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The age of Aceh and the evolution of kingship 1599-1641

Cosijn-Mitrasing, I.S.

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Hypotheses

I

Against myths and misconceptions, the truth is rather, that Islam as a political force in Aceh received its impetus when the Portuguese captured Malacca in 1511.

II

It is understandable that the sultan of Aceh *sui juris* assumed leadership of the Islamic opposition in the East against the Portuguese, because of the qualification by the Ottoman ruler and caliph who called him 'the King of the East.' Yet, Islam in the Malacca Straits region was not the critical criterion of loyalty and cohesion.

III

In the hierarchy of a state's concerns, which include goals and objectives, the goals usually direct the ways to the solutions of the problems (Steve Chan, *International Relations in Perspective*, 1984). Aceh's goal, the dispelling of the Portuguese from Malacca, directed the way to invasions and subjugation of neighbouring trading ports.

IV

Overzealous actions to protect religious values, economic interests and territorial integrity were more responsible for wars and international rivalries than a dereliction of the duty to protect these interests. The Malacca Straits region presents a case where wars and economic deprivation had ramifications beyond those states and people that were directly involved.

V

The evolutionary process of Acehnese kingship shows that different rulers passed through different stages and different times; while they were all equal in dignity, in a perpetual transformation, each assumed the required leading role.

VI

M.A.P. Meilink Roelofs's observation that the more primitive the society the more the local ruler promoted his own interest with the assistance of traders who had mostly come from abroad (*Asian Trade and European Influence in the Indonesian Archipelago Between 1500 and about 1630* (1962), does not reflect Acehnese society which was advanced in the arts, literature and military technology.

VII

Aceh was not, as it were, a *tabula rasa* where each newcomer put his imprint as he wished. The significant influx of Malay war captives did not impact with force on Acehnese traditions and customs and its language held its place *vis a vis* the Malay language.

VIII

If a trade contract was the pre-condition for the VOC to offer the sultan of Aceh its assistance against the Portuguese, the extended, arduous diplomatic efforts from 1637 to 1640 to solicit Sultan Iskandar Thani's assistance for an attack on Malacca demonstrate, that the VOC was determined to capture Malacca unconditionally and acknowledged Aceh's importance in the undertaking.

IX

To confer national hero-status of the Republic of Indonesia to Iskandar Muda, a ruler of a former sovereign Sultanate, is a historical twist, used for the sake of nation-building.

X

'Oriental notions' should not be confused with Asian values, but considered Western conceptions of the East. The West must rediscover Asia - its spirit and ideas - as it once discovered its geography. It requires sympathetic insight into the thoughts and feelings of the diverse people who constitute over half of the world's population and whose decisions profoundly affect the developments in the West.

XI

Political correctness is a wrong counsel when writing a country's history. To follow your intuition in directing your view into the past can be rewarded with a surprising insight.

XII

Homosexuals in a community contribute to its heterogeneity.