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Constructing colonial legitimacy in the Moluccas, 1750-1870

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Stellingen behorende bij het proefschrift

Propositions belonging to the dissertation

Constructing Colonial Legitimacy in the Moluccas, 1750–1870

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1. Dutch colonial exceptionalism emerged from positioning the Netherlands as the liberator from Portuguese and Spanish oppression, redefining extractive rule as enlightened protection rather than a form of imperial replacement.
2. Nineteenth-century Dutch governors in Ambon and Ternate constructed their legitimacy around condemning VOC brutalities while preserving the extractive systems that had enabled those same abuses.
3. Rather than bureaucratic inertia, the persistence of VOC practices reflected their ongoing strategic value to both Dutch administrators and indigenous elites seeking to maintain their positions.
4. Memoranda of transfer functioned as ideological blueprints that constructed historical narratives justifying colonial authority—narratives that subsequently shaped decades of historiography.
5. Colonial legitimacy operated through mundane administrative practices, not grand imperial theories—making everyday bureaucracy more revealing than canonical works of political thought.
6. The myth of Dutch commercial exceptionalism has prevented historians from recognising how thoroughly VOC practices were embedded in broader patterns of European imperial ideology.
7. The Moluccas served as a laboratory for legitimation strategies that were later refined and applied across the archipelago, making them essential for understanding Dutch imperial ideology.
8. While Caribbean historiography has long centred slavery in understanding Dutch colonial rule, historians of Dutch Asia have treated forced labour as peripheral to commercial extraction—a gap recent scholarship is beginning to finally address.
9. While historians have extensively studied the Indonesian Revolution and decolonisation, the early-modern roots of Dutch colonialism deserve equal scholarly attention as the source of colonial practices that persisted into the twentieth century.
10. Efforts to build a new administrative culture (*bestuurscultuur*) risk preserving entrenched hierarchies if reform remains cosmetic.
11. Colonial history belongs as much to Indonesian as to Dutch historiography, yet this shared ownership remains underexplored due to limited academic exchange between both countries and different historiographical priorities after Indonesian independence.