

Review: William H. Frederick, *Visions and Heat: The Making of the Indonesian Revolution*. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1988. 339 pp.

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Bill Frederick's study of Surabaya in the late colonial period through the early days of 1945 revolution is a welcome addition to the growing, but still small, body of Indonesian local histories. Writing "the" history of a country as immense and diverse as Indonesia is a virtually impossible task. In the attempt to write such a history, scholars almost inevitably come to write from the perspective of the capital city, focusing on national policies and priorities. Even where the role of events outside the capital is acknowledged, their genesis sometimes remains obscure. Local histories not only illuminate the dynamics of particular events, but provide the concrete evidence for generalizations about the forces at play in these events. It is from the building blocks of local histories that more fully accurate national histories can be constructed.

In this study, Frederick set out to "fashion a coherent, local history of the social aspects of the birth of the Indonesian Revolution" (p. xi).² By focusing on "the shifting social ideas and relationships" in Surabaya during that period, and by describing the "nature of several levels of Indonesian society in a single urban locale," he hoped to provide a more accurate description of the birth of the revolution (pp. x-xi).

To a substantial degree Frederick has succeeded in the task he set for himself. He shows the continuity of social development from the late colonial period through the Japanese Occupation to the start of the revolution. His biographic sketches of several representatives of the "new *priyayi*" provide concrete examples of the social change that Western ideas and education brought to Indonesian society. Finally, he traces the role of these new *priyayi*, and their *pemuda* allies, in the early stages of the revolution.

Although Frederick specifies "levels of society" and not social classes as the focus of his attention, he faces the same problems of definition and applicability that have stymied other scholars attempting to interpret non-European societies through the prism of Western class models. This is a task that appears to be particularly difficult for American scholars—immersed in a society in which virtually all members believe themselves to be "middle class." It is exemplified by Frederick's attempt to create a category, "new *priyayi*," and to distinguish it from the old *priyayi* and from what he calls the "*kampung* middle class."

My objection to the term "new *priyayi*" is in part that it seems to add nothing to standard usages, such as intellectual or nationalist. Frederick himself virtually admits that the new *priyayi* could well be characterized as intellectuals. In part my objection is that

¹The views expressed in this review are those of the author, and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department of State.

²Throughout this review page numbers in parentheses refer to *Visions and Heat*.

the term implies a lack of mobility into the ranks of the "old" *priyayi*, which is contrary to the evidence of scholars such as Heather Sutherland.³

Frederick's biographic sketches of representative new *priyayi* illustrate the problem of defining categories and drawing lines between different levels of society. Sudirman and his wife, Siti Sudari, were descendents of old *priyayi* families, as were, Frederick admits, others he includes among the new *priyayi* (pp. 42–43). Others came from more modest backgrounds, including the group Frederick calls the *kampung* middle class. Ruslan Abdulgani, a *pemuda* leader, is described as belonging to a *kampung* middle-class family, but he appears indistinguishable from others identified as new *priyayi*. Achmad Djais and Sungkono are placed in the new *priyayi* grouping, with the note that they remained "entrenched in" or close to the *kampung* world (pp. 45–46).

I found the line between the new *priyayi* and the *kampung* middle class indistinct, and the line between these two and the *pemuda* to be solely generational. All of these groups appear, from Frederick's description of them, to be characterized by an interest in Western/modern education, employment in what might be called the modern sector, and involvement in nationalist organizations. With even the small expansion of Western-style education in the 1930s, and ambitious *kampung* families' recognition that this was a path to success, level or type of education seems to have been relatively unimportant as a defining characteristic. One is led to wonder if it is primarily their place of residence—an urban *kampung*—that distinguishes the *kampung* middle class from Frederick's new *priyayi*. (Achmad Djais, however, remained a *kampung* dweller.) Place of employment may also have been significant. Although one of the distinguishing features of the new *priyayi* is their employment outside the traditional *pangreh praja*, several, including Sudirman and Sutadji, did work in the more technical branches of the civil service. The *kampung* middle class seems to have eschewed government employment, and to have been more likely self-employed as small-scale entrepreneurs. Nonetheless, I am inclined to believe that if lines are so difficult to draw, perhaps they do not have much significance.

A line that is more significant is that between this better-off group of urban dwellers and the urban masses. Even here, however, one must recognize that some mobility existed, even in the relatively rigid colonial society. Indeed, Frederick indicates that the *kampung* middle class developed out of the larger urban society. In his general discussion of *kampung*, he mentions that they were "identifiable primarily by their age, location and economic well-being," and that "neighborhoods tended to be known by the language or cultural affinities of the majority of their inhabitants" (p. 13). This early mention of ethnic identification is an aspect of Surabayan social relationships that is surprisingly missing from much of the rest of the book.

Frederick's very interesting description of the varied social, economic, ethnic, and religious character of Surabaya's *kampung* provides a basis for a more differentiated characterization of the urban masses than is found in later chapters of his book. While recognizing the difficulty of so doing, I wonder if it might not have been possible to apply these descriptions to particular *kampung*. Then, were it possible to determine which *kampung* were active participants in particular events in the early revolutionary violence, it might be possible to add a deeper dimension to our understanding of which

³Heather Sutherland, "The Priyayi," *Indonesia* 19 (April 1975): 75. On the relationship between the new elite and the old *priyayi* see Robert Van Niel, *The Emergence of the Modern Indonesian Elite* (The Hague: van Hoeve, 1970), especially pp. 177–78.

groups or elements in the urban mass—including perhaps ethnic and religious groups—played which roles in the birth of the revolution.

Obviously it is much more difficult to draw a picture of the urban mass than of the much smaller groups that comprise the *pemuda* and the older nationalist leaders. However, recognizing the value of Frederick's vignettes of his new *priyayi*, I wonder if he might not have been able to locate a few people who rose from the urban mass in the course of the revolution. Perhaps none are still alive. But it would add greatly to our understanding if we could know more about such people as the illiterate Surabayan *becak* driver once described to me by a professional of the Indonesian army as the most courageous man and best battalion leader of the TNI during the revolution.

While much of Frederick's description and analysis of Surabayan society is devoted to the new *priyayi* and *kampung* middle class, his account of the early phase of the revolution focuses more on the differing roles of these older nationalist leaders and the *pemuda*, and between these socially similar groups and the urban masses. The nationalist leaders and the *pemuda* appear to have had close and virtually continuous contact, and Frederick appears correct in questioning the concept of a *pemuda*-led revolution. The two groups did perform different functions: the leaders were preoccupied with governing, while the *pemuda*—lacking such responsibilities—were more concerned with organizing the masses in support of the revolution.

The problems the *pemuda* faced, not least in their own attitudes, are illustrated in Frederick's description of the 1930s efforts of the Surabaya branch of the PNI-associated Indonesia Muda organization to recruit ordinary urban youth as members (p. 57). The *kampung* youth were eager to learn to read and write, but, despite their radically anti-colonial attitudes, were little interested in the political purposes of Indonesia Muda. Perhaps not recognizing the pragmatic correctness of these attitudes among the *kampung* youth, their more educated tutors congratulated themselves that their students were "thrilled and awed" by the intellectuals' willingness to help them. Even more telling of the condescension gap between the educated and *kampung* youth, is Ruslan Abdulgani's recollection that he had been "unable to conceal his amusement and gentle contempt" when a recent literate had difficulty pronouncing foreign words.

It is not then surprising that in the early days of the revolution *pemuda* leaders found it difficult or impossible to restrain the violence of the urban mass in incidents in Bubutan, Keputeran, Kalisosok, and Simpang in which Japanese, Dutch, and Eurasians were killed. Frederick notes that the *pemuda* shared the apprehensions of the older leaders of the violence and ferocity of the mass (p. 232). At the same time, however, that mass radicalism frightened the intellectuals, they realized that it was the "motor" of the revolution (pp. 234, 238).

That the gap between revolutionary leaders and urban mass was not unbridgeable is indicated in Frederick's account of the activities of the quintessential Surabaya revolutionary hero, Bung Tomo. While still with the PRI (Pemuda Republik Indonesia—Youth of the Republic of Indonesia), Bung Tomo had successfully negotiated between an urban mob and Japanese troops for the turnover of weapons from the Don Bosco barracks (p. 212). In his own BPRI (Barisan Pemberontakan Republik Indonesia—Insurgent Corps of the Republic of Indonesia), which he subsequently founded, Bung Tomo disregarded formal lines of organization and offered a role in the revolutionary struggle for all the people, and not just the educated youth. Still, although Bung Tomo could rouse

the people with his radio appeals, he too had limited success in organizing and channeling their revolutionary passions.

Although Frederick's careful study does much to illuminate the origins and activities of the nationalist intellectuals, I found myself at the conclusion still pondering why it was Surabaya that was the cauldron of the revolution. Was it simply because so many weapons had fallen into Indonesian hands—and therefore Surabayan youth, unlike their compatriots in Makassar, for example, had the means to commit violence? Was it because Dutch, ex-internees as well as officials, began to return even before the Allies arrived, signaling an intention to reestablish colonial rule that triggered violent mass outbursts? Was it something inherent in the nature of the "*arek* Surabaya"—the marginal, uprooted population of a large commercial city, without the restraint of traditional social bonds? Did ethnicity play a role?

Frederick does provide information that at least allows one to ponder the initial questions. However, despite his early mention of ethnicity as a defining characteristic of the various urban *kampung*, this aspect of Surabaya society is not again mentioned. Indeed, the word Madurese rarely appears, and once is an apparent typo for Manadonese (p. 242). It is no denigration of the strength of Indonesian nationalism, or an attempt to stir up ethnic tensions, to inquire whether ethnic differences may not have played a role. At a minimum, if many in the urban mass were ethnic Madurese, and most of the nationalist leaders in Surabaya Javanese, was there a language barrier to easy communication? Difficult as such information may be to come by, I wonder if an analysis of the ethnic data in the 1930 census might not have contributed to an understanding of this dimension of Surabaya society.

Despite these unanswered questions, *Visions and Heat* contributes significantly to our understanding of the origins and outbreak of the Indonesian revolution. Frederick's choice of Surabaya for his study is apt. It was the violence of October, beginning with attacks on Japanese installations and culminating in the battle of Surabaya that began on November 10, 1945, that so influenced the decisions of nationalist leaders and the British occupying forces. The armed resistance to the Dutch return undermined the Allied presumption that only a few nationalist intellectuals supported the proclamation of independence and that the British interregnum would be a brief one until the Dutch return. Nationalist leaders were at the same time, and in varying degrees, heartened by the obvious willingness of Indonesia's youth to die to prevent the Dutch return, dismayed at the loss of life this course entailed, and fearful that their inability to control and channel revolutionary violence would undermine the chances of the newly proclaimed Republic for international recognition.