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Cross-cultural alliance-making and local resistance in Maluku during the revolt of Prince Nuku, c. 1780-1810

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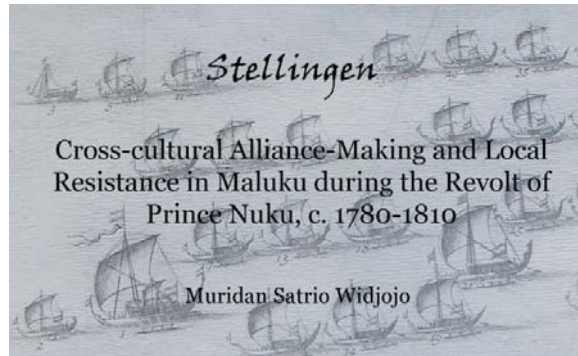
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One

The success of the VOC in maintaining a spice monopoly for some 150 years was the result of a combination of a well-equipped armed force, an efficient trading administration, a flexible attitude to local politics, and a good information network, all tempered by a good dose of considerable patience and perseverance.

Two

During the VOC period, most of the sultans, rajas, *orangkaya* and other indigenous leaders were trapped in their own particular worldviews and interests which protracted regional mutual enmities and restrained their power to mobilize people for a common cause and hence opened the door wide open to outside intervention and finally to foreign domination.

Three

Prince Nuku's vision and strategies enabled him to unify peoples beyond the traditional realms of Tidore and left little room for the already weakening VOC to infiltrate his power base and alliances effectively with its characteristic policy of divide and rule.

Four

The tragic fate of Nuku and Tidore caught between the competition of rival European powers (French, English, and the Dutch) is a common phenomenon in international power struggles (Vietnam versus the USA and China, PRRI versus Indonesian Army and the USA, Papua versus the USA, Indonesia, and the Netherlands). As an Indonesian proverb says, '*Gajah bersetubuh dengan gajah, pelanduk mati di tengah-tengah*,' (When elephants make love, the mouse deer in-between will be crushed to death!).

Five

Nuku's *faits et gestes* transcended the more or less traditional frame of mind of the *pahlawan* or 'heroes' of whom Indonesian historiography is still so fond. Indonesian historiography has put too much emphasis on those who are known as national heroes fighting a common foreign enemy and hardly recognizes particularistic ideas and cultures. It therefore narrows the horizon of the people who claim they would like to expand their horizons beyond a petty nationalistic ideology.

Six

No single society in this world can secure its belongings permanently if it has no powerful resources to defend them; the Malukans and other Indonesians formed no exception to this rule.

Seven

Popular discourses on the dichotomy between Asian and European or Eastern and Western cultural values sideline the fact that identities, power, and hegemony are contingent products of histories of struggle between nations and certainly not a kind of destiny ordained from 'above' or by nature.

Eight

Papua has been mythologized by Christian Papuan priests as a 'land of the Bible', despite the fact that Christianity only made its entry at the end of the nineteenth century. In fact the relationship between the coastal Papuans and Bacan and later with Tidore shows that it was Islam and its culture which has coloured the life of the coastal Papuans since around the fifteenth century.

Nine

For centuries, local ritual, political, and economic ties have bound Maluku to the coastal peoples of the West New Guinea. If Indonesian historians in Soekarno's time had studied the sources of the Dutch VOC and the English EIC more carefully, they would have been able to demonstrate convincingly the close social ties and might have been able to present more credentials to counter much of the Dutch quasi-anthropological political reasoning claiming that, owing to its different cultural roots, 'Netherlands New Guinea' should have been allowed a politically independent future of its own.

Ten

Nuku's important advisor during his refuge was his only wife. Behind a great and strong man, there is almost always an unrecognized greater and stronger woman 'taking care of his diapers'.

Eleven

The term 'partnership' in whatever time and place enables the more powerful party to conceal its privileged position in a relationship which favours them more than the other and consequently not in a state of equality. This is most painfully obvious in the fields of development and educational co-operation between the so-called First World and its 'partners' in the Third World.

Twelve

In today's globalizing world there is an urgent need to examine and understand how cultural differences and behaviours influence collaboration and collaborative learning between academic institutions and individuals. A mutual critical, but above all and more importantly a self-critical, examination of cultural differences in support of collaboration and collaborative needs to be placed high on the agenda.