

specificities of Yunnanese migrants in Burma, *Beyond Borders* remains an academic achievement and a very relevant addition to the literature on diasporas in Southeast Asia. Works like this inevitably improve our understanding of the socioeconomic and political changes currently occurring in this strategic country.

Caroline Grillot

Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology

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The Politics of Protection Rackets in Post-New Order Indonesia: Coercive Capital, Authority and Street Politics

IAN DOUGLAS WILSON

Oxon, NY: Routledge, 2015, xxii+198p.

Seventeen years have passed since the fall of Suharto’s New Order regime. Indonesia’s *reformasi* has since been lauded as a successful case of democratization. Despite the consolidation of institutional democracy, however, some critics have argued that the conventional system of power relations established by the end of New Order still persists, while others have argued that distribution of power and material resources is still under the strong influence of a small number of very wealthy individuals (Ford and Pepinsky 2014). By giving a clear account of the changing condition regarding the politics of racketeering and mass organizations in Jakarta, this book illustrates that the principle of local politics fundamentally altered after the end of the authoritarian regime.

The originality of this study is twofold: it sees Jakarta as a site of local politics rather than the center of national politics; it also sheds lights on the positive side of mass mobilization. Studies on mass mobilization in decentralizing Indonesia have been predominantly about the local politics of regions outside Jakarta, if not about politics at a national level. More importantly, they have largely disregarded the potential for mass organizations to be “advocates on issues of immediate consequence to their members and the neighborhoods in which they live” (p. 94).

In Chapter 1, “Protection, Violence and the State,” the author sets up the theoretical framework for his study. Following Charles Tilly, the author starts by denying the state’s complete

monopoly over the control of coercive force within its territory. However, while Tilly identifies state as an entity “controlling the principle means of coercion within a given territory” (Tilly 1975, 62), Wilson sees the state, with Joel Migdal, as a “field of power marked by the use and threat of violence” (Migdal 2001, 15) and the aim of his study as “identifying the dynamics and contradictions of the practices and strategies of the parts making up this ‘field of power’” (*ibid.*, 16). Thus, the boundary between state and non-state actors is essentially blurred. Furthermore, Wilson cites the criminologist Alfredo Schulte-Bockholt, who differs from Tilly in seeing the state “as the product of a particular historical period and stage of state-formation” (p. 10) in order to conceptualize the relation between regimes and the protection of rackets as “protection racket regimes.” These regimes are “formed by state and/or non-state elites in order to preserve their domination through the violent exclusion of large groups in society that experience condition of substantial social disparities” (Schulte-Bockholt 2006, 35). But unlike Schulte-Bockholt, who presumes that power elites would simply subsume sub-hegemonic groups into the dominating class “across conventional class lines” both systematically and ideologically (pp. 8–9), Wilson draws a different picture. For mass organizations in post-New Order Jakarta are “largely untethered from the direct control of the military or police,” where “the racket as a relationship of domination” operates in a “peculiar brand of populist racketeering” (p. 172).

In Chapter 2, “Reconfigured Rackets: Continuity, Change and Consolidation,” the author outlines how gangs and mass organizations adapted to the post-New Order social environment and how they transformed themselves from racketeers into “professional” protection providers. Demographic domination of the poor due to massive immigration and their spatial segregation from the upper-middle class due to a growing number of enclave residences characterize the urban space of Jakarta. These conditions gave rise to insecurity and a feeling of deprivation among the lower middle-class population in the city, including Betawi. On top of this situation was the nation-wide political trend of democratization and decentralization, which gave rise to “a particular kind of populist political agency of the urban poor,” who claim to have grass-roots relations with the urban underclass and to represent such people (p. 20).

The city administration soon sought to take advantage of this situation in order to regain control of the security over the city. For them, it seemed more reasonable to utilize Betawi groups by encouraging the consolidation of their rackets than to tackle directly the gangs originating from eastern parts of the archipelago. Local political actors were keen to establish alliances with organizations calling for the rights of the indigenous Betawi population. Thus, political alliances in Jakarta increasingly became “based upon communal identities and populist rights demands of various social groups based in critiques of the state, rather than one-way vertical lines of political patronage and defence of state ideology” (p. 29).

Chapter 3, “A New Order of Crime: Suharto’s Racket Regime,” briefly explains the relationship between state and violent entrepreneurs under the New Order regime. While the New Order

state did not have a monopoly over coercive force, it forged informal alliances with non-state organizations. Such organizations were “subcontracted” and only loosely allied to the state apparatus, but they employed violence “under the guise of the state and its symbols” (p.38). While encouraging some violent entrepreneurs to integrate under state institutions, the state eliminated others via purges. Eventually, the state created the complex and delicate mechanism of political backings “based upon contingent patronage,” which was transformed dramatically into something more unstable and opportunistic after democratization (p.56).

Chapter 4, “The Changing of the *Preman* Guard” focuses on one of the biggest informal sector districts of Tanah Abang in Central Jakarta, and examines the transformation of patronage patterns during the period between 1997 and 2002. In this district, the East Timorese youths organized by Hercules took power during the 1990s. Hercules had close ties with the military figure Prabowo Subianto after cooperating with him in the fight against guerrillas in East Timor in the late 1980s. Tacit yet firm backing by Prabowo made him a prominent gang figure in Jakarta. However, the economic crisis in 1997 triggered uneasiness and resentment against harsh extortion by these “outsiders.” Upon its formation, an organization formed by the indigenous Betawi population in the district, called Family of Tanah Abang Association (IKBT), soon received an endorsement from the city administration. In pursuing anti-*preman* campaigns, Governor Sutiyoso strategically made use of emergent ethnic tensions based on the “native versus other” rhetoric. He recruited local Betawi gangs during the campaigns to eliminate gangs from eastern Indonesia.

It should be noted that “the stage upon which his strategies were played out was radically different” from that of New Order (p. 80). The case of Tanah Abang epitomizes the nation-wide shift in the nature of alliances between the formal administration and *preman* organizations. The fragmented nature of political allegiances brought about by democratization led to a shift “away from a vertical dependence upon powerful patrons” (p. 83) toward “fragmented and frequently shifting alliances” (p. 147). Now that local politics had become a contested arena for coalitions of different political interests, it was no longer a necessity for the leadership of *preman* organizations to gain firm support from formal authority in order to survive and prosper. To do so was now at best advantageous.

This changing political landscape engendered a highly self-conscious and often exclusivist sense of localism. In Jakarta, this typically resulted in heightened ethnic tensions and turf wars, especially until the mid- to late-2000s (p. 118). In Chapter 5, “The Rise of the Betawi,” the author highlights Jakarta’s case, taking examples from vigilante groups claiming to represent ethnic Betawi. Violent entrepreneurs who established groups like FBR (Betawi Brotherhood Forum) saw broadened opportunities to mobilize the masses by bringing ethnic symbolism in the forefront. They sought to build alliances with political elites by showcasing their ability to represent the native lower-middle class population who had long been marginalized from urban development. Such violent entrepreneurs were in that sense Janus-faced: at times they became “advocates on

issues of immediate consequence to their members and the neighborhoods in which they live,” and at other times they could be subcontracted to political elites on their demand for violent protests (p. 94). As such, groups like FBR were initially very offensive in character, provoking clashes over turf and violent protests through the use of ethnicized class tensions. The consequences were often disadvantageous to and exploitative of lower-middle class *kampung* residents who were supposed to be the very objective of their mobilization.

From the onset of its expansion, however, FBR went well beyond the domain of violent racketeering. In Chapter 6, “Jakarta’s Political Economy of Rackets,” the author traces the transformation of FBR since the mid-2000s. During this time the city administration and Jakarta Police Department strategically (and implicitly) backed up Betawi mass organizations in the hope that the urban security would be more orderly and predictable. The consequences were a substantial expansion of the organization’s territorial boundaries and a radical transformation of its working principle. The primary concern for FBR quickly shifted from “the turf wars of East Jakarta” (p. 136), to something more common to the urban working-class across the city. This was due in part to the rapid expansion in its constituency and the subsequent emergence of a city-wide network of lower-middle class neighborhoods. As FBR expanded itself through “a city-wide network of branch franchises” (p. 120), activities of newly established branches were deeply embedded in the social world of respective neighborhoods. This process of expansion led to less restraint and more autonomy for the branches, hence mass mobilization becoming increasingly populist in character.

Results from 2014 presidential election were indicative of a further reinforcement of these trends, as is detailed in Chapter 7, “Coercive Capital, Political Entrepreneurship and Electoral Democracy.” During the campaign, most leaders of mass organizations in Jakarta publicly supported Prabowo Subianto, the former military figure and one of the most powerful oligarchs during and after the New Order. This happened in spite of his support for Hercules, the once powerful East Timorese gang leader, because Prabowo “appeared most likely to deliver concrete material returns” (p. 174). Robust continuity from the former authoritarian regime was once again brought to the fore. However, Prabowo’s defeat by Joko Widodo, the symbol of Indonesia’s popularizing democracy, together with the precedent elimination of Hercules by the Police Department and national political elites, were signs that the populist political trend was to be further reinforced.

Overall, this book is an intriguing work that provides a comprehensive and detailed picture of a changing political landscape full of diverse actors ranging from state to non-state actors including violent entrepreneurs in post-New Order Jakarta. This study is especially insightful in that the author sees mass organizations’ appeal to political elites not in terms of their actual ability to mobilize people for voting or the grass-roots relations that they establish in local neighborhoods, but in terms of their sheer ability to bolster or demonstrate such an image. Only on this basis is it possible to understand why organizations like FBR can gain support from formal political actors

despite the fluidity of political allegiances from the members.

It is regrettable, however, that the book does not go beyond depicting the political relationship between formal actors and the leadership of mass organizations. The author's detailed investigations on neighborhood-level activities in two of the huge market districts (the case of Tanah Abang in Chapter 4 and that of Pasar Minggu in Chapter 6) are fundamentally about the economy of racketeering and turf politics pursued by violent entrepreneurs, whose activities often turn out to be inconsistent with, if not contradictory to, the will of local residents. His investigations do not clearly present a picture of neighborhood residents actively engaging in or making use of organizational activities for their own sake. Such a perspective is important if the current political trend were (as the author hopes) to "move beyond populist rhetoric," to tackle "the structural conditions reproducing poverty and social and political exclusion," and to "be transformed into more directly representative social movements of the street" (p. 174). Nevertheless, this does not reduce the significance of this study. By offering a careful examination of the changing dynamics of local politics concerning diverse actors ranging from politicians to violent entrepreneurs, Wilson successfully reveals how and why the mode of mass mobilization and political alliances became increasingly fluid and populist in Jakarta.

Nakamura Shohei 中村昇平

Graduate School of Letters, Kyoto University

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