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Beyond Political Skin

Convergent Paths to an Independent National Economy
in Indonesia and Vietnam

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Beyond Political Skin

Convergent Paths to an Independent National Economy
in Indonesia and Vietnam

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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The writing of this monograph has a long history. I began my career as lecturer in World History at the Faculty of History, Vietnam National University, Hanoi, with a special interest in the maritime history of Southeast Asia. Trading activities in the Straits of Melaka in the fifteenth century was the topic I intended to pursue when I applied to the Encompass (*Encountering a Common Past in Asia*) programme at the Faculty of History, Leiden University in the summer of 2006. In Leiden, I became fascinated with its distinguished tradition of Indonesian studies, and in next to no time I realized that I had better switch my attention to Indonesia. Under the supervision of Professor Leonard Blussé and Dr Alicia Schrikker, respectively director and co-ordinator of Encompass, I wrote my second BA thesis about the Dutch conquest of Makassar in 1666-1669. Makassar was a trading town south of Sulawesi in the eastern part of Indonesian Archipelago. I had then the chance to explore the western part of the Archipelago when I conducted my MPhil research on Dutch imperialist expansion in Sumatra in the nineteenth and the early twentieth century. In addition to the continuing supervision of Professor Leonard Blussé, I received guidance from Dr Thomas Lindblad.

Whether or not it was the intention of my supervisors, my studies at BA and MPhil levels were an excellent preparation for undertaking advanced research in Indonesian history. It provided me with the historical and geographical knowledge of Indonesia necessary to understand the country in more recent times. In my PhD project I have looked at Indonesia as a whole in the dramatic historical period which stretched from the late colonial era to immediate post-independence period. After having learned about the establishment of Dutch imperialism and colonialism in Indonesian Archipelago, in this new project I wanted to explore how decolonization took place and what alternative form of state the Indonesians sought to build after independence.

Comparison came to my mind only after I had discovered that the economic transition from colonialism to independence in Indonesia displayed many affinities with Vietnam. As we shall see, in comparison with other countries in Southeast Asia, the nationalist struggle for economic sovereignty in Indonesia and Vietnam culminated in very radical ends.

This research forms part of a larger research project, '*State and Economy in Modern Indonesia's Changes of Regimes*', financed by the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (Nederlandse Organisatie voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek-NWO). The tradition of Leiden University does not allow a PhD candidate to thank his supervisors in the acknowledgements. Yet I think I may be permitted to point out that it was Dr Thomas Lindblad who selected me for his research project and who guided me from the initial stage of writing a research proposal right up to the final stage of completing the manuscript. His extensive knowledge of the economic history of Indonesia has been of the greatest help whenever I had any difficulty in understanding a historical fact or the data I had collected. As his assistant in organizing history classes and as co-organizer of an international conference, I was able to gain precious teaching and work experience. Professor Leonard Blussé offered valuable comments and advice during my research and helped to correct the final drafts. I also would like to thank my project-partner, Farabi Fakihi, who shared the same office and often travelled with me to various conferences. I have learnt a lot from him because of his wide knowledge about Indonesia, not to mention his enthusiasm in teaching me his mother tongue, Bahasa Indonesia.

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My research has required the use of many different languages. Therefore, I thank my language teachers, Ton Harmsen, Yolande Spaans and René Wezel, for teaching me Dutch. Their patience and the effort they put into the classes as well as into organizing social activities for me and other Encompass colleagues are memorable. My Indonesian was acquired from lessons with Suryadi and Aone van Engelenhoven at Leiden and teachers at the Indonesian Language Center, *Alam Bahasa*, in Yogyakarta, where I had a two-month intensive course in summer 2010. All of them made it possible for me to read and use Dutch and Indonesian archives.

My very special thanks to ‘tante’ Marijke van Wissen-van Staden, secretary of Encompass. She was always available when I needed help and she supported me without fail in all possible ways.

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