

Preface

Conferences come in many shapes. Results are the most rewarding and the conviviality the greatest when participants not only know one another but find common ground in one specific theme to which each contributes from a different angle. Such was the case with the Colloquium on 'Historical foundations of a national economy in Indonesia, 1890s–1990s', held at Amsterdam on 20–22 September 1994. The Colloquium brought together economic historians from Indonesia, Australia and the Netherlands. It constituted the third and final meeting in a tripartite cooperative venture between scholars in these three countries to further our understanding of Indonesian economic history. The previous conferences were held at Jakarta (1–4 October 1991) and Canberra (24–26 November 1992).¹

The initial emphasis in this venture of international cooperation lay on Java and the late-colonial period. Then attention shifted towards the positioning of colonial Indonesia, in particular the Outer Islands, within the wider context of Southeast Asia. Presently the two approaches are amalgamated into one common theme concerning the origin and development of a national economy in Indonesia. This theme incorporates contrasting pairs in terms of both spatial and temporal analysis: Java against the Outer Islands, colonial Indonesia against independent Indonesia. The KNAW Colloquium thus formed the culmination of new orientations in research on Indonesian economic history as they have emerged in recent years. The logical follow-up is a comprehensive synthesis of achievements in this field of research, *i.e.* a modern international-standard textbook in Indonesian economic history.² In anticipation of such a textbook I hope this volume of proceedings, containing 22 separate papers with a common introduction, will act as a stimulus in furthering research on Indonesian economic history.³

¹ Proceedings published as: J.Th. Lindblad, ed., *New challenges in the modern economic history of Indonesia* (Leiden: PRIS, 1993); *Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs* 27 (1993) no. 1–2 [Special issue].

² Plans for a textbook were discussed at the conclusion of the Colloquium. The preparatory work is supported by the Netherlands Institute of Advanced Study at Wassenaar and incorporated in a project executed under auspices of the Cultural Agreement between Indonesia and the Netherlands.

³ A translation of the proceedings into *Bahasa Indonesia* is in preparation.

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Several individuals made a substantial contribution towards organizing the Colloquium and preparing the proceedings. First and foremost I wish to thank my co-pilot in this entire endeavour, Vincent Houben (Leiden). He was responsible for much of the organization of the Colloquium itself and also helped me by compiling abstracts of individual articles for the benefit of a joint introduction to the proceedings. I received much inspiration from the coordinators of the Indonesian and Australian participation in the tripartite cooperative venture, Thee Kian Wie (Jakarta) and Howard Dick (then at Newcastle, Australia) respectively. It was highly regretted that dr. Thee could not himself attend the Colloquium. At a later stage, however, he gave me extensive advice on the editing of several chapters of the proceedings. Rosemary Robson-McKillop (Leiden) corrected and improved the use of the English language by all non-native speakers. Remko Blom, also at Leiden, assisted in preparing the final publication. Finally, the Colloquium itself took place in a most pleasant and smooth fashion thanks to the efforts of Manita Kooy who was responsible for the local organization at the *Trippenhuis*.

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