
INTRODUCTION: STATE IN SOCIETY IN INDONESIA

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It was not a question of a single Dutch sovereignty in the far-flung archipelago, but a “dust cloud of sovereignties” such as had hung above the German principalities, the Swiss cantons, and the Italian states before their consolidation ... Arching above this “dust cloud of sovereignties” in some parts of the archipelago was the thickening mist of Dutch suzerainty.¹

A major realignment is taking place in the way we understand the state in Indonesia. New studies on local politics, ethnicity, the democratic transition, corruption, Islam, popular culture, and other areas hint at novel concepts of the state, though often without fully articulating them. This book aims to capture some dimensions of this shift. One reason for the new thinking is a fresh wind in state studies more generally. People are posing new kinds of questions about the state, and they are developing new methodologies to answer them. Another reason for this shift is that Indonesia itself has changed, probably more than most people recognize. It looks more democratic, but also more chaotic and corrupt, than it did during the militaristic New Order of 1966–98. This book consists of case studies from many different settings around the archipelago. The studies focus on various types of state representatives, such as village heads, informal slum leaders, district heads, and parliamentarians. They explore the spaces and settings where the state is evident and where it is discussed: coffee houses, hotel lounges, fishing waters, and streetside stalls. They investigate state authority, both as a set of actual practices and as an image of what the state “ought” to be. The case studies, and the broader trend in scholarship of which they are a part, allow for a new theorization of the state in Indonesia that more adequately addresses the complexity of political life in this vast archipelago nation.

The book builds on a central argument that has helped direct the recent shift in state studies, which is that the autonomy of the state is more limited than it is often imagined to be. States may portray themselves as generic and immensely powerful in their own right, but in reality they are intimately embedded in their societies in

¹ G. J. Resink, *Indonesia's History between the Myths: Essays in Legal History and Historical Theory* (den Haag: van Hoeve, 1968), p. 335.

historically contingent ways. In this book, we begin with the assumption that the state–society divide needs to be broken down. It is a divide that has been drawn far more sharply in the past than is warranted by the facts. We then develop a critique of older methodologies for studying the state. Rather than focusing on static units such as rulers and closed institutions, we focus on processes of interaction and techniques of rule. Rather than assuming that the state is a single, homogeneous and coherent entity with a will of its own, we zoom in on the evident divisions and internal contradictions that make the state a site of struggle among many competing groups. And, finally, we draw new conclusions: we show that authority is not as centered, unified, and hegemonic as it has often been taken to be. Where there appears to be unity in the state, it is likely to be an ideological image promoted by the state itself. Such images can be powerful cultural constructs with great practical significance, so they should not be dismissed, but neither should they be allowed to blind observers to the reality of how state power is deployed and contested in myriad ways. In developing these insights, we are not claiming to reinvent state studies. On the contrary, we find continued relevance and even fresh importance in many elements of the existing literature. We discuss some of these elements in detail in our literature survey in the next chapter.

Our interest in building on insights from the new state studies literature is, in large part, a reaction to developments on the ground in Indonesia. These developments can be broadly characterized as processes of “democratization”² and “decentralization,”³ although they are far less orderly—and far less predictable—than these terms might suggest. The New Order was characterized by a powerful military, centralized decision-making, violent repression, and ideological control. Elections were largely ceremonial and served to return the same ruling party and much the same cast of characters to power year after year. The dramatic fall from grace of the military in 1998 marked the end of this regime. A decade later, the military shows no signs of regaining its former prestige. Furthermore, new groups have appeared on the political stage: an increasingly assertive middle class, indigenous groups, NGOs, militias, and Islamists, to name just a few. Political parties of all stripes have taken root, and there has been a quick succession of openly contested elections (including a new direct presidential election), yielding a new crop of national and sub-national leaders. The government relaxed its restrictions on the press and on public gatherings, which allowed open public debate to flourish. This opening up of the political process was not always smooth. As political temperatures

² Edward Aspinall, *Opposing Suharto: Compromise, Resistance, and Regime Change in Indonesia*, Contemporary Issues in Asia and the Pacific (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005); Arief Budiman, Barbara Hatley, and Damien Kingsbury, eds., *Reformasi: Crisis and Change in Indonesia* (Melbourne: Monash Asia Institute, 1999); Donald K. Emmerson, ed., *Indonesia Beyond Suharto: Polity, Economy, Society, Transition* (New York, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1999); Damien Kingsbury and Arief Budiman, eds., *Indonesia: The Uncertain Transition* (Adelaide: Crawford House, 2001); R. William Liddle, ed., *Crafting Indonesian Democracy* (Bandung: Mizan, 2001); Chris Manning and Peter van Diermen, eds., *Indonesia in Transition: Social Aspects of Reformasi and Crisis* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2000).

³ Edward Aspinall and Greg Fealy, eds., *Local Power and Politics in Indonesia: Decentralisation and Democratisation* (Singapore: ISEAS, 2003); Maribeth Erb, Carole Faucher, and Priyambudi Sulistiyanto, eds., *Regionalism in Post-Suharto Indonesia* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2005); Damien Kingsbury and Harry Aveling, eds., *Autonomy and Disintegration in Indonesia* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003); Minako Sakai, ed., *Beyond Jakarta: Regional Autonomy and Local Societies in Indonesia* (Adelaide: Crawford House, 2002).

rose, young men sometimes flocked to join ad hoc local militias aiming to protect their respective communities. “Money politics” is still important, and competition among parties and religious groups has sometimes turned violent. Nonetheless, the change has been remarkable. For the first time since measurements began in 1972, Freedom House classified Indonesia as “free” in its global survey of 2006.⁴ It had rated the country “not free” in the 1990s, upgrading it to “partly free” after 1998.

In concert with this rather fitful democratization, the Indonesian government has also undergone significant decentralization. Provinces and districts have won greater autonomy and more money to run their own affairs. In 2001, the government began implementing two somewhat sketchy 1999 laws on decentralization, one on finances and one on government structures. In 2004, a new law on decentralization (no. 32) elaborated and partly qualified the two earlier laws. As a consequence of these laws, regional parliaments have become new power centers, able to make and unmake key government executives. Much of the money has flowed under the table. New opportunities and unclear rules have caused corruption and ecological abuse to flourish. But popular protests against such crimes have also become louder. In some places such as Maluku, Central Sulawesi and parts of Kalimantan, the combination of democratic freedoms and rapid decentralization produced violent forms of communitarian competition, in which thousands died tragic deaths and hundreds of thousands were displaced. In other areas, the transition proceeded remarkably peacefully. One of the unexpected spin-offs of decentralization was the proliferation of new districts and provinces. Their proponents defended them as “bringing government closer to the people,” but, once in power, these new bureaucratic chiefs misspent large amounts of money on constructing new office space in places that had little need for them.⁵ Gradually, decentralization appears to have become better regulated and more democratic. In 2005, as a result of popular disgust with “money politics” in provincial and district parliaments, Jakarta introduced direct elections for district chiefs and provincial governors (*pilkada*), similar to the presidential election. Hundreds of such elections passed off peacefully in that year and have continued to do so since. All these changes have dramatically affected the structure of state power. With only a little exaggeration, we can say that Indonesia’s multiple local arenas have begun to resemble the late nineteenth century “dustcloud of sovereignties” of which Resink wrote.

Not just Indonesia has changed, but so have states everywhere. Globalization, which in the South tends to be viewed as an imperialistic project carried out by the rich and militarily mighty North,⁶ has been reshaping the things a national state can

⁴http://www.freedomhouse.org/uploads/fiw09/CompHistData/FIW_AllScores_Countries.xls (accessed April 11, 2009).

⁵ Also new was a proliferation of reports by multilateral agencies mixing detailed statistics with plentiful advice on Indonesia’s governance; see USAID-DRSP, “Stock Taking on Indonesia’s Recent Decentralization Reforms,” report (Jakarta: USAID Democratic Reform Support Program [DRSP], 2006); World Bank, “Spending for Development: Making the Most of Indonesia’s New Opportunities—Indonesia Public Expenditure Review 2007,” report, published by the World Bank, Jakarta, 2007.

⁶ Many scholars prefer the term “global South” to the term “Third World,” which has Cold War associations, or the term “underdeveloped countries,” which elevates industrialism as a progressive value. All three terms refer to the same large group of countries, located predominantly in the southern hemisphere, by contrast with the richer nations in the northern hemisphere.

and should do. In some areas, such as defining the national identity and providing welfare, the state is now generally expected to do less than in the past. The end of the Cold War in 1989 for a while meant that Western governments were more sensitive to their own domestic protests about human rights abuses committed by their former “frontline” allies. The “third wave” of democratization was sweeping across the developing world. The retired general Suharto fell in 1998 not only because of such reforms, but also because he was a Cold War warrior whose time had passed. But the idea that globalization has meant an across-the-board erosion of state powers is simplistic. After “9/11,” the United States, which had been a proponent of reduced state interference in markets, put pressure on governments around the world to beef up their domestic anti-terror capabilities. Developing countries, for years urged to reduce their “bloated bureaucracies,” are now being told they need an effective state in order to handle economic crises such as the one that struck Indonesia. The world’s poorest countries, meanwhile, have become the subject of a policy literature on “state failure.” According to the literature, these “premodern” states need to be strengthened to prevent them from immiserating their citizens and becoming sources of instability. This new approach is known as the post-Washington Consensus.

All these changes raise fundamental questions about the nature of the state. Most of us who contributed to this book have been writing about Indonesia for a long time. Like many intellectuals, we had grown attached to our stock phrases about the state, and we continued to use them even after they had outgrown their usefulness. As dynamic as the history of these ideas had been at times, by the end of the long New Order certain orthodoxies had spread through our academic idiom about the state and had then set solid, like a plaster cast. We routinely deployed terms like “bureaucratic polity,” “bureaucratic authoritarianism,” and “state corporatism,” using them to portray an autonomous state that was able to assert its will over society with little fear of contradiction. The result, as Andrew MacIntyre pointed out in a survey of writings about the Indonesia state in 1990, was that: “... [a]ll the approaches are very heavily state-centred in their focus: very little scope is allowed for the possibility that extra-state actors have a major role ...”⁷

Scholarly perceptions of the state shifted radically after 1998. Before then, many had described the New Order state as strong and effective. Hal Hill’s introduction to the 1994 overview volume he edited, for example, predicted that Indonesia’s “effective and powerful civilian bureaucracy” would prove impervious to reform.⁸ After 1998, the key buzzwords of these models dropped silently from our vocabulary, for reasons not difficult to grasp, but few suggestions for alternative ways of talking about the state in Indonesia have emerged. Some observers at first saw shortfall everywhere, a perception echoed in expressions like “crisis,” “disintegration,” “fragmentation,” “polycentrism,” “chaos,” “regime collapse,” and “rampant corruption.”⁹ The political fragmentation and contestation of the late 1990s

⁷ Andrew MacIntyre, *Business and Politics in Indonesia* (North Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1991), p. 17.

⁸ Hal Hill, ed., *Indonesia’s New Order: The Dynamics of Socio-Economic Transformation* (St. Leonard’s: Allen & Unwin, 1994), p. xxix.

⁹ “Crisis” from the title of Budiman et al., *Reformasi: Crisis and Change in Indonesia*; “disintegration” from the title of Kingsbury and Aveling, *Autonomy and Disintegration in Indonesia*; “fragmentation” found in, for example, Budiman et al., *Reformasi: Crisis and Change in Indonesia*, p. 173, and in Manning and Van Diermen, *Indonesia in Transition*, p. 311; “polycentrism” in, for example, Emmerson, *Indonesia Beyond Suharto*, pp. 69, 234–35; “chaos”

and early 2000s could indeed be partly explained as belonging to a moment of paralysis typical of a regime transition. But we began to feel increasingly uncomfortable with such negative terms. States rarely pass from strength to failure overnight, and Indonesia had by no means experienced a social revolution. Probably the phenomena that struck observers after 1998 had been widespread but simply unremarked before then, reflecting something perennial about the way power works in Indonesia. Conversely, perhaps the state after 1998 was not as dysfunctional as often thought. But by choosing terms of negation such as “chaos,” these observers revealed more about the way they thought states *ought* to function than the way this one *did* function. A language of failure does not help us much to understand why things work the way they do.

This book will depart from the language of failure in an effort to rekindle a more balanced discussion about the Indonesian state.¹⁰ Our aim, as we move beyond the discussion of the failed state, is to open the alleged autonomy of state institutions to investigation. We pay close attention to the social forces traversing the state in its relations with society. Some processes are formal, such as political party formation, elections, anticorruption court cases, and the establishment of new district units resulting from decentralization. Others are far less so, such as the moral movements promoting *syariah* law at local levels. Our approach is to focus on the everyday, face-to-face exchanges between individuals, in the formal and informal settings where state power is exercised, discussed, and contested. We build on a growing body of empirical work on the micropolitics of everyday life. In the workshops that gave rise to the present book, we used a number of terms as we sought to grapple with what a new image of the state might be: the “embedded state,” the “state-in-society,” or perhaps the “network state.”¹¹ While each of these terms had its problems, all served to emphasize our commitment to studying the state in relation to the broader social context in which it is embedded.

from the title of Geoff Forrester, ed., *Post-Soeharto Indonesia: Renewal or Chaos?* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1999); “collapse of the omnipotent central regime,” found in Aspinall and Fealy, *Local Power and Politics in Indonesia*, p. 256; and “rampant corruption” in Tim Lindsey, ed., *Law Reform in Developing and Transitional States* (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 43.

¹⁰ The history of this conversation is too voluminous to examine here. Among the most important reviews or compendia are the following four. All focus on the national policy level; see Benedict R. O’G. Anderson and Audrey Kahin, eds., *Interpreting Indonesian Politics: Thirteen Contributions to the Debate* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Modern Indonesia Project, 1982); MacIntyre, *Business and Politics in Indonesia*, Introduction; Mark T. Berger, “Old State and New Empire in Indonesia: Debating the Rise and Decline of Suharto’s New Order,” *Third World Quarterly* 18,2 (1997): 321–28; Simon Philpott, *Rethinking Indonesia: Postcolonial Theory, Authoritarianism, and Identity* (London: Macmillan, 2000). They are also restricted to foreign studies of the Indonesian state. A good study of Indonesian social science in general is the volume edited by Hadiz and Dhakidae, but it has no chapter explicitly on Indonesian analytical approaches to the state; see Vedi R. Hadiz and Daniel Dhakidae, eds., *Social Science and Power in Indonesia* (Jakarta: Equinox/Singapore: ISEAS, 2005).

¹¹ The term “embedded state” was attractive but sounded too much like Evans’s theoretically muddled “embedded state autonomy”; “state-in-society” is used by Migdal; the “network state” is a neologism inspired by Castells’s “network society”; see Peter B. Evans, “Predatory, Developmental, and Other Apparatuses: A Comparative Political Economy Perspective on the Third World State,” *Sociological Forum* 4,4 (December 1989): 561–87; Joel S. Migdal, *State in Society: Studying How States and Societies Transform and Constitute One Another*, Cambridge Studies in Comparative Politics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Manuel Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society*, 2nd ed., 3 vols. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000).

This book consists of two introductory chapters and seven empirical case studies. In this chapter, we draw out some of the key themes that emerge from our empirical studies of the state. In the second chapter, we step back to provide a critical review of the two main “storylines” that have dominated analytical writing about the state in Indonesia. One of these narratives views it as a modern bureaucratic machine, the other as a personalized, culturally colored patrimonial affair. We argue that studies of the state in Indonesia would benefit from a recognition that the state is much lighter on the ground than it has often been assumed to be. They would also benefit from a research agenda inspired by new developments in the literature on state studies elsewhere in the world, which could help to better make sense of its institutional “patchiness.”

All seven empirical case studies that follow these two introductory chapters adopt an ethnographic approach to the state. They are microlevel studies often focused around specific individuals whose stories play out in concrete locales. The case studies provide a rare view of how Indonesian state authority is exerted and experienced on the ground in a wide range of settings. This does not yield a comprehensive view of the state in all its guises. Particularly, its formal institutional side—constitutional reforms, political party formation, relations between judiciary and executive, new roles for parliament, changes in taxation or welfare—is almost invisible here. That is to say, we observed it from below, as when, for example, Deasy Simandjuntak watched political party apparatchiks working a coffee shop in the morning. We felt a sense of excitement as we wrote. Deasy Simandjuntak wears her heart on her sleeve more than most in this regard. Her chapter conveys a palpable sense of surprise, even of revelation, at the disjuncture between what she had learned from her political science textbooks and what she saw in North Sumatra. Clientelism was supposed to be destructive of the political fabric, yet here it seemed to promise access to the new democracy. Civil society was supposed to be an essential element in democracy, but here a lot of consultation seemed to happen with little formal organization. We tried not to routinize this sense of revelation. It does give our work a tentative quality. Whether we have really discovered something novel about the state through our investigative mapping of networks, and whether we have successfully kept a scholarly distance from our ever-fascinating informants, we leave to the reader to judge.

That the state apparatus is institutionally fragmented is an underlying premise in most of this book. This proposition does not harmonize easily with some of the more sweeping ideas of state strength heard under the New Order. Rather than perceiving the state as a single subject capable of “action,” we see it as an institutional ensemble of power centers. The only state actors are specific sets of politicians and officials, in specific locations within the system. When we study their actions ethnographically, we see that they are often at loggerheads with each other. For example, Dorian Fougères writes in his chapter that, when Made Ali became head of a small fishing village on an island off South Sulawesi, he did not wholeheartedly implement his government’s laws on sustainable fishery because not all his constituents were served by rules against cyanide fishing. The governor of Bengkulu province in Sumatra, according to Syarif Hidayat and Gerry van Klinken, fought off attempts by the attorney-general’s department to prosecute him because he had issued a permit for an iron sands mine in a national park. The mine was creating employment and thus improving his chances of reelection. Tensions occur within discrete levels of the state but also between lower and higher levels. At certain moments in the political

cycle, provincial actors find ways to assert themselves against Jakarta. A new polycentrism is emerging that places many centers in dynamic tension with each other. Arenas of contest produce fragmentation of the state, while at the same time regimes of administration and governmentality continue to do their homogenizing work. This dialectic ought to be the subject of future research.

Each of a state's various institutions has its own interests, and each institution strategizes competitively in order to satisfy those interests. The focus for studies on the state, we believe, ought to be on relationships and strategies, not on static structures. A good example of institutional strategizing is found in John Olle's chapter on the state-sponsored Council of Indonesian Ulama (Majelis Ulama Indonesia, MUI). Aiming to enhance its influence within the government, the council began to "create an issue" of heresy within society, focusing its allegations on the Ahmadiyah organization. By deliberately creating a moral panic about religious "deviants" and then adopting a censorious stance it knew few would comfortably oppose, it aimed to insert itself into the place long occupied by the larger, more mainstream religious organizations. In so doing, MUI was engaging other state institutions whose task it is to safeguard social cohesion (police, judiciary, even the president), and initiating this confrontation as part of a struggle for the ultimate rule-making authority.

The actors in these struggles for domination usually deploy certain well-established tactics or techniques of rule. Actual state practices are strategies for negotiating the competitive arena that we call the state. The arena is crisscrossed by complex social forces. State practices aim in different ways to enlarge alliances and exclude rivals by redrawing the boundaries of the legitimate state. The practices are partial and contingent in nature, as they necessarily take place amidst the diversity of institutional state and nonstate entities competing for dominance. Actors change their tactics as opportunities arise. In the 1980s, the MUI meekly acted like an advisor to the government on religious matters. But by 2005, it began allying with violent and intolerant religious organizations that had once been quite opposed to the secular developmentalism of the New Order government. Now MUI was aggressively claiming priority over other state institutions in religious matters, stating: "Because there is a *fatwa* from MUI, the government is automatically obliged to prohibit [Ahmadiyah]." ¹²

We observed many practices discussed in this book, sometimes incidentally and without further remarking on them. Most of the practices are best described as repertoires of action, that is, performative templates that can be repeated in different situations and that aim at a theatrical effect on their audience. "Regimist" thugs had often trashed the offices of dissident groups under the New Order. When various (formally unrelated) religious organizations began to use this tactic against the "heretical" Ahmadiyah, they did it not so much to injure Ahmadiyah members as to raise a panic about heresy among the wider population.

Some of the techniques observed are modern, such as the demonstrations students used to put pressure on the Jambi governor in December 2005, events examined in Syarif Hidayat and Gerry van Klinken's chapter. Others appear traditional, such as the violence among rival fishers groups that forced the village chief, himself a patron of one group, to adopt a mediating role, as described in

¹² See John Olle, "The Majelis Ulama Indonesia versus 'Heresy': The Resurgence of Authoritarian Islam," in this volume.

Dorian Fougères's piece. Others, again, look modern at first sight but on closer inspection turn out to resemble precolonial techniques. The church-building project adopted by a status-conscious elder statesman in Sumba, discussed in Jacqueline Vel's chapter, looks not unlike the tomb-building projects of the precolonial tribal chiefs.

It has become a commonplace to say that the boundary between state and society, particularly in countries of the global South, is "blurred."¹³ The contributions in this book aim to go further by claiming that the state exists *within* society. We have adopted Joel Migdal's phrase "state-in-society." Nicos Poulantzas, in a phrase that has been developed at length by Bob Jessop, wrote somewhat elliptically but even more provocatively that "the state is a social relation."¹⁴ He meant by this that we cannot understand the state without a good grasp of what we mean by "society." The social embeddedness of the state—a condition that the central argument of this book seeks to confirm—becomes particularly evident through the ethnographic method we adopted.¹⁵ A fascinating cast of state actors populates the chapters that follow, from the head of a quiet fishing village in South Sulawesi caught between the law and his village livelihood to a provincial governor in Jambi facing down protests over his building a controversial theme park. Their actions cannot be understood only through the optic that defines the state as a socially isolated institution of power.

Just as the state is fragmented, so society must not be essentialized as if it were a single entity. The contributions of Jacqueline Vel and Deasy Simandjuntak take particular care to distinguish social groups that have greater power from those that have less power over the lives of others not related to themselves. Each group has its own identity. But the social identities that cleave to these groups rarely emerge of their own accord. Often they are made through the same processes that also build and reproduce the state. According to Vel, the top 10 percent or so of Sumbanese society draws its status symbols—multiple houses, horse race trophies, numerous dependents—from precolonial myths. But its money comes almost entirely from the state budget, sent out from Jakarta. The education of its older members was provided in the first place by the church, which has still not shed its intimate association with the colonial state, dating from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Its aristocratic honorifics date back no further than the compact the Dutch made with their ancestors under nineteenth-century indirect rule. Joshua Barker's chapter on governance in a Bandung slum is designed to show that, far from being a state-free zone in which a lumpen proletariat could at any moment decide to unleash a revolution, the slum has always been deeply penetrated by the state. It is true that the slum is what Derrida called a *voyoucracy*, "a corrupt and corrupting

¹³ Akhil Gupta, "Blurred Boundaries: The Discourse of Corruption, the Culture of Politics, and the Imagined State," *American Ethnologist* 22, 2 (1995): 375–402.

¹⁴ Migdal, *State in Society: Studying How States and Societies Transform and Constitute One Another*; Bob Jessop, *State Power: A Strategic Relational Approach* (Cambridge: Polity, 2007), chap. 5.

¹⁵ In the terms of a famous debate within sociology, we have chosen a "social integration" approach, which investigates social order/disorder in terms of the social co-operation/conflict of agents. The other approach, "system integration," focuses not on actors but on "system parts." The two approaches are complementary, and either might be useful, depending on the research question. See Nicos Mouzelis, "Social and System Integration: Lockwood, Habermas, Giddens," *Sociology* 31,1 (1997): 111–19.

power of the street.”¹⁶ But the state never left it to its own devices. Since late colonial times, the state has bureaucratized the slum by means of technologies of healthcare and hygiene. More to the point here, the state has exercised its authority in the slum by cultivating the thuggish informal leaders that dominate its street life. We can say it practiced a form of indirect rule tantalizingly suggestive of that once practiced in Sumba.

In this book, the social embeddedness of the state mostly expresses itself in the neopatrimonial mode of relations. Unequal friendship—this is a less exotic way to describe the patron–client relationship than metaphors based on ancient kingdoms—features in most chapters in this book. The influence of a retired district chief in Sumba depends on his being a patron to many others. Reputation is as important as formal office. Here the neopatrimonial relation is no longer an abstraction, as in some earlier texts on the Indonesian state, but is explored biographically. It is the one concrete reality upon which the state sits like an elaborate myth. Life histories reveal the intricacy of carefully wrought relational networks. How has this history shaped a person’s trustworthiness, interests, and competencies? How skilled are they at the mediating work that is the state’s *raison d’être*? We can see in John Olle’s chapter how the reputation for obsessive heresy-hunting that “Pak A” built up over many years suddenly struck the conservative MUI organizers as useful in their post-New Order push for influence. Dorian Fougères’s close reading of a village chief’s life illustrates how the biographical and the institutional are inextricably intertwined.

The importance of unequal friendship to Indonesian state power raises a theoretical question that has long been central to studies of this postcolonial state (see Chapter Two). How does the universal model of neopatrimonialism we have inherited from the neo-Weberian literature help us to understand the particular forms state power takes in different locales? For example, how does the peculiarly egalitarian form of gift-giving common in Eastern Indonesia make the patron–client pattern there different from that of Java? A study of neopatrimonialism also raises the question of origins. To what extent are reputations created through the modern state, and thus properly called *neopatrimonial*, or, conversely, created through social circuits beyond the state that perhaps have a much longer history (which might make the original label, “patrimonial,” more relevant)? Does the retired Sumbanese district chief draw his authority primarily from his family roots in a precolonial aristocracy, or, conversely, from the networking skills that are the legacy of a successful career in Golkar and the bureaucracy? Our suspicion, like John Pemberton’s, is that modern state projects, such as depoliticized developmentalism, have been highly productive of societal effects, such as respect for aristocratic lineages.¹⁷

Despite its fragmentation and institutional patchiness, therefore, the state retains its preeminence as a field for achieving and holding onto power. The relationships binding various social elements together in bonds of solidarity, rivalry, or oppression always traverse the state and often originate in bureaucratic institutions. Even money does not appear to have an independent force. Independently wealthy business entrepreneurs only put in cameo appearances in this book—in hindsight, we perhaps should have paid them more attention—but the examples we do have

¹⁶ Jacques Derrida, *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), p. 66.

¹⁷ John Pemberton, *On the Subject of “Java”* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994).

never suggest that money alone can produce power over others. There is no purely societal “class power” that is not at the same time also “state power.” Some characters in this book are wealthy, like former district chief Umbu Djima in Sumba, or the businessman-turned-district chief Zulkifli Nurdin of Jambi, but they look to the state to gain upward mobility and prestige. The state may also provide them with the capacity to enforce rules that favor their accumulation strategies. In Sumba, as in many other provincial areas, particularly outside Java, most of the money in circulation comes from the state budget. Decisions over who gets what are made within what Vel calls the “political class.” This loosely defined group includes many disparate networks that each clusters around a politically influential personality. Besides the high-level executives currently in office, the political class “also embraces others capable of influencing the allocation of state resources: (some) retired state officials, businessmen, political party bosses, clan leaders, religious leaders and the wives and mothers of all these influential men,” according to Vel.

Our studies suggest that this interlinking of class and state power holds not only for big corporate players, the so-called *konglomerat* based in Jakarta and Singapore, as has long been highlighted by Richard Robison, but also for much smaller players in the provinces. The loose political alliances that have been busily deploying strategies are today also forming dynamic centers in the provinces and districts, in ways not seen for a long time. Urban bureaucrats, business entrepreneurs, and NGO activists sometimes resemble a social class that cultivates networks, seizes available rents, excludes or patronizes the poor, and deploys authoritarian ideologies.

Just as there is no class power without state power, so there are no notable countervailing forces outside the state. Although we did not aim at consensus on this point, the contributors to this book tend not to consider existing civil society in Indonesia as essentially opposed to the state. We thus take issue with what has been called the “counterweight” view of civil society, which was the dominant one in the democratization discourse in Indonesia in the late New Order years.¹⁸ The ease with which popular anger against Suharto’s military in 1998 was reduced to an issue of Suharto’s personal corruption and then left to linger in the courts, for example, suggests little fundamental disagreement between civil society and the state. Eva-Lotta Hedman has invoked Antonio Gramsci to make a similarly iconoclastic argument for the Philippines.¹⁹ If we define the state broadly as Gramsci did (political society + civil society = the integral state),²⁰ then people within civil society are also part of the state. We cannot understand the operation of the state by referring only to officials. The social bases in which the state is embedded are quite wide. Like Jacqueline Vel, John Olle explores social bases of state power that extend beyond officialdom into religion. “Pak A,” a small man with a goatee who has been obsessively writing incoherent pamphlets about heretics for decades with little effect, now sits on the central board of MUI, along with men whose entire careers have been in Golkar and the religious bureaucracy. Joshua Barker describes people even further

¹⁸ Arief Budiman, ed., *State and Civil Society in Indonesia*, Monash Papers on Southeast Asia, No. 22 (Clayton, Victoria: Centre of Southeast Asian Studies, Monash University, 1990).

¹⁹ Eva-Lotta E. Hedman, *In the Name of Civil Society: From Free Election Movements to People Power in the Philippines* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai’i Press, 2006).

²⁰ Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci: Edited and Translated by Q. Hoare and G. Nowell Smith* (New York, NY: International Publishers, 1971), Notebook 6, §88, pp. 262–63.

down the social ladder who support state power in the slum. Eman Suherman is a street vendor with such good organizational skills that he attracted the eye first of the police, who wanted his help to prevent a riot from breaking out in 1998, and then of the political party PDI-P (Partai Demokrasi Indonesia-Perjuangan, Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle), whose representatives wanted him to mobilize lower-class voters in the slum.

Not everyone belongs. Networks also exclude. The state as a network is not embedded in all places and social formations. We occasionally catch glimpses in our chapters of a state that looks, after all, like an alien, predatory creature. Once the election in Bengkulu and Jambi is over, the real work involves small factional cliques with shallow social roots. The great majority of Sumba's population, the rural poor, have no leverage over the hiring-and-firing decisions that keep the political class's rice bowls full. The "common person" in Deasy Simandjuntak's chapter lives in a world where state actors visit so rarely that it is a wonder to him or her when leaders do show up to try to win precious votes.

The composition of the political class—or what could be called the local establishment—varies over time, but in general it changes only slowly. Uumbu Djima, the church-building former district chief, built up his social capital in Sumba over a successful bureaucratic career that spanned decades. In his retirement, his capital only seems to be growing. Loren Ryter shows that of the national parliamentarians serving between 2004 and 2009 and belonging to the largest party, Golkar, at least 41 percent had been socialized through membership in a corporatist, and sometimes violent, pro-New Order youth organization, most frequently KNPI (Komite Nasional Pemuda Indonesia, The Indonesian National Youth Committee). There they learned the tough business of political manipulation, of scrambling for turf and positions, and of running protection rackets and skimming funds off the state budget. Nevertheless, the proportion of national parliamentarians overall with such a background is declining, and members constituting the largest group in parliament now say their background is business. Democratization has, above all, politicized businesspeople, as it has done in many Asian countries.²¹ Even at the downmarket end of town, Joshua Barker noticed slow change in the social basis of support for the state. The tough guys who dominated the *kampung* between the 1970s and the 1990s, whom military intelligence recruited for surveillance work, have been replaced by a new generation of more entrepreneurial, political types, who are of interest to the political parties.

Those who have made it to the privileged strata never find it easy to stay on top. State power is a complex, contradictory effect of class and popular democratic struggles, mediated through an array of institutions. The balance of social forces is constantly changing. Neopatrimonial networks do not determine who is a member of the local establishment. There are usually more available patrons than is necessary to keep the system going. Brastagi's coffee-shop scene shows real competition among rival patrons. Brokers play vital roles in mobilizing constituencies, and they do not appeal only to myths of primordial groups. Much of local politics is highly pragmatic. Bus drivers in Brastagi's coffee shop listened carefully for indications that this or that candidate would favor or oppose relocation of the bus terminal. Other customers eating their greasy noodles heard that the incumbent district chief had

²¹ Edmund Terence Gomez, ed., *Political Business in East Asia, Politics in Asia* (London and New York, NY: Routledge, 2002).

little support left beyond thuggish debt collectors who intimidated market stall-owners. They later voted him out, in favor of a smoothly spoken military man who had been district chief before and who promised to bring order, discipline, and cleanliness. The newly elected governors of Jambi and Bengkulu both ran into opposition for awarding business projects to cronies who had assisted their election campaigns. Downward social mobility (*jatuh kelas*) is a constant risk. The backdrop for all these contingent local struggles is the logic of capital accumulation and the ongoing risk of economic crises. Although the possibility seemed remote when we wrote these contributions, as we went to press another crisis like that of 1998, induced by an American banking catastrophe far beyond any provincial player's control, was appearing on the horizon. Such a crisis could conceivably trigger fresh protests that could break up the alliances underpinning the establishment.

Illegal practices are part of the exercise of power. Although private greed is a crucial motive, and law enforcement is weak, such practices are neither merely private clandestine activities nor harbingers of a "soft" or "failed" state. It is true that inadequate personnel and budgets (as highlighted in the next chapter) make it less likely that the state's disciplinary powers will be invoked. But the terms "softness" and "failure" suggest that the only thing stopping an effective state is lack of resources. In fact, the system is kept permanently incapacitated because so many people profit from its incapacity. Illegal activities bind state officials to each other and to nonstate actors. They extend the struggle for domination into the marketplace, and they bind state actors to elements in society.²² Systematic underfunding of the bureaucracy, minimal oversight, and competition among state institutions lead state agents to build coalitions with nonstate actors. Money is the main medium of exchange. For example, the new governors of Jambi and Bengkulu could not have won their election campaigns without clandestine payments from friends in the business community. Despite the political controversy that inevitably ensued, they had to reward these donors with fresh projects after their election.

Money alone is not enough to sustain loyal relationships that are at constant risk of legal sanctions. Trust develops from more emotive bonds, such as a reputation for neighborliness, honesty, or piety. Blood relatives, co-regionists, co-religionists, or co-ethnics make more reliable partners than strangers because they are already part of a dense network of mutual personal obligations. Agreements are more easily enforced, since no one wants to be penalized for noncompliance by alienation from their "natural" group. The patronage that flows along neopatrimonial networks is usually informal, if not illegal, in nature. The book of donations for Umbu Djima's large church in rural Sumba reveals how the circulation of cash with dubious origins helps cement power relationships among the island's political class. Thus the chairman of a church foundation, instead of using the economic development fund he controlled to buy goats for poor farmers, as he should have been doing, made a large donation to the church-building fund because he felt that improving his relationship with Umbu Djima was more important to him than the gratitude of the poor. The informal *kampung* leader Nana Berlit, in the Bandung slum Cicadas in the 1970s, made some money for himself and his military and police bosses through the Rahwana youth

²² The term "shadow state" first achieved prominence in a study of Sierra Leone. It described a complex struggle for market domination and political authority that takes place via the interpenetration of formal state institutions and societal networks; see William Reno, *Corruption and State Politics in Sierra Leone* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

organization. Besides hosting martial arts activities, the organization provided “protection” to local shops and factories. It was, moreover, an important conduit for local political surveillance.

When the law is paralyzed, the technique of last resort for enforcing contracts—as well as for outright extortion—is violence. In this respect, illegality and violence go hand in hand. Threats are the stuff of politics in Indonesia. Loren Ryster quotes a Medan parliamentarian who shrugs off hostile demonstrators by saying:

People threaten us, we can handle it. Because we’re used to brawling in the field. Normally people we deal with [are] like that, demonstrators who pound the tables, pound the doors. We just sit back calmly [*slow aje*] and watch, ha ha ha, right? Because we’re used to it. We’re used to being chased with swords. “Is that all you got?!”

The threat of legal action is even more common. As the business crony of the Jambi governor said when confronted with the possibility of losing his reward due to popular protests: “I not only possess the MoU, but also many other letters and strong proofs.” However, violent threats and even the threat of legal action are rarely carried out. Protection money, circulating through neopatrimonial networks and reinforcing trust, is an alternative way of coping with insecurity.

Discourse is also an important means to shore up (or challenge) authority. The discourses described in this book are deployed as part of various hegemonic projects, in which ideas and material interests interpenetrate. They are not produced equally throughout society but primarily by individuals who occupy key nodes in the network state. Their originators already enjoy economic, cultural, and/or social capital.²³ Politically efficacious cultural capital often employs religious symbols and hierarchies. Jacqueline Vel’s chapter demonstrates how patrimonial networks involving state actors are constructed in a religious domain. The church is outside the state—maybe not that far outside it in colonial times—yet it remains an important network anchor. Sumba is largely Christian, whereas most of the rest of Indonesia is Islamic. John Olle’s chapter describes the strategic deployment of an Islamic discourse against “heresy” by figures on the margins of the establishment who attempt to improve their position.

The major discourses recurring throughout the book are those that create idealized images of what the state is and how it is meant to function. Electoral candidates in Brastagi promised to bring order, discipline, and cleanliness to the district, all without bribes. Police officers confronting cyanide fishers on Pulau Rantau off South Sulawesi invoked the state’s authority to preserve the marine environment from destructive practices for future generations. Discourse, understood broadly so as to include the kinds of performance whose aura does not necessarily depend on words, is essential in the struggle for domination because brute force alone is never sufficient. Discourses that provide a “state idea” can be very powerful when they resonate with and reproduce popular symbols and styles concerning order and disorder, hierarchy, and harmony. They are even more powerful when they draw upon and intersect with discourses found in revered indigenous texts. Most Brastagi candidates mixed discourses of modern good

²³ Pierre Bourdieu, “The Forms of Capital,” in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, ed. John G. Richardson (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1986), pp. 241–58.

governance with those invoking the locally dominant symbol of the “*raja*,” a person of wealth and influence, someone who embodies both a biblical righteousness and a familiarity with Batak *adat*.

In our case studies, we also see various instances where challenger elites use a discourse of wronged identities to mobilize crowds against incumbents. John Olle describes the ideological strategy conservative religious groups deploy to try to move public debate their way. They create a moral panic about religious “heresy” and then invite or pressure mainstream religious figures to join them in their outrage. Hypocrisy is rife. Discourses of sovereignty, national identity, religious morality, the rule of law, good governance, and even budgets are designed to create precisely calculated theatrical effects among voters, multilateral funding agencies, and domestic opponents. Contradictory discourses are deployed for different audiences. One of the Brastagi candidates, a deacon in the church, also kept a hotel-cum-brothel, where he was obliged to welcome and give gifts to his poor rural relatives who had come to support him. His discourse of family solidarity in their presence contradicted both the righteousness and the impartiality of his public campaign discourse. Discourses play out in a context of extra-discursive constraints. Anticorruption discourses are often deployed unfairly to bring down rivals. The antiheresy discourse outlined in John Olle’s chapter only emerged once the military-dominated New Order had crumbled.

The state discourses reported in this book are embedded in culture. We can view them as the product of multiple and fragmented “metropolitan supercultures.” However, contra Harry Benda and Clifford Geertz,²⁴ who thought the independent state would conform to and arise out of an original indigenous culture, these state discourses do not indigenize the state. Instead, they bring the existing modern state close to the people, familiarizing them with it in numerous ways. When bus drivers “overhear” state officials talking in a coffee shop in Sumatra, or when small-scale vendors discuss the municipal budget while holding court in a streetside stall in Bandung, or when posters of the president are on sale on the sidewalk next to posters of Red Hot Chili Peppers or the Pope, the state has become amazingly intimate, even as it maintains an aura of remoteness.

State power is also spatial. State institutions have their own spatial scales, and our studies reveal how much place matters. The “state image,” projected by state actors, is indeed homogeneous. In it, the state’s sovereignty extends uniformly across the entire territory, stopping abruptly at the international borders. But as we see in the next chapter, where we analyze the footprint of the state in some statistical detail, actual state presence is patchy. It is intense in provincial towns, with their numerous government offices and little else besides. In other places—urban slums, rural backwaters—there are hardly any formal state personnel. Instead, various non- and semi-state actors claim to be authorized by the state. The informal leaders in the Bandung slum, the antiheretical pamphleteer “Pak A” in his narrow East Jakarta shop front, and the fisherman-cum-village head “Made Ali” on Pulau Rantau, are good examples in this book. Networks of unequal personal relationships connect these sites of state power. They can stretch over large social and geographic distances. Being unequal, the relationships are directional. They tend to spread

²⁴ Harry J. Benda, “Democracy in Indonesia,” in *Interpreting Indonesian Politics: Thirteen Contributions to the Debate*, pp. 13–29; Clifford Geertz, ed., *Old Societies and New States: The Quest for Modernity in Asia and Africa* (London: Free Press of Glencoe, 1963).

outward from the center, rather than inward from villages to the center. They bunch up in the towns. The networks are by no means flat, but neither do they map completely onto the formal hierarchies of a particular legal-rational state apparatus. Local state practices are colored by local discourses, personalities, and places.

Specific spaces assume a particular significance in this disaggregated Indonesia. Examples include the coffee shop where Deasy Simandjuntak observed lobbyists for parliamentary candidates meeting their public in North Sumatra, the hotel foyer where Loren Ryter heard parliamentarians hold forth on how power works in Indonesia, and the wooden home of the chief of a fishing village in South Sulawesi where Dorian Fougères had nocturnal conversations with his host. It is difficult to imagine the deals made in these places being made in any other kinds of space. Maybe Joshua Barker's Bandung can *only* be Bandung and does not represent a typical metropolis in Indonesia. There is a situated sense of political geography in these chapters that has been missing from much previous work on the state in Indonesia.

Like place, time is an often-neglected variable in studies of the state. How the state is imaged and how it is embedded in society varies over time. The typical state client in the Bandung slum in the 1970s was a street fighter, but by the 2000s he had become more bureaucratic and more politically sophisticated. Time is a dimension we have only begun to explore in this book. We hope others will feel inspired by the idea of reinserting the study of the state into that of society and will carry out the historical work on this subject that it so urgently needs.

In short, state studies in Indonesia are in a phase of exciting progress. The studies in this volume have benefited greatly from new trends in state studies, and we hope that they can in turn contribute to studies on states in general and to studies of states of the global South in particular.

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²⁵ Previous projects in this program have resulted in volumes on local politics, on communal conflict, and on new forms of historiography. See Henk Schulte Nordholt and Gerry van Klinken, eds., *Renegotiating Boundaries: Local Politics in Post-Suharto Indonesia* (Leiden: KITLV, 2007); Gerry van Klinken, *Communal Violence and Democratization in Indonesia: Small Town Wars*, Routledge Contemporary Southeast Asia Series, no. 15 (London: Routledge, 2007); and Henk Schulte Nordholt, Bambang Purwanto, and Ratna Saptari, eds., *Perspektif Baru Penulisan Sejarah Indonesia* (Jakarta: Obor/KITLV/Pustaka Larasan, 2008). The KITLV Research Program is described in http://www.kitlv.nl/home/Research?subpage_id=179 (as of May 2009).

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