REFERENCES


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Turbulent Times is aptly named, focusing on the most colorful characters and dramatic moments in the centuries-long story of struggle over control of the spice trade in North Maluku. Admires of Hanna’s Indonesian Banda (1978) will recognize, in this collaboration with Des Alwi, Hanna’s dramatic evocation of Maluku history and his critical assessment of the power struggles that accompanied Europe’s violent entrance into the spice trade. When I found the book in the Rumah Budaya Banda Naira Museum in January 1991 (when it was just off the presses), I was taking a vacation from a study of Tidorean oral history traditions. Since these traditions offer few details on the actual personalities and goings-on of each successive regime (often little more than a list of the names of rulers), this book’s more descriptive accounts were especially welcome.

Indeed, each chapter can be read as a self-contained tale in a series of power struggles, accompanied by judicious sifting through the rumors that accompanied them. As in a good mystery novel, we are even treated to creative accounts of the possible motivations of the main actors in these dramas, and to the flaws of character that almost inevitably bring about their ruin. This is reflected in such chapter titles as “The Freakish Regime of Good Governor Galvao,” “The Peregrinations and Perils of Hairun,” “Francis Drake’s Curious Visit,” “Baab’s Mysterious Death,” “The Despicable Sultan Madarsjah,” “The Abominable Admiral de Vlaming,” and “M. Pierre Poivre and the Purloined Spice Trees.” This gives you a flavor of the sometimes quaint but appealing style that the authors may have retained from their reading of early source materials. (The captions to the twenty photographs included in the text also have a whimsical feel to them.) Another chapter title, “Moluccan Peccadillos, Iberian Fiascos,” sums up the authors’ generally cynical assessment of the self-interest and greed of all parties to these processes. At times the reader’s head spins at the ultimately almost comic repetition of disasters that befell successive
regimes, both indigenous and European. (I know for a fact that the book has inspired one tourist-playwright sojourning in Ternate Town to write a musical comedy in the "comedy of errors" style based on these accounts.) But more importantly, in the interstices between these accounts of palace intrigue, there is some good ethnography.

Readers will especially appreciate vivid descriptions of an emerging Ternate Town. The European and mestizo society, initially confined within the walls of Gammalamma Castle and Fort Malayo (later Fort Oranje) was, by the late seventeenth century, finally able to move beyond those walls and the almost constant state of siege of earlier times.

Contrary to present local historical interpretations that the town must have been founded on a particular day or year, the following passage shows how the town grew up gradually between the Sultan's court and the European fort as a *de facto* capital, trading center and safe harbor controlled to varying degrees by various powers:

The Dutch governor lived and worked in Fort Oranje, together with most of the V.O.C. personnel assigned to it; the sultan lived in his Melayo palace a mile away. About the sultan's palace and along the sea-coast clustered a few hundred Malayan-style houses of bamboo, matting, and thatch, many standing on stilts over the tidal flats. On the fringes of Fort Oranje were built up about a hundred semi-European style houses, many of them of stone, brick, plaster, and tile. In between the Ternatean and the European towns was the Chinese quarter, another hundred or so semi-Chinese style buildings serving as homes, shops, warehouses and workshops, for the Chinese almost inevitably entered trade or practiced the crafts and almost inevitably prospered. The conspicuous structures were the huge Dutch fort set not far back from the waterfront with a long pier and wharves, shipyards, and warehouses to serve it; the sultan's palace set on a hill overlooking town and port; and the royal mosque adjacent to the palace (pp. 190–191).

The authors concentrate mainly on political history and elite political figures. The conspicuous absence of a discussion of Wallace's sojourn in Ternate Town is understandable in this regard (see Wallace 1869). Still, one would like to know more about how these colonial processes and upheavals affected the everyday lives of ordinary people in the town, and also in rural areas. Were settlement patterns as wildly fluctuating as the circulation of court and colonial elites?

We hear a great deal about how competing colonial powers felt about the Dutch policy of uprooting spice trees in Northern Maluku to maintain their monopoly in the spice trade, but how were ordinary smallholder farmers affected by these policies? The destruction of spice horticulture on Ternate and Tidore may have severed the courts' access to merchant wealth from nearby peasant producers, but no doubt intensified other forms of tributary extraction and trade-based political ties in the hinterlands (including slave raiding and specialized commodity collection of forest products in Halmahera, Raja Ampat, and Papua). These processes are not analyzed, even though, like Hanna's earlier book on Banda, this book can be read as a case study of the usually disastrous consequences of the articulation of merchant capitalism with tributary modes of production. At least the presence in North Maluku of centralized kingdoms may have spared them the fate experienced by the less centralized clan-based polities of the Banda Islands, whose populations were exterminated shortly after European contact. In short, the book emphasizes a history of personalities, big men, and important events, but gives us little about local understandings or lifeways beyond Ternate Town.

Des Alwi deserves our gratitude for taking on the daunting task of organizing and expanding the late Dr. Hanna's unfinished manuscript and publishing it through the auspices of the Yayasan Warisan dan Budaya Banda Naira under his direction. Rumor has it that a forthcoming second edition will be carefully edited for the spelling and grammatical inconsistencies that remain in this edition. It might be prudent at that time also to edit for style and repetitions of content that are occasionally disconcerting. But this is a minor issue. *Turbulent Times* makes fascinating reading and is a lively narrative constructed from historical materials on North Maluku that were previously difficult to access. Perhaps the best recommendation comes from the present Sultan of Ternate himself, who pointed out when I asked his opinion of the book, "Well, these is a lot in it that I did not know before." For that very reason, all serious scholars of Maluku history and culture will want it on their bookshelves. Finally, a timely translation of this book into Indonesian, making the book accessible to Indonesian students of Maluku society and Moluccans themselves, might eliminate the complaint I often heard during my fieldwork in the North Maluku that "Westerners often seem to know more about Moluccan history that we Moluccans do."
As the title of the book suggests, the central problem that Dirk Teljeur confronts in his work is "whether, among the Gimán, a totality of features can be found which can be defined as a symbolic system" (7). In order to determine this, he investigates the symbolic properties of the two villages, Puliló and Pulikin, in which the Gimán live (chapter 2), house construction and its rituals (chapter 3), agricultural rituals (chapter 4), the spirit world (chapter 5), and Gimán social organization and the regional system within which it is embedded (chapter 6). The introductory and concluding chapters provide an overview of his theoretical perspective on the nature of symbolism and its particular realization among the Gimán.

Teljeur makes an effort to reconstruct an image of an indigenous symbolic order—particularly in his analysis of house cosmology, agricultural rituals, the spirit world, and social organization. This is necessary, he claims, because much has changed over the last centuries to obscure the indigenous worldview from sight: Islam was introduced in the 19th century, the population was forced into larger village settlements around 1917, an "original" system of endogamy has disappeared, and the regional system created by the rule of Ternate has ultimately been replaced by the regional system of the Indonesian nation-state.

Teljeur’s analysis focuses upon a set of symbolic oppositions that are familiar to students of eastern Indonesia. The most prominent oppositions include: seaside/landside, above/below, outside/inside, cool/hot, red/white, male/female, elder/yonger, and rootstock/summit; but he also considers a number of other symbolic elements, oppositions, and patterns.

In his analysis of the symbolic relation between the two Gimán villages, for instance, Teljeur paints a picture in which the two villages, Pulikin and Puliló, are related to each other as the living room and the kitchen of a single dwelling. Symbolic associations are built up by noting that the living room (in traditional dwellings and in the relation between the two villages) is conceptualized as seaside, male, and outside; while the kitchen is conceptualized as landside, female, and inside.

On the one hand each village is an enclosed whole, so that all the places in Pulikin as well as Puliló are referred to as ‘in the village’. On the other hand, the two villages form a whole, so that it is said only in Puliló that one is going outside . . . if one is leaving the village in the direction of Pulikin. This ‘going outside’ is comparable to going from the kitchen to the living room. It implies that one is in this sense ‘inside’ only if one is in Puliló. (46)

The sanjaji, the head of the Five Regions of South Halmahera, had his seat on the inside, in Puliló, whereas the outside village of Pulikin guarded the path to Puliló against enemy attack. Indeed, those who live in Pulikin (as the outside guards of Puliló) are characterized as being "virile, warlike, brave," while those on the inside, in Puliló, are seen as “womanlike" (46). In this way, here and in other contexts, Teljeur carefully builds up a set of symbolic associations that comprise what he calls a "symbolic construction."

In his analysis of the symbolic system of the Gimán, Teljeur proceeds not from the whole to the parts, as Lévi-Strauss (1967) or Dumont (1980, 1982) would have it. Rather, he moves from the parts to the whole. He begins by stating that

the elements of a symbolic system are taken from the world in which people live. They already possess an intrinsic, primary significance, to which an extra, symbolic significance is added. (6)

His insistence on "intrinsic significance" is baffling: he seems to assume that cultural "elements" have an inherent significance that can be determined apart from their place in a larger system of relationships. Yet when he asks what the intrinsic significance of these elements is (168), he immediately speaks of them in relational terms—in terms of oppositions, whether explicit or implied (168–170).