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The Phantom World of Digul: Policing as Politics in Colonial Indonesia, 1926–1941. By Takashi Shiraishi. Singapore: NUS Press; and Japan: Kyoto University Press, 2021. xi+347 pp.

In *The Phantom World of Digul*, Takashi Shiraishi traces in fascinating detail the late-colonial history of political policing in the Dutch East Indies. Explicitly framed as a sequel to his path-breaking study of popular radicalism in Java, *An Age in Motion: Popular Radicalism in Java, 1912–1926*, this new volume both extends his account of popular politics in the Indies up to the moment of the Japanese occupation and expands his analysis to account for the complex interplay between political organizing and state repression that characterized the last decades of Dutch colonial rule. Through a critical reading of colonial reports, supplemented by biographical accounts and the work of other historians, Shiraishi shows how the late-colonial administrative state—what Harry J. Benda called the *beamtenstaat*—took shape in response to the perceived threat of communism and how the terrain for popular politics was subjected to police surveillance and bounded by explicit “no trespass” zones. He also contrasts the Dutch approach to political policing to that of the Americans in the Philippines, the French in Indochina and the British in Malaya and India.

The watershed moment for the advent of the *beamtenstaat* was the wave of large-scale arrests, imprisonment and internment of thousands of suspected communists following the 1926–27 communist revolts in Java and Sumatra. Previously, policing in the colony had been quite decentralized and concerns had focused mainly on ordinary crime, pan-Islamism and millennial revolts rather than popular politics. But the spectre of international communism led to a rewiring of state power, galvanizing an incipient centralization and modernization of the police and putting political intelligence gathering at the centre of colonial governance. While there were debates between liberals and conservatives about whether to engage or to intern various Indonesian

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activists and leaders, and where to draw the line on politics that would be off-limits, Shiraishi plots a clear historical trajectory away from engagement towards a reliance on policing.

The first chapters of the book describe the epistemic and institutional structures of the new policing regime. Chapter 1 examines Boven Digul, the internment camp hastily constructed in remote New Guinea following the 1926–27 revolts, which Shiraishi convincingly argues served as a template for political policing in the colony; more generally, a strategy of isolating the population from outside political influences and dividing political activists into categories of recalcitrant or corrigible. The former faced exclusion and indefinite internment at a secondary camp, while the latter were expected to adhere to a closely managed "normalcy", a state of affairs full of suspicion and devoid of politics.

Chapter 2 offers arguably the best concise history to date of modern policing in the Dutch East Indies, together with a detailed account of the rise of the institutional infrastructure of political policing. Centralized under the attorney general, the new apparatus assembled police intelligence reports from across the archipelago and from neighbouring jurisdictions. Developed to counter the communist threat, it soon became "the dominant player in native policymaking and remained so until the end of the Dutch era" (p. 82). However, as Shiraishi convincingly shows using examples from the archive alongside his own counterfactuals, the gaze of the police state on native society was often a cliched one, focused on lurking dangers without any meaningful sociological or cultural context, feeding what amounted to an overdetermined narrative of colonial fear.

The remaining chapters then trace the fate of popular politics and politicians subjected to this new policing regime. Chapter 3 focuses on the ripple effects of Digul on Indies politics as the government worked to define the limits of the "communist" threat, using arrests and internments to establish in the public mind clear "no trespass" zones for popular political activism, such as having any association at all with Tan Malaka, the Indonesian Communist

Party or the Anti-Imperialist League. Chapters 4 to 6 then show how this logic was similarly applied to the nationalist movement, with repeated efforts to draw the line on the limits of acceptable politics, but in a context where the zone of what was acceptable was both contested and narrowing. By the time of the Japanese occupation, "no trespass" zones were everywhere—nationalist political parties, mass rallies, rural activism, journalism—and the edges around the managed zone of "peace and order" were increasingly haunted by fears about spies and "wild forces".

In these latter chapters, Shiraishi also shows how successive generations of nationalist leaders—from Soekarno and Hatta to Soemanang, Adam Malik and others—navigated this complex terrain, either choosing to cross into "no trespass" zones and risk internment, or not. The image of nationalist politics that emerges from Shiraishi's account of this period is that of a rhizomatic network of connections through which contacts were made, texts were relayed, and people moved. More than any party or ideology it was this seemingly irrepressible, phatic sense of connectedness that would form the basis for Indonesian revolutionary politics.

While focused on the colonial period, *The Phantom World of Digul* is required reading not just for historians but also for political scientists and others interested in contemporary Indonesia, where the legacy effects of "no trespass" zones remain, nearly a century after their introduction.

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