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<Book Review>

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**Anthony Reid. *To Nation by Revolution: Indonesia in the 20th Century*.
Singapore: NUS Press, 2011, 348p.**

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practices, outsiders in family-owned companies have limited opportunities for advancement, which often results in leaving their employers and seeking out better opportunities.

There is a common omission in the two books. Both show little concern about Buddhists' involvement in violence. In Hipsher's book, Buddhists' involvement in violence deviates from their beliefs in *kamma* and "middle way" values. In Schober's book, Buddhists' involvement in violence should be regarded as another expression of monastic resistance to the state. At present, Buddhist extremism is thriving in Myanmar, which is engaging in violence against Muslims. Radical Buddhist monks have been accused of spreading hate speech and fueling sectarian violence as was evident when the country was ravaged by anti-Muslim violence in 2012 and 2013, violence that left more than 200 people dead and tens of thousands homeless, mostly Muslims (Radio Free Asia 2014). In March 2014, Buddhist mobs even attacked international aid agencies over perceived pro-Rohingya bias, triggering a mass humanitarian withdrawal from Rakhine State (Integrated Regional Information Networks 2014). If the authors would consider Buddhists' involvement in violence, their arguments and predictions on the future trend will be more inclusive.

Rich in insights and elegant in presentation, both books are well documented and thoroughly researched. They represent a welcome and original contribution to the study of Theravada Buddhism, and offer new directions for future research. They are to be highly recommended to researchers, students, and practitioners alike who seek to gain both stimulating theoretical and more practical insights into Theravada Buddhist countries of Southeast Asia.

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To Nation by Revolution: Indonesia in the 20th Century

ANTHONY REID

Singapore: NUS Press, 2011, 348p.

To Nation by Revolution is a collection of articles written by Anthony Reid, who has been praised not only for his seminal book *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce*, but also for important works on diverse themes that have been critical in the formation of Indonesia. At first glance, the book

looks quite disoriented: the 12 chapters were written over a quite long time span, and the topics of the chapters appear to be rather fragmented. However, reading through the entire book, readers find that these seemingly fragmented chapters are interconnected through the mediating role of the “Revolution” and sociopolitical transformations linked to it.

Reid sees the Indonesian Revolution as more analogous to the French Revolution than to the Russian Revolution and in this book the term is used to represent a kind of political phenomenon. However, the Revolution is not confined to the “Revolusi,” Indonesian struggle (1945–49) for independence against the Dutch. As Reid himself states, this book is rather about the “manner in which Indonesia entered the modern community of nation-states, through political revolution” (p. viii). In light of this perspective, the Revolution here does not merely denote political changes, but also connotes sociocultural transformations Indonesians have experienced for a longer period of time beyond the 1940s.

The themes of the chapters testify to the wide thematic scope of the Revolution, and of the changes resulting in and from the Revolution. The majority of the chapters analyze topics directly or indirectly related to the Revolusi (1945–49) and adjacent time period. Yet some chapters deal with themes, temporally or thematically far away from the Revolusi. The most interesting cases are chapter 2 (“The Late Death of Slavery”), chapter 3 (“From Betel to Tobacco”), and chapter 12 (“Chinese and the State”). These issues appear to have nothing to do with other chapters on political changes in Indonesia in the mid-twentieth century. They are, however, not unrelated to others in that they explore transformations that led to a break with past tradition in Indonesian society. Subsequently, these paved the way for the “Revolution” and the emergence of a nation-state, baptized with a new zeitgeist such as modern knowledge and new political system. Yet, the Revolusi in the 1940s did not come without any preliminary symptoms: “revolutionary” social transformations in the colonial period such as the abolition of slavery and the replacement of betel by tobacco were among those factors that contributed to the political revolution in the mid-twentieth century.

In this regard, I think that chapter 5 (“*Merdeka*: The Indonesian Key to Freedom”) is pivotal in linking the two seemingly unrelated phenomena—sociocultural transformations (chapters 2 and 3) and political changes—analyzed in other chapters. *Merdeka*, originating from Sanskrit *maharddika* (eminent, wise, illustrious), came to legally mean non-slave status in Malay, and, with the introduction of the Western political concept, it came to take on the meaning of “freedom” and functioned as a key political term in anticolonial movements (pp. 107, 116). In the context of the Revolusi, *Merdeka* signified the ultimate freedom: independence (p. 120). Thus, considering the etymological history of the term *Merdeka*, research on the Indonesian Revolution should also pay attention to diverse social reforms (such as land reforms and labor movements) against the backdrop of political upheaval. The inclusion of chapter 9 (“Gestapu”) can be understood in this light: to Reid, the coup in October 1965 and the subsequent birth of an authoritarian state was not just

a tragic political event: by eliminating social aspects of Merdeka and making it completely a political independence, the New Order brought about the decline or demise of the Revolution that Indonesians (and probably Reid) have envisioned.

Another interesting point is the time span of the publication dates of the chapters: almost 40 years. The oldest one (chapter 9) was published in 1968, while the most recent one (chapter 11 “Why not Federalism”) came out in 2007. This temporal gap between chapters may raise skepticism on the coherence of the entire book. At the same time, however, it is one of the merits this kind of compilation can produce: reading this book provides an opportunity to trace the diversity and changes over many years in Reid’s scholarly interests in contemporary Indonesia. These factors make the publication of this collection of diverse articles more plausible. As the author points out, each chapter exhibits his perspectives and scholarly debates in the period when they were written, so it is understandable that he deliberately meant to leave the articles as unmodified as possible. This is particularly positive in that the book provides other scholars of modern Indonesia with room for (re)interpretation of what has been written by one of the most prominent trailblazers in the field.

However, this book also contains weaknesses, some of which ironically come from the above-mentioned merits. First, primarily because of his intention to keep the articles as unchanged as possible, there is inevitable redundancy in some parts of the book. For example, while chapter 7 (“The Japanese Impact”) investigates the Japanese Occupation period (1942–45) in detail, parts of chapters 1 and 8 also cover the period. A slight streamlining of some chapters might have made the book more compact and cohesive. The most regrettable point is that the book does not include a newly-written introduction. To some extent, chapter 1 (“Indonesia: Revolution without Socialism”) plays its part as an introductory chapter. However, it would have been much better if it had included Reid’s own reflection (if not evaluation) of his research and perspectives on Indonesian society over the past four decades. I agree that the publication of this book is justifiable in that it would benefit Indonesianists by bringing together the scattered writings of the author (p. viii). However, I believe that a new (introductory) chapter reflecting his current interpretation of the (concept and scope of) Revolution would have given more scholarly legitimacy for the publication of this book.

Despite these minor weaknesses, *To Nation by Revolution* is still a good read, filled with useful information and (still) provocative insights. By welding a social history point of view in analyzing political issues and events, this book (and each chapter) problematizes the definition and significance of the Revolution. By doing so, it provides diverse angles to look at Indonesian society in the twentieth century.

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