

*State and Civil Society in Indonesia*. Edited by Arief Budiman. Monash Papers on Southeast Asia no. 22. Clayton, Melbourne: Centre for Southeast Asian Studies, Monash University, 1990. Pp. xiv, 538.

This book is the result of a conference which aimed at exploring the “process of democratization” in Indonesia. The theme of the conference was motivated in part by the changing economic situation in Indonesia, which resulted from economic restructuring in the mid-1980s undertaken by the military regime in the face of declining oil revenues, and the need to depend on the private industrial sector to make up the shortfall. This dependency has enabled the private enterprise sector, especially the big conglomerates, to extract some concessions from the government. However, the Indonesian state remains largely insulated and unresponsive to public demands. Such intransigence is ostensibly maintained in response to pressures for “democratization” of military and non-military regimes all over the world, thus raising the question of what are the prospects of democracy in Indonesia. These prospects, if any, are analysed in terms of the relations between the state and civil society, *a la* Gramsci.

The collection is divided into four parts. Each part has an introduction that attempts to highlight some of the points raised and, occasionally, to add new dimensions which are absent in the essays themselves. An example of the latter is Ariel Heryanto’s explication of the politics of the processes of production and reading of the print mass media in his introduction to the cultural aspect of state and society.

Part I, on theories of the capitalist nature of the state in Indonesia, contains four essays. The first three constitute quite a coherent analysis of the Indonesian state as a “rentier” state; the fourth is a cursory analysis of gender and the state. The first essay (James) suggests that the most appropriate framework for the analysis of the Indonesian state is a neo-Marxist structural approach coupled with an analysis of patron-client relations and repressive mechanisms of the state. Patron-client relations are then given a materialist explanation through the Marxist concept of “rent” in the second essay (Tornquist). This rentier economic analysis is then carried further by the third essay (Tanter) to incorporate the role of

foreign interests, as donors of aid and as consumers of oil exports, in the analysis. It is argued that oil revenues and foreign aid have “enabled the Suharto regime to rule with only a modicum of substantial legitimacy” (p. 53) because these financial resources have allowed the government to maintain some measure of economic growth and expansion of infrastructure without extracting high taxes from the people. One of the themes that emerges from this analysis is the segregation of “legitimacy” from the building of democratic institutions. Unfortunately, this theme is not explored. Beyond these three theoretical essays, the essays in the collection do not hang together coherently in conceptual terms; instead each explores certain aspects of the Indonesian scene with its own disciplinary or substantively derived framework.

Part II, on the nature of state control, also contains four essays. Langenberg provides an analysis of how an intertext vocabulary of social order, stability, and national security against “inherent dangers within the body politic and civil society”, material progress and modernization, constitutionalism and the “fetishism of law”, sacral national philosophy (as in Pancasila), and a corporate nationalism is continuously manipulated by the military regime to maintain its dominant position of social control through both ideology and selective repression. The ideological elements, especially constitutionalism, and the “integralist” idea of the state are further analysed by Reeve to provide a historical account of the ideological rationalization of Golkar as a political entity. To the extent that the New Order regime’s right to govern is in part dependent on its claim to the superior ability to maintain social order, the prevalence of crime may be read as an index of its failure. Conversely, the suppression of crime through however brutal means is indicative of its efficacy. Thus, the violent killing of criminal elements by the military security forces during the Petrus campaign in 1983 had an ideological payload in addition to crime prevention. Finally, various repressive intelligence and security operations of different branches of the regime are subjected to quite detailed examination by Tanter.

Part III, entitled the cultural aspect of state and society, explores various instruments of what may now be called “weapons of the weak”. Ideological resistance to the regime is analysed through various cultural

productions and reproductions, such as theatre, literature, and even the funeral of the sultan of Yogyakarta, Hamengkubuwono IX, as an index of the countering of the New Order ideology with traditional pieties.

Part IV, the dynamics of civil society, is the most disparate of the sections. Three of the essays cover some of the economic dynamics under the regime. MacIntyre attempts to analyse the in-roads made by industrial capitalists into the economic policies of the state under the deregulation programme. Schiller shows how a small rural town's entrepreneurial class and bureaucratic élite are able to benefit from the developmentalist economic policies of the regime. The short comparative essay on rural development between India and Indonesia, by Tornquist, is theoretically substantial and significant. Two essays, by Zifirdaus Adnan and Bambang Pranowo, together provide a more complete picture of the internal, cross-cutting divisions within the Muslim community, showing the perils of applying too readily convenient categorization schemes. The final essay of the section and of the book analyses the rationale and strategies of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in either collaborating or resisting the state.

The collection as a whole explores various aspects of Indonesian society. The themes are rather familiar even to one who is a newcomer to the field, as myself. What is unfortunately missing apropos the conference theme is some direct assessment of democratic tendencies in Indonesia, even if it is only to document their absence at the current historical conjuncture.

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