

of exclusivist discourses on ethnic cleansing (Davidson). Therefore, it is probably not so much a point of delineating what *adat* exactly means but rather understanding *adat* as a discourse that serves multiple purposes in a fast-changing society like Indonesia. Once again, the question is not so much on *adat* as such but rather on its deployment in contemporary Indonesia. Looking at *adat* from this perspective, both scholars and practitioners will find a welcome guide in this book not only trying to understand *adat* but also to better understand contemporary Indonesian society and politics.

JEROEN ADAM

*Ghent University*

*State terrorism and political identity in Indonesia: Fatally belonging*

By ARIEL HERYANTO

London and New York: Routledge, 2006. Pp. xii, 242. Glossary, Notes, References, Index.

doi:10.1017/S002246340800043X

This book performs the rare feat of ‘de-provincialising’ Indonesia. Since the days of the New Order regime and especially after ‘911’, research and analytical work on ‘violence in Indonesia’ enjoys a certain cachet. Much of what surfaces as explanations or analyses of violence in the literature follows two trends of thought, namely that the totalitarian New Order state had with malicious intent persecuted or made ‘scapegoats’ out of innocent civilians, political foes and activists as a means of securing political control. Second, Indonesia, being a multi-ethnic and multi-religious nation suffers from periodic blood-letting because racial and religious ‘instincts’ remain primordial and have not been overcome successfully. While the latter thread is sometimes given a historical twist such as when scholars attempt to historicise what appears superficially as ‘primordial instincts’, these accounts do not quite succeed in overturning the stereotypical, if pessimistic belief that violence seems inevitable in the Indonesian geobody. In spite of or because of the voluminous research on violence in Indonesia, ‘violence’ tends to be seen as an extraordinary phenomenon that exemplifies Indonesian society. This portrait, to say the least, is problematic.

This book addresses specifically one important form of political violence in Indonesia — state terrorism. Heryanto’s treatment challenges existing literature and is potentially ground-breaking. Leaning on Achille Mbembe’s works on Africa (another exemplary site of violence in popular consciousness) the book focuses on the banality of what is often perceived as phantasmagoric state terrorism. It revises the argument that state terrorism must necessarily follow an instrumental, if fantastic logic of extreme state power and competence. According to this logic, acts of state terrorism are perpetuated by state agents who possess both the resources and ability to carry out efficiently and without fail the state’s grand plan of regulating, oppressing and torturing ordinary Indonesians. Thus, the line between perpetrators and victims of state terrorism is always already straightforward and clear-cut. Heryanto marshals an impressive array of empirical material, especially in chapters 2, 3, 4 and 5 to critique this instrumentalist logic. Re-thinking ‘state terrorism’, he writes, ‘state terrorism is a

mode of domination where consent, coercion and narratives are neither separable nor easily distinguishable from one another. Agents of the state and their victims are both active perpetrators as well as being actively affected by the perpetration. However, this neither dissolves nor reduces social inequality and unnatural suffering. It remains a mode of domination' (p.194).

I found chapters 3 and 4 particularly powerful. These chapters examine the kidnapping and trial of three young student activists from Yogyakarta – Darmawan, Hidayat and Rudy – towards the end of the 1990s. These events were neither triggered nor planned by the military, a government official or agency. They started unravelling from a seemingly innocuous incident when Darmawan was fingered by a local dramatist, Soleh, for selling banned books outside a performance venue. Heryanto's nuanced analysis of the series of events following Soleh's accusation and Darmawan's detention at the district military command suggests not a grand plot of persecution and victimisation by the state but the workings of a 'simulacral regime' authorised by the New Order state's master narrative of communist subversion coded in Indonesian as the 'Peristiwa G30S / PKI' ('The Gestapo 30<sup>th</sup> September Movement / Communist Party of Indonesia' Incident). This master narrative is examined in chapter 1 which together with the last chapter contains his re-worked account of 'state terrorism'.

Scholars studying Indonesia and Southeast Asia are familiar enough with the New Order master narrative of communist subversion. What sets this book apart is its position against reading the narrative *as if* it is a 'closed text' ready for de-coding. The dominance of this master narrative should neither be assumed nor tied to assumptions about the innate power of historical 'truth' or 'the real'. After all, the efficacy of any narrative, let alone a dominant one, lies in its capacity to signify, thereby creating particular effects through the communication of specific meaning-laden 'messages', in this case, fear-inducing ones. Heryanto's approach is a semiotic one. Briefly, he argues that the master narrative regenerates itself, the New Order state and Indonesian society through the sustained reproduction of terrorising effects via socially significant simulacra. Baudrillard's concept of 'simulacra' is used in a limited way albeit with great effect. Unlike 'ideology', 'simulacra' does not conceal or mystify anything. As 'hyperreal' signs, they are neither 'real' nor 'unreal'. 'Simulacra are there not to deceive people as to intimidate and humiliate them' (p.12).

Lest the heavy engagement with theory conveys the impression that the book is concerned with establishing a new theory about state terrorism, Heryanto insists that a simulacral regime and state terrorism do not work in fixed ways. Borrowing the words of Coronil Fernando and Julie Skurski who work on political violence in Venezuela, he writes that moments of political violence are 'shaped by each society's particular history and myths of collective identity and energized by sedimented memories of threats to the collectivity' (p. 8). Heryanto is careful to attend to the particular and contingent character of state terrorism in Indonesia: 'state terrorism is a dynamic state of being, or, better, of social relations. Its intimidating effects and political efficacy fluctuate and spread unevenly across various social spaces' (p. 23). His mode of analysis oscillates between 'the particular-general, empirical-abstract, subject-structure, narrative theory' (p.160). This is sustained throughout the entire book. Empirical examples are meticulously documented, explained, contextualised and set in relation to

existing literature and the deployment of key concepts and theories. The book is unusually rigorous and it becomes heavy going despite the very lucid writing.

The Yogyakarta case is central to the book's main thrust. Part of the power of the prose in chapters 3 and 4 derives from Heryanto's representation of the voices of Darmawan, Hidayat and Rudy. He cites extensively from their own writings about their experiences of being kidnapped, detained and tortured. Given the nature of the material, the writing could have slipped easily into voyeurism or abetted the creation of yet another spectacle out of the victimhood of the three young men. Heryanto avoids this. His keen insights and cautious qualification of how he is using his material helps to put the voices of the three activists in perspective. Thus, although readers may feel pathos when reading how Darmawan was intimidated into lying and supplying 'testimony' demanded by security agents, the point of the writing is not simply to stir poignant feelings. Heryanto calls attention to the absurd and the ridiculous. The desire and anxiety driving security agents to procure such a testimony, even when it was baseless and not threatening to the state, is absurd. So too are the multiple instances of ineptitude of state agents which includes the prosecutors' decision to take what was a weak case to court and making basic typing errors on the formal indictment document!

The element of absurdity in the Yogyakarta case was apparently a crucial element in traumatising the persecuted, their family members and fellow activists. Heryanto writes, 'one of the reasons why these cases initially created a wave of terror was the fact that (the) charges were, to say the least, extraordinarily superficial. It was as if the authorities were not even pretending to be serious, or bothering to take the trouble to construct even slightly more credible cases. The implication was that only those who were overwhelmingly powerful, immoral and ruthless could present such a prosecution. Consequently, the atmosphere was very confusing for the defendants and others who were involved' (p.119). The microscopic examination of the irrational and inconsistent behaviour of state agents, the differential impact of state terrorism on Darmawan, Hidayat, Rudy, their family, friends and activist circles succeeds in not simply generating empathy for 'the victims' but more importantly assists readers in understanding the workings of state terrorism and techniques of dealing with it.

This book is an important contribution to scholarship on Indonesia but it must be stated that the book should not be narrowly conceived as an 'area studies' book catering mainly to Indonesianists. Heryanto furthers our understanding of power-knowledge and the differential modes of resistance. To this end, I found his discussion in the final chapter on the global dimensions of post-colonial state terrorism, hegemony, consent and resistance, extremely thought provoking. Having plodded through five painstakingly constructed chapters, readers confront once again Heryanto's strategy of keeping the pendulum swinging between the empirical and the theoretical.

As I understand, keeping the two poles critically in play constitutes a novel strategy in 'de-provincialising' Indonesia. Readers are reminded that simulacral regimes that abet state terrorism do not exist in post-colonial societies alone. As a mode of domination, state terrorism is a 'common, persistent and basic mode of rule in the twentieth century' differing 'in scope, intensity, duration and style' (p.163). Compared to the word *teror* in the Indonesian language, the English term 'terrorism' can be misleading because it evokes spectacular violence taking place on a grand magnitude. Of late, the word cannot be expressed without simultaneously invoking images of the

Twin Towers exploding in New York. On the other hand, *teror* connotes the sustained but low-level instances of state-induced fear and violence experienced by Indonesians on a daily basis. The latter is also alive in the so-called 'Western liberal democracies' especially the United States and the United Kingdom. Significantly, their militarism is practised on its own citizens as well as globally. The inter-connections in the history, form, technique and operations of state terrorism gives it a global and necessarily comparative dimension that makes any investigative attempt to reduce state terrorism to a series of 'local' or better yet, 'indigenous' effects, an exercise in chauvinism. The book ends on a pointed note. 'I suspect there are both parallels and genealogical links between yesterday's anthropology and culture and today's state terrorism. They are all married by a totalising ambition, "in which the same constitutes itself through a form of negativity in relation to the other". Anthropology and culture were to the formation of the "West" via European colonial construction of the "East" what state terrorism is to the making of contemporary states' self-identity via the construction of subversives' (p.195).

SAI SIEW MIN

*National University of Singapore*

#### Malaysia

*Politics in Malaysia: The Malay dimension*

By EDMUND TERENCE GOMEZ

London & New York: Routledge, 2007. Pp. 160. References and Index.

doi:10.1017/S0022463408000441

Published in 2007, this book may seem dated given the recent turn of events in the Malaysian General Elections but this is far from the truth. In the March 2008 General Election, the ruling coalition, the Barisan Nasional (BN) suffered its largest electoral losses since independence. It lost four states to the opposition and failed to win back Kelantan, which remains under the control of the Islamic party, PAS. Whilst many commentators are currently scurrying to find explanations for these tectonic changes, I found the essays in this edited volume almost prescient in identifying the key transitions in society that have led to the BN's catastrophic failure at the polls. Another valuable contribution is the mapping out of the issues that will continue to be key concerns for the Malay electorate as well as political parties from both sides of the political spectrum in the years to come.

The volume, ably edited by Edmund Terence Gomez, contains five chapters concerning the Malay dimension of politics. It is a welcome and useful addition to the field. The papers were presented at the Fourth International Malaysian Studies Conference in August 2004 and were put together in this volume on Malay politics in order to raise key questions about the nature of Malay political dominance within the state as well as address the 'limited changes in the pattern of political mobilisation and rhetoric of parties claiming to represent the interests of this ethnic community' (p. ix).

Gomez's first chapter on 'Resistance to change – Malay politics in Malaysia' captures the essence of the current political debacle in UMNO. He argues that Malay parties have engaged in limited change and innovation because they persist in