

BOOK REVIEWS

***Unmarked Graves: Death and Survival in the Anti-Communist Violence in East Java, Indonesia.* By Vanessa Hearman. Singapore: NUS Press, 2018. Soft cover: 272pp.**

The outcome of over a decade of in-depth research, Vanessa Hearman's remarkable book, *Unmarked Graves*, makes a significant contribution to our understanding of the mass violence which took place in Indonesia in 1965 and specifically in East Java. Hearman's book leads the reader through this period of catastrophic violence and its long aftermath by using testimonial accounts, mainly given by survivors. These survivors — their actions, recollections and reflections — are companions throughout the book, and their testimonies give us a better understanding of this period as well as a sense of the experiences of those who lived through it. Hearman tells the story of the massacres in East Java with sensitivity and a clear-sighted understanding of this terrible tragedy, derived from years of working closely with survivors and analysing archival materials.

The structure of the book progresses logically, beginning with a discussion of the background to the main analysis chapters. Aside from describing the methods, sources and structure of the book, Chapters One and Two give a longer history of the Left in modern Indonesia than in recent analyses of the 1965 coup and its aftermath. In this way, the reader is able to contextualize the growth and immense impact of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) from its small beginnings at the start of the twentieth century through to the height of its strength and influence in the early 1960s. Hearman also provides a careful and thorough account of President Sukarno's regime (1945–65), and the challenges which faced East Java and Indonesia as a whole.

Critically, it is in the opening chapters that Hearman first introduces the reader to the survivors whose stories appear throughout the book. These survivors include Putmainah, a women's activist and leader in East Java who represented the PKI in the regional parliament for ten years until 1965, and Winata, whose studies led him overseas during the Sukarno era and to a high position within the government's Directorate of Mining just prior to the start of the massacres. Hearman builds on these introductions throughout the book, as the experiences of these survivors make real and personal the mass violence that ruined their lives and took so many of their family members, comrades and friends. Their testimonies give us insight into these experiences, as well as to the decisions that they made and the strategies they developed to cope with the massacres and then often long-term political imprisonment and repression over the next few decades.

Chapters Three through Six constitute the main analysis, with each one examining a different theme. Chapter Three focuses on how the killings and mass detentions were carried out in East Java, substantially improving academic understandings of the massacres in this region, where an estimated 200,000 people were killed over several months. Here Hearman makes important contributions to current debates about the roles of military and civilian actors, and how detention centres were used to funnel detainees to mass execution sites. Throughout these chapters, the experiences of those who lived through these events give us rarely-heard personal recollections of significant events and actions, such as: the mass confusion created by the 30 September 1965 coup; the effects of the military's propaganda campaign on the populace; and the enthusiastic participation of civilian groups in the slaughter. These survivors also recollect their own arrests, and the violence and starvation they experienced as political prisoners. Chapter Three also provides detailed accounts of mass killings in the province, with the final section devoted to a comparison of the violence in two regions: Kediri, where the PKI was strong, and Bangil where the Party had less support. This section in particular should be used as an example for further, local comparative studies into the dynamics of the 1965–66 killings.

Chapter Four gives the first comprehensive analysis of how communists attempted to survive during and after the killings. Hearman again draws extensively on the testimonies of survivors to sketch the different ways in which they sought safety, such as by going on the run, and hiding out to organize with comrades.

The chapter details the underground network which formed, and the lengths that the surviving activists went to in order to rebuild the Party. This leads into Chapter Five, which charts how this underground network eventually set up a PKI base in South Blitar in 1967–68, but which was destroyed in the second half of 1968 by the military with the help of civilian militias from Ansor, the youth wing of the mass Islamic organization, Nahdlatul Ulama. Hearman gives the most detailed account to date of the PKI's retreat and regrouping in South Blitar, and of the military's operation to destroy the Party once and for all.

In Chapter Six, the author takes a step back to look more broadly at life in the South Blitar region during and after the destruction of the PKI base. This last chapter examines how the local people were caught up in the violence, and the military's actions and campaigns in that region through to the early 1970s. Hearman also explores the "sense of common suffering and shared grievance in the community" (p. 189), as both former leftists and local people became the subject of intense surveillance and indoctrination by the military. Finally, in the Conclusion, Hearman reflects on the impunity of those who committed the mass violence of 1965–66, and the tremendous loss that these killings had on individuals and communities, and on Indonesia as a whole.

Overall, *Unmarked Graves* is an essential text for academic and general readers alike. It belongs both in university libraries and on the shelves of more mainstream bookshops, as the accessible writing and the critical topic should appeal to a wide range of audiences. Hearman's book makes a number of noteworthy contributions to existing debates about the nature of the 1965–66 killings and the mass incarcerations of political prisoners, and to the framing of these events in Indonesian, Cold War and world history. *Unmarked Graves* will no doubt stand for many years as required reading for anyone wishing to learn about one of the darkest periods in modern Indonesian history.

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