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Maxwell Ronald Lane
University of Wollongong

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Department of History and Politics

**Mass mobilisation in Indonesian politics,
1960-2001: towards a class analysis.**

Maxwell Ronald Lane

**This thesis is presented as part of the requirements for the
award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
at
University of Wollongong**

May, 2009

CERTIFICATION

I, Maxwell Ronald Lane, declare that this thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, in the School of History and Politics, University of Wollongong, is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. The document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other institution.

Max Lane

October, 2009

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ABSTRACT

This thesis presents an analysis of the course of political developments between 1960 and 2001 arguing that the determining factor at key conjunctures was class struggle, as manifested in the mass mobilisation of Indonesia's popular classes: the proletariat, semi-proletariat and pauperized petty bourgeoisie, (the latter including the peasants). The thesis deploys classical Marxist concepts, in their connections to some of Indonesia's political thinkers, especially Soekarno. It critiques some of the major in-depth (book length) struggles on political developments during this period as negating or downplaying the class factor, and in particular class struggle and mass mobilisation, in their studies.

The thesis argues that it has been the nature of two crisis caused by the escalation of mass mobilisation of the popular classes against a ruling class and its political elite, and the nature of the resolution of these two crisis, that best explains what happens at two key conjunctures in modern Indonesian history, 1965 and 1998. In 1965 the sharpening polarization between two visions of Indonesia was resolved with mass repression and the emergence of the New Order regime. The thesis examines how the political activity one side of this polarization was increasingly manifested in mass mobilisation and how the new regime was structured to permanently end all mass mobilisation activity. The thesis examines the nature of the crisis, namely an impending threat of the forces of the mass mobilisation winning power.

The thesis later examines the process whereby mass mobilisation politics in the period 1989-1998, re-asserted itself, through the agency of a small initiating political group, the Peoples' Democratic Party, and through the increasing involvement of more and more elements from the popular classes. A part of the examination presents the analysis that the content of class struggle for this period, in the aftermath of the radical suppression of mass mobilisation, was the struggle of the popular classes to reassert a right to mobilize. The thesis then examines the nature of crisis caused by the escalating mass mobilisation of this period, especially as it climaxes between 1996 and 1998.

Through an examination of the reasons for the inability of the political movement based on mass mobilisation to win power and its inability to sustain further escalation between 1998 and 2001, the thesis attempts to locate political weaknesses of the mass mobilisation politics that emerged in the 1990s, identifying in particular its weak ideological activity and dependence on alliance with dissident elements from within the ruling class and its elite.

The conclusion sums up these arguments as well as looks at possible future trends and the research agendas that would be needed to pursue this kind of approach in regard to future developments.

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This thesis most of all was made possible by the willingness of so many Indonesians to share their ideas with me. I thank especially all those I list in my prefatory note.

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Among my colleagues and associates, Dr Toby Carrol, now at the National University of Singapore, has been very supportive offering camaraderie as well as comments on some of what I have written.

I am also grateful for the comments and suggestions of Allen Myers, John Percy and Eva To.

Finally, I would like to thank my wife and partner, Faiza, whose companionship and solidarity has been essential.

PRELIMINARY NOTES

Engagement with Indonesians.

I have not used systematic interviewing as a part of the methodology of this thesis and have not sourced interviews conducted during the period of preparing the thesis. However, during that period I have had many discussions with Indonesians, whose own activities and ideas are relevant to thesis and indeed, in some cases, the subject of the thesis. These dialogues, however, are a continuation of a general dialogue I have had with political and culturally active Indonesians since 1971. There can be no doubt that that 48 years of dialogue has contributed – positively, I hope – to the course of trying to understand Indonesian politics, and therefore, also in writing this thesis. For the readers benefit, I list some of those Indonesians, but only those who are mentioned in the thesis. And with whom I have had such a dialogue. I have asterisked with a triple asterisk those with whom the dialogue has been intense, with two asterisk those with whom the dialogue has been regular but not intense and with one asterisk for those with whom the dialogue has been sporadic.

Abdurrahman Wahid 1991-1996 ** 1996 – 2004 *

Budiman Sujatmiko 1991 – 2001 ***

Danial Indrakusuma 1990 -2009 ***

Dita Sari 1992-2007 ***

Hariman Siregar 1978 – 2009 **

Joesoef Isak 1980-2009 ***

Pramoedya Ananta Toer 1980 – 2007 ***

Rendra, 1972-1981 *** 1981 – 2009 *

Wilson 1992-2001 *** 2001-2009 *

I am deeply grateful for the time and energy that these and many others have given to me over the years.

Published Material

A considerable amount of the material in this thesis was included a book published during my doctoral candidacy, namely, *Unfinished Nation: Indonesia before and after Suharto*, Verso, 2008. Some material from Chapter 2 appears in Chapters 1 and 2 of that book. Much of the materials in Chapters 3, 4,5,6 and 7 appear in the same chapters in the book. Smaller sections of the thesis appear in other parts of *Unfinished Nation*.