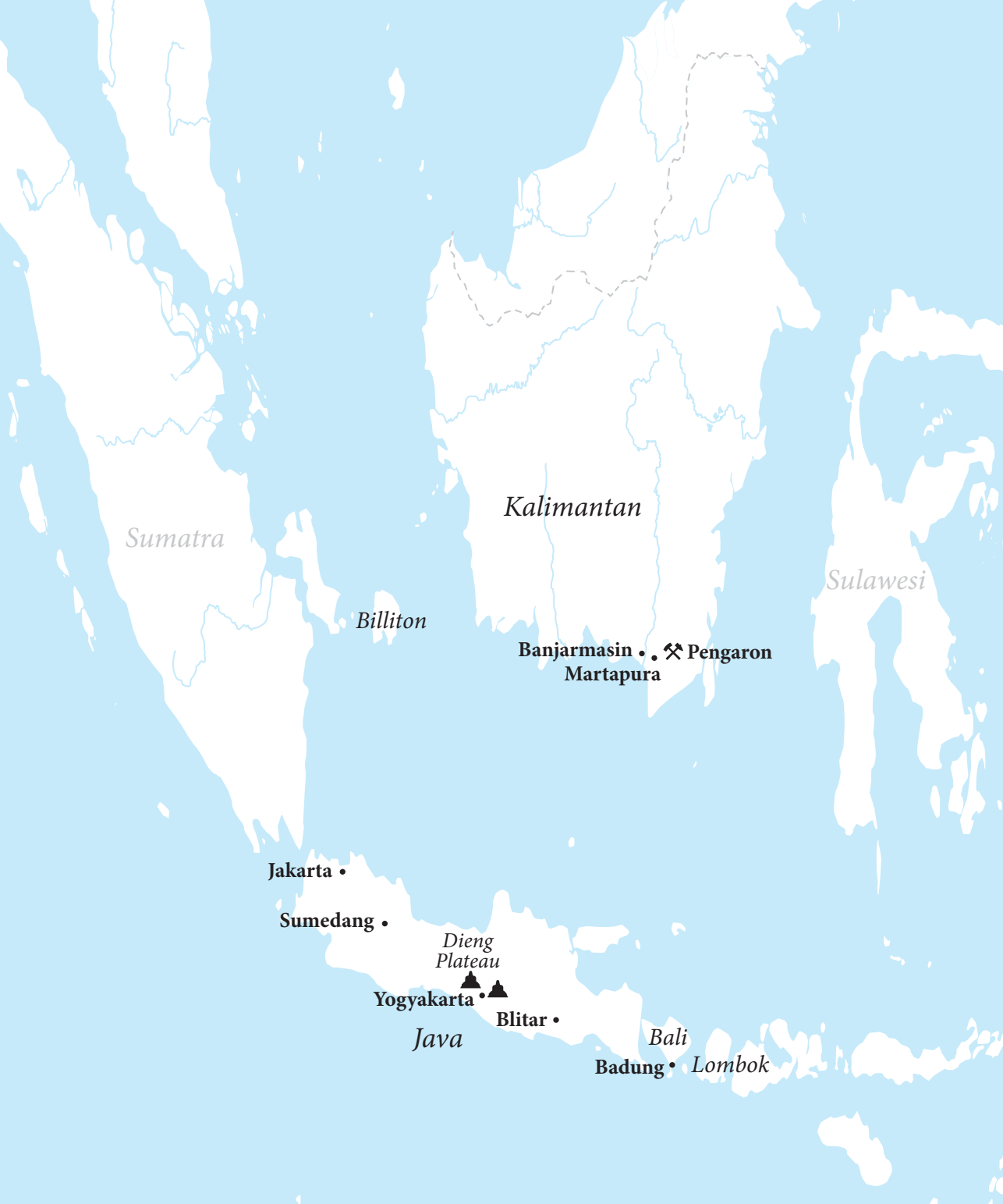




INDONESIA



Sumatra

Kalimantan

Sulawesi

Billiton

Banjarmasin • • ⚒ Pengaron  
Martapura

Jakarta •

Sumedang •

Dieng  
Plateau

Yogyakarta •

Blitar •

Java

Bali

Badung • Lombok

- Town
- ▲ Temple
- ⚒ Mine

Scale 1:18.000.000 Gall-Peters Projection





# The Diamond from Banjarmasin: A Story in Facets

• KLAAS STUTJE\* •

In a display case in Room 1.17 of the Rijksmuseum, dedicated to the nineteenth-century colonial history of the Netherlands, there is a glittering diamond the size of an almond (fig. 1). The accompanying text is uncompromising. It begins ‘This diamond is war booty’ and goes on to explain, in five short sentences, that the diamond had once been owned by the sultan of Banjarmasin, on the Indonesian island of Kalimantan. It leaves open the question as to exactly how the sultan lost the diamond, but does note that it was sent to the Netherlands after 1859 following a violent conquest of the area by the Dutch colonial army.<sup>1</sup>

The diamond has been on display since 2013, but has recently become the subject of new social interest. The presence in the Netherlands of sizeable museum collections acquired in a colonial context is being questioned more critically than ever before, and the Banjarmasin diamond is widely perceived as an ‘icon ... that serves as a model for all the valuable objects that were ever shipped from the colonies to the Netherlands’.<sup>2</sup> In the restitution debate, too, the diamond is often cited as an example of looted art, now that a number of formerly colonized countries are making efforts to reclaim heritage housed in European and American museum collections.<sup>3</sup> The Indonesian media, meanwhile,

*Fig. 1*  
*Banjarmasin Diamond,*  
1.4 x 1.7 x 2.2 cm,  
weight 7.65 grams,  
38.23 carats.  
Amsterdam,  
Rijksmuseum,  
inv. no. NG-C-2000-3.  
On loan from  
the Ministry of  
the Colonies.

page 338  
Rijksmuseum,  
Room 1.17, showcase.  
Photograph:  
Albertine Dijkema

appears to equate the Indonesian-Dutch diplomatic negotiations about heritage policy and restitution with the approaching return of the diamond to its homeland.<sup>4</sup> The diamond is an element in ongoing discussions about the Dutch acceptance of its violent colonial past and Indonesian post-colonial nation building.

But small though it may be, the diamond has more to tell. Illuminated from different angles, the diamond’s facets reflect the other stories of colonialism that are told in Room 1.17. Stories about war and violent subjugation (like the looted jewellery and gems from the ‘Lombok Treasure’ and several cannons), about the resistance and co-optation of the local rulers (the painting of the subjugation of Diponegoro and the Baud weapon rack), about trade and monopolization (the scale model of the island of Deshima and the presentation box of opium), and about colonial imagery (Schouten’s Surinamese panoramas). Stories elsewhere in the Rijksmuseum are also reflected in the diamond’s history, among them the dwindling power of the Dutch royal house in the nineteenth century, the Netherlands as a modern, imperialist nation, and even colonial aphasia and suppression of the colonial past.

This article, based on a provenance report written as part of the Pilot Pro-



ject Provenance Research on Objects of the Colonial Era (PROCE), aims first of all to tell the story of the Banjarmasin diamond through a number of its facets.<sup>5</sup> It will outline the precise course of events in the Sultanate of Banjarmasin around 1859, earlier stories of mining and local interpretation, and later stories of diamond polishing and presentation. This more extensive biography of the diamond – a second aim of the article – will create space for alternative narratives about colonialism and imperialism, about nation building and regional identifications, and about remedying injustice and decolonization today. The article is thus in line with a form of research that has been tested for some time now, ‘the social life of things’, based on the eponymous book by the American anthropologist Arjun Appadurai, in which the socio-political biography of an object is used as a gateway to uncover complex stories.<sup>6</sup>

### Facet 1: Forced Colonialism and Growing Resistance

From as far back as the sixteenth century, the region around the Barito

and Martapura rivers in Kalimantan (the Indonesian part of the island of Borneo) had been the home of the Sultanate of Banjarmasin, an Islamic kingdom mainly populated by small farmers, fishermen and river traders who were in close contact with neighbouring centres of power in Java and South Sulawesi, and with Dayak communities upstream in Kalimantan (fig. 2). The natural harbour of the town of Banjarmasin was strategically located on an inlet of the Java Sea, and trading contacts extended as far as South China. The town of Martapura, the site of the sultan’s palace, was also the centre of a modest trade in regionally mined diamonds (fig. 3). Until the discovery of diamonds in Brazil in 1725, South Kalimantan, alongside Southeast India, was one of the two regions in the world where diamonds were found, and although the share of diamonds from the Martapura region on the world market had never been large, they always played an important role in the local export economy and the sultan’s feudal system.<sup>7</sup> The sultan and prominent members of his family had the exclusive rights to a couple of open-cast mines



Fig. 2  
Sketch of the Ship  
Madura off  
Banjarmasin, 1866,  
drawn by Willem  
Mathol de Jong.  
Amsterdam,  
Rijksmuseum, inv. no.  
RP-P-1908-2416.



Fig. 3  
Diamond mine near  
Martapura,  
Kalimantan, c. 1937.  
Stichting Nationaal  
Museum van  
Wereldculturen, inv.  
no. TM-10007449.

and rented out the right to exploit other quarries to vassals. Diamonds not only helped to oil the wheels of the sultan's economy, the largest were also worn as jewellery and as symbols of power.<sup>8</sup> The diamond in the Rijksmuseum was one of them.

The Sultanate's central location, between the Dutch power bases in the Moluccas, North Sulawesi and Batavia (present-day Jakarta), meant that the area had already had to deal with interference by the Dutch in the early period of the presence of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) in the Indonesian archipelago. Periods of trading and alliance with neighbouring kingdoms alternated with periods of war and active meddling by the VOC in the Sultanate's internal politics. In 1786, the VOC intervened in a long-running dispute between two branches of the Banjarmasin dynasty, which both claimed the throne. After a short military expedition, the VOC put an end to the conflict to the advantage of one of the claimants. In exchange for an annual financial payment, military aid and protection against internal and external enemies, this new sultan signed a treaty in 1787 in which sovereignty over the Sultanate was granted to the VOC.

The VOC claimed the right, at least in the treaties it formulated itself, to approve successors to the throne and to directly administer a number of districts. The VOC was allowed to open and exploit gold and diamond mines in the region.<sup>9</sup> In 1826, after the British interregnum in the Indonesian archipelago and the return of the Dutch to Banjarmasin, the 1787 treaty was renewed by the new governor-general of the Dutch East Indies and Sultan Adam Al-Watsiq Billah (c. 1771-1857, fig. 4).<sup>10</sup> The Dutch interest in the area increased even further with the discovery of coal in the eighteen-forties, precisely in the period when the Dutch began to use steam-powered vessels. In 1849 the Dutch opened a coal mine – the Oranje-Nassau mine in Pengaron – on land recently acquired from the sultan.

The good economic and diplomatic relationships between the incumbent sultan and the Dutch colonial authorities in the Archipelago, however, masked a growing unrest among large parts of the Banjarese and Dayak populations and members of the aristocracy about the increasing presence of Dutch interests in the region. This unrest culminated in the Banjarmasin War (Indonesian: *Perang Banjar*) between





Fig. 4  
Portrait of Sultan  
Adam Al-Watsiq  
Billah, c. 1844, drawn  
by Auguste van Pers.  
Leiden University  
Libraries, Collection  
Royal Netherlands  
Institute of Southeast  
Asian and Caribbean  
Studies (KITLV),  
inv. no. 36A143.

1858 and 1863. Contemporary Dutch authors interpreted the Banjarmasin War above all as a dynastic war of succession in which the colonial state, perhaps unintentionally, became embroiled.<sup>11</sup> Modern historians have pointed out that this emphasis on dynastic tensions is only part of the story. Several studies have since been

published in which economic, religious and socio-political dimensions of the conflict have been explored.<sup>12</sup> These later additions by historians help to better explain the prolonged duration of the resistance and the great social support against the Dutch rule. But in order to understand the importance of the Banjarmasin diamond, as part of the sultan's jewellery, it is nevertheless worthwhile focusing on the dynastic tensions in the Banjarmasin conflict.

### Dynastic Tensions and 'Surrender of Royal Regalia'

In the dynastic reading of the war in Banjarmasin, the source of the conflict dated from 1852, when the first son of Sultan Adam and the heir to the throne died, without any clarity about who should succeed him as the new crown prince. There were three candidates: the younger brother of the crown prince, Prabu Anom (?-1869), who was supported by his mother Kemala Sari (c. 1765-1864), Sultan Adam's wife. She exerted great influence over the administration of the Sultanate and even carried the royal seal. The Dutch administrators, however, greatly disliked Kemala Sari and her son because of their anti-Dutch attitude. The Dutch government favoured Tamdjidillah (1817-1867), the first son of the deceased crown prince and nephew of Prabu Anom. This second candidate had forged good relationships with European circles in Banjarmasin and promised the colonial government the exploitation of all coal mines within the borders of the Sultanate of Banjarmasin. However, this prince was unpopular with the Banjarese population, because his Sino-Dayak mother was not of noble birth and because it was said that he spent most of his time consorting with Europeans in the city of Banjarmasin.<sup>13</sup> The last on the list was Hidayatullah (1822-1903, fig. 5), the second son of the deceased crown prince. He had a different mother from Tamdjidillah,

Fig. 5  
Portrait of Prince  
Hidayatullah,  
lithograph by  
Pieter Wilhelmus  
van de Weyer, in  
W.A. Van Rees, *De  
Bandjermasinsche  
Krijg van 1859-1863*,  
vol. 2, Arnhem 1865,  
p. ii. The Hague,  
KB – National Library  
of the Netherlands,  
sign. 676 D 130.



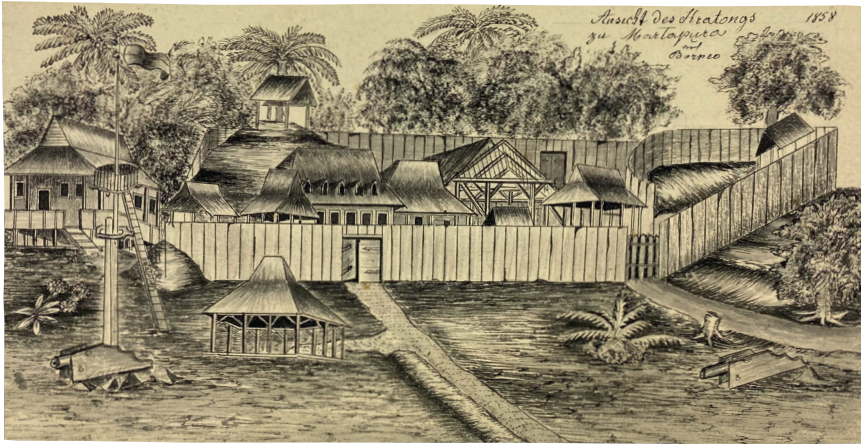


Fig. 6  
View of the Palace of Martapura, c. 1858, maker unknown. Arnhem, Museum Bronbeek, inv. no. 2006/05/29-1-1. Photograph: with thanks to John Klein Nagelvoort

and through her Hidayatullah was of double royal descent. The majority of the Banjarese considered Hidayatullah the rightful heir to the throne.<sup>14</sup>

The reigning Sultan Adam was too old to settle this dynastic dispute about his succession – or to deny the Dutch interests – and in 1856 the Dutch made use of (what they regarded as) their acquired right to choose a royal successor: Tamdjidillah

was appointed as crown prince, despite his unpopularity with the Banjarese population and the court. The lack of support for Tamdjidillah was symbolized by the fact that he did not live in the *kraton* (palace, fig. 6) of Martapura, for centuries the centre of the Banjarese court, but preferred to remain in the city of Banjarmasin, close to the protection of the Dutch resident of Southeast Borneo (fig. 7) and

Fig. 7  
Sketch of the Fortified Resident's House in Martapura, c. 1861, drawn by P.A.C.H.T.H. Werdmüller von Elgg. Leiden University Libraries, Collection Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies (KITLV), inv. no. 36c48.





the colonial army.<sup>15</sup> Sultan Adam died on 1 November 1857 and two days later Tamdjidillah was hastily installed as the new Sultan Tamdjidillah al-Watsiq Billah by the resident. It was usual that on his appointment the new sultan was presented with the state regalia, but because there were many who did not acknowledge Tamdjidillah it was only after long negotiations, and with reluctance, that Kemala Sari and Hidayatullah handed over their part of it.<sup>16</sup> Some Banjarese would maintain that with the appointment of Tamdjidillah the rightful heirs to the throne had actually lost control over the royal treasures.

In the months that followed Tamdjidillah's appointment, Prabu Anom and his mother Kemala Sari were arrested and banished to Java. Hidayatullah held on to some power thanks to his large following among the population, but fearful of similar treatment, he kept his distance from the Dutch and from Tamdjidillah. In June 1859 he even fled the *kraton* in Martapura. This tense atmosphere of mistrust and intrigue provoked uprisings that culminated in the Banjarmasin War. Between 28 April and 11 May 1859, anti-Dutch crowds began to attack the Oranje-Nassau coal mine and Christian mission posts of the Rheinische Missionsgesellschaft. Altogether, thirty-three Europeans were killed. In response, the Dutch colonial government replaced the resident and also sent a military commander as governor commissioner, Colonel A.J. Andresen (1808-1872, fig. 8). It also sent large numbers of troops to crush the uprising and tried to regain control over the Banjarese aristocracy by occupying the palace in Martapura and demanding public loyalty from members of the nobility and other dignitaries.

In June 1859, more than a month after the first attacks on Dutch institutions, Andresen ordered eighty or so prominent leaders from Martapura



Fig. 8  
Portrait Photograph  
of A.J. Andresen,  
Commandant KNIL  
1865-69. Arnhem,  
Museum Bronbeek,  
inv. no. 1872/05-1.  
Photograph: with  
thanks to John Klein  
Nagelvoort

to meet him so he could hear their demands in an attempt to defuse the situation. In Dutch documents from the archives of the Ministry of the Colonies in The Hague we find evidence that those leaders made it clear that the abdication of Sultan Tamdjidillah was a necessary condition for peace. Andresen then returned to Banjarmasin to urge Tamdjidillah to abdicate 'voluntarily'. He exerted strong pressure on the sultan, confronting him in the resident's office in Banjarmasin and telling him that the elite and the Banjarmasin population did not trust him because of his un-Islamic behaviour and because his accession to the throne had been against the rules of the customary law (*adat*). Andresen also indirectly blamed Tamdjidillah for the recent attacks on Europeans by saying that they were carried out by people from the sultan's fiefdoms, for which he would be held responsible once the criminal investigation had been completed. Andresen made it clear that the colonial authorities felt that they were no longer obliged to protect

him against internal opposition, as had once been agreed in the treaties. He therefore suggested that the sultan should abdicate 'of his own free will', after which he promised him and his family a safe passage to Batavia, with an ongoing monthly allowance in accordance with his dignity and the continuing right to bear the title of sultan.<sup>17</sup> Tamdjidillah, knowing that his life would be in danger without the protection of the Dutch,<sup>18</sup> had little choice but 'to entirely subject himself to the advice of the governor commissioner' on condition that a new sultan would be installed according to the Banjarese *adat* as soon as the revolt had ended and order had been restored. According to the Dutch report, the sultan was 'prepared to surrender all the state ornaments belonging to the throne'.<sup>19</sup> The next day, 25 June 1859, the newly appointed resident, C.J. Bosch (?-?) went to the sultan's residence to collect the state regalia in the name of the governor commissioner. They were then stored in the Resident's office (fig. 9).<sup>20</sup>

The emphasis in official Dutch documents on the voluntary nature of Tamdjidillah's abdication and surrender of the regalia probably arose out of concern about the reaction of the Banjarese population and elite. For the same reason they asked Tamdjidillah to write a public announcement in which he stated that he was abdicating as sultan 'of his own free will and without any

coercion'.<sup>21</sup> But in later sources, when the royal regalia had already been shipped from Banjarmasin, the official document that was produced at the time of the transfer was referred to as the *Proces Verbaal van Afpakking* – Proceedings of Confiscation – which leaves little doubt about its involuntary nature.<sup>22</sup>

The Sultanate was placed under the temporary rule of two princes. Although Tamdjidillah and the Dutch had agreed to install a new sultan after the rebellion ended, the Dutch also alluded to the return and appointment of Hidayatullah as the new sultan, which would have been unacceptable to Tamdjidillah. In the course of 1859-60, however, Hidayatullah continued to refuse to abandon his guerrilla positions. On 11 June 1860, with no solution in sight, and little confidence that a new sultan would put an end to the rebellion, the Dutch East Indian authorities announced the dissolution of the Sultanate and the establishment of a system of direct government. On that same day the governor commissioner sent a letter to the governor-general of the Dutch East Indies in which he announced that he would send the regalia to the governor-general 'since there is no use holding it any longer'. All the regalia would be at the disposal of the governor-general, with the exception of the diamond, for which 'authorization' would be required.<sup>23</sup>

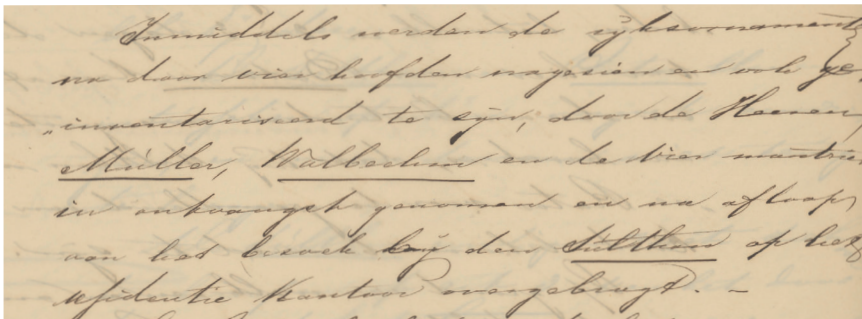


Fig. 9  
Letter from the Resident to the Government Secretary, 26 June 1859. The Hague, National Archives, Colonies, 1850-1900 (2.10.02), inv. no. 869, report 16 September 1859, no. 29 (detail).



## Facet 2: Eastern Despotism and Western Greed

It is not clear why and from whom this authorization had to be requested or who decided that the diamond deserved different treatment. It is the first time that the diamond was specifically mentioned as part of the royal regalia and singled out from the larger collection. It was not, however, the first time that Europeans set eyes on the diamond. From the beginning of the nineteenth century the diamond regularly featured in stories about the Sultanate of Banjarmasin, in which the jewel symbolized the sultan's Eastern despotism, the cruel treatment of the miners he had working for him, and the ease with which he appropriated riches.<sup>24</sup> This image is reflected in various travel diaries and newspaper articles from the 1832 to 1848 period, like the journal by Salomon Müller (1804-1864).<sup>25</sup> This German zoologist, who travelled around Banjarmasin in 1836 and published his account between 1839 and 1844, wrote that Sultan Adam was in possession of a rough diamond of – according to the sultan himself – 77 carats. The shape of the diamond was an ‘almost regular octahedron’. It was set in gold, hung around the sultan's neck on a simple cord, and was one of ‘his most expensive showpieces’. Müller describes this diamond in a section in which he contrasts the wealth of the sultan with the dilapidated state of Martapura and the *kraton*. Müller states that the 77-carat diamond had been found in a diamond mine near the village of Goenong-lawak which was owned by the sultan and his son,

and the finder ‘only’ received 500 Spanish dollars or 1275 Dutch guilders as a reward.<sup>26</sup>

Müller was not the first European to write about the large diamond around the sultan's neck. In 1833 the *Nieuwe Amsterdamsche Courant en Algemeen Handelsblad* reported that in 1823 the son of Sultan Sulaiman Saidullah II (1761-1825), probably the later Sultan Adam, wore a diamond of ‘68, according to some of 72 carats’ on a green cord around his neck.<sup>27</sup> In 1829 a Dutch resident of Banjarmasin visited the royal diamond mines and in the *Javasche Courant* described a diamond of 77 carats, which was set in a gold clasp and worn by the sultan himself as a necklace with a simple black cord (fig. 10).<sup>28</sup> In 1837 the Dutch botanist P.W. Korthals (1807-1892) also referred to an ‘almost regular octahedron’ from the diamond mines around Goenong-lawak in the possession of the sultan. In publications he stated that the diamond weighed 72 carats, but in his journal he wrote of 76 carats.<sup>29</sup> Finally, in 1838, a diamond of ‘more than 70 carats’ is mentioned in a travel journal penned by ‘a government official’ and in 1848 the Dutch agronomist M.D. Teenstra (1795-1864) referred to a diamond of 77 carats.<sup>30</sup>

A diamond of this weight in combination with the shape of an almost regular octahedron is extremely rare. The fact that this is mentioned several times leads Rijksmuseum curator and conservator of jewellery Suzanne van Leeuwen to the conclusion that these sources refer to the same stone.<sup>31</sup> It is interesting that the witnesses differ regarding the details – with diamonds

Fig. 10

Newspaper article ‘Correspondentie’, *Javasche Courant*, 29 October 1829 (detail).  
The Hague, KB – National Library of the Netherlands.

De grootste brillant, welke tot nog toe alhier gevonden is, is in het bezit van den tegenwoordig regerende Sultan en weegt zeven en zeventig karaat. Dezelve is in een gouden bandje ingesloten en wordt als het zeldzaamste contrast voor een edelgesteente van zulk eene hooge waarde, aan een eenvoudig zwart koordje bij festiviteiten, door den Sultan om den hals gedragen.  
Het vinden van dezen steen kostte den ontdekker het leven; daar dezelve uit blijdschap over zijne gevondene schat, krankzinnig werd en in dezen toestand overleed.



*Figs. 11a, b*  
Two kris (*keris*)  
from the regalia  
of the sultans of  
Banjarmasin.  
Iron blades, wooden  
hafts covered in  
silver/gold inlaid  
with diamonds;  
44.7 and 43.5 cm.  
Jakarta, National  
Museum of Indonesia  
(Museum dan Cagar  
Budaya), inv. nos.  
2514 (E.376) and  
2508 (E.373).  
Photographs:  
National Museum  
of Indonesia

between 68 and 77 carats, hanging on black or green cords, set in gold or silver, and with different rewards for the miners – but share a strikingly similar narrative in which a large diamond hangs around the sultan's neck on a simple cord. The beauty of the diamond is often contrasted with the rundown state of the *kraton* and the extreme poverty of the population. The diamond symbolised the Oriental image of the all-powerful potentate. It could be argued that the repeated appearance of this diamond in Dutch sources between 1823 and 1848 not only indicates that it was the sultan's favourite object but is also evidence of Dutch observers' Orientalist fascination for exotic riches. In that sense the early descriptions of the diamond foreshadow its later 'surrender' and journey to the Netherlands.

### Facet 3: Royal Gift, Lucrative Sale or Precious Memorial?

In July 1861, two years after Tamjidillah had surrendered the royal regalia, and a year after it was taken to Batavia, the larger collection was offered to the Batavian Society for Arts and Sciences, which gratefully accepted the gift.<sup>32</sup> The Batavian Society's museum was an early forerunner of the present-day Museum Nasional in Jakarta, where the jewellery can still be found (e.g. figs. 11a, b). However, the 70-carat diamond was

specifically excluded from the rest of the collection because Governor-General Baron Sloet van de Beele (1806-1890) had proposed that the Minister of the Colonies, Gerhard Hendrik Uhlenbeck (1815-1888), should gift the diamond to the Dutch king William III (1817-1890) as an ornament for his royal crown.<sup>33</sup> In December 1861 the diamond left the port of Batavia, and four months later, in April 1862, it was unpacked by the Minister of the Colonies. The stone was in a yellow wooden box, had been wrapped in paper and mounted in silver. The diamond was weighed when it left Batavia and on arrival in The Hague and on both occasions it was 70 carats.<sup>34</sup>

The Minister had apparently agreed to send the diamond to the Netherlands, but he questioned whether it could be given to the king as a personal gift, or should instead remain the property of the Dutch State. During this period, it was also suggested that the diamond could be sold for the benefit of the recently established Bronbeek home for disabled soldiers near Arnhem. Between 1862 and 1902 the diamond was at the centre of a messy conflict of interests. On 3 March 1862, while it was en route to Europe, its destination was the subject of debate in the Council of Ministers. It was decided that it could be best included in the collection of the Museum of Natural History in

Leiden as the property of the State.<sup>35</sup> However both the museum director and the director of the Royal Cabinet of Curiosities in The Hague, who was also approached, objected because they did not have the facilities to guard the diamond properly and because the stone did not fit in their collections.<sup>36</sup> As an alternative, the Minister of the Colonies contemplated selling it and adding the proceeds to the *Batig Saldo* – the Credit Balance – the annual amount the Dutch East Indies paid to the Netherlands. De Nederlandsche Handel-Maatschappij (NHM), which had the worldwide monopoly to sell products from the colony, offered to help and suggested cutting the diamond before putting it on the market.<sup>37</sup> This time it was King William III who objected.<sup>38</sup> Throughout this time the diamond remained where it had been since it arrived in 1862: the Ministry of the Colonies building in The Hague. Pending further decisions about its destination, the diamond was taken to De Nederlandsche Bank on 22 February 1864 to be stored there until further notice.

In 1869 the Minister of the Colonies once again suggested to the king that it should be sold, and this time he agreed. The diamond was taken to the NHM and valued at 300,000 guilders. The Minister and the NHM decided to remain silent at the sale about the name of the seller and the provenance of the object.<sup>39</sup> The NHM again advised that the diamond ought to be cut, because ‘its unusual shape and the reduced clarity’ would deter possible buyers.<sup>40</sup> They might not be prepared to run the risk of a cut that went wrong. The Minister therefore decided to have the diamond cut by A.E. Daniëls and his son, directors of the factory of M.M. Coster (1818-1880) in Paris.<sup>41</sup>

From that moment on, the stone no longer weighed 70 (or actually 69 7/8) carats but just 37 3/8 carats.<sup>42</sup> More importantly still, after it was cut the cutter had to admit that it was not as

clear as he had hoped and expected, but had a ‘yellowish tint’ that would have a negative impact on its value.<sup>43</sup> The price was dramatically reduced to 50,000 guilders, and still no buyer could be found. In 1875 the Minister of the Colonies and the NHM therefore decided to call off the sale and await better times. Now that the financial market value of the diamond appeared to be much lower than expected, the Minister stated that it no longer outweighed its historical value ‘as a precious memorial of an important event in the history of the Dutch East Indies’.<sup>44</sup>

In 1888 the government decided that the diamond should be sent to the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, but awaiting the construction of a special security display case the actual transfer was postponed and ultimately cancelled. The transfer was nearing completion, but in the last months of 1897 the Minister of the Colonies suggested offering it for sale for the third time, along with a collection of precious jewels from the Lombok Treasure. This time he argued that the diamond had lost its historical value after it had been cut. It was also stated that it had never been part of the actual royal regalia of Banjarmasin.<sup>45</sup> But this third attempt at selling it was again unsuccessful.<sup>46</sup> Eventually, on 22 August 1902, the Minister of the Colonies transferred the diamond to the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam on permanent loan.<sup>47</sup>

The complex history between 1862 and 1902 and the disagreement and shifting opinions about what ought to happen to the diamond reflect different historical developments in Dutch society and in the political arena. The waning influence of the royal house, the increasing importance of taxes and income from trade from the Dutch East Indies for the Dutch treasury, but also the importance of modern imperialism in the Netherlands’ national self-image can be seen in the discussions about whether or not to gift the



diamond to the king, to sell it or place it in a museum as a 'precious memorial' of the Dutch sacrifices and successes in the Indonesian Archipelago.

#### Facet 4: From Showpiece to War Booty to Identity Object

The diamond has never been officially listed in the museum's inventory, perhaps because of the continuing uncertainty about its fate. It was not given an inventory number until the year 2000. Until the outbreak of the Second World War, it was exhibited together with another fiercely debated collection, the Lombok Treasure, which was looted from the palaces of the Sultanate on Lombok in 1894. The diamond formed part of a colonial treasure room alongside other symbols of Oriental wealth and colonial power (fig. 12). In August 1939, when fear of an impending war reached its peak, the Rijksmuseum closed its doors and evacuated the most important works of art. The Banjarmasin diamond was probably taken to the safe dungeons of a castle in Medemblik, and after the war the colonial treasure room was not set up again.<sup>48</sup> The diamond was not listed until 2000, and it was only in 2013, after a major renovation of the Rijks-

museum in Amsterdam, that it was permanently exhibited in Room 1.17, devoted to nineteenth-century colonial history.

In the meantime, the diamond has undergone a change of meaning. Under the influence of a changing Dutch society and a different way of dealing with the colonial past, the diamond, like Room 1.17, is no longer 'a precious memorial of an important event in the history of the Dutch East Indies'.<sup>49</sup> Today it symbolizes the violent subjugation and robbery of monarchs and peoples overseas. The criticism expressed elsewhere about the way colonialism is presented in the Rijksmuseum, about the contextualization of Room 1.17 in which the 'looted booty' shares the space with the cheerful description of the Netherlands as an enterprising nation that spread its wings, and about the isolation of the colonial room from wider Dutch history, does not alter the fact that the diamond itself is no longer a showpiece.<sup>50</sup> In the report of the Gonçalves Committee, which advises on the revision of the Dutch restitution policy with regard to colonial cultural goods, the diamond is top of the list 'as an example of



Fig. 12  
Display case with  
the Banjarmasin  
diamond and three  
Buddha statuettes in  
the Rijksmuseum,  
after 1902-before  
1939.

war booty'. This description means that according to the committee's own proposal, the object ought to be unconditionally restituted were Indonesia to request it.<sup>51</sup> The changed significance of the diamond in the Netherlands has also been highlighted by the Indonesian media. The publication of the Gonçalves Committee's report was interpreted by many Indonesian newspapers as an announcement that the diamond would be soon restituted. The widely read online news page *Tribunnews.com*, for instance, had as a headline '70 Carat Diamond plundered by Dutch colonists to be returned to Indonesia'.<sup>52</sup> The Indonesian page of *CNN* stated 'the Netherlands is ready to send an Indonesian heirloom back home; a 70-carat diamond'.<sup>53</sup> At the same time there is debate in Indonesia about who the diamond should be returned to. Since 2010 the ruler of the regency (*kabupaten*) of Banjar, Haji Khairul Saleh (1964-), has assumed the title of sultan on the basis of his supposed royal lineage. Asked for his opinion about the restitution of the diamond, he stated that the stone should be returned to the Sultanate of Banjarmasin, and not to the central government in Jakarta. His closest advisor indicated that the Sultanate of Banjarmasin has a right to royal

regalia such as the diamond: '[these are] rights, not only for Banjarmasin, but also for the Banjarese in general'.<sup>54</sup> Hilmar Farid, the Director General of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology in Indonesia, who also has restitution and heritage policy in his portfolio, however, showed that he was not quick to get involved in regional claims. He believes that restitution to non-governmental claimants can only be discussed if demonstrable heirs can be identified. For him it is more important that the history of objects, after thorough provenance research by researchers from both countries, contribute something to the understanding of Indonesian history. As far as he is concerned, the diamond, like dozens of Indonesian war flags in Dutch museum collections, has 'an important historical value for Indonesian society and identity'.<sup>55</sup>

With these discussions about the future of Indonesian heritage in the Netherlands and possible restitution, a new facet seems to have been added to the diamond. The object is no longer a prism on a glorious or disreputable past, but is ascribed a value of identity formation in the present: in relation to the self-image of a post-colonial Netherlands, the pride of the resurrected Sultanate of Banjarmasin, and the strengthening of Indonesia's national story.

#### ABSTRACT

This article tells the socio-political life story of the Banjarmasin diamond that is on display in the Rijksmuseum's nineteenth-century colonial room. How the diamond came into the possession of the Dutch in 1859 was not entirely clear, although both in the Netherlands and in Indonesia it is cited as a typical example of 'war booty' and 'looted art'. It is therefore used in debates about contemporary identity formation, like the Dutch approach to their violent colonial past and Indonesian post-colonial nation building. But the stone has more to tell: stories about war and violent subjugation, about resistance and the co-optation of the local rulers, about trade and monopolization and about colonial pretension. On the basis of a provenance report written as part of the Pilot Project Provenance Research on Objects of the Colonial Era (PPROCE), this article aims to shed more light on various moments in the diamond's life story, from mining to exhibition. This also makes it clear that the present-day debate about its painful history and its possible restitution to Indonesia will be not the conclusion but a brand-new chapter in the diamond's long socio-political history.



## NOTES

- \* The research into the diamond was undertaken as part of the Pilot Project Provenance Research on Objects of the Colonial Era (PPOCE). This project was a joint initiative of the NIOD Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies, the Rijksmuseum Amsterdam (RMA) and the Stichting Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen (NMVW), carried out under the leadership of the NIOD and its Expert Centre Restitution (ECR). The present article is based on the provenance report about the diamond by the author that was produced for PPOCE, see [RAP\\_PPOCEprovenanceReport\\_13\\_BanjarmasinDiamond\\_NG\\_c\\_2000\\_3\\_v10\\_202203.pdf](#). The other publications of the project can also be found on the PPOCE website: <https://www.niod.nl/nl/projecten/pilotproject-provenance-research-objects-colonial-era-pproce>.
- 1 The displays in the Rijksmuseum rooms might change due to the wish to alternate the exhibited items or include new insights.
  - 2 'icoon ... dat model staat voor alle waardevolle voorwerpen die ooit uit de kolonie naar Nederland zijn verscheept'. Michel Maas, 'Teruggeven roofkunst aan Indonesië is meanderen tussen hebzucht en historie', *De Volkskrant*, 1 December 2020.
  - 3 See for example 'Duizenden kunststukken verdwijnen mogelijk uit Nederlandse musea: "Roofkunst moet terug"', *Algemeen Dagblad*, 7 October 2020.
  - 4 For example, Faisal Zamzami, 'Berlian 70 Karat yang Dijarah Penjajah Belanda Akan Dikembalikan ke Indonesia (70 Carat diamond plundered by Dutch colonists to be returned to Indonesia)', [tribunnews.com](https://tribunnews.com), 9 October 2020, see <https://aceh.tribunnews.com/2020/10/09/berlian-70-karat-yang-dijarah-penjajah-belanda-akan-dikembalikan-ke-indonesia>; 'Belanda Siap Pulangkan Lagi Pusaka RI, Ada Berlian 70 Karat (The Netherlands is ready to send an Indonesian heirloom back home; a 70-carat diamond)', *CNN Indonesia*, 11 October 2020, see <https://www.cnnindonesia.com/internasional/202010111212858-134-557146/belanda-siap-pulangkan-lagi-pusaka-ri-ada-berlian-70-kara>.
  - 5 Klaas Stutje, *Provenance Report Regarding 'The Banjarmasin Diamond'*, see [RAP\\_PPOCEprovenanceReport\\_13\\_BanjarmasinDiamond\\_NG\\_c\\_2000\\_3\\_v10\\_202203.pdf](#) and note \*.
  - 6 Arjun Appadurai (ed.), *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, Cambridge 1986.
  - 7 Karin Hofmeester, Ashkan Ashkpour, Katrien Depuydt and Jesse De Does, 'Diamonds in Borneo: Commodities as Concepts in Context', *datech2019: Proceedings of the 3rd International Conference on Digital Accession to Textual Cultural Heritage*, May 2019, pp. 45-50.
  - 8 René Brus, 'Diamanten uit Kalimantan', *Orion, tweemaandelijks oriënterend tijdschrift Nederland/Indonesië* 3, no. 5 (September/October 1987); Salomon Müller, *Verhandelingen over de natuurlijke geschiedenis der Nederlandsche overzeesche bezittingen*, Leiden 1837-44, pp. 420, 423-24.
  - 9 *Surat-Surat perdjandjian antara kesultanan Banjarmasin dengan pemerintahan-pemerintahan voc, Bataafse Republiek, Inggeris dan Hindia-Belanda, 1635-1860* (Letters of agreement between the Sultanate of Banjarmasin and the governments of the VOC, Bataafse Republic, England and the Dutch East Indies), Arsip Nasional (National Archives) Republik Indonesia 1965, pp. 108-21.
  - 10 *Surat-Surat Perdjandjian* 1965 (note 9), pp. 223-471.
  - 11 See for example W.A. Van Rees, *De Bandjermasinsche Krijg van 1859-1863*, vol. 1, Arnhem 1865; H.G.J.L. Meyners, *Bijdragen tot de kennis der geschiedenis van het Bandjermasinsche Rijk, 1863-1866*, Leiden 1886; E.B. Kielstra, *De Ondergang van het Bandjermasinsche Rijk*, Leiden 18921.
  - 12 See for example Karl E. Böhmer, 'Violence Begets Violence: Anticolonial Mobilisation of Ressentiment in 19th Century Borneo', *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 45 (2019), no. 1; Helius Sjamsuddin, 'Islam and Resistance in South and Central Kalimantan in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century', in M.C. Ricklefs (ed.), *Islam in the Indonesian Social Context*, Clayton (Victoria) 1991, pp. 7-17; Mujiburrahman Al-Banjari, 'Historical Dynamics Of Inter-Religious Relations in South Kalimantan', *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 11 (2017), no. 1, pp. 145-74; Helius Sjamsuddin, 'Fighting Dutch Rule in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries: The Social, Political, Ethnic and Dynastic Roots of Resistance in South and Central Kalimantan, 1859-1906', Clayton (Victoria) 1989 (dissertation Monash University); M. Idwar Saleh, 'Agrarian Radicalism and Movements of Native Insurrection in South Kalimantan (1858-1865)', *Archipel* 9 (1975), pp. 135-53; H.G. Mayur S.H., *Perang Banjar*, Banjarmasin 1979.

- 13 M.C. Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia since c. 1300*, London 1993, p. 1391.
- 14 Sjamsuddin 1989 (note 12), pp. 86-951.
- 15 Sjamsuddin 1989 (note 12), pp. 111-121.
- 16 The Hague, National Archives (NL-HANA), Ministry of the Colonies 1850-1900, accession number 2.10.02, inv. no. 869, report 16 September 1859, no. 29, 'Historische Nota over het voorgevallene met de beide mededingers naar de Bandjermasinsche troon'.
- 17 NL-HANA, Colonies, 1850-1900 (2.10.02), inv. no. 869, report 16 September 1859 no. 29, copy of minutes of 24 June 1859'.
- 18 Sjamsuddin 1989 (note 12), p. 112; NL-HANA, F.N. Nieuwenhuijzen [1819-1892], accession number 2.21.205.44, inv. no. 52, 'Resumé der correspondentie omtrent de aangelegenheden van het Martapoerasche hof', secret letter of 23 February 1858, no. 228, from the Resident to the Governor-General, p. 246'.
- 19 'geheel [te] onderwerp[en] aan den raad van de Gouvernements Commissaris'; 'bereid tot afgifte van alle de rijksornamenten behorende tot den troon'. NL-HANA, Colonies, 1850-1900 (2.10.02), inv. no. 869, report 16 September 1859, no. 29, copy of minutes of 24 June 1859.
- 20 NL-HANA, Colonies, 1850-1900 (2.10.02), inv. no. 869, report 16 September 1859, no. 29, copy of a letter from the Resident to the Governor Commissioner of 26 June 1859. Transcription fig. 9: 'Inmiddels werden de rijksornamenten na door vier hoofden nagezien en ook geïnventariseerd te zijn, door de Heeren Müller, Walbeeken en de vier mantries in ontvangst genomen en na afloop van het bezoek bij den Sulthan op het residentie kantoor overgebracht.'
- 21 'uit eigen vrijen wil en zonder eenigen dwang'. NL-HANA, Colonies, 1850-1900 (2.10.02), inv. no. 869, report 16 September 1859, no. 29, copy of a translation of the public announcement of Tamdjid Illah of 25 June 1859.
- 22 See for example 'Bestuursvergadering 13 July 1861', *Tijdschrift van het Bataviaasch Genootschap* 12 (1862), p. 122; NL-HANA, Colonies, 1850-1900 (2.10.02), inv. no. 1158, report 10 March 1862, no. 6, minutes of Siedenburg of 14 December 1861.
- 23 'Rijksraden van het Bandjarezen Rijk. Onder aanbieding van een daarvan opge- maakte procesverbaal, mededeeling, dat, vermits eene langere aanhouding zonder enig nut is, ze ter beschikking van den G.G. worden gesteld, met uitzondering van den ruwen diamant van 70 karaten, ter welker verzending autorisatie wordt aangevraagd.' (Regalia of the Banjarese Empire. Presenting an official report of it, announcing that, since there is no use holding it any longer, it will be placed at the disposal of the G.G., with the exception of the 70-carat rough diamond, for which authorization will be requested for shipment.) NL-HANA, Nieuwenhuijzen (2.21.205.44), inv. no. 53, log of correspondence of Governor Commissioner Nieuwenhuijzen, note of an outbound letter of 11 June 1860, no. 176.
- 24 I would like to thank Suzanne van Leeuwen, Rijksmuseum curator and conservator of jewellery, for locating and sharing some early mentions of the diamond. See also S. van Leeuwen and J.C. Zwaan, 'The Banjarmasin Diamond', *The Journal of Gemmology* (forthcoming 2023).
- 25 Müller 1837-44 (note 8), p. 420.
- 26 Müller 1837-44 (note 8), pp. 420-21, 424.
- 27 '68, volgens sommigen van 72 karaat'. 'Het Eiland Borneo (Vervolg en Slot van Nummer 37)', *Nieuwe Amsterdamsche Courant en Algemeen Handelsblad*, 17 January 1833, p. 4.
- 28 'Correspondentie', *Javasche Courant*, 29 October 1829, p. 2.
- 29 'bijna regelmatige octaëder'. P.W. Korthals, 'Aanteekeningen over Borneo's Zuidoost-kust', *Algemeene konst- en letter-bode, voor het jaar... 47* (1837), p. 245.
- 30 'meer dan 70 karaten'; 'een ambtenaar van het gouvernement'. See 'Borneo, Eenige reizen in de Binnenlanden van dit Eiland, door eenen Ambtenaar van het Gouverne-ment in het jaar 1824', *Tijdschrift voor Neerland's Indië* 1 (1838), no. 2, p. 17; M.D. Teenstra, *Beknopte beschrijving van de Nederlandsch Overzee-sche Bezittingen*, vol. 5-6, Groningen 1848, p. 447.
- 31 Correspondence with Suzanne van Leeuwen, curator and conservator of jewellery at the Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, 4 March 2021, see also note 24.
- 32 'Bestuursvergadering 13 Julij 1861', pp. 122-25, 136-37, 219.
- 33 NL-HANA, Colonies, 1850-1900 (2.10.02), inv. no. 1158, 10 March 1862, no. 6, letter from the Governor-General to the Minister of the Colonies, 26 November 1861.
- 34 NL-HANA, Colonies, 1850-1900 (2.10.02), inv. no. 1173, 24 April 1862, no. 22, receipt note and report 7 April 1862; *ibid.*, inv. no. 1437, report 9 February 1864, no. 28, draft minutes. On 22 February 1864 the dealer E. Vita Israel (1831-1915) adjusted the exact weight to 69 7/8 carats.



- 35 NL-HANA, Raad van Ministers (Minister-raad) 1823-1996, accession number 2.02.05.02, inv. no. 34, minutes of the Council of Ministers, 3 March 1862.
- 36 NL-HANA, Colonies, 1850-1900 (2.10.02), inv. no. 1272, 3 December 1862, no. 23, letter from the Minister of Internal Affairs to the Minister of the Colonies.
- 37 NL-HANA, Colonies, 1850-1900 (2.10.02), inv. no. 1278, 22 December 1862, no. 17, letter from the NHM to the Minister of the Colonies, 11 December 1862, no. 112 secret.
- 38 NL-HANA, Cabinet of the King (kdk) 1841-1897, accession number 2.02.04, inv. no. 1403, cabinet written reply of 26 December 1862, no. 36.
- 39 NL-HANA, Nederlandsche Handel-Maatschappij (NHM), accession number 2.20.01, inv. no. 428, minutes of the board meeting, no. 72, 8 October 1869.
- 40 'zijn afwijkenden vorm en de verminderde zuiverheid'. NL-HANA, NHM (2.20.01), inv. no. 428, minutes of the board meeting, no. 93, 20 December 1869.
- 41 NL-HANA, NHM (2.20.01), inv. no. 428, minutes of the board meeting, no. 93, 9 May 1870; NL-HANA, Colonies, 1850-1900 (2.10.02), inv. no. 6010, report 6 May 1870 E5.
- 42 NL-HANA, NHM (2.20.01), inv. no. 6432, minutes of the NHM vault, 26 August 1870. According to a gemmological analysis by S. van Leeuwen and J.C. Zwaan, the diamond weighs 38.23 carats, see Van Leeuwen and Zwaan forthcoming (note 24).
- 43 'geelachtigen tint'. NL-HANA, Colonies, 1850-1900 (2.10.02), inv. no. 6013, letter from the Nederlandsche Handel-Maatschappij to the Minister of the Colonies, 27 August 1870.
- 44 NL-HANA, kdk, 1841-1897 (2.02.04), inv. no. 1801, cabinet written reply 20 August 1869, no. 1; NL-HANA, Colonies, 1850-1900 (2.10.02), inv. no. 2779, report 21 April 1875, no. 19.
- 45 NL-HANA, kdk, 1841-1897 (2.02.04), inv. no. 2833, cabinet written reply 12 April 1888, no. 27; NL-HANA, Colonies, 1850-1900 (2.10.02), inv. no. 5224, report 2 December 1897, no. 22.
- 46 NL-HANA, Ministry of the Colonies: Index of the Public Archives 1901-1953, accession number 2.10.36.04, inv. no. 133, 19 July 1902 no. 35.
- 47 NL-HANA, kdk, 1841-1897 (2.02.04), inv. no. 5237, report 19 July 1902, no. 35, minutes director RMA and broker Vita Israel, 22 August 1902; see also Noord-Hollands Archief, Haarlem (NL-HlMNH), Rijksmuseum legal predecessors in Amsterdam, accession number 476, inv. no. 1074. Ewald Vanvugt, *De schatten van Lombok: Honderd jaar Nederlandse oorlogsbuit uit Indonesië*, Amsterdam 1994, pp. 94-97. NL-HANA, Colonies, 1850-1900 (2.10.02), inv. no. 2779, report 21 April 1875, no. 19.
- 48 Vanvugt 1994 (note 47), pp. 94-97.
- 49 'een kostbaar gedenkteeken van eene belangrijke gebeurtenis in de geschiedenis van Nederlands-Indië'. NL-HANA, Colonies, 1850-1900 (2.10.02), inv. no. 2779, report 21 April 1875, no. 19.
- 50 Marieke Bloembergen and Martijn Eickhoff, 'Een klein land dat de wereld bestormt. Het nieuwe Rijksmuseum en het Nederlandse koloniale verleden', *BMGN – Low Countries Historical Review* 129 (2014), no. 1, pp. 156-69, esp. 162; Caroline Drieënhuizen, 'Een "lelijk vuil ding": een diamant in het Rijksmuseum en de doorwerking van koloniaal denken', <https://carolinedrieenhuizen.wordpress.com> (published 26 September 2017).
- 51 Gonçalves-Ho Kang You (ed.), 'Koloniale Collecties en Erkenning van Onrecht', Advisory Committee on the National Policy Framework for Colonial Collections, Council for Culture, 2020, p. 10, see <https://dutchculture.nl/en/news/Report-Advisory-Committee-National-Policy-Framework-Colonial-Collections>.
- 52 Zamzami 9 October 2020 (note 4).
- 53 CNN Indonesia 11 October 2020 (note 4).
- 54 'Karena itu hak kerajaan Banjar...Maknanya, tidak hanya bagi Banjarmasin, tapi suku Banjar pada umumnya.' See Endang Nurdin and Callistasia Wijaya, 'Raja Belanda diminta kembalikan berlian Banjarmasin: "Jika bertemu, saya akan minta semua barang kesultanan di Belanda"' (The Dutch king was asked to return the Banjarmasin diamond: 'When I meet him, I will ask for all the Sultanate goods in the Netherlands'), BBC News Indonesia, 13 March 2020.
- 55 'Tapi nilai sejarahnya karena terkait sejarah identitas dari masyarakat yang bersangkutan saya kira sangat sangat signifikan'. Nurdin and Wijaya 2020 (note 54).