C. van Fraassen
Rejoinder to Anthony Reid

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DISCUSSION AND DEBATE

CH.F. VAN FRAASSEN

Rejoinder to Anthony Reid

In his reaction to my review of Leonard Andaya's book, *The World of Maluku; Eastern Indonesia in the Early Modern Period*, Anthony Reid writes, among other things: 'The review in question was unusually hostile, [...] concentrating on a list of divergences from the facts as Van Fraassen sees them, all calculated to discredit *The World of Maluku* as a serious analysis of Malukan history. [...] The most regrettable aspect of Van Fraassen's review is that it focuses on alleged errors of detail in such a way as to suggest that these represent the heart of Andaya's analysis, whereas the essential arguments of the book cannot be discerned from the review' (*BKI* 151-I:132). These remarks call for a rejoinder.

If the above is indeed the main gist of Reid's comments, I would reiterate that for me there was hardly any valuable new point to detect in the book under review. Although extremely well written, in my view it certainly does not contribute to a serious analysis of Malukan history. Contrary to what Reid alleges, however, my main objection does not concern 'errors of detail', but rather the fact – and I repeat what I wrote in my original review – that in his attempt to reduce a complex situation to a simple picture, Andaya has been too selective in his use of the available sources and has omitted to check his starting-points and hypotheses against the facts.

My first 'example' as cited by Reid may serve to illustrate that my objections do not pertain only to errors of detail, but first and foremost to Andaya's method in conducting his research. Reid assumes that my criticism on this point boils down to the allegation that Andaya, in emphasizing the most striking division of North Maluku, has failed to provide sufficient context. I see no reason to deny that Andaya has indeed provided insufficient context for the quadripartition of Maluku. But this was not the point I was trying to make. My primary aim was to show that the division of Maluku into four realms neither can be actually connected with the four points of the compass, nor has been associated with the four points of the compass by the Moluccans themselves in their systems of classification, amongst other reasons because there are no terms that correspond with the four points of the compass in the local non-Austronesian languages. In the local classification system the locatives that are important are: 'up(ward)', 'down(ward)', 'sea(ward)', 'land(ward)'. Andaya's association of Malukan quadripartition with the four points of the compass is untenable in all respects. He is imposing on the Malukan

quadrupartition an anthropological classificatory model of quadrupartition in which the points of the compass figure prominently, without carefully checking whether this model really fits the Malukan situation. I have serious objections to the lack of reservation with which Andaya presents his assumptions and presumptions as facts throughout the book, thereby continually violating reality. Most scholars conducting research that aims to be sound and reliable will continually test their ideas in the course of their research by checking whether it is possible to falsify these ideas, and will eliminate these ideas from any publications resulting from this research if they prove untenable. Not so with Andaya, however. A scrutiny of his book shows that he is apparently more interested in a pleasant narrative than in a serious scholarly analysis. Although *The World of Maluku* reveals much of Andaya's ideas and research method, it is not a serious original contribution to our knowledge and understanding of Malukan history.

Furthermore, I stick to my objections to Andaya's arbitrary choice of Malukan sources. Indeed, if Andaya had consistently refrained from making use of Malukan sources in his reconstruction of the Malukan past and Malukan beliefs and confined himself to contemporary (16th- to 18th-century) primary European sources, this would have been a legitimate choice. However, he is far from consistent in this respect. First, he passes over the fact that Valentijn, when writing his description of Maluku in the 17th century, used a Ternatan manuscript, so that this important source can certainly not be considered a wholly 'uncontaminated' primary European source. Secondly, Andaya in no way shrinks from using a manuscript on the history of Maluku that was written at Ternate in 1979 by A.H. Hasan. Hasan from 1975 onward acted as informant and research assistant to various European and American researchers and had a knowledge of older Ternatan manuscripts through them. His insights have been partly shaped in the many discussions he had with Western scholars and other visitors. If one decides, for whatever reason, not to use pre-20th-century Malukan sources, it would be consistent not to use a 20th-century manuscript written especially for Western researchers, either. By not following a consistent line in this, Andaya creates the impression that he rather indiscriminately picks and chooses only what suits his purpose and his convenience, to put it bluntly.

Reid emphatically recommends Andaya's book for the notions of the complementarity of plurality and unity in Malukan statecraft and of the unifying power of myth. In this connection I would point out that Andaya was by no means the first scholar to stress the phenomenon of unity in diversity in the world of Maluku. Moreover, he neglects to indicate the complex way in which the Europeans (Portuguese, Spaniards, Dutchmen) interconnected with Malukan divisions and oppositions were fitted into the system of political and cultural dualism, and in the 16th century contributed to the upsetting of the political equilibrium in the Moluccas.

For example, in 1551 the Ternatans without any hesitation enlisted Portuguese aid to destroy Jailolo and break its power as a political entity, thereby destroying the unity of the four realms. If the Ternatans could also have mobilized the necessary strength, with or without European help, to destroy Tidore and break its power as a political entity, there is no reason to suppose that they would not have made use of that opportunity. Archival sources indicate that in the 17th and 18th centuries, on the other hand, the Dutch did everything in their power to keep the system of balanced rivalry intact. In other words, while in the 16th century the Malukans used the Europeans to upset the equilibrium, at other times the Europeans did everything to preserve that equilibrium. It is too simplistic to assume, as Andaya seems to do, that as far as the Moluccans are concerned it was not the elimination of the other party that was at issue, but the need for struggle or conflict itself, while the alliances of the Malukans with the Europeans were formed with a view to the necessary balance in the dualistic system (pp. 152, 174).

To sum up, I stick to the view I expressed earlier that Andaya has been unusually selective in his use of the available sources and has failed to test his hypotheses seriously. What he has published is a manuscript full of ideas that – in my opinion – was far from ready for publication. I am prepared to admit that my norms are certainly not universal norms, however.