suharto's fall President Sukarno's wife was honoured as a kind of balance, and to provide the often-neglected province of Bengkulu with its hero. The record in the Reformasi period was distinctly unimpressive, with the female nominees, like their male couterparts, relatively marginal figures explicable in terms of local politics and interest groups.

While Cut Nyak Din's battle was distinct from the defence of Indonesian independence, her inclusion in the national hero registry consolidates the assumption that the two are identical. Her battle is presented to appear as part of Indonesia's resistance against Dutch colonial power. Thus, understanding how Cut Nyak Din is remembered and repurposed through time allows us to see the Indonesian nationalism at work. This place in the national registry could also be used to increase national recognition of women, but in ways that were still compatible with ideals of hegemonic masculinity based in anti-imperial military struggle.

3.4 Conclusion

Patriarchy, nationalism, and militarism have all converged around the figure of the national hero in Indonesia. Mid-century commemorations of Cut Nyak Din by different Indonesian nationalists drew in some ways on representations that had been produced by earlier figures such as Lulofs, while they also placed Cut Nyak Din into the frames of *pahlawan* and Srikandi to construct her as a heroic figure for nationalist purposes. Listing Cut Nyak Din in the *Pahlawan Nasional* program proved to be quite advantageous for the state as it allowed for the inclusion of both a female character and a figure from the Acehnese community. Indonesian nationalists demonstrated a degree of reverence for Cut Nyak Din that resembled some of the respect that emerged in earlier Dutch perspectives. However, they included new elements to her memorial, including the incorporation of the "Srikandi" framework and a desire to promote her as part of broader endeavours towards Indonesian national unity. These efforts helped to shape how Cut Nyak Din became a familiar figure across different parts of Indonesia.

In this chapter, I have looked at textual sources in the 1950s and 1960s that show how two different Indonesian nationalists commemorated Cut Nyak Din. These sources are inherently limited because they are ones that were preserved in writing, so they do not include oral or other sources. However, these textual sources were very influential in helping to shape Cut Nyak Din within Indonesian national contexts.

Abdul Muis's translation of Lulofs' novel unofficially categorised Cut Nyak Din as a hero by using the language of *pahlawan* to describe her. After Cut Nyak Din was officially commemorated through the National Heroes program, the state continued to find ways to promote her legacy. Another notable biography named "Pahlawan Nasional Cut Nyak Dien (1978)" by Muchtaruddin Ibrahim emerged. This biographical initiative was implemented in 1975 by the Ministry of Education and Culture of Indonesia with the aim of promoting awareness and recognition of national heroes and other people who played significant roles in Indonesian history. The project sought to serve as a valuable educational resource for both the academic community and the average citizen.[39] These national projects also highlighted Cut Nyak Din's religious devotion. In his speech, Sukarno not only describes Cut Nyak Din as a courageous and heroic figure, but also emphasises her religious character. She has thus become a national figure who is known for piety and resistance.

[39] Also see Schreiner, "The Making of National Heroes Guided Democracy to New Order, 1959-1992," 273.

By becoming an official national hero, Cut Nyak Din was placed into a very formal ongoing state process. National Heroes Day commemorations are rigorously specified and organised in accordance with a yearly guideline termed *Pedoman Pelaksanaan Peringatan Hari Pahlawan* (The Guidelines of Heroes Day Commemoration). This guideline is updated annually and covers a wide range of subjects. It has roughly 40 pages. These requirements demonstrate how well-planned, consistent, and official the ceremonies and anniversaries for Heroes' Day are. While the theme changes each year, the activities typically stay identical. The guidelines detail how to organise a celebration committee as well as the key acts that are controlled at the regional, national, and international levels. These kinds of ceremonies can be seen as forms of civic religion. The ritual and ceremonies hold and serve their purpose to unify the nation. As Durkheim (1976) points out:

> There can be no society, which does not feel the need of upholding and reaffirming at regular intervals the collective sentiments and the collective ideas, which make its unity and its personality. Now this moral remaking cannot be achieved except by the means of reunions, assemblies and meetings where the individuals, being closely united to one another, reaffirm in common their common sentiments; hence come ceremonies which do not differ from regular religious ceremonies, either in their object, the results which they produce, or the processes employed to attain these results.[40]

Cut Nyak Din, by being officially named a national hero, was used to promote this civic religion.

This post-independence commemoration of Cut Nyak Din occurred in a time of debate about Indonesian identity and the role of women in the nation. Because there were questions in Aceh about whether the Javanese were simply colonial outsiders like the Dutch, the Indonesian state sought to create platforms that could promote unity and inclusion for Indonesia's diverse regions. The *Pahlawan Nasional* program sought to frame the struggle of Acehnese resistance to the Dutch as part of a broader fight for Indonesian independence, even though figures like Sukarno acknowledged that Acehnese fighters might not have seen their own resistance this way. Cut Nyak Din was thus a useful historical figure for the state to recognise because she could be presented as fighting for a "homeland" that could be simultaneously Aceh and Indonesia. Anthony Reid states that "Sukarno's revolutionary and anti-colonial rhetoric made particular use of the Aceh case when he dominated the stage in 1958-65".[41] By listing Acehnese fighters such as Cut Nyak Din and Cut Meutia in the register,

[40] Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, p.427.
[41] Reid, *Imperial Alchemy : Nationalism and Political Identity in Southeast Asia*.

the program emphasised the allegiance of the Acehnese to Indonesia. A specific Acehnese struggle could be read as part of a larger narrative of the Indonesian struggle.

Choosing a figure like Cut Nyak Din also allowed the Indonesian state to show that it was recognising the contributions of women to the nationalist struggle at a time when the state was concerned about women's groups potentially making more radical demands and critiquing patriarchal practices. Cut Nyak Din's role as a warrior allowed the state to continue to recognise forms of hegemonic masculinity, such as military strength, even when they were upheld by women. The language of "Srikandi," which Sukarno used to describe Cut Nyak Din, helped the state present her in this way.

The sources in this chapter show how Cut Nyak Din was written and spoken about by influential men, such as Abdul Muis and Sukarno. These commemorations were thus shaped through predominantly male perspectives on how a heroic woman should be seen. These perspectives tended to focus on the way that Cut Nyak Din could be Acehnese without destabilising the idea of Indonesian unity, and the way that she could be a militant fighter without critiquing patriarchal practices. The broader context of commemoration through the *Pahlawan Nasional* shows patterns where women remained in the minority of national heroes long after Cut Nyak Din was first listed in the register in 1964.

In the next chapter, I will show how Cut Nyak Din was imagined in the 1970s and 1980s in ways that responded to this legacy of national commemoration. As I will show, she became visible in popular culture through film in ways that were similar to the nationalist vision promoted by the *Pahlawan Nasional*, where her Acehenese identity was presented as part of Indonesian nationalism. But she was also commemorated in different ways by leaders of Aceh's separatist movement, who used her image to promote an alternative political view. These later visions built on and sometimes challenged the visions of nation and gender that were promoted through the *Pahlawan Nasional* program.

Chapter 4
Remembering a National Hero: Cut Nyak Din in *The Drama of Acehnese History* (1979) and the film *Tjoet Nja Dhien* (1988)

4.1 Heroism and Contesting Masculinity in Visual Representation

The emphasis of this chapter is on two depictions of Cut Nyak Din that allude to the anxieties around separatism in the 1970s and 1980s. This chapter shifts from the official state narratives of Cut Nyak Din in the *Pahlawan Nasional* (national hero) state program to concentrate on the role cultural representations play in building a new kind of collective memory considering the anxieties of the 1970s and 1980s. In contrast to the *Pahlawan Nasional* program, which embodied Sukarno's nation-building aspirations, Cut Nyak Din commemorations in the late 1970s and 1980s were developed within the framework of Suharto's New Order government and emerging separatist politics in the region of Aceh. This era was characterised by concerns with political control and societal stability, as well as the suppression of political opposition. Representations of Cut Nyak Din intervene in crises concerning Indonesia's national identity and in arguments about the role of women in such crises.

In this chapter on the 1970s and 1980s, I argue that on the surface, Cut Nyak Din is depicted as a hero who struggled against Dutch colonialism, but this struggle is used both to critique and to reinforce competing authoritarian political structures and gender norms. This chapter turns to textual sources in popular culture, specifically Acehnese historical plays and Indonesian national cinema. I explore how the memory of a nineteenth-century hero was revived as a symbol of heroism for the Aceh region and the Indonesian state in twentieth-century popular culture. In conflicting ways, these cultural materials portray Cut Nyak Din as a hero. She is envisioned as a symbol of both the Acehnese separatist and Indonesian national unity. Her emergence as an Acehnese nationalist and Indonesian cultural figure in Acehnese historical dramas and Indonesian national film is an act of constructing heroes that originates from a political crisis and presents unmet aspirations for competing political actors.

The Drama of Acehnese History 1873-1978 (1979), written by Hasan Tiro, founder of GAM (Free Aceh Movement), serves as a unique celebration of Cut Nyak Din from a nationalist Acehnese viewpoint. This drama is the first significant Acehnese written portrayal of Cut Nyak Din since the *hikayat* at the turn of the twentieth century, which makes it a crucial element in Cut Nyak Din's representation. The earlier chapter demonstrates that Cut Nyak Din was a

minor figure in the Acehnese hikayat during her lifetime. Except for the discovery of her grave in the 1950s, she does not become a central figure in Acehnese memorial discourse until the 1970s. In this chapter, I examine how Cut Nyak Din is celebrated in the play as an Acehnese hero and foremother to legitimise Acehnese separatist claims. This drama serves as a medium for Hasan Tiro to promote his political resolution as the founder of the Free Aceh Movement in 1976. Although Cut Nyak Din is a female hero, she is primarily important as a way to promote the ambitions of an aspirational Acehenese man.

Meanwhile*, Tjoet Nja Dhien* (1988) (remastered in 2021) represents a *film nasional* (national film) by famed filmmaker Eros Djarot. Cut Nyak Din was envisioned as a symbol of Indonesian (as opposed to Acehnese) resistance by this non-Acehnese filmmaker during a period when GAM was a relatively subterranean presence. During the time of the New Order, when the suppression of political opposition was a governmental priority, conflicts against the Dutch gave the possibility of uniting historical landmarks. As with the national program, prioritising Cut Nyak Din helped to assert Aceh as a part of Indonesia and worked to reframe Acehnese resistance to Dutch rule as a form of Indonesian nationalism. This vision takes shape through competing gender ideologies. Suharto's military dictatorship was founded on an extremely male authority oriented on control and women's submission. Women seemed to be emancipated during the New Order government, yet they were often subordinated. *Tjoet Nja Dhien* was meant to rebut this notion by presenting a totally liberated female figure. However, this film also continues longstanding patterns of portraying Cut Nyak Din as primarily important in her relation to powerful men. The film ultimately reinforces gender hierarchy while ostensibly challenging women's restricted roles.

Both texts are significant in terms of their effect on establishing representations of Cut Nyak Din within political and cultural memory in Aceh and Indonesia. I show that both plays and films emphasise resistance to foreign rul. However, competing actors are presented as “foreign.” Both texts also use the representation of a female hero to negotiate different kinds of male political authority. As the first substantive attempts to bring the memory of Cut Nyak Din into visual performance culture, these texts offered new ways to define and visualise Cut Nyak Din for a new generation of Indonesians in a contested national and regional context.

4.2 Cultural Memory and Masculinity: Popular Culture as Means of Commemoration

This chapter addresses how Cut Nyak Din is portrayed in Indonesian-produced culture and media. This vehicle for women's advancement happens within a larger gender debate that

is centred on male dominance. I build on existing scholarship to argue that performative genres such as plays and films are critical in commemorative endeavours. It is worth noting that "the past is always constructed in story, always a representation, always a construction."[1] My work demonstrates the need to examine various textual places to understand how one representation in one site may echo and build upon itself, as well as how historical memory can change from one medium to another. Previous researchers have drawn on a variety of textual sources. This chapter examines these disparate media concurrently and their interrelationships via the lens of numerous periodical histories.

Popular culture has provided a counterpoint to the official narratives offered in state-sponsored or state-authorised remembrance. Morris-Suzuki observes that the rise in popularity of films reflects a formative period in national history. Additionally, she says that in order to comprehend the divergent viewpoints on the past that exist and the shifting ways in which historical events are remembered, it is important to go beyond textbooks, to the ways in which images of the past are framed by popular culture.[2] The role of the state was the primary topic of discussion in the prior chapter (Chapter 3), and this subsequent chapter (Chapter 4) will serve to supplement that discussion by examining authors who are not affiliated with the state and who may even be opposed to the state.

The theoretical work of Ariel Heryanto, which is drawn upon in this chapter, argues that during the New Order period in Indonesia, political dissent was restricted, and cultural texts became important places where people could express their political ideas.[3] This chapter draws its inspiration from that work. This is the kind of practice I am analysing in this chapter.

In comparison to other sources, scholarly literature emphasises cinema's function in producing new forms of historical memory and its power to review the past and shape historical concepts. Theatre and movies each have their way of evoking memories. The film's potential to provide popular narratives that surpass objective images and textual sites has been highlighted by scholars. The film has the potential to impact future generations' recollections of the past. As a "real-world reverberation" and "catalyst for revaluing the historical past," the film has historical relevance in shaping historical vision and inspiring national consciousness.[4]

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[1] Katharine Hodgkin and Susannah Radstone, "Contested Pasts: The Politics of Memory," (New York;London;: Routledge, 2003).
[2] Morris-Suzuki, *The Past within Us: Media, Memory, History*.
[3] Ariel Heryanto, *Popular Culture in Indonesia: Fluid Identities in Post-Authoritarian Politics* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2008).
[4] Robert Burgoyne, "Memory, History and Digital Imagery in Contemporary Film," in *Memory and Popular Film*, ed. Paul Grainge (Manchester;New York;: Manchester University Press, 2003), p.221.

Performative oral forms have therefore played an important role in Indonesia as sites for the transmission of historical knowledge. In some ways, the play and cinema are carrying on traditions such as that of the *hikayat*, which is a form designed to be performed.

In Indonesia, the film has been a critical tool for moulding memory and a vehicle for effective propaganda. Indonesian documentaries or historical films, which are extensively distributed, often reflect the gloomy past of Dutch colonisation. In this sense, Heryanto asserts "until the mid-1980s the political dynamics in the production and consumption of pop cultures was then caught in the polarity between those for, and those against, the status quo centred at the official ideology of the regime, which was a combination of Javanism, secularism, militarism, developmentalism, and indigenism".[5]

At the time of 1980s, when the film *Tjoet Nja Dhien* (1988) was produced, the expansion of consumption and new forms of media during this time, which is also regarded as the pinnacle of the militarist rule of the New Order government, have been the most notable effects of Southeast Asia's deepening industrialisation since the 1980s. Indonesia is a prime example of this development (1966–1998).[6]

Furthermore, the Importance of historical film has been highlighted by scholars as it has certain intrinsic features; it immerses the audience in a totalised vision of the past, personalises, elicits laughter and tears, and it leaves certain images indelible in the memory.[7] This chapter expands on the premise that the advancement of memory studies enables the use of diverse items as memory sites and makes a contribution by examining how Indonesians are depicting Cut Nyak Din in their own way.

4.3 Methodological note

In conceptualising pop culture, it is noteworthy that "[m]ost observers of Indonesian culture devote attention to so-called traditional or ethnic cultures (often exoticised by many studies to be authentic cultures of the people), the state-sanctioned 'official' version of national cultures as often propagated in schools and ceremonies, or the 'avant-garde' or 'high' cultures of the nation's intelligentsia (as found in the academy, theatres and prestigious galleries)".[8] While popular culture and Indonesian national politics are inextricably linked, they have been

[5] Heryanto, *Popular Culture in Indonesia: Fluid Identities in Post-Authoritarian Politics*, p.8.
[6] Ibid. *introduction.*
[7] Morris-Suzuki, *The Past within Us: Media, Memory, History*, p.154.
[8] Heryanto, *Popular Culture in Indonesia: Fluid Identities in Post-Authoritarian Politics,* p.7.

neglected and understudied, resulting in a serious intellectual gap.[9] This chapter strikes a compromise between the ambivalent position of pop culture in academic studies and an effort to contribute to a serious examination of the political, cultural, and ideological influence of popular culture media in Indonesian studies.

I conduct a close reading method in this chapter, focusing on the social, historical, and political dimensions integral to a culture of production or consumption. I confine my examination to certain components, such as how a text impacts the construction and recycling of Cut Nyak Din's memory and how it is adapted for contemporary use. Following that, in addition to attentive reading, I conducted interviews with key figures involved with these cultural texts.

4.4 The Drama of Acehnese History 1873–1978 (1979)

Figure 4-1 Hasan Tiro Aceh, independence leader, at his apartment in Sweden. Three paintings of Teuku Tjik Ditiro, Cut Nyak Din, and his Iranian wife, Dora, hang in the backdrop.[10]

Hasan Tiro was born in Aceh to an influential family. He received his education in Indonesia and the United States, where he earned both a law degree and a PhD. In the 1950s, he was affiliated with the militant organisation Darul Islam, which aspired to establish an Islamic State in Indonesia and ultimately compelled the Indonesian government to recognise

[9] Ibid.
[10] Image source: Sverige Sweden Radio https://sverigesradio.se/artikel/3753050

Aceh as an independent Islamic state.[11] In 1959, the central government conceded to the consistent demand of the people of Aceh and established the province the status of a Special Province with autonomy in the sectors of religion, customary law, and education.[12]

While residing in the United States during the 1950s and early 1970s, Tiro acquired beliefs about Aceh's history and role in the world that were important to mass-based nationalism.[13] In the mid-1970s, Hasan Tiro shifted his political vision to become known as a major advocate of Acehnese (rather than Islamic) nationalism. This vision was linked to Tiro's broader search for economic prosperity. After oil and gas were found in Aceh in 1974, Hasan Tiro unsuccessfully sought a contract to manage these resources. Klinken (2001) suggests that Tiro had oil interests in the United States before launching the guerilla fight, and he was presumably aware of the freshly found Arun gas resources sooner than other Acehnese. Tiro concealed potential motivations around self-interest or economic nationalism in his published diary, which appealed to sentimental ideals of history and identity in its vision of Aceh.[14]

After this failure to acquire the oil and gas contract, Hasan Tiro founded the Free Aceh Movement (Gerakan Aceh Merdeka, GAM) in 1976, which demanded secession from the Indonesian state as a way of protesting Indonesian national control over Aceh's resources. Natural resources were a topic of concern for historians of Acehnese dissatisfaction later.[15] In this period, scholars have argued that Hasan Tiro lobbied for an "Acehnese" identity to motivate the Acehnese to battle the Indonesian government for control of these resources. GAM fought against the Indonesian government from 1976 until 2005, demanding independence. As an internationally connected political activist, Hasan Tiro directed much of GAM's resistance from abroad. In 1977, he escaped to Malaysia and then eventually relocated to Sweden in 1980. After periods of significant conflict, Aceh and the Indonesian Government signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in Helsinki in 2005, putting an end to 30 years of resistance and strife.

[11] For more on these developments see Dijk C. Van, "Aceh, the Rebellion of the Islamic Scholars," (BRILL, 2015); R. Michael Feener, *Shari'a and Social Engineering : The Implementation of Islamic Law in Contemporary Aceh, Indonesia*, First edition. ed., Oxford Islamic Legal Studies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Reid, *The Blood of the People: Revolution and the End of Traditional Rule in Northern Sumatra*.
[12] C. Van, "Aceh, the Rebellion of the Islamic Scholars.". *The Rebellion of The Islamic Scholars*. p.269.
[13] Edward Aspinall, *Islam and Nation: Separatist Rebellion in Aceh, Indonesia* (Stanford University Press, 2009).. *Islam and Nation: Separatist Rebellion in Aceh, Indonesia.* p.43.
[14] Gerry van Klinken, "The Battle for History after Suharto: Beyond Sacred Dates, Great Men, and Legal Milestones," *Critical Asian Studies* 33, no. 3 (2001).
[15] Since the colonial era, there has been an oil industry in Aceh. Mobil Oil Indonesia discovered massive resources of liquefied natural gas (LNG) in the Arun fields in North Aceh in 1971, and it was stated in 1974 that the resources were the biggest in Asia. Aspinall, *Islam and Nation: Separatist Rebellion in Aceh, Indonesia*, 54.

The Drama of Acehnese History 1873–1978 (1979) was created by Hasan Tiro during a pivotal late 1970s period as he was establishing himself as a leader of Achenese resistance. When he was in camp in Alue Seupot, a village in Aceh, in February 1978, Tiro was inspired to compose a play that paralleled the historical dramas of other freedom movements throughout the globe. While he and his people were in the jungle, they listened to international radio broadcasts to keep abreast of global affairs. The inspiration for historical plays was derived from a play about a comparable Quebec independence battle. As stated by Tiro:

> This week I was happy to read a special article in *Time* magazine featuring the Free Quebec Movement – naturally, we sympathised with the PQ, as with any freedom fighters in the world. It contained a review of the play, *La Complainte des Hivers Rouges*, by Roland Lepage that striked [sic] a cord [sic] in our hearts, …It was after reading that story that I thought of writing a play about Achehnese history. Quebec...Acheh...Sumatra...Alue Seupot... Time - could there be more disparate elements to bring the message of freedom?[16]

Tiro was so impressed by this Quebec play that he travelled to Canada in an attempt to meet the author, Roland Lepage, but was unsuccessful.[17] He decided to create a play that might similarly raise sympathies for Acehnese self-determination within Western political contexts.

The Drama of Acehnese History 1873–1978 was published in 1979 by the Aceh state Ministry of Education, during what is claimed to be Hasan Tiro's presidency. The play is set between the years 1873, when the Aceh-Dutch War started, and 1978, when the drama was written. Tiro's eight-act drama is a chronicle of resistance and revolution, the two ideologies that underpin GAM's existence. Tiro mentions that this play is a tribute to both the ancient and young warriors who dare to follow in the footsteps of their predecessors.[18] Additionally, Husaini Hasan, the so-called Minister of Education State of Acheh Sumatra, claims in the preface that this play is the inspiration for the current generation's legitimate struggle against Javanese-Indonesian neo-colonialism.[19] The play is a chronicle of Javanese dominance and Acehnese resistance.

The play served two key purposes for Tiro: first, to legitimate him as a genuine Acehnese leader with a noble genealogy, and second, to establish sympathy for Acehnese

[16] Hasan Muhammad Tiro, *The Price of Freedom: The Unfinished Diary of Tengku Hasan Di Tiro* (Norsborg, Sweden: Information Dept., National Liberation Front Acheh Sumatra, 1984), p.145-46.
[17] Ibid., 146.
[18] Ibid., p.186.
[19] Hasan M Di Tiro, "The Drama of Acehnese History 1873-1978," (Aceh: Ministry of Education State of Acheh, 1979).

separatism within Western political discourse. The play helped to produce for Tiro an authority firmly based on hierarchical structure, membership in an elite family and English-language production of the play. Despite being an allegedly populist production, it has little to do with connecting with the commonness or ordinariness of Acehnese.

The play served as a vehicle for Hasan Tiro to bolster his status as a leader for Acehnese independence. His surname Tiro may indicate a yearning for legitimacy, since it is unclear why he has that surname. He was born Hasan bin Leube Muhammad and chose Tiro as his family name in the 1950s. "Tiro" may refer to the Aceh hamlet where he was born, establishing him as a native of Aceh. It might possibly be a reference to his ancestor Tengku Tji di Tiro (1836–1891), a prominent Acehnese ulama and guerrilla fighter. Hasan Tiro did not originally have the surname Tiro since he is a maternal descendant of Tengku Tjik di Tiro. While the play is named The Acehnese Historical Drama, it could be seen primarily as a family drama designed to validate Tiro as a member of the "Tiro Dinasti." Hasan Tiro refers to Teungku Tjik di Tiro as 'the lord,' 'the lawgiver,' 'the king,' and the Aceh hero, but not quite as Indonesia's official national hero, a title he excludes. By creating this perception of a Tiro dynasty, Hasan Tiro sought to strengthen his connection to inherited forms of elite leadership and resistance in Aceh.

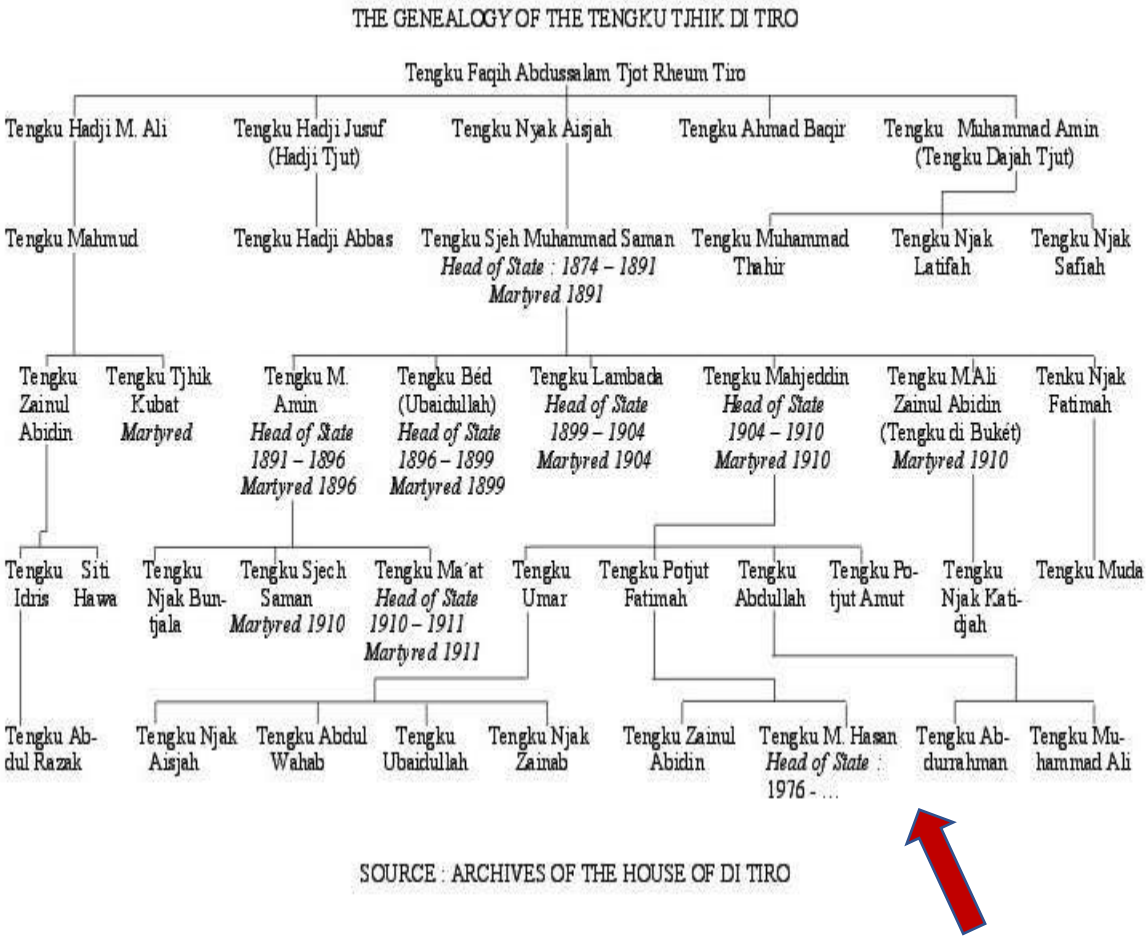


Figure 4-2 Tengku Tjhik Di Tiro. Source: Unfinished Diary of Hasan Tiro[20]

Hasan Tiro presented the play as a postcolonial attempt to tell a specifically Acehnese story through in which he could gain political authority. In Hasan Tiro's unfinished journal, he emphasises the need to chronicle the history of Aceh from an Acehnese viewpoint. According to him, his play was the first to use Aceh's historical sources from an Acehnese perspective. The stated goal of making this play is to reignite the spirit of the Acehnese people to fight on. He believes it is critical to provide a record of Acehnese history from an Acehnese viewpoint, because most historical sources on Aceh were published by Dutch journalists and writers in the period, such as Snouck Hurgronje, H.C. Zentgraff, M.H. Székely-Lulofs, and others. The play was hailed as the first to be based on an Acehnese historical source. Tiro invoked the genealogy of the Acehnese *hikayat*, or oral performances of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, by creating a play.

[20] Tiro, *The Price of Freedom: The Unfinished Diary of Tengku Hasan Di Tiro*. p.141.

Although Tiro claimed to write the play to inspire his Acehnese fellow citizens, he wrote the play in English. This choice suggests that although the stated audience of the play was the people of Aceh, Hasan Tiro was more interested in reaching an international audience to generate sympathy for the Acehnese cause. Tiro was already an author in English, which was the language he used to write many of his books. English was a significant language not only because it could help him distribute the play worldwide, but also because it showed his rejection of Indonesian. Tiro was reluctant to use the Indonesian language, saying, "We used international standard in our printing – not Javanese Indonesian standard!"[21] English could thus be used to make direct connections between Aceh and the West.

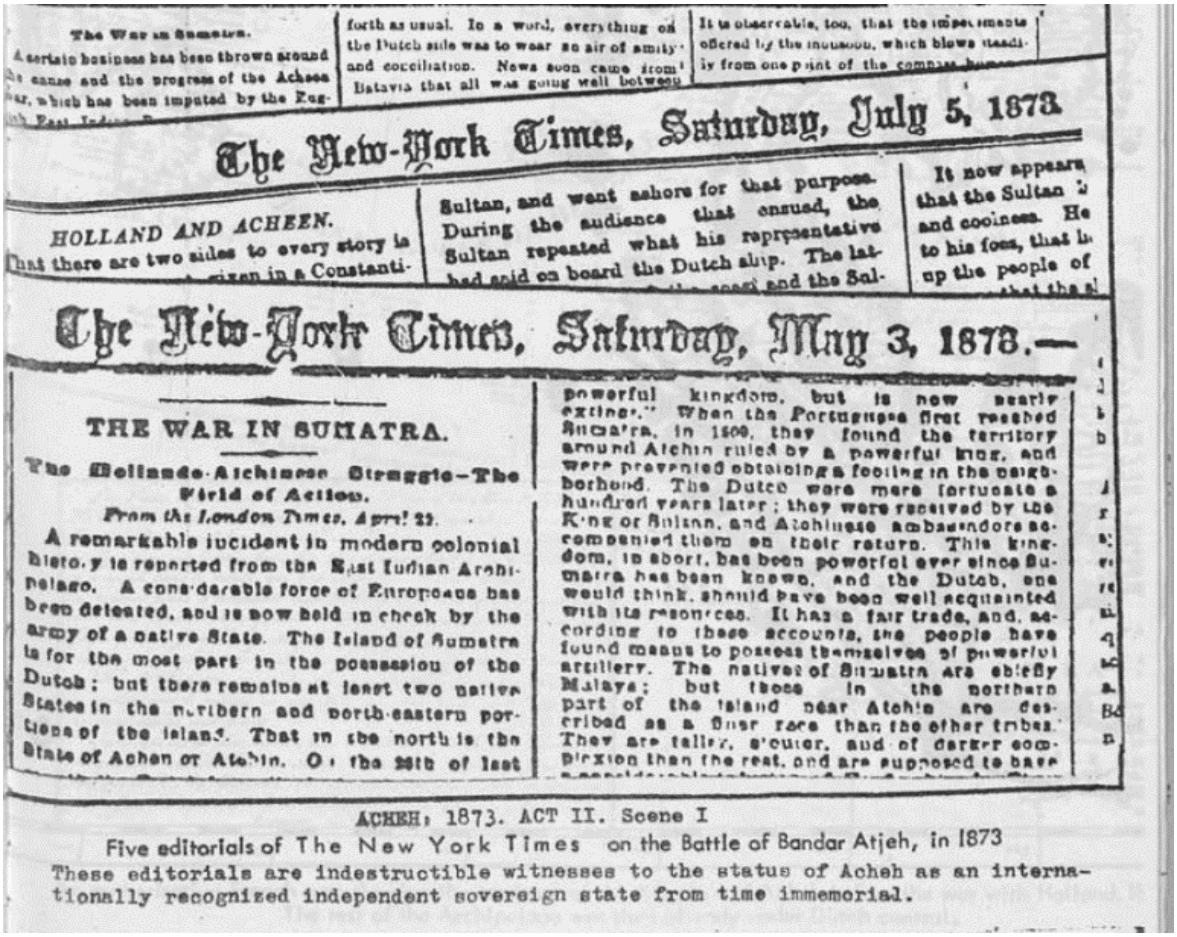
Hasan Tiro also drew on Western predecessors and references in writing the play. Although the form of the play draws on the oral tradition of the *hikayat*, he wrote rather than performed it, implying a link to European literary theatrical traditions. Furthermore, Shakespeare inspired Tiro's composition of the play. "Because of his countless plays, Shakespeare was the primary teacher of history to his people," he adds. "I feel we have also identified our medium." Furthermore, Tiro is conscious of the fact that Aceh province has gained international recognition and has been featured in numerous international media outlets, as well as his claim that Acehnese history is unique, as he put it "no people on earth have such a dramatic history like our people [Acehnese], except the Greeks perhaps."[22] It seems to be consistent with the assumption that the play is aimed at a Western audience and is intended to legitimise Aceh's battles and history by comparing them to those of ancient Greece, which has a high status in the West.

Tiro also used Dutch styles and sources when they could support his glorified history of Achenese resistance. The writing style of the manuscript is typical of Dutch anthropological history studies on Aceh. The first page of this book has a collection of *New York Times* articles, maps of the Aceh region in both English and French, and images of GAM personnel's operations. Tiro is keen about making this a comprehensive and "perfect" historical record, despite the theatrical style. It is also a form of dedication "to produce an idealised history by any standard."[23] Like Indonesian nationalists who came before him, Hasan Tiro engaged with Dutch materials to construct his vision of Acehnese history. He often uses well-known historical works written by the Dutch author H C Zentgraaf to support his arguments, such as

[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid., p.186.
[23] Tiro, *The Price of Freedom: The Unfinished Diary of Tengku Hasan Di Tiro*.

> The Dutch historian, H.C. Zentgraaff has written: "The Family of the Tengku di Tiro is the holiest family Acheh has ever recognised." (ACT IV Scene 2); and The Dutch historian, H.C. Zentgraaff wrote: "The history of the fall of the last Tengku di Tiro left such materials for a romance, and so buried in the history of Aceh War the stuffs for an heroic epic, the greatest, the most overpowering, and so formidable, as has not been seen elsewhere that make for the pride and the glory of a people." (ACT VIII Scene 2)

Hasan Tiro relies on Dutch accounts for credible information. In his eyes, the Javanese were as major colonialists as the Dutch. Consequently, the Dutch have become a "safe source," which may be exploited to access Aceh's history and legitimately build his own position within it. It is quite evident that he is constructing this drama in such a way that it is acceptable to Western audiences, not so much to audiences in Aceh. He is trying to establish his credibility and legitimacy with international media networks.



The War in Sumatra.

A certain business has been thrown around the cause and the progress of the Acheen war, which has been imputed by the Eng-

forth as usual. In a word, everything on the Dutch side was to wear an air of amity and conciliation. News soon came from Batavia that all was going well between

It is observable, too, that the impediments offered by the monsoon, which blows steadily from one point of the compass

The New-York Times, Saturday, July 5, 1873.

HOLLAND AND ACHEEN.

That there are two sides to every story is

Sultan, and went ashore for that purpose. During the audience that ensued, the Sultan repeated what his representative had said on board the Dutch ship. The lat-

It now appears that the Sultan and coolness. He to his foes, that h up the people of

The New-York Times, Saturday, May 3, 1873.—

THE WAR IN SUMATRA.

The Mollande-Atchinese Struggle—The Field of Action.

From the London Times, April 22.

A remarkable incident in modern colonial history is reported from the East Indian Archipelago. A considerable force of Europeans has been defeated, and is now held in check by the army of a native State. The island of Sumatra is for the most part in the possession of the Dutch; but there remains at least two native States in the northern and north-eastern portions of the island. That in the north is the State of Achen or Atchin. On the 26th of last

powerful kingdom, but is now nearly extinct." When the Portuguese first reached Sumatra, in 1509, they found the territory around Atchin ruled by a powerful king, and were prevented obtaining a footing in the neighborhood. The Dutch were more fortunate a hundred years later; they were received by the King or Sultan, and Atchinese ambassadors accompanied them on their return. This kingdom, in short, has been powerful ever since Sumatra has been known, and the Dutch, one would think, should have been well acquainted with its resources. It has a fair trade, and, according to these accounts, the people have found means to possess themselves of powerful artillery. The natives of Sumatra are chiefly Malays; but those in the northern part of the island near Atchin are described as a finer race than the other tribes. They are taller, stouter, and of darker complexion than the rest, and are supposed to have

ACHEH, 1873. ACT II. Scene I

Five editorials of The New York Times on the Battle of Bandar Atjeh, in 1873

These editorials are indestructible witnesses to the status of Acheh as an internationally recognized independent sovereign state from time immemorial.

Figure 4-3 Some photos attached to the drama documents, featuring the activities of the GAM, Gerakan Aceh Merdeka (Free Aceh Movement)

Zentgraaff is a prolific author who has published several works about Sumatra and Aceh. His work includes *The Family di Tiro of Acheh* (197-). And Zentgraaff is a Dutch author that Tiro regularly mentioned in favour of his views and relationship with the Teuku Tjik di Tiro, a well-known and respected Acehnese *ulama* in Aceh's history. In his book *Aceh*, Zentraaff devoted a particular chapter to Tiro titled *De Tiro- Oelama's*.[24] Furthermore, Tiro cites Zentgraaff's allusions in many sources to bolster his Tiro dynasty and position in Aceh history.

Tiro also employs first-person pronouns when describing the importance of Tgk Tjik di Tiro, his great-grandparents, and his affiliation with the so-called Tiro dynasty.

> However, to be in that position my family had paid dearly in blood and treasures. "Too much blood of the di Tiro family has been spilled," as H. C. Zentgraaff had observed in his book, Atjèh. Many national heroes of Acheh therefore have come from my bloodline. Because of this long history, my people have come to expect their leaders to come from the family. As it was with my ancestors in the past, it is still so with my generation now as I expect to be so with the future generations. The bond of loyalty between my people and my family that has been fertilized by so much blood and sacrifices shall never perish. [25]

[24] Zentgraaff, *Atjeh*, Batavia, p.16.
[25] Tiro, H. M. (1984). *Preface. The Price of Freedom: The Unfinished Diary of Tengku Hasan di Tiro.* p.1.

First-person narration has shown that Tiro is reliving his memory, participating in the event, and narrating what transpired. Using the first-person point of view, as Nathan (2016) proposes, can mean the narrator being inextricably entangled in this past.

4.4.1 Cut Nyak Din and Aceh Female Heroes from Aceh Nationalists' Political Perspective

In this broader context, Cut Nyak Din becomes important within this play because she is used to bolster Hasan Tiro's claim to be part of a "Tiro dynasty." Hasan Tiro claimed that he was the great-grandson of Cut Nyak Din. No clear biological link exists between Cut Nyak Din and Hasan Tiro, although they share a family connection. Cut Gambang, the only daughter of Cut Nyak Din, was the first wife of Hasan Tiro's grandfather. In the play, Hasan Tiro refers to Cut Nyak Din as a member of the "Tiro dynasty" and refers to Cut Gambang as his grandmother. These female figures are thus mobilised to support his legitimacy.

Tiro's use of Cut Nyak Din and other elite Acehnese women in the play is significant because they do not appear in many of the Dutch sources that helped Tiro construct his "Tiro dynasty." While writing this play, Tiro consulted a variety of historical materials, including works of Dutch literature. This is to demonstrate that the Tiro family is highly esteemed in history, so that he may strengthen his status as a member of the so-called Tiro dynasty. The Tengku Tiro Family Tree, which he transcribed from a Dutch book by H.J. Schmidt, consists only of males. Cut Nyak Din is not included, and neither are the other female members.

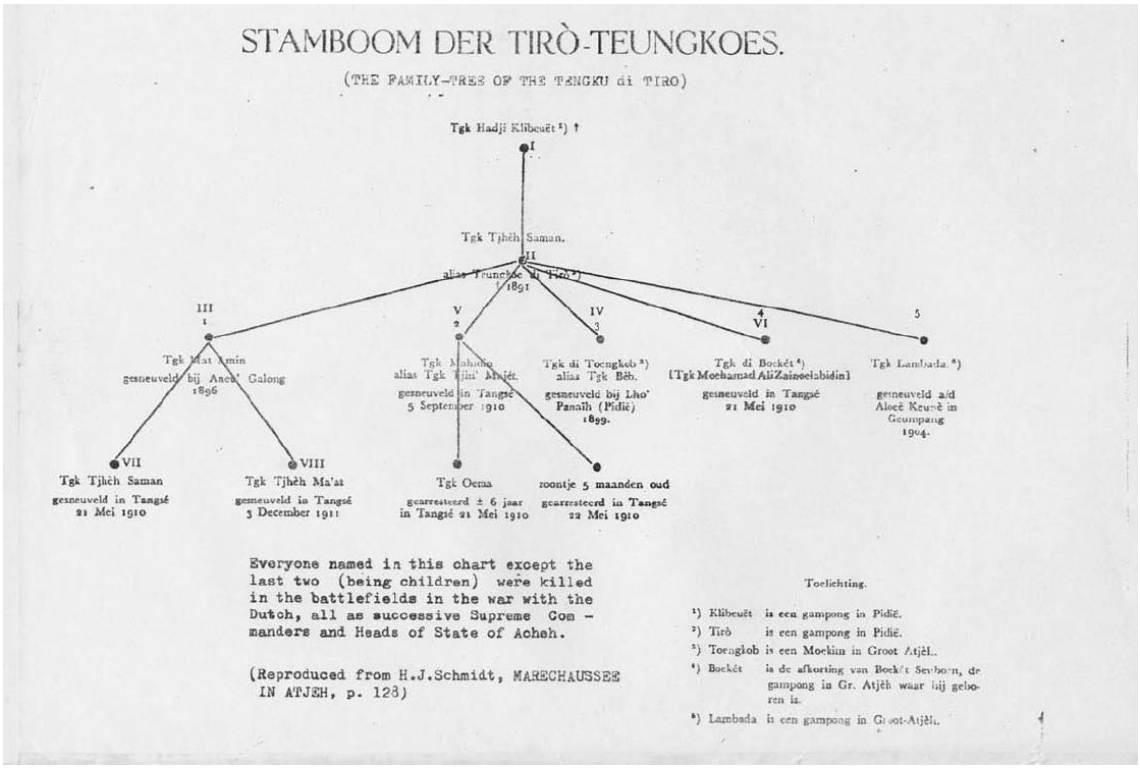


Figure 4-4 The Tengku Tiro Family Tree reproduced by Hasan Tiro from H.J Schmidt in Atjeh

The ancestry of the Acehnese is based on the paternal line. Female family members are excluded from the Acehnese family tree. This is also influenced by cultural factors, which incorporate the Islamic style which utilises paternal lineage or what is called *nasab*. In addition to Cut Nyak Din, the play features several female characters, such as Potjut Meurah (the widow of Sultan Mahmud Shah), Pocut Gambang (Cut Nyak Din's daughter), Cut Meutia (also a national hero), and Tengku Njak Fatimah di Tiro, Tiro's mother. All of them are Tiro's female ancestors or members of the Acehnese nobility. These female figures appear to reaffirm Tiro's male authority.

Cut Nyak Din is a female figure in this drama who plays a significant part. First, she is portrayed as a true Achehnese patriot who opposed her husband's political move from the outset. She had never consented to his [Teuku Umar's] thoughts or opportunistic policies. According to Umar, this was done mostly to deceive the Dutch to get their weaponry. Additionally, she is portrayed as an outspoken advocate for Acehnese resistance. As illustrated in the following scene between Cut Nyak Din and Teuku Umar:

> (She stands up, vehemently tosses all her knitting materials to the air, approaches her husband, and loudly shouts): "If you do not want to rejoin our people, I beg you to divorce me, now! I must clear

> my family name. I do not want to die as a traitor to our country. I was not born to dishonor my family before God and men!"

This scene presents Cut Nyak Din as a Western-style rather than a specifically Acehnese hero. Tiro is using a very “high style” of English. Cut Nyak Din speaks in an aristocratic and even melodramatic vein, with phrases like “I beg you to divorce me,”. This dialogue also presents Cut Nyak Din as a character more like that found in a Greek tragedy; Antigone, for example, defends the idea of honour. The concept of “destiny” would also resonate with Greek drama. It is evident that Hasan Tiro, far from representing an indigenous Aceh, in fact, styled Cut Nyak Din to make the Acehnese political cause very legible to Western readers and worthy of the status afforded Greek civilisation in the West. Hasan Tiro fashioned Cut Nyak Din to make the Acehnese political cause very comprehensible to contemporary global readers. These elite markers help to affirm Tiro’s own claim to be a member of an Acehnese nobility in the eyes of a global audience.

This scene also creates an idealised Cut Nyak Din who fits into changing Western gender norms. First, Hasan Tiro projects an ideal version of Western femininity onto Cut Nyak Din through the activities that Cut Nyak Din participates in, such as knitting. Knitting is not often considered to be a mainstream activity in Aceh. Like the many other Western influences on the play, such as the opening music by Ludwig van Beethoven, and Vivaldi, this detail portrays Cut Nyak Din as a female figure who fits a Western perception of female domesticity. Then, in the style of European feminist plays like Henrik Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House*, he shows her rejecting this sign of female domesticity in ways that show the impact of Western second-wave feminism. The fact that Cut Nyak Din is pleading for a divorce is surprising in an Acehnese context, since women are not encouraged to seek divorce. The topic of divorce is one that is discussed seldom and not in a light manner. This is another instance in which Hasan Tiro makes use of a statement that was prevalent in the American second-wave feminist movement of the 1960s and 1970s.

4.4.2 The Denigration of the Javanese and the Critique of Imperialists

Additionally, as seen in the following Cut Nyak Din dialogue, Tiro's objective was to demonstrate his contempt for Java in any way that he could. He portrayed Cut Nyak Din to support this idea.

> Tjut Njak Dien: "Let's go to wherever destiny wants us, but no surrender to the Dutch and their Javanese dogs."

> (She gives her hand to Tjuwa Baren who lends the way followed by others, including Dutch soldiers - all in silence.)[26]

When the terms Java or Javanese people are used, they refer to Indonesia. Tiro changes "Indonesia" to "Java" to criticise Javanese superiority and colonialism. Tiro never accepted Indonesia as a nation, according to his journal entries. This perspective has emerged as the most crucial part of his whole body of work. And format-wise, he wrote Indonesia without a capital letter and with quotation marks:

> While I think about it I would like to comment about the ridiculous name of "indonesia", the biggest hoak [sic] perpetrated by the Javanese in collusion with the Dutch and other Western imperialists in Southeast Asia for the convenience of their continuing plunder of the economic resources of this region against the legitimate interests of so many millions of the indigenous peoples of this vast region. This is the name of a supposed "nation" that never was. The word "indonesia" itself is a totally foreign nomenclature a misspelled and mispronounced Greek word. It sounds strange and unconvincing the first time we heard it, in 1942, when the Dutch Colonialist regime officially announced the change of name of their colonial empire of the "Netherlands East Indies" to "Indonesia". Thus a new, artificial "nation" was fabricated.[27]

Cut Nyak Din is used to build an idea of a militant Achenese identity who opposes both the Dutch and the Javanese. In addition to her image as a religious Islamic figure, she is also portrayed as a feminist who led the fight equally with men. She appears as a fighter woman against the side of Dutch East Indies or Indonesia.

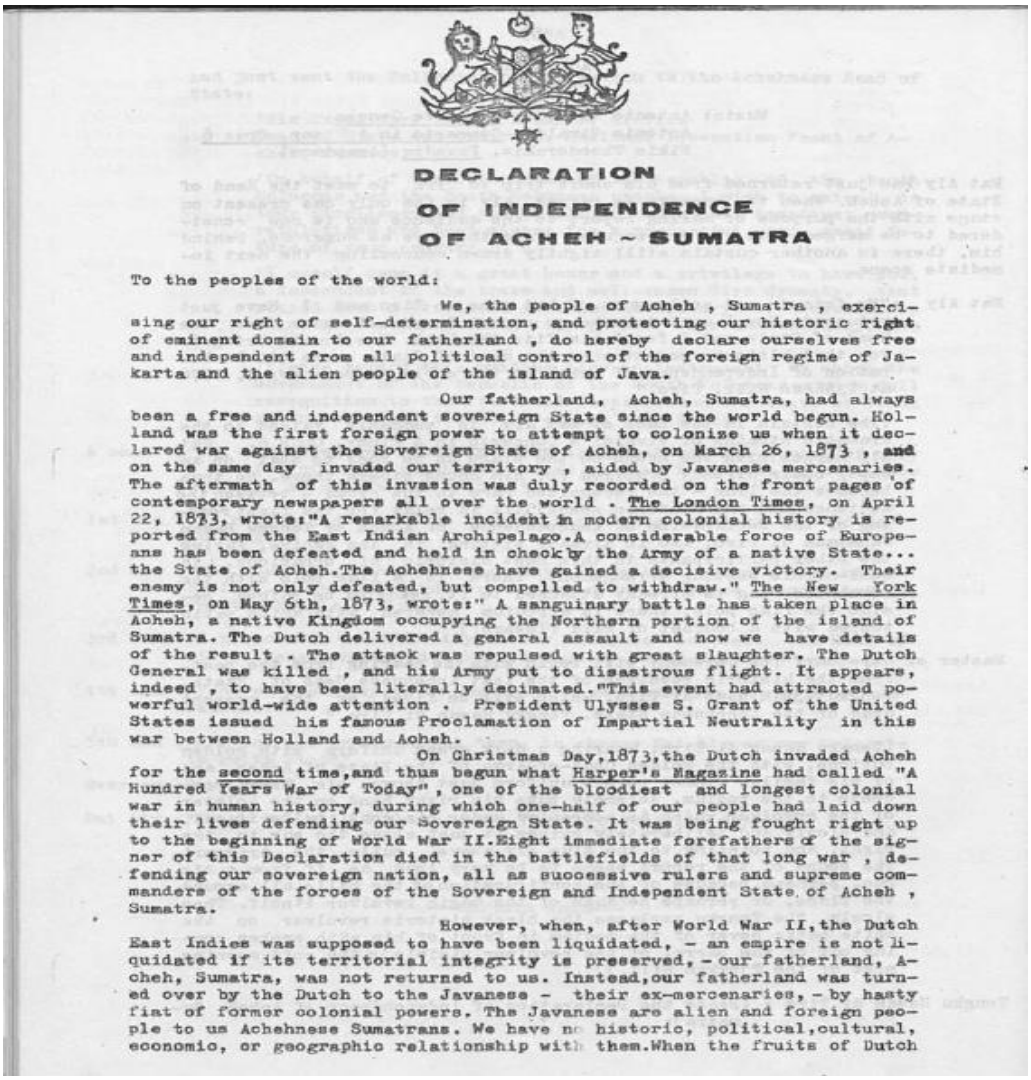
> "Our people no longer trust us and begin to look at us as a traitorous couple. The Dutch had given you a grand title. But I am an Achehnese woman! I do not feel proud to be the wife of a 'Grand Marshall of the Dutch East Indies Army'."[28]

Hasan Tiro also writes Teuku Umar as recognising Cut Nyak Din as his boss who is smarter than he is: “You are the Boss! Henceforth I will follow your policy. You are right all along. I must admit: women are smarter than men."[29] This scene allows Hasan Tiro to distance

[26] Hasan. Tiro, *The Drama of the Acehnese History 1873-1978* (Information Dept., National Liberation Front Acheh Sumatra, 1979), p.29.
[27] Tiro, *The Price of Freedom: The Unfinished Diary of Tengku Hasan Di Tiro*, p.197.
[28] Tiro, *The Drama of the Acehnese History 1873-1978*, p.14.
[29] Ibid., p.25.

himself from problematic predecessors like Teuku Umar, and to link himself to Cut Nyak Din, who is presented as the voice of Acehnese identity and resistance.

This portrayal of Cut Nyak Din is shaped by Tiro's broader resistance to the idea of Indonesia. Tiro's second key attitude and argument in this work is that he never acknowledged Indonesia as a nation, or, alternatively, that he never considered Aceh as a part of Indonesia. With the Acheh–Sumatera Declaration of Independence document included in the play, he elaborated on his view of the Indonesian concept.



DECLARATION
OF INDEPENDENCE
OF ACHEH ~ SUMATRA

To the peoples of the world:

We, the people of Acheh , Sumatra , exercising our right of self-determination, and protecting our historic right of eminent domain to our fatherland , do hereby declare ourselves free and independent from all political control of the foreign regime of Jakarta and the alien people of the island of Java.

Our fatherland, Acheh, Sumatra, had always been a free and independent sovereign State since the world begun. Holland was the first foreign power to attempt to colonize us when it declared war against the Sovereign State of Acheh, on March 26, 1873 , and on the same day invaded our territory , aided by Javanese mercenaries. The aftermath of this invasion was duly recorded on the front pages of contemporary newspapers all over the world . The London Times, on April 22, 1873, wrote:"A remarkable incident in modern colonial history is reported from the East Indian Archipelago.A considerable force of Europeans has been defeated and held in check by the Army of a native State... the State of Acheh.The Achehnese have gained a decisive victory. Their enemy is not only defeated, but compelled to withdraw." The New York Times, on May 6th, 1873, wrote:" A sanguinary battle has taken place in Acheh, a native Kingdom occupying the Northern portion of the island of Sumatra. The Dutch delivered a general assault and now we have details of the result . The attack was repulsed with great slaughter. The Dutch General was killed , and his Army put to disastrous flight. It appears, indeed , to have been literally decimated."This event had attracted powerful world-wide attention . President Ulysses S. Grant of the United States issued his famous Proclamation of Impartial Neutrality in this war between Holland and Acheh.

On Christmas Day,1873,the Dutch invaded Acheh for the second time,and thus begun what Harper's Magazine had called "A Hundred Years War of Today", one of the bloodiest and longest colonial war in human history, during which one-half of our people had laid down their lives defending our Sovereign State. It was being fought right up to the beginning of World War II.Eight immediate forefathers of the signer of this Declaration died in the battlefields of that long war , defending our sovereign nation, all as successive rulers and supreme commanders of the forces of the Sovereign and Independent State of Acheh , Sumatra.

However, when, after World War II,the Dutch East Indies was supposed to have been liquidated, - an empire is not liquidated if its territorial integrity is preserved, - our fatherland, Acheh, Sumatra, was not returned to us. Instead,our fatherland was turned over by the Dutch to the Javanese - their ex-mercenaries, - by hasty fiat of former colonial powers. The Javanese are alien and foreign people to us Achehnese Sumatrans. We have no historic, political,cultural, economic, or geographic relationship with them.When the fruits of Dutch

Figure 4-5 Acheh–Sumatera Declaration of Independence[30]

[30] Di Tiro, "The Drama of Acehnese History 1873-1978."

> This illegal transfer of sovereignty over our fatherland by the old, Dutch colonialists to the new, Javanese colonialists, was done in the most appalling political fraud of the century: the Dutch colonialist was supposed to have turned over the sovereignty over our fatherland to a "new nation" called "Indonesia". But "Indonesia" was a fraud: a cloak to cover up Javanese colonialism. …"Indonesia" is merely a new label, in a totally foreign nomenclature which has nothing to do with our own history, language, culture, or interests; it was a new label considered useful by the Dutch to replace the despicable "Dutch East Indies" in an attempt to unite the administration of their ill-gotten far-flung colonies; and the Javanese neo-colonialists knew of its usefulness to gain fraudulent recognition from the unsuspecting world, ignorant of the history of the Malay Archipelago. If Dutch colonialism was wrong, then Javanese colonialism which was squarely based on it cannot be right. The most fundamental principle of International Law states: *Ex injuria jus non oritur*. Right cannot originate from wrong! …colonialism, either by white, Dutch, Europeans, or by brown, Javanese Asians is not acceptable to the people of Acheh Sumatra.[31]

With all those connections to US and UK publications, this declaration appears as it was intended for the English-speaking West audience. No Acehnese histories are acknowledged in this paper, yet it is the documentation of Aceh's history in those publications that makes it "real." Therefore, it is evident that the play is not really intended for Acehnese people. Maybe it's more geared at the English-speaking West, where Hasan Tiro was attempting to gain support to his cause, or for the reasons for the worldwide separatist (East Timor, etc.). As he mentioned in his unfinished diary

> Javanese indonesia needs other Southeast Asian states' help to keep her[32] colonies such as Acheh Sumatra, Borneo, the Celebes, the Moluccas, West Papua East Timor, etc., from gaining their independence.[33]

Tiro views the people who live in these areas (Acheh Sumatra, Borneo, the Celebes, the Moluccas, West Papua, and East Timor) as non-Javanese communities that all shared the same fate of being colonised by Indonesia and subjected to a string of atrocities and acts of violence at the hands of the Indonesian government.

Several records prove Hasan Tiro's long-standing hostility for Indonesia. He has long claimed that "the concept of Indonesia is absurd; it is just another term for Dutch East Indies with new rulers who are Javanese rather than Dutch".[34] He used coercive utterances when it

[31] Tiro, *The Drama of the Acehnese History 1873-1978*, p.57.
[32] Tiro uses her pronouns to refer to the Indonesian state.
[33] Tiro, *The Price of Freedom: The Unfinished Diary of Tengku Hasan Di Tiro*, p.105.
[34] Bertil Lintner, "Giving No Quarter," (1999).

comes to shame and criticise the Javanese in the play, which is remarkable for an intellectual nationalist.

> Oh, they have surrendered to the Dutch for three hundred years already! They are an effeminate race, with infantile race, with infantile culture, where everybody is calling one another "father" or "mother": and they always surrendered. They have been colonised by the Chinese, by the Dutch, by the British, and then by the Dutch again. Anthropologists say they are descendants of “Java-men” which in Latin is referred to as “pithecanthropus erectus” which means “walking apes”.[35]

Regarding this Javanese sentiment, Reid points out that "The specific idea of an Acehnese state was never far from the minds of those opposing the Jakarta status quo in Aceh".[36] Throughout the drama, the Javanese/Indonesian is shown as a Dutch collaborator who shares the Dutch colonial ambitions for Aceh. Aspinall supported this statement that:

> [T]ransforming Indonesia into Java was first and foremost a way to draw a dividing line between the Acehnese and their national enemy”. Some founders of the movement who later became nervous about accusations of racism levelled against them conceded that they made the Javanese the chief enemy because it was hard to classify who were their enemies and who were the allies."[37]

In Tiro's play, Cut Nyak Din serves as a vehicle for him to incite ethnonationalism and to further his hate of Javanese or Indonesia. Cut Nyak Din is used to embody Tiro's resistance to Java or Indonesia, as suggested in one of the dialogues of Cut Nyak Din to Teuku Umar: "And when do you start your military campaign against the Dutch and the Javanese?"[38] The play sheds light on how, in order to serve the requirements of a nascent GAM and its historical ideology, Cut Nyak Din was envisioned as a proto-Acehnese patriot opposing Java and the Dutch. Tiro is another actor who blatantly utilised Cut Nyak Din for propaganda reasons. In this drama, he uses her name to further his political ambitions and influence in the region. AA female figure is being memorialised to reconstitute a particular kind of male authority (Tiro's), and anachronistic images of Cut Nyak Din that suit 1970s Western feminism are used to make her seem more appealing to Western audiences. This authority is primarily predicated on hierarchical structures, membership in an elite family, the production of the play in English, and other such factors. Even though it's being touted as a populist production, it has little to do with connecting with "ordinary" Acehnese.

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[35] Di Tiro, "The Drama of Acehnese History 1873-1978," p.4.
[36] Anthony Reid et al., "Indonesia, Aceh and the Modern Nation-State," (Book chapter, 2009).
[37] Aspinall, *Islam and Nation: Separatist Rebellion in Aceh, Indonesia*, p.71.
[38] Ibid., p.14.

4.5 Tjoet Nyak Dhien (1988, 2021)

Figure 4-6. Tjoet Nja' Dhien Film Poster[39]

Almost ten years after Hasan Tiro wrote his play, Cut Nyak Din appeared as a major historical figure within Indonesian national cinema. *Tjoet Nja Dhien* (1988), directed by Eros Djarot, represented a key moment when Cut Nyak Din became a figure within Indonesian popular culture. Drawing on but also challenging some of her previous representations, the film developed a new way of commemorating Cut Nyak Din for a new generation of Indonesian mass audiences.

Appearing in 1988, the film emerged at a particular moment of underlying tension for national, regional and gender ideologies in Indonesia. This New Order period was known for a strong emphasis on political stability, especially in the context of challenges to Indonesian rule over diverse parts of its archipelago. In the 1980s, GAM, which had engaged in direct conflict in the late 1970s, was largely training operatives overseas. However, this potential threat to stability lingered. The question of Aceh's integration with broader ideas of Indonesia remained. This period was also associated with New Order gender ideologies in which women's citizenship was largely understood through their roles as mothers and housewives. By making Cut Nyak Din a strong and visible heroine, the film in some ways challenges the regional and gender norms of this period, but in other ways, it works to reinforce them.

[39] Image source: http://www.hariansejarah.id/2017/02/film-tjoet-nja-dhien-1988.html

This film was well received. It garnered several national and international honours and recognitions. *Tjoet Nja Dhien* established Eros Djarot as a formidable filmmaker. Christine Hakim, who plays the lead part of Cut Nyak Din in this film, has similarly received several accolades for her performance. The movie depicts the valiant battle of the Cut Nyak Din guerrilla troops against Dutch imperialism in the Dutch War. *Tjoet Nja Dhien* is a vital part of Indonesia's film industry. The film is considered one of the most lavish productions in Indonesian history.[40] It has won various prestigious national and international accolades. *Tjoet Nja Dhien* and a few other Indonesian movies, such as *Nagabonar* (1987),[41] characterised Indonesia's film industry in the 1980s.[42] It was the first Indonesian film to be admitted to the Cannes Film Festival,[43] where it competed against a record 37 foreign-language Oscar nominations and received widespread international recognition.[44] It was subsequently shown in a number of countries, including France's 1989 Selection de la Semaine de la Critique (International Critics' Week).[45]

The film is dedicated to establishing Cut Nyak Din as a central figure in the *Prang Kaphe*[46] (or Dutch war). The film recounts Cut Nyak Din's fight to assume Teuku Umar's leadership after his assassination in an ambush in Meulaboh, West Aceh. Although the film focuses on Cut Nyak Din, it also analyses the dynamics of the Dutch war (1873–1904), which is regarded as one of the most prolonged military conflicts conducted by the Dutch. Prior to this production, and after Cut Nyak Din's death in 1908, the legacy of Cut Nyak Din had been presented in a variety of books, papers, and tradition that lingered in public memory. *Tjoet Nja Dhien* is the only film that depicts an Acehnese heroine from that era, making it an invaluable resource for understanding Acehnese women's heroic portrayal. This film attempts to place Cut Nyak Din within a historical and cultural context by highlighting the battle of Acehnese warriors against Dutch imperialism. According to scholar Ariel Heryanto, oral/performative traditions are more prominent in Indonesia than textual traditions. *Tjoet Nja Dhien* attracted a far larger audience than previous twentieth-century works. My analysis is intended to

[40] Michael Wilmington, "L. A. Film Festival Comes of Age: From Friedkin to Donen and the Whole World in between, the Fest List Includes 200 Films from 40 Countries," (Los Angeles, Calif: Tribune Interactive, LLC, 1990).
[41] An Indonesian epic comedy film depicting Nagabonar during the Japanese occupation in Indonesia in a 1945 setting.
[42] Anita Rachman and Sara Schonhardt, "Business News: Indonesia Opens up Film Industry," *Wall Street Journal* 2016.
[43] Baidura Ahmad, "Screen Legend's Humble Role," *Sunday Mail; Kuala Lumpur* 2003.
[44] The Gazette, "Arcand Film among Record 37 Entries Vying for Foreign- Language Oscar: Final Edition," *The Gazette* 1989.
[45] http://archives.semainedelacritique.com/films/1989/1989_selection.php
[46] Prank Kaphe is Acehnese language that literally means Infidel war. The word Kaphe derived from Arabic to refer to disbelievers and during the war was used to refer the Dutch colonisers.

"challenge and go beyond the common-sense ideological understanding of film as a mere form of harmless entertainment, and instead maintain that it is an intrinsically significant medium integral to twentieth-century modern and postmodern society."[47] *Tjoet Nja Dhien* represents the first time Cut Nyak Din is commemorated as a major heroine for a mass audience in film.

The play by Hasan Tiro was not particularly accessible, but the film *Tjoet Nja Dhien* impacted how thousands of Indonesians saw Cut Nyak Din and affected her worldwide reputation. Thus, Cut Nyak Din's commemorations have emerged in many ways, some with minimal effect/audiences and others with significant cultural impact. The film is relevant to the Malay world in general. *Tjoet Nja' Dhien* (1988*)* has been distributed and screened in various countries. Additionally, this film was distributed to neighbouring Malaysia and Singapore, where Indonesian films and soap operas continue to be popular and in great demand among Malaysian viewers.

Tjoet Nja Dhien (1988) is notable for several reasons. It was produced and directed by Eros Djarot. Eros Djarot was a talented musician before making his directorial debut (*Tjoet Nja Dhien* was the first film he made).[48] Two films produced by Eros Djarot at the end of the 1980s—*Tjoet Nja Dhien* and *Kantata Takwa*—showed the rising influence of Islam and its capacity to criticise the government.[49] *Kantata Takwa*, his other film, is an Indonesian musical documentary that examines social concerns and criticises the New Order government. Christine Hakim, a well-known actress, played the character of Cut Nyak Din in the film *Tjoet Nja Dhien*. Hakim was chosen as the protagonist due to her Aceh ancestry. Her grandfather is from Meulaboh, West Aceh, which is also the birthplace of Cut Nyak Din and Teuku Umar. Apart from being a well-known actress with solid acting abilities, it is probable that this was the deciding factor for Eros Djarot. The film is set in Aceh, and a portion of the dialogue is in Acehnese, with most of the extras being Acehnese performers. *Tjoet Nja Dhien* (1988) was not the first film to star Hakim, but this role was the one that made her most famous.[50]

The ramifications of this great film are not isolated to Hakim, but it is arguable that having famous actors in feature films can bring history into the midst of our own lives. As suggested by Morris-Suzuki,

[47] Norman Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language* (London: Longman, 1995), p.2.
[48] It has been recorded that there are only two films he has directed, namely *Tjoet Nja Dhien* (1988) and *Kantata Takwa* (2008).
[49] Thomas Barker, "A Cultural Economy of the Contemporary Indonesian Film Industry," (2011), p.123.
[50] Suraya Al-Attas, "Christine's Second Act: The City Advertiser, 2 Edition," *New Straits Times* 2003.

> It assures us that the people of the past had recognizable emotions and motives that may be played out by the people of the present and that the events of the past are considered sufficiently relevant to be addressed to us through the voices of the heroes of contemporary popular culture. [51]

Furthermore, by selecting an actress with Acehnese background, Djarot sought to establish the legitimacy of his vision as a portrait of Aceh's history. Djarot noted that in the early phases of identifying numerous prospective film characters, he investigated different life experiences of Indonesian women personalities, including famed female national hero Dewi Sartika and Kartini:

> "I start to research and select a figure. I look at Kartini, hmm it's okay, she is okay, however, for the level of a good film, I think it might need a more concrete one, then I search again. I found Dewi Sartika, but eventually I chose Tjut Nyak Dien and when I chose Cut Nyak Din, I gathered more than 100 books…." [52]

The key distinction between them and Cut Nyak Din is that neither Kartini nor Dewi Sartika were military leaders. Meanwhile, Djarot was looking for a strong-willed militant spirit figure whom he believed might encourage women to rebel against the New Order regime. The historical setting created by film cannot be compared to that of literature, at least in terms of popularity. The film is an unsettling representation of a "postliterate age" in which people can read but choose not to.[53] The performative genre and visually depicted media can serve purposes other than those associated with the written word. *Tjoet Nja Dhien* (1988) was released during the Indonesian cinema industry's heyday. During the 1980s, the biographies of national heroes were exclusively discussed by government officials and academics.[54] Although a Dutch translation of the biographical novel Cut Nyak Din was released in Indonesia in 1954,[55] van Klinken believes that after this, Cut Nyak Din's biographies become less fascinating.[56] Consequently, people's interest is more absorbed in the film. However, this film provides a more realistic and clearer visual representation of Cut Nyak Din than her representation in other textual sites (e.g., biographies). More than textbooks, film depictions affect the people's view of historical subjects.[57] By the 1980s, depictions of Cut Nyak Din are

[51] Morris-Suzuki, *The Past within Us: Media, Memory, History*, p.150.
[52] Interview with Eros Djarot
[53] Robert A. Rosenstone, "The Historical Film: Looking at the Past in a Postliterate Age," ed. Kramer Lloyd, Reid Donald, and L. Barney William (University of Minnesota Press, 1994).
[54] Gerry van Klinken, "Nationale Helden in Indonesiî," *Tropenlevens : de (post)koloniale biografie* (2008).
[55] Székely-Lulofs and Moeis, *Tjoet Nja Din : Riwajat Hidup Seorang Puteri Atjeh*.
[56] van Klinken, "Nationale Helden in Indonesiî."
[57] Paul Grainge, *Memory and Popular Film* (Manchester;New York;: Manchester University Press, 2003), p.48.

no longer primarily found in print culture (such as in books or magazines), but rather, they are a part of an emerging visual and popular culture in Indonesia. Cut Nyak Din is shown to the spectators in Indonesia for the first time as a real, breathing person moving around the screen.

Film can function as a fundamental revolutionary instrument for building character and nation[58] and an essential process through which collective memory is constructed (and undermined). The power and dominance that the Indonesian Government exerts on the Indonesian film industry is reflected in a 1983 report on Indonesian film, which stated, "The film medium exerts a great influence on the development of the nation's attitude, character, and civic virtues. Consequently, all films and film advertisements meant for public showing or export must first acquire permits from the Government."[59] The Government sought to control the thought and opinions so that it remained in line with the principles and ideology of the Government so that political interests and cinema could always be consolidated.

The 1980s were the Indonesian film industry's heyday. The efforts to submit the film *Tjoet Nja Dhien* to various festivals increased worldwide interest in Indonesian filmmaking. *Tjoet Nja Dhien* (1988) was the first Indonesian film to be shown at Cannes film festival.[60] In addition, from the 1980s, national cinema was systematically included in the New Order's developmentalist program.[61] Heryanto presents a number of questions about the relationship between the industry and the regime and believes that "those involved in the production of the film and its consumption indirectly (and most likely unconsciously) were taking part in reproducing the dominant ideology of the time".[62] I argue that Indonesian national films have allegedly been used to criticise the state while also reflecting its ideology. *Tjoet Nja Dhien* (1988) is no exception when it comes to challenging the regime and its political ideology while still reflecting its outlook ideology.[63]By considering filmmakers' perspectives, I can comprehend "social relations in market-oriented institutions".[64] I extend the gender analysis in Indonesian cinema, which specifically addresses women's representation.[65]

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[58] N. Kurnia, "Lambannya Pertumbuhan Industri Perfilman," *JSP: Jurnal Ilmu Sosial dan Ilmu Politik* 9, no. 3 (2006).
[59] As cited in Byungkuk Soh, "In Search of “Unity in Diversity”: The Image of Women in New Order Indonesia," *International area studies review* 10, no. 2 (2007).
[60] Then only in 2005 Indonesian films again competed at Cannes.
[61] Barker, "A Cultural Economy of the Contemporary Indonesian Film Industry," p.61.
[62] Heryanto, *Popular Culture in Indonesia: Fluid Identities in Post-Authoritarian Politics*, p.11.
[63] Along with *Tjoet Nja Dhien* (1988, 2021), Djarot also made a similar film which is a form of criticism of the New Order; see Barker, "A Cultural Economy of the Contemporary Indonesian Film Industry," 213.
[64] Keith Negus, "Identities and Industries: The Cultural Formation of Aesthetic Economies," *Culture, Representation and Identities* (London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2002), p.15.
[65] Heider 1991; Sen 1994, 1995, 2005.

I will first examine how the film portrays gender, focusing on how the film in some ways portrays women as strong and militant, but also uses this portrayal to emphasise the heroic masculinity of men. I will then examine how the film in some ways portrays Aceh as an exemplary part of Indonesia through its focus on Dutch colonialism and religion piety, but also expresses anxiety about potential Acehnese resistance and betrayal of the Indonesian state.

4.6 *Tjoet Nja Dhien* (1988) and Indonesian Gender Politics

Suharto's military regime was “built on an excessively masculine power obsessed with control and women's submission”.[66] Women were subordinated by the New Order government even if they appeared to be emancipated. *Tjoet Nja Dhien* (1988) was created to present an emancipated new female model. In an interview, Eros Djarot said his goal was to concentrate on Cut Nyak Din as an exemplary woman. This issue derives from what he termed an identity crisis among Indonesian women. During an interview with Djarot, he expressed his strong disdain for women in "Dharma Wanita",[67] who served merely as their spouses' companions. Indonesia will be in a much stronger position if the vast majority of its female population assumes a more active role, he added. Thus, Djarot stated that the selection of Cut Nyak Din was intended to serve as an inspiration for Indonesian women. [68]

This perspective critiques the idea that “women’s position is only as companion of their husbands” and argues that women should do more for Indonesia’s development than focus on consumption and status. In this respect, the film was designed to inspire women to take on broader and more significant roles. I identify four key ways it does so.

First, the film emphasises Cut Nyak Din as a strong woman in contrast to Dutch assumptions that women will only be civilian non-combatants. Siapno, who has offered an extensive study of how the categorisation system is gendered by the Dutch, also makes a case for this notion. She looks at the daily decisions, minutes, and police reports transmitted from Aceh to Java and finally to the Netherlands in colonial times. Her report stated:

> The classification system used by the Dutch police is gendered in the following way: the ‘enemy’ (vijand) is male and females are ‘innocent’ civilian

[66] Saskia Wieringa, "The Birth of the New Order State in Indonesia: Sexual Politics and Nationalism," *Journal of women's history* 15, no. 1 (2003).
[67] An organisation consisting of the wives of Civil Servants.
[68] Interview with Eros Djarot in 2018

> non-targets. This might have to do with the fact that Dutch men were thinking of Acehnese women in terms of Dutch 'huisvrouw' (house-wife).[69]

As indicated in the film, when Teuku Leubeh has a conversation with the Dutch officials, he mentions that:

> VAN HEUTZS: …I thought with Umar dead this damned war would be over. What do you think, Mr Leubeh?
>
> TEUKU LEUBEH: I told you, General. Cut Nyak Din knows what she's doing. She's dangerous. Remember that. She's the daughter of Teuku Nanta Setia. General Van Swieten's nemesis. Her first husband, Ibrahim LAmga, was a commander, too. I told Snouk that, but he didn't believe me. If you want my opinion, she was the brains behind Umar's campaign.

The rise of Cut Nyak Din as a leader posed a challenge to the Dutch perception of Acehnese femininity compared to Dutch white femininity, as shown by Governor General van Heutz's wife in a scene in which he implied that women can only bring problems. Cut Nyak Din was portrayed in opposition to the Dutch perception that Acehnese femininity was inferior to white Dutch femininity and unsuitable for military leadership.

Second, the film also shows Cut Nyak Din encouraging women, such as her daughter, to see themselves as able fighters. She takes over as leader when Umar is killed in an ambush at Meulaboh, West Aceh, in 1899. After learning of her daughter's grief at Umar's death, Cut Nyak Din advises her daughter, Cut Gambang:

> "Sebagai perempuan Aceh, pantang meneteskan air mata untuk orang yang telah syahid pada medan perang. Bangkitlah, agar arwah ayahmu tenang. Perjuangan kita masih panjang Gambang, wajib bagi kita meneruskan semua ini".
>
> It is a disgrace for an Acehnese woman to cry for those who have been martyred on the battlefield. Rise up so that your father's soul is at peace. Our fight continues, Gambang. It is our obligation to continue all of this. [70]

[69] Siapno, *Gender, Islam, Nationalism and the State in Aceh: The Paradox of Power, Co-Optation and Resistance*, p.26.
[70] Duration 00:25:53" – 00:26:01"

This is a very different perspective than the portrayal of Cut Nyak Din in the Acehnese hikayat, where she is represented as mourning her dead husband. Here, she is not just fighting herself, but also actively inspiring a younger generation of women to take a leading role in battle.

Third, Cut Nyak Din is also shown critiquing the idea that she should be protected from danger because she is a woman.

> Cut Nyak Din: Pang Laot, sudah kukatakan, ini semua ada hubungannya dengan senjata, kekuasaan dan uang. Sebaiknya kau pelajari ini. Pang Laot sku sendiri yang akan turun ke Meulaboh.
>
> Pang Laot: Ahh, Tjoet Nja', itu tidak mungkin. Aku yang bertanggung jawab atas keselamatanmu.
>
> Cut Nyak Din: Sebagian rambutku memang sudah memutih Pang Laot, kau khawatir apa karena aku seorang perempuan?
>
> Cut Nyak Din: Pang Laot, I have already said, it has everything to do with weapons, power and money. You should learn this. Pang Laot, I myself will go down to Meulaboh.
>
> Pang Laot: Ahh, Tjoet Nja ', it is impossible. I am responsible for your safety.
>
> Cut Nyak Din: Some of my hair is getting grey Pang Laot, are you worried because I'm a woman?

These scenes show Eros Djarot's stated intention to create a representation that would challenge the image of Indonesian women as passive, dependent on their husbands, and in need of protection.

Fourth, Cut Nyak Din is shown in a way that makes her seem more like an ordinary woman. She is portrayed very differently than in the majority of photos created and disseminated by the state (schoolbooks, posters, biography, bank notes), dressed in aristocratic and costly attire and looking stunning. Rather than that, in the majority of Cut Nyak Din scenes, Djarot portrays her in peasant clothing, with a shabby scarf covering half of her hair, as shown in several of the surviving photographs.

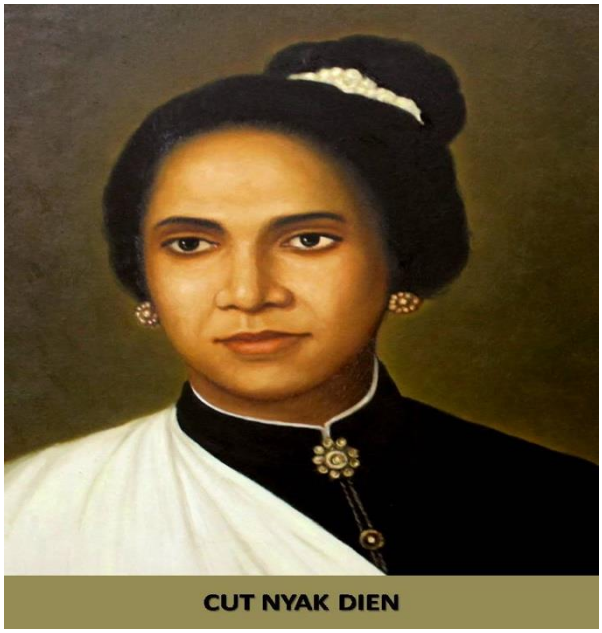

Figure 4-7 Cut Nyak Din photo from the official National Hero website[71]

I argue that by depicting Cut Nyak Din in this manner, Djarot wishes to emphasise her memory as a female fighter and military commander rather than her noblewoman position. This contrasts sharply with the era covered by Dutch historical sources, during which her aristocratic status seems to have been predominant.

At the same time, however, Cut Nyak Din was also portrayed in this film to help enhance the reputation of men. Other aspects of the film's production show that it was not so easy to define women beyond their role as companions to their husbands. *Tjoet Nja Dhien* (1988) reveals the gender politics of the New Order environment, which reflect what McClintock suggests: that women constantly become the symbol of "bearer of the nation" while men constantly depicts to play role as the "national agency". [72] Like many previous representations of Cut Nyak Din, the film focuses on Cut Nyak Din's relationships with key male figures and represents her as a female figure who upholds male norms and ideals. Gender order and national identity were sources of anxiety during this period. Paramaditha that Indonesian cinema "indicates a masculinity crisis in an era where the national body ruptured."[73] According to Wichelen, there are three interconnected variables that help shape a

[71] https://direktoratk2krs.kemsos.go.id/pahlawannasional
[72] Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Conquest* (New York: Routledge, 1995), p.354.
[73] Intan Paramaditha, "Contesting Indonesian Nationalism and Masculinity in Cinema," *asian cinema Asian Cinema* 18, no. 2 (2007): p.56.

hegemonic masculinity in Indonesia.[74] The first is the idea of "fatherism" (*bapakism*), the second is the strong domination of the Javanese-centric ethnicity, and the third is patriotism or loyalty to the nation. Concepts of masculinity and femininity are constructed to influence how heroes and heroines participate in the struggle movement.

One of the key places where the film portrays Cut Nyak Din to address crises around masculinity is through its representation of Teuku Umar. Christine Hakim, who plays Cut Nyak Din, reads a letter to Teuku Umar while the letter is displayed in the background on the television. The letter comprises the following:

> After they destroyed my hometown Lampadang
> They burnt Lampisang too
> It reminds me of the time
> when General Van Swieten
> burnt the Kutaraja Mosque in 1873.
> And since that time, the land of Aceh has been stained by the greed of men who never understood.
> how deep is our love for this beneficent land.
> Today, our retreat expresses my belief:
> our struggle against the Colonialists [*kaphe-kaphe* (Dutch infidel)]
> is part of our true faith.
> Dear Teuku [Umar], your decision to rise up again
> and to drive the infidels out of our beloved land
> brings me invaluable happiness
> And though I am in a place so different
> from our house in Lampisang
> I am thankful for all the people here around me
> recognise the value of fighting for one's faith[75]

This letter is intended to restore Teuku Umar's image as a defector. Cut Nyak Din is used in this scene to rehabilitate Teuku Umar, showing that part of the purpose of her female

[74] Wichelen, "Polygamy Talk and the Politics of Feminism: Contestations over Masculinity in a New Muslim Indonesia."
[75] https://player.eyefilm.nl/en/films/tjoet-nja-dhien

heroism is to reconstitute the ambivalent male heroism of Teuku Umar. This letter seeks to establish that Teuku Umar was a real combatant who allied with and supported Aceh.

Evidence shows that the Acehnese who participated in the filming had an influence on the plot of the movie. In an interview with Eros Djarot in 2018[76], he claimed he was approached in Aceh to produce the film by an Acehnese traditional institution (Lembaga adat). They urged him to integrate Teuku Umar's account in *Tjoet Nja' Dhien*. This request perplexed and upset Eros, since the original script excluded Teuku Umar's character. As a result, Eros approached his older brother Slamet Rahardjo Djarot, a well-known actor who then was in America, to invite him to come to Indonesia to play Teuku Umar's role. As a result, Teuku Umar appeared briefly (less than five minutes) at the beginning of the film to meet the expectations of the crew and actors on site in Aceh. Even though the film was intended to be about a woman, there seems to have been pressure to make it more about males. It clearly illustrates and reinforces gender hierarchies throughout the film. The film uses a female hero to build the heroism of male figures as desired by male audiences in Aceh.

The event highlights how film can be used to better understand power dynamics and gender and political interplay. It is ruled by governmental power, but the economic aspect also shapes the film's various tendencies. Djarot credits the Acehnese people and institutions for the numerous advantages and supports he received while filming in Aceh, including financial assistance. As Pang suggests, it is internally constructed by a male cinematic legacy, which manifests itself most actively in the industry's economic reorganisation.[77] This urge for masculine representation reveals how films in Indonesian cinematography are recreated in response to cultural demand and political masculinity.

Teuku Umar's brief interlude here is more concerned with justification and rectification of history than with the extensive record of Teuku Umar's notorious defection. Teuku Umar's defection and inconsistency in taking sides between Aceh and the Dutch have been chronicled for a great deal of time in several pieces and works of literature. The emphasis on Umar has facilitated a key aspect of Cut Nyak Din's memory. Following the talk between Cut Nyak Din and Umar over his defection in the film,

> Cut Nyak Din: It would be different if this time you take up arms and battle with those *kaphe* (infidel). If only you know my feeling, I have been

[76] Interview with Eros Djarot in Jakarta in 2018
[77] Laikwan Pang, "Masculinity in Crisis: Films of Milkyway Image and Post-1997 Hong Kong Cinema," *Feminist media studies* 2, no. 3 (2002): p.235.

> waiting so long for this to happen, we should be thankful. And I request you. Don't take me to live with those infidels again, whatever reasons. Tjut Bang, three years is enough.
>
> Umar: PoTjut, you still doubt me, it is all a ruse. Otherwise, how can we get the war equipment, I can also learn about all of their battle tactics. If you still doubt it, let history to prove it. I am Teuku Umar, from Meulaboh. I will never surrender to that infidel.

This fragment has played a significant part in the interaction and relationship between Umar and Cut Nyak Din. This connection can be followed systematically across all sources, starting with the earliest Dutch works that depict gender politics between Cut Nyak Din and Teuku Umar. Hasan Tiro also imagines Cut Nyak Din conversing with Teuku Umar in his play. The notoriety and lousy image associated with Teuku Umar have aided Cut Nyak Din's memory in some way. Compared to Umar, Cut Nyak Din is recognised for being more steadfast and devoted to protecting Aceh. The negative image of Teuku Umar bolstered her heroic side, which seems more admirable than Teuku Umar's, who was less consistent and 'heroic' in this sense. He was also sometimes seen to be more motivated by economic reasons than by ideals. Teuku Umar's background is thoroughly recorded in many Dutch papers. Teeuwen and Doorn[78] explore some of Umar's misconduct as follows:

> His [Teuku Umar] powerful position was based on exploitation of pepper, intelligence, bravery, marriages of convenience and terror… Umar always tried to get closer to Dutch when his pepper needed transport. He was engaged in acts of piracy: …. and his involvement in the Nisero case.[79]

But Cut Nyak Din is also used to make Teuku Umar seem more heroic, because these conversations allow the film to represent this defection as a strategic manoeuvre aimed at duping the Dutch. It can be suggested that this narrative is necessary due to his status as a National Hero in 1973 who is idealistically devoted to defending the nation.

These scenes featuring Teuku Umar show how the memory of Cut Nyak Din was not only important to how women were commemorated, but also central to how male heroes were

[78] drs D. Teeuwen msc and H. Doorn, *Prang Beulanda/ the Atjeh War 1873-1913* (2006).. *Prang Beulanda/ The Atjeh War 1873-1913*. p.17

[79] *Nisero* was a British steamer wrecked in 1883 near Teunom, the *uleebalang* of which place held the British crew hostage while negotiating what advantage they would bring. Teuku Umar, a rival *uleebalang*, offered the Dutch to free the hostages by force, but instead killed the Dutch seamen who put his men ashore and made off with the boat and weapons (Reid 1969:237).

seen. They also put Cut Nyak Din back into a frame of female companionship where her heroism is largely presented as the legacy of powerful men. The gendered norms that shape the commemoration of Cut Nyak Din show her not only as a “hero” who fits hegemonic masculine norms around ideal warriordom, but also as an “everywoman” who is also expected to be a devoted wife. Despite the initial intention to emphasise autonomous women as role models, Djarot becomes caught in the mainstream representation he criticised. Although in some ways the film deviates from the dominant portrayal of official femininity under the New Order, in other ways it is very compatible with those ideals.

4.6.1 Indonesian National(ism) references

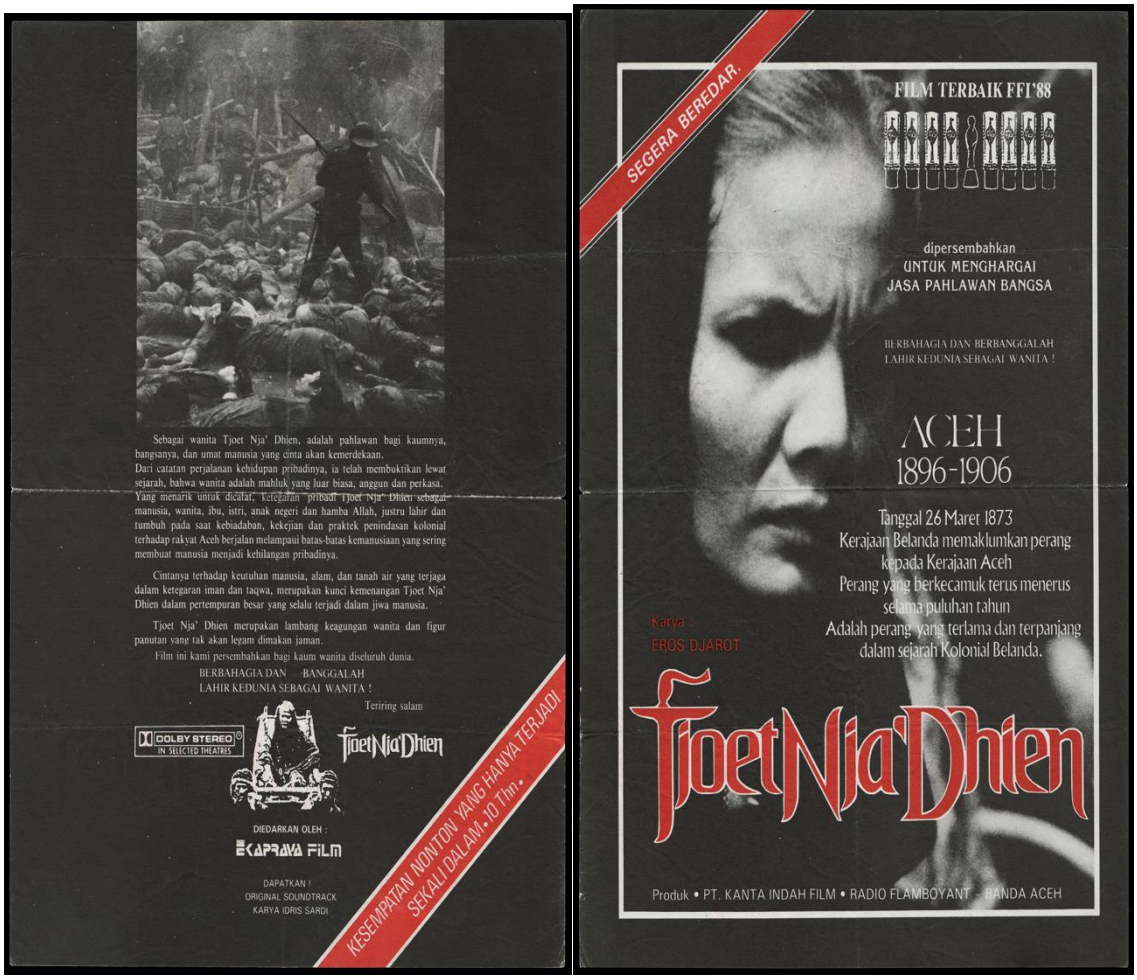

Figure 4-8 Tjoet Nja Dhien (1988) Movie poster

The film continues some of the goals of the *Pahlawan Nasional* program in the way that it represents the Acehnese struggle. In some ways, the film emphasises aspects of history that could create a feeling of shared experience across different parts of Indonesia. These

potentially unifying elements are Dutch colonialism and Islamic religious struggle. In this context Aceh is presented as an exemplary region of Indonesia.

This opening letter quoted earlier highlights many aspects of the way Cut Nyak Din is presented. It portrays Cut Nyak Din's resistance as a part of the struggle to defend Aceh's sovereignty from the Dutch. However, the film makes it seem like this specifically Acehnese battle is part of a larger struggle for Indonesian independence. This letter highlights the Dutch colonialists' misdeeds, which have been a recurring motif in Indonesian pre-independence cinema. In the 1980s, the Dutch had left Indonesia, but the various regions of the country were still wary of one another. Opposing the Dutch was a chance to bring together people of different ethnicities and backgrounds from different parts of Indonesia. This film documents and depicts the Dutch imperial crimes and atrocities in Aceh. Eros Djarot acknowledges that portraying the Dutch as antagonistic helped him convince Acehnese players to act in fighting the Dutch in the war scene. By acting the fighting against the film's Dutch actors, they essentially reflected their hatred for the Dutch.[80] The anti-Dutch scenes were a way to create enthusiasm in Aceh for the film.

Not only does Djarot's *Tjoet Nja' Dhien* shape Cut Nyak Din's memory, but it also assists in generating general recollections of Dutch colonisation. Remembering the Dutch is one approach to let all Indonesians feel as if they are on the same side of the conflict. When Eros made the film, it is fair to assume that it was a film designed to bring Aceh closer to the ideas of Indonesia, and to reassert the importance of a shared enemy (the Dutch) during a time when the Aceh/Indonesia relationship was contentious. I argue that this consistent portrayal of Dutch crimes in *Tjoet Nja Dhien* (1988) Indonesia was crucial in reinforcing anti-imperialist sentiment. In this regard, the Dutch enemy is essential as a "safe" and unifying enemy, especially to evoke an Indonesian sense of nationality.

Second, religious sentiments are portrayed as the driving force behind this struggle. Cut Nyak Din described the struggle as a war against the Dutch *kaphe* (Dutch infidel). "Fighting the invaders is a part of religion," as said by Cut Nyak Din in the film. The earlier Dutch colonial accounts do not necessarily depict her in this light, so this emphasis on religious piety is an important new contribution made by Indonesians. This emphasis on an Islamic struggle could unite viewers from different parts of Muslim-majority Indonesia and affirm connections between Aceh and the rest of the nation.

[80] https://youtu.be/kkA2pdbGmsM

This portrayal of religion as potentially unifying overlooks the way in which historically Acehnese were reluctant to form alliances with outsiders, and even fellow Muslims were seen as "kaphe" by them.

> …Even the bond of Islam was insufficient to outweigh the prejudices against Indonesians who had come to Aceh as agents or camp-followers of the conquering *Kompeuni*. In the 1920s, the 8,000 Minangkabaus in Aceh were still apt to be dismissed contemptuously as *kaphe´ Padang*, no matter how strictly they observed their religious duties. Although Islamic movements had more chance of interesting Acehnese than secular ones, it was a long uphill struggle.[81]

Anthony Reid argued at that time that a strong regional identity was more crucial.[82] Aceh is united with Java not because its people have a natural affinity for their Javanese counterparts, but because both were colonised by the Dutch at very different times and contexts. Indonesia's official narrative tends to gloss over these ambiguities in its Cut Nyak Din commemorations, downplaying the fact that Aceh rebels fought against (Dutch) colonialism out of jihadist and local nationalist motivations.

Despite some of these historical tensions, the image of religious piety appears in the film as a way to unify Aceh with the rest of Indonesia, and it is often combined with anti-imperialism. I suggest that the film depicts her in this manner to meet the specific demands of increasingly Islamic Indonesian politics. Many of the scenes in the film show how Cut Nyak Din invites Acehnese people to defend against the Dutch, whom she frequently refers to as *"kaphe-kaphe"* (unbelievers), to protect their land (*nanggroe*) and their faith. Another study conducted by Azharuddin has also pointed out Cut Nyak Din's letter to Teuku Umar contrasts the greed of the commercially motivated Dutch colonial administrators with the faith and piety of Cut Nyak Din.[83] She also incorporates and spreads this message by educating youngsters to read Hikayat Prang Sabi and follow in their footsteps as martyrs by joining the jihad/war. The film thus aims to represent Aceh's battles against the Dutch in ways that potentially minimise some historical differences between Aceh and other parts of Indonesia.

[81] Reid, "The Nationalist Quest for an Indonesian Past," pp.19-20.
[82] "Aceh and Indonesia : A Stormy Marriage."
[83] Alicia Izharuddin, "Gender and Islam in Indonesian Cinema," (New York;Singapore;: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

4.7 The Representation of Aceh as Treacherous

Figure 4-9 The scene where Cut Nyak Din helps in treating Umar's injuries after the battle. (Screenshot from eyefilm.nl)

However, while some aspects of the film aim to make Aceh seem like an emblem for Indonesian resistance and piety, other aspects of the film critique Aceh as a region known for betrayal. Considering the broader context of underlying separatist tensions in the 1980s, the film can be read as a warning to Aceh not to betray the state of Indonesia.

Numerous betrayals occur during this film. One recurring subject in this film is treachery. Apart from Teuku Umar, multiple other male characters commit treason. Additionally, the film shows the treachery of the warlord and Cut Nyak Din confidant Pang Laot who exposed Cut Nyak Din's hiding place, allowing the Dutch to locate and apprehend her. Figures from the Aceh side, such as Teuku Leubeh and Pang Laot, were regarded as trustworthy but were eventually deceived and allied with the Dutch.

The theme of treachery as an Acehnese trait appears in the following interaction between the Dutch commander and Acehnese Teuku Leubeh.

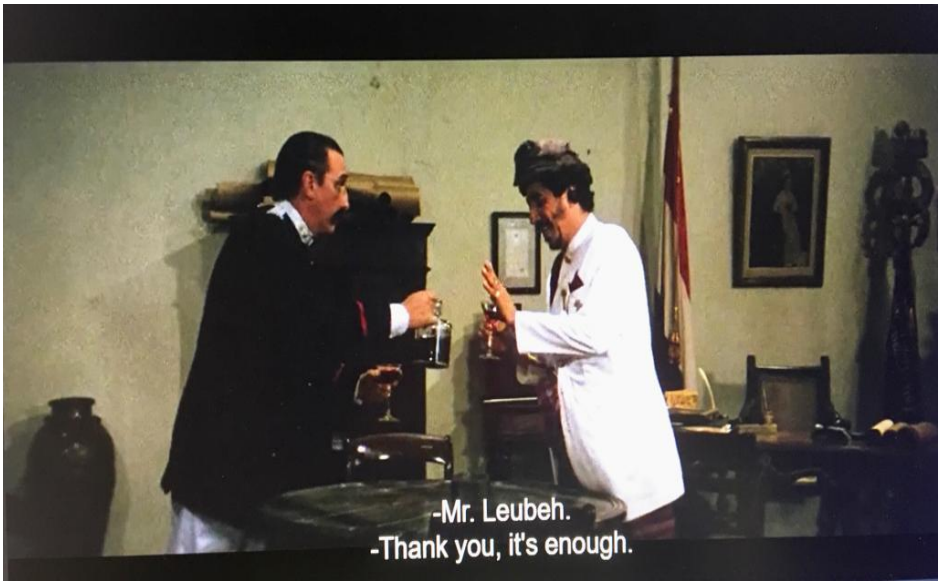

Figure 4-10 The conversation of Dutch commander and Acehnese Teuku Leubeh

Van Heutz: Please sit down.

Teuku Leubeh: I have never had wine as good as this.

Lekker [tasty]. Mr.Van Heutz, is this a French wine?

Van Heutz: No.

Teuku Leubeh: Italian?

Van Heutz: No.

Teuku Leubeh: Russian?

Van Heutz: No, Mr Luebeh. The Russians only drink vodka. This outstanding wine comes from Netherlands.

Teuku Leubeh: The Netherlands are known for the cheese!

Van Heutzs: Really? And what is Aceh known for?

Teuku Leubeh: Its coffee. Its fine coffee.

Van Heutzs: No, Mr Leubeh. It's known for its double-dealing.[84]

The Dutch official who gives wine to an Acehnese must be aware that alcohol is not traditionally consumed in Aceh. This scene thus shows the potential for people in Aceh to behave in ways that might not be considered Islamic. It also raises the idea that Aceh is seen as a deceptive region in general.

[84] https://player.eyefilm.nl/en/films/tjoet-nja-dhien

In the context of the GAM of the 1970s, the film is, in a manner, accomplishing two different things. To begin, it seems to be maintaining, at least on the surface, that Aceh is an illustrative component of the Indonesian struggle and an essential element of the Indonesian nation. This is the bait that will make Aceh feel as if it is an integral part of Indonesia. But there is also this motif of treachery throughout the story. In this instance, the Dutch official is making a statement that the Indonesian state in the 1980s wishes it could make. Therefore, in this setting, the discourse in question acts as a deterrent to the people of Aceh, who are notorious for their traitorous behaviour: do not betray the Indonesian state by embracing separatist ideals. The way the Indonesian state feels about Hasan Tiro is comparable to how the Dutch government felt about Teuku Umar. Djarot also states that betrayal is a problem he wants to address through this film. The film thus provides a way of both honouring and warning Aceh.

4.8 Conclusion: Drama and Film in Propelling Memory

The drama and film arose from the upheaval and separatist tensions that existed between Indonesia and Aceh province. Aceh has historically had a conflicted relationship with the rest of Indonesia. Tiro's interest in incorporating Cut Nyak Din originates from his claim to be Cut Nyak Din's great-granddaughter, emphasising his relationship to Teuku Chik di Tiro, a notable Acehnese *ulama* (cleric) and Acehnese guerrilla forces leader. Tiro valued having a lineage of *ulama* and Acehnese soldiers, especially in establishing his claim to be the creator of the Acehnese separatist movement. Eros Djarot's film, on the other hand, seeks to critique the gender ideology popular during President Suharto's New Order administration. Dramas and films capture the 1980s' anxiety about separatism. Tiro and Djarot use their plays and films to interpret history with political overtones. Both *The Drama of Aceh History* (1979) and *Tjoet Nja Dhien* (1988) are instructive works, the first using historical drama to communicate an Acehnese nationalist perspective and the second using historical representation to explore Cut Nyak Din within a broader Indonesian context.

These representations continue to shape the memory of Cut Nyak Din in different international contexts. *Tjoet Nja Dhien* has regained her life 33 years after the first release. The restored version of the film had its Jakarta premiere on May 20th, 2020. The restoration project was performed as part of a master class on the audio-visual archive at the University of Amsterdam[85] by Eye Filmmuseum Amsterdam[86] and ID FilmCentre. Recent re-releases have also breathed fresh life into Indonesian films, which are now suffering from neglect

[85] https://www.eyefilm.nl/en/programme/conference-2021/348093
[86] https://www.eyefilm.nl/en/whats-on/masterclass-global-audiovisual-archiving-north-south-exchange-in-knowledge-and-practices/347620

because of the pandemic's harsh effect. Indeed, aware of the film's continued commercial viability, Eros Djarot made steps to resurrect the picture. He also used National Awakening Day to galvanise support for Cut Nyak Din's 'awakening'.

The play and film have differing viewpoints on the place of Cut Nyak Din in Indonesian history. Cut Nyak Din's rhetoric is inextricably linked to her status as an Indonesian national hero. The concept of a united Indonesia did not exist at the time of Cut Nyak Din's battle, nor was it a major driving force for her struggle. Only in retrospect is she recognised as a person who can represent "Indonesia" as a whole. Meanwhile, Hasan Tiro's historical drama portrays Cut Nyak Din as an Aceh warrior, emphasising Tiro's Aceh roots and his hostility to Indonesia. This variation in how she has been represented marks important threads in how she has been represented to serve the aims of very different political purposes.

Chapter 5
Conclusion

This thesis examines the commemoration of female heroism in Indonesia through a focus on Cut Nyak Din (1848–1908), an Acehnese female aristocrat and warrior who had an integral position in the Acehnese resistance against Dutch colonial power in the late nineteenth to early twentieth century. Cut Nyak Din didn't leave any writings or personal documents behind. Accordingly, her memory and legacy are being refashioned and awakened from the interpretations of numerous community groups. Different societies have moulded and appropriated her account differently and at cross-purposes. Examining her many portrayals allows us to understand bigger concerns and how her affiliation and closeness with elite males tends to position her in the spotlight. Many different political players have claimed Cut Nyak Din for different reasons. My thesis uncovers the construction of female heroes through archival and written texts. By tracing the evolution of the Indonesian idea of heroism, this study explores how the colonial structure, nationalist ideology, centralised state education, and regional political debates generated 'heroes' and what this implies in gendered terms. It illustrates the complexity and discrepancies of honouring women as national heroes.

I review how the memory and legacy of Cut Nyak Din have been propagated through literature, film, and national projects. I examined this topic from multiple perspectives, including national and regional, as well as historical resources acquired during fieldwork and archival research in multiple sites in Indonesia and the Netherlands. I have examined several textual, cultural, and state representations of Cut Nyak Din, encompassing Acehnese hikayat, imperial documents, early journalistic and fictional reports by Dutch authors, national speech, Acehnese closet drama, and well-known Indonesian films and literature. These texts span one hundred years and four languages, including sources in Acehnese, Dutch, Bahasa Indonesia, and English. People writing in different languages were often engaging with each other’s perspectives. The in-depth investigation of the competing gender ideologies and national politics underpinning the commemoration of Cut Nyak Din as a female hero exposes friction between Acehnese, Dutch, Indonesian, and Islamic perspectives.

In particular, I have traced two important sets of tensions: one focused on gender and one focused on national identity. In many of these texts, Cut Nyak Din is celebrated in ways that call attention to her status as a woman. But these commemorations in other ways also can reaffirm broader gender hierarchies, show hegemonic masculinity (especially around warrior status), and serve the interests of men. Similarly, Cut Nyak Din is often commemorated

in ways that are designed to address broader tensions between Aceh and the Indonesian state. She has been appropriated for national projects as well as for Acehnese resistance.

Finally, I have shown the way the representation of Cut Nyak Din has changed over time. In the earliest sources from Aceh, she is portrayed as a devoted wife mourning her husband. Dutch colonial reports show her as a figure involved in complex politics in Aceh and introduce a tone of respect for her as a serious opponent. Later Dutch writings after the Aceh-Dutch war begin to describe Cut Nyak Din in terms we might consider heroic. In the 1930s, these Dutch descriptions of her heroism become more elaborate. In the 1940s, she is represented in the first textual source I have found that was produced by a woman. This Dutch novel uses Cut Nyak Din as a way of representing broader women's struggles. This historical novel was then translated by an influential Indonesian nationalist who described Cut Nyak Din in the language of "pahlawan," or hero. Cut Nyak Din was then officially categorised in the National Heroes' program, where she was also described as a Srikandi, or a female hero. These nationalist representations were then followed in the late 1970s by an attempt to commemorate Cut Nyak Din as a specifically Acehnese hero who could help to legitimate Acehnese separatism. Finally, the last text I consider in the 1980s makes Cut Nyak Din visible to mass Indonesian audiences through popular film as a hero who can symbolise the unifying themes of anti-Dutch resistance and Islamic piety. In these different texts, Cut Nyak Din has been commemorated to serve the interests of different and sometimes competing political purposes.

5.1 Future Directions for Research

The written and recorded archive of perspectives on Cut Nyak Din from the 1880s to the 1980s that I have uncovered in this thesis is largely produced by men. The only female perspective I have analysed is the historical novel by Madelon Szekely-Lulofs. The most important future direction for research, therefore, is to find and analyse the voices of women from Aceh, which are often not recorded in traditional written sources.

One important place where we are beginning to see evidence for these voices is in the oral histories of women involved in the Gerakan Aceh Merdeka (GAM) from the 1990s onwards. Cut Nyak Din, along with several other women, have been elevated as a model and

inspiration for the ideal female warrior in the *inong balee*[1] concept of battle.[2] This concept refers to widows. Additionally, it is used to refer to female combatants, many of them are widows who lost their spouses during the fight between the Gerakan Aceh Merdeka/Free Aceh Movement (GAM) and the Republic of Indonesia. As Clavé-Celik puts out, *inong balee* are involved in the Acehnese separatist struggle in a variety of ways. [3]

> *Inong Balee*…. They were members of all-female combatant and mixed gender units, but they were also individual women fighters, cooks, logisticians, fundraisers, nurses, propagandists, and part of the intelligence service. Trained for anything from a few days to three months, these women were taught how to fix and use weapons. They received lectures on ideology, ethics and military attitude, as well as in strategy and guerrilla tactics. They officially became GAM *Inong Balee* after a formal ceremony during which they swore "I promise to Allah to sacrifice my possessions and my life for the nation because there is just one and unique God".[4]

In a nutshell, *Inong balee* is the feminine counterpart of GAM (Free Aceh Movement).

Cut Nyak Din was one of several heroines who were utilised as models for how to fight back against the Indonesian state, which GAM deemed a manifestation of contemporary colonialism. They are essential elements in the creation of an idealised nationalist narrative featuring female soldiers and warriors. Matthew N. Davies (2006) argues that women like Cut Nyak Din were important recruitment devices for GAM:

> GAM publicity effectively exploited the memory of female militancy embodied by such legendarily heroic female anti-Dutch resistance commanders as Cut Nyak Dhien and Cut Meutia; Inong Balee took their name from the female soldiers centuries earlier led by a woman admiral, Keumalahayati, against the imperialist Portuguese. The Inong Balee theme often influenced Indonesian news magazine coverage to strengthen impressions of GAM's popular legitimacy. An implied revenge motive in Inong Balee could spook the soldiers of the all-male[5]

[1] Acehnese metaphors refer to widows. Additionally, it is used to refer to female combatants, many of them are widows who lost their spouses during the fight between the Gerakan Aceh Merdeka/Free Aceh Movement (GAM) and the Republic of Indonesia. In a nutshell, *Inong balee* is the feminine counterpart of GAM (Free Aceh Movement).
[2] Clavé-Çelik, "Images of the Past and Realities of the Present: Aceh's Inong Balee."
[3] Ibid.
[4] Clave-Celik, "Silenced Fighters: An Insight into Women Combatants' History in Aceh (17th-20th C.)," p.11.
[5] Davies, *Indonesia's War over Aceh: Last Stand on Mecca's Porch*, 31.

Oral histories taken with combatants in the early 2000s show how women in GAM were inspired by Cut Nyak Din. One former female combatant name Daryani from North Aceh who joined the guerillas in the forest said:

> I heard stories from time to time that Aceh had gone through wars. I heard the stories of Cut Nyak Dien, a woman fighter, and I realised this means a continuation. Cut Nyak Dien had died but now thousands like her have been born. I joined GAM because I noticed them, where they ate, where they lived, what their purpose was. I still have the intention to support the progress of Aceh, but is what I chose right or not?[6]

In my future work, I hope to examine more deeply how Acehnese women combatants in the 1990s and 2000s understood the significance of Cut Nyak Din, and to compare their commemorations to the visions that are found in the male-created perspectives I have analysed in this thesis. I also plan to explore how Indonesian women nationally have engaged with Cut Nyak Din in a range of contexts. Including but not limited to: poetry by D. Kemalawati, Office of Women Empowerment and Child Protection's Commemoration Day for Cut Nyak Din, and Group of women known as "Lasykar Cut Nyak Din". I have already carried out initial participant-observation and interviews at the museum and grave of Cut Nyak Din. In addition, potential future avenues of research might include examining the selection process and circulation patterns of stamp and bank note images in order to get a deeper understanding of these visual representation.

To uncover more of women's perspectives on Cut Nyak Din in the contemporary period, it will be important to go beyond written sources to look at commemorative sites and conduct ethnographic research. There are several important sites of commemoration of Cut Nyak Din, including her grave, a museum, and a ship to take pilgrims to Mecca, that can help us add to the understanding we gain through textual sources such as reports, novels, and films. Through participant observation and interviews with women who visit these sites, I will be able to offer a more comprehensive portrait of how different Indonesian women have commemorated Cut Nyak Din for their own goals. Another possible way to gather women's voices would be to conduct oral histories in Aceh to determine if there are oral storytelling traditions that have offered grassroots forms of memory work outside official projects. I also plan to examine how Indonesian women have used new technologies like social media to express their views on Cut Nyak Din and what she means to them today.

[6] Crowe et al., *I Have to Speak Voices of Female Ex-Combatants from Aceh, Burundi, Mindanao and Nepal*, 34-35.

A second direction for future research would be to compare Cut Nyak Din to other influential women who have been categorised as heroes by the Indonesian state. Sukarno's 1964 choice of the first three women to join the pantheon of *Pahlawan Nasional* was significant. The two Acehnese, Cut Nyak Din and Cut Meutia, had both been singled out by Dutch writers in the last phase of the Aceh-Dutch war for their fighting spirit against the Dutch. Although aristocrats continuing the intensely local fight of their dead husbands, and motivated beyond that by militant Islam rather than by nationalism, their defiance of the Dutch made them ideal exemplars of what male warrior heroes were meant at this time to be. The Javanese aristocrat Kartini, on the other hand, had in the same period eagerly embraced Dutch modernity and the liberation it appeared to bring for Dutch-educated women like herself.

Was this experiment with a female model of national heroism born of confusion, or a deliberate attempt to balance the ticket – Kartini's western-educated modernity against the Islamic rejection of westernisation by the two Acehnese; the unquestioned anti-Dutchness of Cut Nyak Din to balance the awkward enthusiasm for Dutch education of Kartini? Kartini has also been more internationally marketable, with UNESCO funding the translation and publication of her work, whereas Cut Nyak Din never wrote or kept any personal relics. In the longer-term Kartini was the unquestioned winner as representative of conventional Indonesian femininity. Kartini Day is the time to honour girlfriends and mother-figures. Kartini also seemed a safer model of the traditional motherhood role of women celebrated by Dharma Wanita (Women's Duty), the organisation founded under Suharto rule. Even though Kartini died in childbirth, she became known in the conservative Suharto period as Mother Kartini (Ibu Kartini), a title never extended to the militant Cut Nyak Din. The striking continuity around Kartini's image has been noted, "not just throughout the postcolonial and colonial periods, but also between colonialist and anticolonialist political cultures."[7] It would therefore be productive to examine in detail the contrasts between Cut Nyak Din and Kartini to understand what their commemoration says about competing gender ideologies.

Such future research can add to our understanding of the significance of Acehnese women in Indonesia. Modern anthropologists such as James Siegel have demonstrated the fundamental strength of Acehnese women as landholders and managers.[8] Similarly historians have highlighted their unique prominence as rulers – in four consecutive terms in the 17th Century. Sher Banu has shone a light on the skill and success of these Sultanah (queens) in

[7] Bijl and Chin, *Appropriating Kartini: Colonial, National and Transnational Memories of an Indonesian Icon*.
[8] Siegel, *The Rope of God*.

Aceh 1641–1699.[9] Aceh's notoriously ruthless King, Sultan Iskandar Muda (r.1607–1636), was briefly followed by his son-in-law Iskandar Thani, but much more successfully by his daughter, Thani's widow, Sultanah Safiatuddin Syah (1641–1675). This successful experiment in female rule was often opposed by male aristocrats and ulama, but only ended in 1699 when these opponents produced a *fatwa* from Mecca, proclaiming female rule to be prohibited in Islam. This *fatwa* is certainly very disputed.

In the colonial era scholars such as William Marsden and Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje characterised these queens as ceremonial or weak monarchs, puppets who reigned in name only while the *orangkaya* (wealthy merchant-officials) pulled the strings, whose reign marked Aceh's collapse. Modern academics are more positive, though accepting that the queens were appointed and supported by the male elite. According to these sources, *orangkaya* agreed to instal women on the throne as a counterbalance to the belligerence and destructive rivalry amongst male nobles. Anthony Reid argues that female rulers were more frequent in Southeast Asia than elsewhere because status is more important than gender in determining rank.[10] Sher Banu agrees with this viewpoint and uses previously untapped sources to reveal the queens' strategies, savviness, achievements, and leadership styles.[11] I thus seek to add to this body of scholarship through my examination of how a woman from Aceh has been commemorated as a symbol of strength and resistance since the late nineteenth century.

The hero discourse in Indonesia is a constructed concept. Women have been objectified and constructed in the male-dominated process of national hero formation. This is the first account that delves deeply into the hierarchical process of a female hero being recognised as a national hero in Indonesia. This study adds to a more comprehensive understanding of hero commemoration in postcolonial cultures. Additionally, this research proposes a reimagining, revisiting, and re-gendering of the conceptual hero story and process in national discourse to produce a more gender-inclusive, varied, and egalitarian hero and heroine.

a. At the scholarly level, it can enrich the development of research in the field of Indonesia history, specifically in the field of history and memory of Indonesian national heroes.

[9] Sher Banu, *Sovereign Women in a Muslim Kingdom: The Sultanahs of Aceh, 1641−1699*.
[10] Reid, "Female Roles in Pre-Colonial Southeast Asia."
[11] Sher Banu, *Sovereign Women in a Muslim Kingdom: The Sultanahs of Aceh, 1641−1699*.

Additionally, the analysis and findings can become the preliminary basis for upcoming research in similar fields.

b. At a practical level, the research finding can become the basis for public policy decision-making about who is in charge in the national hero program.

This thesis has demonstrated that a historical figure can be transmogrified in a series of positions and orientations for various goals and interests through an array of multi-media studies. The legacy and memory of Cut Nyak Din is therefore relevant to various academic fields, including postcolonial studies, gender nationalism, Indonesian studies, feminism, cinema, cultural studies, heritage, and museums. Cut Nyak Din continues to be well recognised and appreciated, especially in Indonesia, for her role as an Aceh-born fierce heroine and national hero. Even though she passed more than a century ago, Cut Nyak Din seems to be alive and animated again in various contexts.

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