

Ehito Kimura. *Political Change and Territoriality in Indonesia: Provincial Proliferation*. London: Routledge, 2013. 171 pp.

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The number of provinces and districts in Indonesia has increased dramatically since Indonesia's political opening in 1998. In his new book, Ehito Kimura asks why this territorial fragmentation has occurred and what it tells us about Indonesian politics.¹

His introductory chapter outlines three main arguments. First, new political institutions at the national level created "critical junctures," during which territorial change became possible. Concretely, the introduction of elections and the decentralization of political and fiscal powers created opportunities for political actors to renegotiate territorial boundaries. Second, the actual contours of territorial proliferation are shaped by highly political and contentious processes. The fault lines of these struggles over space and place do not always emerge between the national and subnational level. Rather, alliances that stretch across government layers often explain why administrative fragmentation has taken different forms. Third, the flexibility of the very notion of "territory" needs to be recognized and understood by how it is shaped in the broader historical context.

The subsequent three chapters describe the historical context in which territorial politics have unfolded since 1945. Chapter 2 defines key terms, such as "territory" and "territoriality," and situates the concept of "territorial politics" in the literature on coalitional politics and political mobilization. Chapter 3 provides an overview of territorial politics since the colonial period. Kimura argues that territorial changes under the Dutch continue to influence provincial proliferation until today. Chapter 4 explores changes in Indonesia's territorial administration from the 1950s to the collapse of the New Order in 1998. Kimura concludes that territorial proliferation is dependent upon state strength. During the tumultuous 1950s, when the state was weak, groups situated in society successfully pushed for the creation of new localities. By comparison, the comparatively strong state during the New Order period is the reason that almost no new territorial units emerged during the Suharto years.

The second part of the book looks into territorial politics in Indonesia after 1998. The three case studies explored are indicative of the various forms of territorial proliferation across the country since the demise of Suharto. Chapter 5 examines the split of Gorontalo province from North Sulawesi in 2000. There, tensions between ethnic groups had simmered ever since different groups were lumped together in the residency of Manado during the Dutch colonial period. These rifts, accentuated by colonial policies that favored certain groups over others, resurfaced in the context of democratization after 1998. The minority group of ethnic Gorontalo pushed for a province independent from the Minahasa that constituted the largest ethnic group in North Sulawesi.

¹ Those questions are also addressed elsewhere in this issue of *Indonesia*; see: Keith Andrew Bettinger, "Puncak Andalas: Functional Regions, Territorial Coalitions, and the Unlikely Story of One Would-be Province."

In Chapter 6, Kimura shows that the split of Riau into two provinces in 2004 was driven by different factors. Significant socio-economic inequalities layered on top of ethnic and religious differences were not, together, a factor, as was the case in Gorontalo province. Rather, shifting alliances between the central government (Jakarta) and local elites in one part of the province changed the power balance within Riau after 1998 and, ultimately, gave rise to the new Riau Island province. Territorial change, in other words, occurred due to changing relations between the center and the periphery. In Chapter 7, Kimura examines the creation of West Irian province. There, the territorial fragmentation had its origins at the national level. National elites split the province to quell a secessionist movement as well as to strengthen their control over the region's natural resources.

Chapter 8 contains a summary of the arguments and examines whether the concept of "territorial coalitions" explains cases of administrative fragmentation outside Indonesia. To this end, Kimura looks at the proliferation of new administrative units in India and Nigeria. He finds that territorial coalitions that include a variety of actors situated at different government layers have also been the driving force behind the creation of new political entities in these two countries. In India, however, many of these territorial coalitions followed party lines, and political parties were eventually the main beneficiaries of provincial proliferation. In Nigeria, ethnic groups that were spread across administrative layers promoted the creation of new provinces to support regional allies from the same tribe.

Kimura's book is important for several reasons. The devolution of political and fiscal powers in Indonesia after 1998 has triggered a large body of literature on the subject. Most studies examine the implications of decentralization for either national or local politics. Processes by which space is bounded and divided between territories that are often nested within one another are rarely addressed. Furthermore, almost all existing works also implicitly assume that the regulatory framework circumscribing the relations between government layers is shaping politics rather than the other way round. Said differently, in most research on decentralization in Indonesia, the understanding of politics is aspatial as much as the conceptualization of territory and territoriality is apolitical.

Yet, the political and the spatial constitute one another.² Kimura's book is one of the first studies of Indonesian politics that takes this issue seriously by explicitly examining how the interactions among political actors situated at different administrative layers shape politics. Kimura also shows that these relations produce space as much as they are shaped by it. Concretely, the democratization of Indonesian politics since 1998 may not have changed considerably the qualifications for being considered among the political elites. Yet, the democratic opening has rendered the relations among these elites more competitive and fragmented. Kimura's book shows that territory and space shape the relationship between these players in important ways. In addition to contributing to our understanding of elite politics and dynamics within the state, Kimura's study also shows the importance of space for our analysis of contentious politics between societal groups and the state in Indonesia after 1998. For example, he shows that territorial coalitions were most successful in establishing new

² Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1991).

localities if they cooperated closely and made relatively narrow and concrete demands for territorial change. This is in contrast to recent arguments that social movements in Indonesia are successfully influencing politics despite their fragmentation,³ and should therefore lead to an interesting debate.

At the same time, the book leaves important questions unanswered. For instance, it would have been interesting to learn why Papuans were (and continue to be) unable to use the discourse about territoriality and ethnicity to their advantage while groups in other parts of the archipelago, such as the Gorontalo in Sulawesi, were able to do so. Is this due to differences inherent to these groups, or because of the relationship between these groups and the broader political arena? Similarly, why were people in Riau successful in linking questions surrounding territory and space to claims about local resource control, while Papuans failed? In other words, how does space define and confine the validation (or the “certification,” as social movement theory has called this process⁴) of political actors and their agendas in contemporary Indonesia? Why does the ongoing discourse about territoriality and the politics of territory improve the rights of some political groups, but not others, to exist, to act, and to make claims? A more explicit comparison among the three examples of provincial proliferation in Papua, Riau, and Sulawesi may have shed light on such questions.

Overall, the lack of studies on the subject of territoriality in Indonesian politics, despite the fact that fifteen years have passed since the country adopted one of the most decentralized political systems in the world, makes this an important book, which will be an informative read for academics and development practitioners alike.

³ Edward Aspinall, “A Nation in Fragments: Patronage and Neoliberalism in Contemporary Indonesia,” *Critical Asian Studies* 45,1 (2013): 27–54.

⁴ Doug McAdam, Sidney Tarrow, and Charles Tilly, “Dynamics of Contention,” *Social Movement Studies* 2,1 (2003): 145–46.