

Mutia Sukma (translated by Ida Puspita, Helen Moore and Kathy Alderman)

Soenda Kelapa

I touch the wiry veins of the port workers,
dusty green veins coated in cement, and the sea salt
encrusting faces of street food sellers.
I see the Dutch *kompeni* riding horses
across fields of tobacco
that blacken the lips of the small boat skipper
who sucks at the end of a clove cigarette.

Soenda Kelapa, an estuary
built over by towers,
an eternal memory in the mouths of blind lovers.
The hum of canoes unknown in Europe,
the sea that casts out waste,
industries demanding cheap transportation.

The air in Jakarta is stifling,
the old port of Sunda Kelapa turns red.
Your love is an expensive camera capturing twilight,
the stench of drains rising,
port workers emptying bilge from ships.

Among torn nets,
and a rusted anchor eaten by saltwater,
your name is frozen
on a cabin door
its key long gone.

Notes to poem:

Soenda Kelapa: is a historical term that refers to the area now known as Sunda Kelapa, which is the old port of Jakarta, Indonesia. The name Sunda Kelapa is derived from the Sunda Kingdom, an ancient kingdom in West Java, and *kelapa* meaning coconut in Indonesian. Historically, the port of Sunda Kelapa was a significant trading hub in Southeast Asia. Sunda Kelapa was the principal harbour of the Sunda Kingdom before the

arrival of the Dutch, and it remained a crucial port in the region, even as Jakarta (formerly Batavia) became the centre of Dutch colonial rule in the 17th century. The port facilitated trade between Java and other parts of the world, particularly with Chinese, Arab, and European traders. Today, Sunda Kelapa is located in the north of Jakarta, near the Old Town (Kota Tua) area, and it is still an active harbour, although it is now mostly used by traditional wooden schooners (called *phinisi*) for inter-island trade. It is also a popular tourist destination, with remnants of the old port and Dutch colonial-era buildings.

Kompeni: The term derives from the Dutch 'compagnie' ('company') referring to the East Indies Company (VOC - Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie). This powerful trading entity existed during the colonial period in Indonesia (formerly the Dutch East Indies) and was one of the first multinational corporations in the world.

Mutia Sukma

Soenda Kelapa

Aku sentuh urat-urat kekar kuli pelabuhan
Gurat hijau tertutup debu semen muatan dan sisa garam
lautan pada wajah penjaja jajanan

Aku lihat kompeni berkuda
pada hamparan bukit tembakau
yang menghitam di bibir penarik mesin kapal kecil
menggamit rokok kretek yang hampir habis

Soenda Kelapa adalah muara
yang terinjak gedung pencakar langit
Kenangan kekal dalam mulut pencinta buta
Deru kapal kano yang tidak ada di Eropa
lautan yang membuang sampah
industri yang ingin angkutan murah

Udara Jakarta gerah
Sunda Kelapa yang memerah
Cintamu adalah makera mahal memotret senja yang turun
Bau selokan meruap
dan awak Pelabuhan yang menimba air keluar kapal

Di antara jala yang robek,
karat jangkar tergerus air garam
aku temukan namamu membeku
pada sebuah pintu di atas ruangan sebuah kapal
yang kuncinya telah menghilang.