Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje: A life in two worlds

Nico J.G. Kaptein – UIN Padang, September 2023

Universiteit Leiden
The Netherlands

C. Snouck Hurgronje (1857-1936)

- 1874-1880 studied Theology and Semitic languages in Leiden, a.o. with M.J. de Goeje; friendship with theologian Herman Bavinck.
- 1880 PhD defense 'Het Mekkaansche Feest"
- 1884-5 conversion to Islam in Jeddah (`Abd al-Ghaffaar);
- Stay in Mecca of more than 5 months ("a medieval dream")
- 1889-1906 stay in the Dutch East Indies. Architect of Ditch Islam policies. Proponent of Ethical Policy.
- 1907 – 1927 Professor of Arabic and Islam in Leiden as the successor of M.J. de Goeje

Snouck Hurgronje in Jeddah

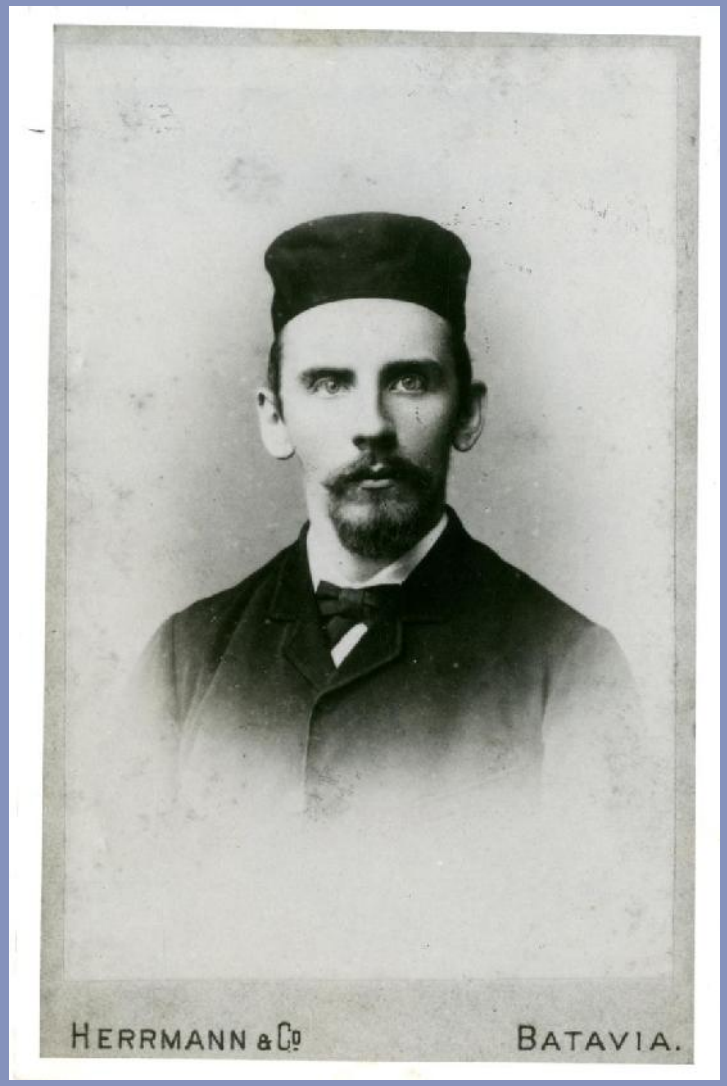
ʻAbd al-Ghaffaar

Aboe Bakar Djajadiningrat in Jeddah

Snouck Hurgronje in the Netherlands Indies:
1889-1906

The colonial world

Snouck in Batavia, 1889 (?)



Oude Tamarinde Laan - Weltevreden

Snouck and the European community

Snouck was an eminent networker and he received many European guests in his place in Batavia, like K.F. Holle, J. Brandes, J.B. van Heutsz, Ph.S. van Ronkel, and many others. He also had good contacts with the Governor General and high ranking civil servants.

Moreover, he entertained many Muslim guests.

Snouck Hurgronje in Aceh

Productive author

Mekka (1888-9).

Java; Aceh(1893-4); Gajo (1903);

Recomendations to the colonial administration.

In writing *De Atjèhers,* there were mixed motives at work.

Letter to Herman Bavinck (1854-1921)

written in Batavia, 18 June 1895

'First of all, you have to realize that my work is the elaboration of a report which I have submitted to the government, primarily with a practical and not above all a scientific purpose. In it one might expect to learn what light science may shed on the subject dealt with for the benefit of practical affairs, [and] not the latest word of science about fundamental metaphysical problems [...] 'In case I have succeeded to have given some "useful knowledge", for which our government has a great need, I have accomplished my goal.'

”Ontdekker van het Adatrecht”

In his book on Aceh Snouck develops his theory that the indigenous Indonesian societies are not administered according to Islam, but according to customary law (*adat*).As a result of this, later C. van Vollenhoven would recognize Snouck as the discoverer of Adat Law.

Snouck Hurgronje in the Dutch East Indies

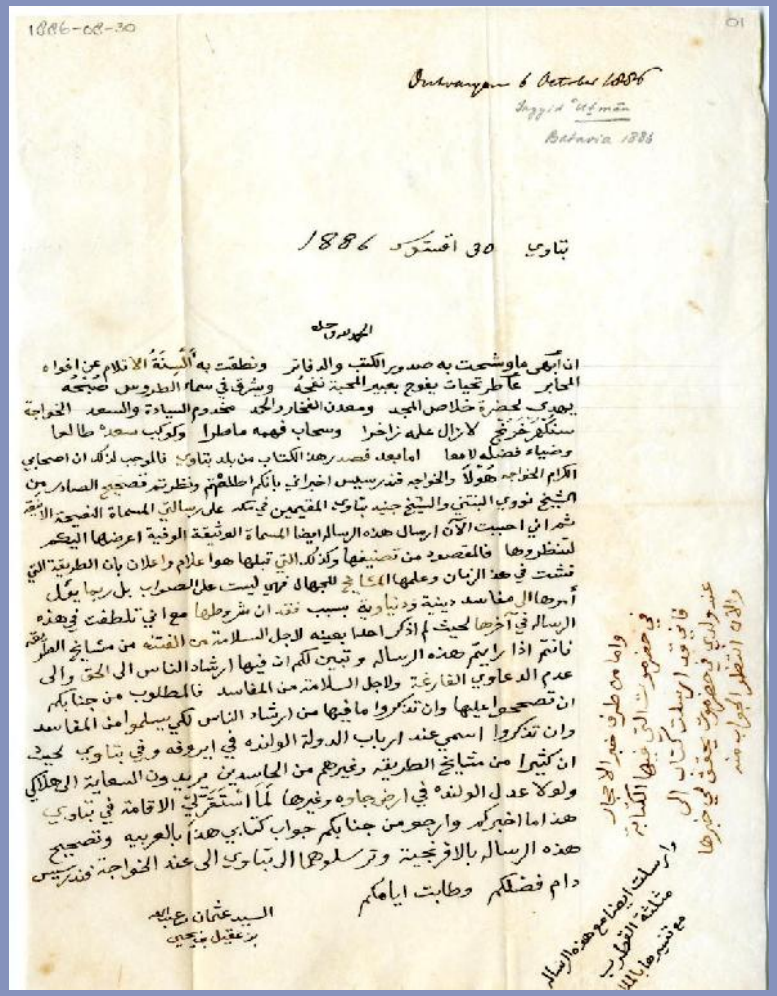
1889-1906

The native world

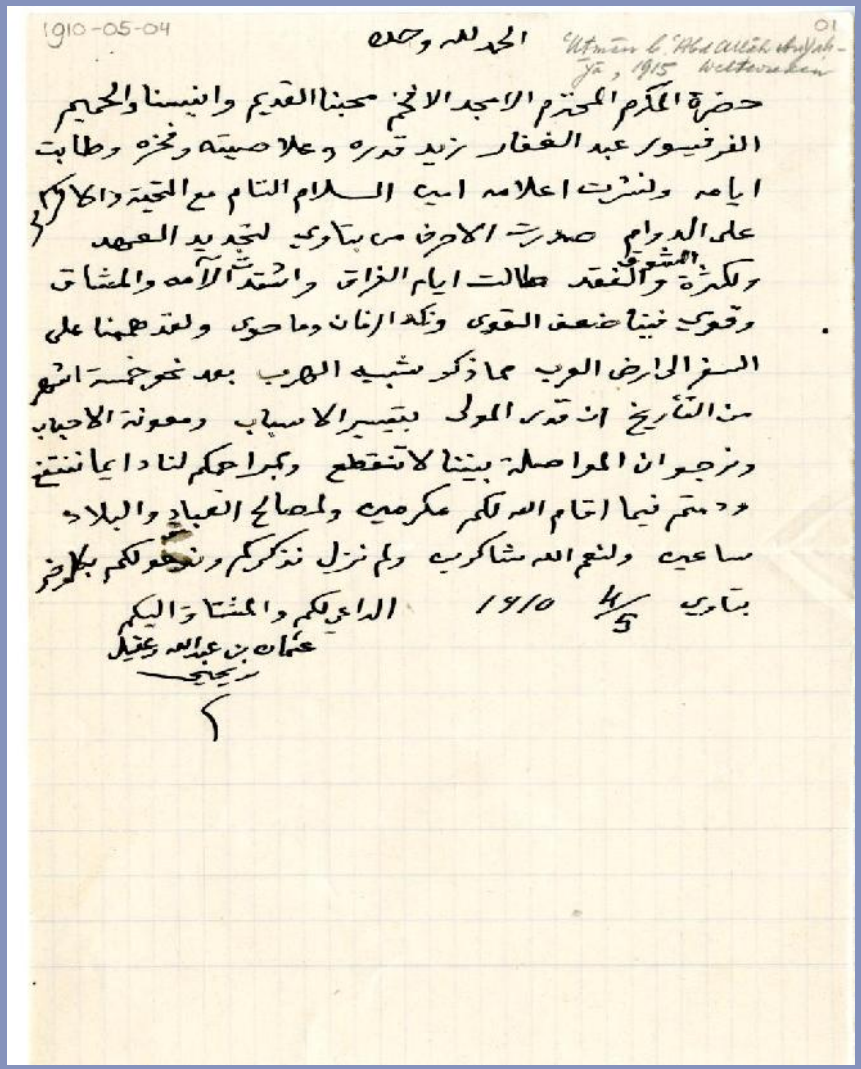
Travels with Haji Hasan Mustafa through West Java, 1889-1890

Sayyid ʿUthman

Sayyid ʿUthman to "Mr. Snouck Hurgronje", Batavia 1886



Sayyid `Uthman to "Professor `Abd al-Ghaffaar", Batavia 1910



1910-05-04

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'Utman b. 'Abd allah b. 'Aqil b. Yahya, 1915 Weltevreden

الحمد لله وحده

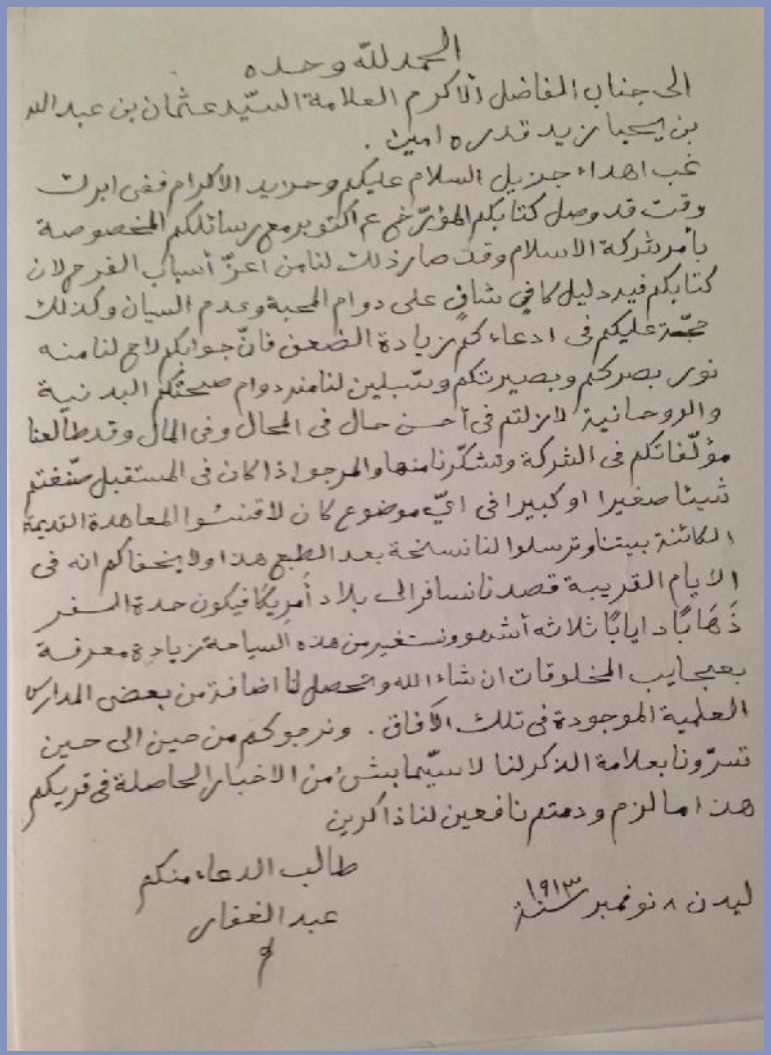
حضرة المكرم المحترم الامجد الافخم محبنا القديم وانيسنا الحميم
الفرفيسور عبد الغفار زيد قدره وعلا صيته وفخره وطابت
ايامه ونشرت اعلامه ابث السلام التام مع المحبة والاكرام
على الدوام صدرت الاحرف من بتاوي لتجديد العهد
والمشوق والكثير والشغف طالت ايام الفراق واشتدت الآمه والمشاق
وقوي فينا ضعف القوى وكد الزمان وما حوى ولقد هجمنا على
السفر الخارض الوبء مما ذكر شبيه الهرب بعد نحو خمسة اشهر
من التاريخ ان قدر المولى بتيسير الاسباب ومعونة الاحباب
ونرجو ان المواصلة بيننا لا تنقطع وبراجحكم لنا دايما تنتفع
ودمتم فيما اتام الله لكم مكرمين ولمصالح العباد والبلاد
ساعين ولنعم الله شاكرين ولم نزل نذكركم ونخطر لكم بالخاطر

بتاوي 4/5 1910

الداعي لكم والمشتاق اليكم
عثمان بن عبد الله بن عقيل

Leiden University. The university to discover.

ʿAbd al-Ghaffaar to Sayyid ʿUthman, Leiden 1913



الحمد لله وحده

الى جناب الفاضل الاكرم العلامة السيد عثمان بن عبد الله
بن يحيا زيد قدره اميث .

غب اهداء جزيل السلام عليكم وحزيد الاكرام فقد ابرق
وقت قد وصل كتابكم المؤرخ في عم اكتوبر مع رسائلكم المخصوصة
بامر شركة الاسلام وقد صار ذلك لنا من اعز اسباب الفرح لان
كتابكم فيه دليل كافي شافي على دوام المحبة وعدم النسيان وكذلك
حجة عليكم في ادعاءكم زيادة الضعف فان جوابكم لاح لنا منه
نور بصركم وبصيرتكم وتبين لنا منه دوام صحتكم البدنية
والروحانية لازلتم في احسن حال في المحال وفي المال وقد طالعنا
مؤلفاتكم في الشركة وتشكرنا منها والمرجو اذا كان في المستقبل صنفتم
شيئا صغيرا او كبيرا في اي موضوع كان لا تنسوا المعاهدة القديمة
الكائنة بيننا وترسلوا لنا نسخة بعد الطبع هذا ولا يخفاكم انه في
الايام القريبة قصدنا نسافر الى بلاد امريكا فيكون حدة السفر
ذهابا وايابا ثلاثة اشهر ونستفيد من هذه السياحة زيادة معرفة
بعجايب المخلوقات ان شاء الله ونحصل لنا اضافة من بعض المدارس
العلمية الموجودة في تلك الآفاق . ونرجوكم من حين الى حين
تسرونا بعلامة الذكر لنا لا سيما بشيء من الاخبار الحاصلة في قريكم
هذا ما لزم ودمتم نافعين لنا ذاكرين

طالب الدعاء منكم
عبد الغفار

ليدن ٨ نوفمبر سنة ١٩١٣

Marriages with native women

During a trip through West Java (together with Haji Hasan Mustafa) in January 1890 Snouck married according to Islamic practice with Sangkana, a daughter of the Hoofdpanghoeloe of Tjiamis. In the colonial press rumours appeared, but Snouck and the authorities denied everything.

From this marriage four children were born. In 1896 Sangkana died as the result of complications duringher fifth pregnancy.

Snouck has never legally recognized these children, although he took care of their financial well-being. He also forbade them to contact him after his return to the Netherlands in 1906.

Marriages with native women

In 1898 Snouck married for the second time, this time with Siti Sadija (13 years of age), the daughter of the deputy Panghoeloe of Bandung. The marriage was arranged for by Haji Hasan Mustafa.

In 1905 a son, named Yusuf was born. In 1982 this Mr. Yusuf was informant to the Dutch researcher P.S. van Koningsveld who went to Indonesia to do research into Snouck's activities in the Indies.

Van Koningsveld had made the acquaintance with Mr. Yusuf through his son Harry Yusuf, who lived in the Netherlands.

Siti Sadija with Yusuf, around 1906

(UBL Or. 26.399)

Islam policy of Snouck Hurgronje

Snouck divided Islam conceptually into two parts, a purely religious part and a more social and political part. The first part consisted of ritual, dogmas etc. and in this domain the believer was to be left completely free; as soon as the believer, however, used the other part of Islam, that is to use religion to express and justify political claims, the believer was not free to do so, but should be watched carefully and, if necessary, should be corrected by force, as was indeed done in the Aceh war.

In one word one could call this policy the depolitization of Islam.

Ethical Policy

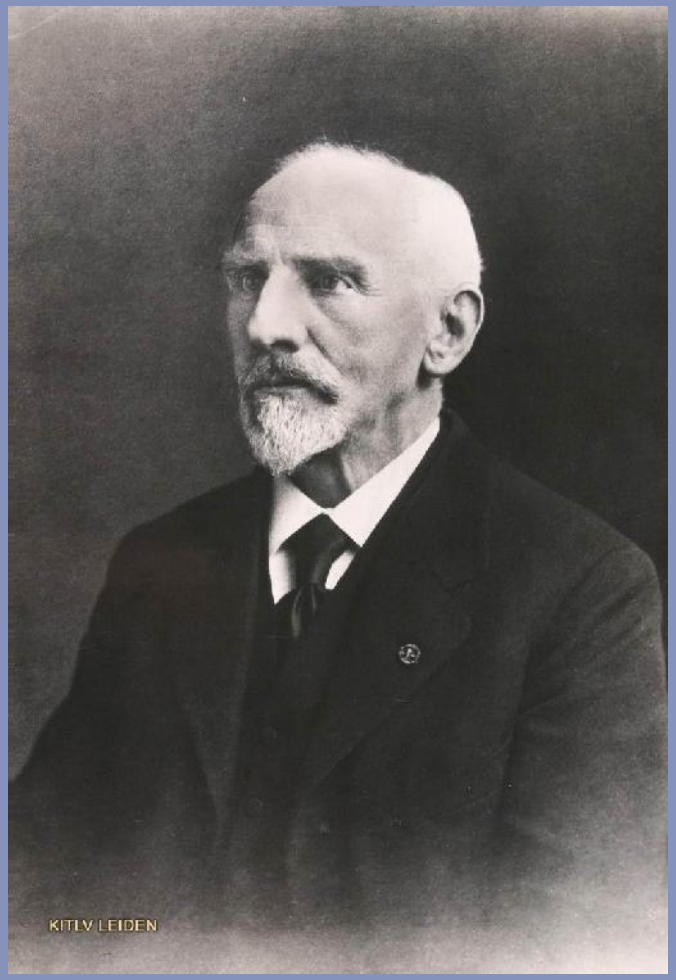
From 1901 onwards more and more Dutchmen thought that the native population of the colonies should also profit from the economic and scientific progress made: the so-called Ethical Policy.

Snouck wanted to contribute to this by providing native children with a European education. His first pupil was: Achmad Djajdiningrat.

Professor in Leiden, 1906 - 1936

First Indonesian to obtain a PhD degree from Leiden: Hoessein Djajadiningrat, 1913

Statue Hoessein Djajadiningrat, Academy building Leiden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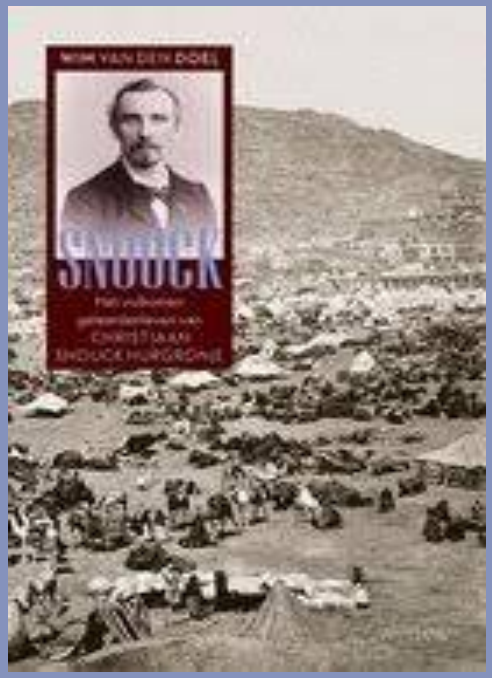
Grave of C. Snouck Hurgronje, Groenesteeg, Leiden

Conclusion

From his conversion in Jeddah in 1885 until his return to the Netherlands in 1906 Snouck Hurgronje has lived in two worlds. Also after his settlement in Leiden

The question how he could combine these two worlds has led to a lot of controversy.

Controversies related to Snouck from 1980 onwards

- Snouck's reputation (Van Koningsveld – Drewes a.o.)
- Conversion ("a neglected aspect of colonial history")
- Native marriages (1910 marriage with Ida Oort; daughter Christien, 1914-2014)
- Research ethics; relation to object of research ("good relationships with lots of people", Drewes, BWN)

Biography of C. Snouck Hurgronje
by Wim van den Doel, 2021
(Indonesian translation 2023)