presumably eschewed details and confined himself to giving us a broad picture of the situation before embarking on a major study. This is a very useful contribution to our understanding of Java's socio-economic history and should be read by everyone interested in the subject.

Universiti Sains Malaysia

M.R. Fernando


Indonesia has undergone major political and social upheavals since the resignation of Suharto from the presidency on 21 May 1998. These upheavals have made dramatic changes to the political, economic, and social scenery of the country in ways and to an extent beyond the prior expectation of most observers. For instance, the gang raping of Chinese females and ability of Habibie to succeed Suharto for more than a couple of months have come as surprises to many observers. Also there was the almost universal assumption until the first half of 1998 that military domination would remain intact regardless of what happened after Suharto no longer ruled.

While we have seen surprises, we may have not seen the worst, the best, or the oddest. There is still no indication that the dust has settled down, and that we have seen more or less the major events that followed Suharto's resignation. Uncertainties of various kinds and scales remain the most salient feature of today's Indonesia. Analyses come in abundance with confusion and predictions in journalistic reports and academic seminars, then in a matter of days they become obsolete. Subsequent corrections have not stood the test of time any better.

Several months prior to these historical moments, Jim Schiller and Barbara Martin-Schiller's co-edited volume on Suharto's Indonesia came out. It is difficult not to immediately ask the question of relevance: how does a volume of academic analyses of Suharto's Indonesia that originate from a 1991 conference find its links to the current tensions and disjunctures? In my own reading at least, many of the chapters in the volume survive the Indonesian political and economic storms fairly well. In varying degrees many of the chapters in this volume provide careful, sensitive, and detailed perspectives that are crucial and yet too often and too easily missing in current comments on volatile Indonesia. They help us understand that the fall of Suharto's New Order regime did not come about overnight as many journalistic comments imply.

William Liddle's examination of the cultural politics of three Indonesian intellectuals (all Jakarta-based and males), Philip Eldridge's insightful observation of the strength and weaknesses of Indonesian NGOs, or Anton Lucas' well-informed study of land disputes that affected the subaltern all have enormous bearings on recent events after Suharto resigned. Liddle's chapter highlights the inter-elite antagonism and aspirations. Eldridge's contribution, just like that of Moelyono, provides the history of street politics and audacious political activism that flood the streets and pages of our newsmagazines these days. Lucas demonstrates that political violence had long been a prominent weapon of the powerful
authoritarian state agents as well as of resistance for the regime’s most repressed and
desperate subjects.

Other chapters have no direct relevance to the fall of Suharto and the aftermath, but
their contribution to Indonesian studies is no less significant. In this category one can
include William Frederick’s investigation of Armijn Pane (a pre-war intellectual figure)
and of contemporary popular culture, Kuntowijoyo’s historical analysis of the culture of
aristocratic Javanese bureaucrats, and studies by both Fachry Ali and Greg Acciaioi on
centre-periphery relationships.

Three contributions stand out as the best in this volume. They are David Bourchier’s
reconstruction of the New Order’s philosophy of state power, Barbara Hatley’s feminist
reading of the sympathetic portrayal of female characters in modern Indonesian fictions
written by males in contrast to those by females, and Amrih Widodo’s rigorous ethnography
of the Samin people of Java’s northern coastal areas. While each of these three chapters
(especially that of Bourchier) has some resonance to contemporary studies of Indonesia
during the major political turmoil, such is not a fair description of the merits of their
works. Each of these studies is important either in their original perspective, in challenging
the conventional wisdom, or laying the foundation for further research on culture, power,
gender, state, ethnicity, history, fiction, or language. They represent some of the finest
scholarly works on Indonesia that we have today. Bourchier and Widodo may also represent
the promising elements within the new generation of Indonesianists.

The main problem with the volume is its lack of coherence, as is to be expected with
most publications originating from conferences. Most of the chapters barely have sub
stantive links with each other. One can easily sympathize with the editors who must have
had to juggle with such diverse materials in terms of approach, scope, focus, or style of
presentation. Understandably, the editors’ introductory chapter contains mainly a summary
of each chapter. I was unable to find any synthesis or common thread running through
the volume. Neither can I be sure why the book bears the title it does, nor why it has no
index of subjects or names.

No doubt the volume offers important materials for anyone teaching or conducting
research on contemporary Indonesian politics and culture. Different chapters in the book
may appeal different people for different reasons. It is a little difficult to imagine that
many of us can take full advantage of all the chapters for a single purpose.

National University of Singapore
Ariel Heryanto

Young Heroes: The Indonesian Family in Politics. By SAYA S. SHIRAISHI. Ithaca:

Saya S. Shiraishi’s Young Heroes is a study of the family, not as a unit of social organi
zation in Indonesian society, but as a key concept in New Order Indonesian political
ideology. The idea of the family Shiraishi envisions is a thoroughly modern invention. It
was created in the early 1920s, she asserts, on the model of the among system of Ki
Hadjar Dewantara, the architect of Indonesia’s educational system. Historically, Shiraishi
argues, “family-ism” (kekeluargaan) spread from the schools to government offices as