

James T. Siegel. 1998. *A New Criminal Type in Jakarta. Counter Revolution Today*. Durham and London: Duke University Press. 145 pp

The changes in Indonesia are drastic. What seemed impossible only a few years ago are now within sight. This includes the accounting of decades of state violence, which is necessary for common people to get the courage to build democracy and the country the chance to regain its former statue. James T. Siegel's dense little book on the politics of crime and violence in Indonesia was produced just before the fall of Suharto. And it is not easy to read. But since it both could and should be important in the current process as well, it is worthy of a lot of patience.

This is a book of why people did not revolt against the regime – not of why people finally and despite everything began to do away with it. The second is a drawback, of course. But the first is exciting and fruitful, if not always clear-cut. And the second was very common. Most scholars had become preoccupied with the irresistible rise of capital, the ever-lasting neo-patrimonialism, and the anatomy of subordinating people. Few paid attention to the contradictions and counter forces thus generated. So that missing part is alright, because even though East Timor has taught an entire World of the political violence in Indonesia, we still need to know how it worked over the years and in the country as a whole, and we still need to discuss all that remains to be fought.

On the basis of the text itself, I am not capable of evaluating the way in which Siegel goes about his project. It is about discursive analysis and hegemony, of course, and of how Suharto's New Order used criminality to scare people of each other as well as of the state, and yet appreciate its protection. But there are not too many words about the approach, and (to me) the style and language is often vague. From the point of view of the outcome of the subordination of people, however, (including in terms of the reports of the actual repression and the constant and even scholarly attempts at portraying it all as mainly religious and/or ethnic conflicts), as well as the pro-democracy movement's human rights work and its attempts at mobilising people, much of Siegel's perspectives and conclusions make a lot of sense.

The usage of criminality to legitimate authoritarian rule of what was taken to by necessity be uncivil societies goes back to the Dutch rule. And outlaws, to use a more neutral term, *did* play an important role in the nationalist struggle. But then, as the new elite wanted to consolidate their positions, Sukarno co-

opted the people and their revolutionary aspirations into the state, headed by himself. He did not represent the people, he *was* the people. And thereafter, with the birth of Suharto's New Order, violence was made into established state policy, in the massacres of 1965-66. This way it continued. Including, of course, in East Timor and Aceh, but also through Suharto's 'shock therapy' in the early-80s in the form of 'mysterious' killings and displaying of criminals, real or imagined. For three decades the military, the various militias and the death brigades did the dirty job. But the civil establishment (and its mob-fearing middle class) contributed also to the conscious exacerbation of conflicts and antagonisms. People became so afraid – both of the military and of each other (including of those who have reason to take vengeance) – that the military almost managed to make itself indispensable, by virtue of its 'protection against instability'. Hence, it is as important in Indonesia as in for instance in the Philippines, I would add, to distinguish patron-clientelism with certain reciprocal and benevolent elements from bosses' patronage against some of their own repression.

This might be even more difficult for the Indonesians to do away with than for the Germans to handle the holocaust or the South Africans the apartheid. As I'm writing this, for instance, the new and often autocratic but also liberal minded Muslim president Wahid is up against fierce resistance, as he finally speaks of the need to not just talk of human rights atrocities of Muslims or Christians but also of more than half a million radical nationalists and Communists and millions of their children and relatives. It shall be interesting to see if the West is as prepared to support him now as Suharto then, during the massacres and the 30 years of repression.

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