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Homage to AE Priyono

In the late 1990s when the Legal Aid Institute and many other groups suggested that a vibrant civil society would put an end to Suharto's rule and democratise Indonesia, Arief Budiman and myself said there must also be collective actors. To this end, we supervised studies of the democracy movement to find out whom the actors might be. As usual, however, it was more attractive to collect data and discuss how they should be analysed than to sort out and integrate scattered manuscripts. Fortunately, a soft-spoken committed young editor with the name of AE Priyono and a background in Muslim reform groups finally put it all together and made it possible for ISAI (the institute set up by concerned investigative journalists) to publish '*Aktor Demokrasi*'. Similarly, a few years later, this remarkably tall little man, known as AE among friends, also saved the editing, along with Stanley A. Prasetyo, of the more extensive surveys and analyses in the definite book on the '*Post-Soeharto Democracy Movement*'. Now, sadly, AE is no more – brought down by pneumonia.

Lest we forget him. AE was certainly more than a socially and politically committed editor, and translator at that. He was also thoroughly interested in history writing, advocating less colonial power points of view. And he enjoyed discussing issues of culture and interfaith, including educating me of Sufism and other improper beliefs. But our joint work was mainly during the years when AE with a team of other former students made possible the association *Demos*' huge assessments of democratisation. Later on, the assessments were transferred to UGM. But initially, when senior academicians engaged in better-paid work, it was these former students – without fine exams but committed to critical studies – who, with some senior guidance, made extensive interviews with so many hundreds of experienced activists around the country, analysed the data, revealed the downsides of Indonesia's elitist democracy, and concluded that activists must therefore 'go politics' again. AE was crucial in this. Others were better in organising the work. And Willy P. Samadhi handled the quantitative data. But AE was the formidable editor – not using his elbows, always willing to learn and making constructive use of critique. Even though my comments must often have been frustrating. He might not come in time for all meetings, but he stayed on to finish his job until falling asleep over the computer. He occasionally got absent minded and lost texts, but just looked a bit sad and rewrote them. AE never knew how to spell to 'give up'. The first main report '*Making Democracy Meaningful: Problems and Options in Indonesia*' would not have been possible without him. Some years later, his achievement in publishing, with Usman Hamid, the massive collection of scholarly activists' reflections on the democracy movement, '*Merancan Arah Baru Demokrasi*', was, again, remarkable. AE represented the best of Indonesia's intellectual democracy activists.

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