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Religion is a sensitive issue in Indonesia. As one of the elements of SARA (*Suku, Agama, Ras, Antar-golongan* or Ethnicity, Religion, Race, Inter-Group) problems related to religion often lead to conflict and cause casualties among people.

This book is an example of this sensitive and controversial issue as the writer himself states in the foreword to his book because it deals with the “demythology process” of Nommensen’s role in the Batak region (North Sumatra, Indonesia). It differs from the history most people believe.

Ludwig Ingwer Nommensen (born Nordstrand 1834, died Sumatra 1918) was a missionary in the Batak region. In 1857, he began his training for missionary work at the *Rheinische Missiongesellschaft* (United Rhein Mission Association, RMG) in Wuppertal-Barmen. He also learned the Batak language with H.N. van der Tuuk in Amsterdam. In 1861, as a Lutheran missionary he went to Sumatra where he worked in the interior among the Batak, a people as yet untouched by either Islam or Christianity. By 1878, Nommensen had translated the New Testament into the Batak language. He was one of the successful missionaries in the Batak region and the Christian community – The HKBP (*Huria Kristen Batak Protestan*) - Batak Protestant Christian Church – he planted grew and prospered. The HKBP developed into the largest Protestant church in Southeast Asia (p. 38).

This book may be considered controversial because, as Kozok writes, the writing of the history of evangelism in the Batak region is dominated by writers who are close to the HKBP. Because this history was often written uncritically and one-sidedly, like the history written by Nommensen who was very famous among the Bataks Christian and considered as an apostle, criticism vented by other parties, like Kozok, will certainly be seen as controversial (p. 14).

For a historian, the *Utusan damai di kemelut perang* also offers previously undisclosed facts about Nommensen’s role and his involvement during the 1878 and 1883 Toba Wars. This is the book’s strong point. Kozok uses primary sources and thus has firsthand knowledge and he provides the facts of Nommensen’s relations with the Dutch Colonial Government and Si Singamangaraja XII. Kozok uses Nommensen’s own handwritten reports
that he sent to RMG which explain his involvement in the Toba Wars. Kozok clearly demonstrates Nommensen’s involvement from Nommensen’s use of the words *wir* (we) to identified himself with the Dutch Colonial Authorities and *die feinde* (the enemy) for Si Singamangaraja’s soldiers (p. 106).

In this book, Kozok criticizes Sidjabat’s *Ahu Si Singamangaraja* (1982) which is generally used as the handbook for the history of the Batak. In his book, Sidjabat did not mention that Nommensen had asked the Dutch Colonial Government to attack Si Singamangaraja because it would help him in his missionary work in the Batak region (p. 105).

The book also provides the background and the reason why the RMG missionaries decided to side with the colonial government (pp. 47-72). According to the introduction written by Ichwan Azhari, in a previous edition the sources Kozok used for his book were a matter of debate. This early edition was published by Pussis (Pusat Studi Sejarah dan Ilmu-ilmu Sosial – Centre for History and Social sciences), Universitas Negeri Medan and was discussed in June 2009. In the discussion, Prof. Dr. B.A. Simanjuntak doubted the originality of Nommensen’s documents Kozok had used. He argued that Kozok did not use Nommensen’s original report because, in the first edition he used the published version of the *Berichte der Rheinischen Missiongesellschaft* (BRMG) - News of United Rhein Mission Association and Kozok should therefore have considered them secondary sources. After the discussion, Azhari suggested Kozok to find the original report. Kozok contacted the central archives in Wuppertal to ask for the original documents and was relieved to find that the central archives still kept them so that in this new edition Kozok was able to include them.

Apart from the original documents of the BRMG of 1878, 1879, and 1882 in German, the book also includes the Indonesian translations of the documents. This is very helpful for those who cannot read German. The book comes with illustrations but unfortunately their sources have been mentioned but for one, the RMG Polyclinic in Pearaja taken in 1910 (p. 78).

It is essential to read this book in combination with other books Coolhaas suggests in his bibliography, such as S. Coolsma’s *De zendingseeuw voor Nederlandsch Oost-Indië* (1901), which is a substantial history of the Protestant missions; J.H. Hemmers’s popular biography of Nommensen *L.I. Nommensen; De apostel der Batakkers* (1935); the work by P.B Pedersen *Batak blood and Protestant soul; The development of national Batak churches in North Sumatra* (1970) which is an important study of the missionary activities in the Batak region, and finally S.C. van Randwijck’s ‘*Enkele opmerkingen over de houding der zending tegenover de expansie van het Nederlands gezag*’ (1971) that discusses the ambiguous attitude of the missionaries vis-à-vis the expansion of Dutch rule after 1870 (Coolhaas 1980: 118). It is also necessary to consult Dutch colonial government sources and other local sources for more information and other points of view about Nommensen’s involvement in the Toba Wars to arrive at the whole story behind the subject.

Finally, this book is very interesting and important for historians and
anyone interested in history, especially that of the missionary activities in
Indonesia and the cultural history of the Netherlands East Indies.

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Quite early, the Minangkabau in West Sumatra adopted the European-style educational system the Dutch Colonial Government had introduced. Although the Minangkabau people adhere to Islam, they responded positively to secular education. The book *Asal-usul elite Minangkabau Modern* provides an in-depth analysis of this phenomenon. It looks at various local cultural elements that may have contributed to the wide acceptance of the European secular education system in Minangkabau and the socio-cultural impacts it caused during the second half of the nineteenth up to the first half of the twentieth century.

This book is an Indonesian translation of Graves’ *The Minangkabau response to Dutch colonial rule in the nineteenth century* (Ithaca: Cornell Modern Indonesia Project, 1981), which was the published version of her Ph.D. thesis entitled “The ever-victorious buffalo; How the Minangkabau of Indonesia solved their ‘colonial question’” (University of Wisconsin, 1971). Indonesian readers had to wait for long time, three decades, before they were enabled to read the translation of this book. Therefore, the credit goes to the translators, the principal editor, and the publisher for this Indonesian version so it can be read by a wider Indonesian audience.

Compared with its two English editions, the title of the Indonesian translation quickly reveals the gist of the book, which is the emergence of the modern Minangkabau elite as a result of the introduction of secular education...