

Upon his return to Jakarta, he joined with a militant Islamic youth group in ransacking and burning of buildings associated with the PKI. By early 1966, he was an active leader in student demonstrations on the streets, expressing the Tritura (*Tri Tuntutan Rakyat* - Three Demands of the People): calling for the President to ban the PKI, to reshuffle the Cabinet, and to lower the price of basic commodities. This was part of a wider campaign by the newly formed KAMI (*Kesatuan Aksi Mahasiswa Indonesia - University Student Action Front*), but his group of campus-based students from the Faculties of Letters and Psychology acted both autonomously and in concert with others. Among other activities, the demonstrators took their protests to cabinet ministers and even to the President. This was a risky business because Sukarno was recalcitrant and tried hard to restore his authority, encouraging those still loyal to him to confront the protesters.

Arief was unable to take an active part in these demonstrations because he had fallen seriously ill with tuberculosis. Nevertheless, behind the scenes, he worked with a group of writers and artists preparing placards and posters that were used by the demonstrators.

After Sukarno was compelled to surrender powers to General Soeharto on 11 March 1966 and action was taken on the students' demands, Hok Gie and Arief both engaged in preparing and writing scripts for broadcasts on the student Radio AMPERA. They worked together harmoniously and effectively. This was an important turning point in their personal relationship. The two brothers were also contributors to the two new student newspapers that appeared in mid-1966—the Jakarta daily *Harian KAMI* and the Bandung weekly *Mahasiswa Indonesia*—that were intent on attacking all aspects of the Old Order and its leadership.

In July 1966 the journalist and novelist Mochtar Lubis was released from detention. He had been visited in early March on several occasions while still in detention by both brothers who admired him for his principled opposition to Sukarno. Mochtar soon launched the magazine *Horison*, destined for a while to become Indonesia's leading literary magazine. Arief (still under the name Soe Hok Djinn) became a member of its original editorial board together with luminaries like the literary critic HB Jassin. At around the same time Hok Gie's very first article in the press appeared in the student weekly *Mahasiswa Indonesia* under the title 'Why I chose gaol – Mochtar Lubis and politics'.

Both brothers went on to become noted columnists in the mainstream press, particularly in *Kompas* and *Sinar Harapan*. But unlike many of their contemporaries, they

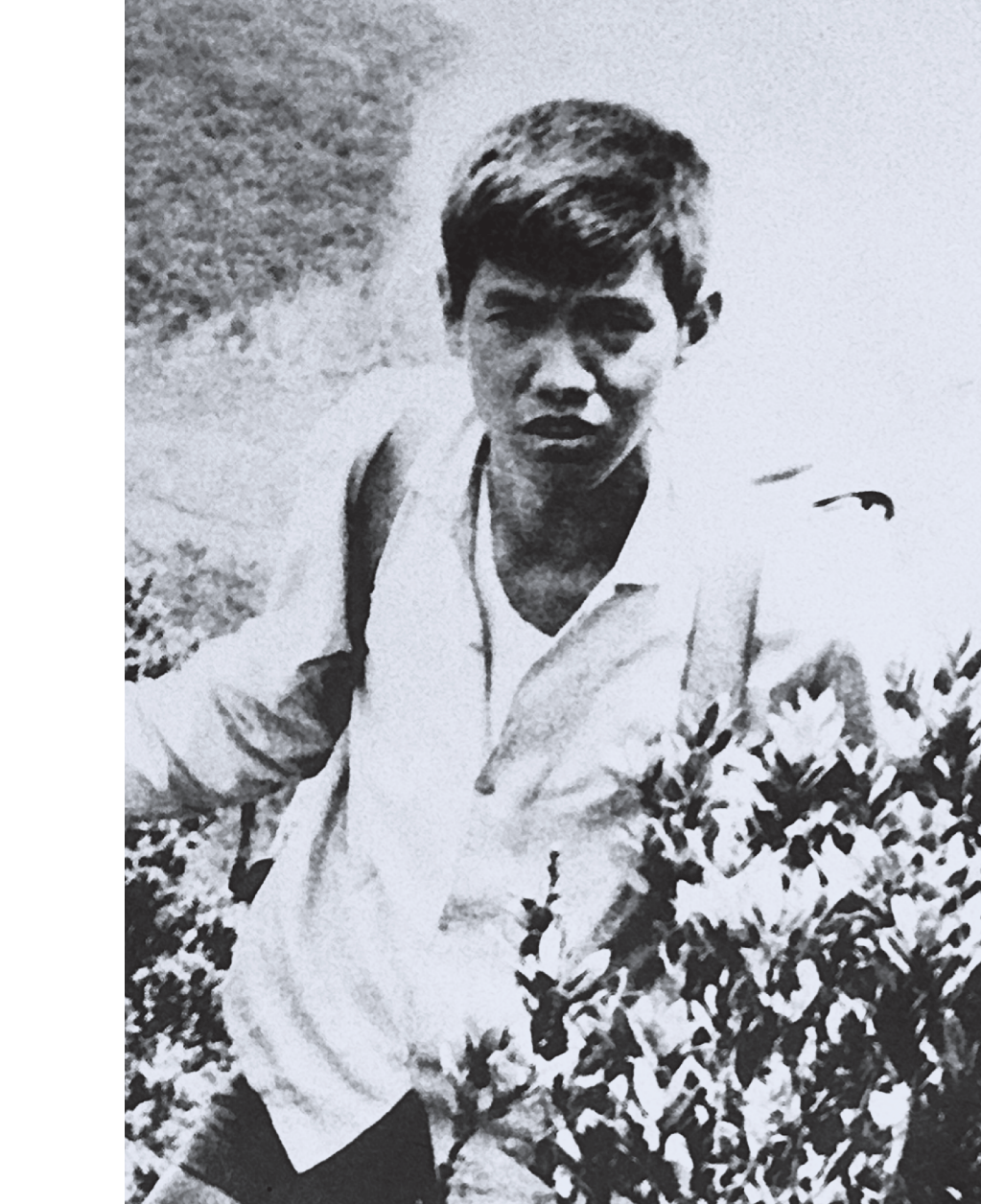


Fig. 3: Soe Hok Gie, approx. 1968 (Photo courtesy John Maxwell, original source unknown).

did not remain silent in the face of injustices. In particular, Hok Gie's two-part *Kompas* article in July 1967 on "The future social consequences of the Gestapu affair" was probably the first time that the horrendous scale of injustice and human suffering caused to the victims of the drive against the PKI and its affiliates after October 1965 was raised in the Indonesian press. In contrast to their friend Mochtar Lubis, both brothers took up the cause of the many thousands of political prisoners detained without charge or trial.

In the last phase of his life Hok Gie felt alone in his struggle. But as Arief stood beside his brother's coffin in East Java, he declared "Gie, you are not alone." Arief soon assumed

the mantle of the activist, moving beyond the spoken and written word by leading campaigns against corruption, boycotting the stage-managed New Order elections, and opposing the expensive Taman Mini theme park.

Both brothers were public intellectuals who were steadfast in their courage and consistent in their defence of freedom of expression and human rights. We can only speculate about what Hok Gie would have done had he lived. In the case of Arief, during a period of graduate studies in the United States, he was influenced by a wider range of ideas, including neo-Marxism. When he returned to Salatiga, his teaching of development studies and contextual literature during

the 1980s was anathema to some of his old friends and comrades.

Arief also came to regret the assimilationist movement and embraced the concept of a multicultural Indonesia in which Chinese culture had a place. He also recognised that the role of a public intellectual came at a cost to himself and his family. In his inaugural professorial lecture at the University of Melbourne, he paid tribute to his wife Leila, saying, "You all know it is far from easy to live as the wife of a person like me." And yet, despite that statement to his dead brother – "Gie, you are not alone" – the title of that lecture was "The Lonely Road of the Intellectual."⁵

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Notes

- 1 Soe Lie Piet, *Melantjong ka Bali (dari pengalaman sendiri 1 taon berdiri di Bali)* (Sightseeing in Bali based on a year's personal experience living in Bali), Penghidoepan XI, 131 November 1935, 80 pp; and *Pengoendjoekan Poela Bali atawa Gids Bali (Guide to the island of Bali or Bali Guidebook)*, Malang: Paragon Press.
- 2 Soe Hok Gie, *Catatan Seorang Demontran*, Jakarta: LP3ES, 1983.
- 3 John Maxwell, *Soe Hok-Gie, Pergulatan Intelektual Muda Melawan Tirani*, Jakarta: Pustaka Utama Grafiti, 2001, based on John R. Maxwell, "Soe Hok-Gie: A Biography of a Young Indonesian Intellectual", unpublished PhD dissertation, The Australian National University, 1997.
- 4 Despite the newspaper headlines when he died, Arief Budiman was certainly not unrecognised in Indonesia. A tribute for his 77th birthday published in 2018 includes 26 contributions and runs to 267 pages: KH. Mustofa Bisri et al (ed), *Arief Budiman (Soe Hok Djinn) Melawan tanpa Kebencian*, Yogyakarta: New Merah Putih, 2018. Another tribute published posthumously has over 50 contributions and runs to 434 pages: Syaefudin Simon and Swary Utami Dewi (ed), *Idealisme dan Kearifan Arief Budiman*, Jakarta: Global Express Media, 2020.
- 5 This is an abridged version of the inaugural Arief Budiman Lecture delivered at the University of Melbourne on 28 September 2021 by Charles Coppel. The full lecture may be found at <https://arts.unimelb.edu.au/asia-institute/news-and-events/inaugural-arief-budiman-lecture>. John Maxwell made major contributions to the lecture and to the abridged version.

Arief Budiman, Chinese Indonesians, and Indonesian Studies at the University of Melbourne

Jemma Purdey

Arief Budiman arrived in Melbourne in the late 1990s, in the midst of something of a boom in Indonesian studies in Australian universities. Enrolments in Indonesian language at the University of Melbourne were reaching a near all-time high. The array of Indonesia-related subjects and researchers with an Indonesia interest – not only within the Faculty of Arts but across the university – offered students the opportunity for a rich and deep level of engagement with "Indonesia," then on the cusp of monumental change and democratic reform. When Arief arrived in 1997, I was completing my BA Hons year and making plans to undertake a dissertation under Charles Coppel's supervision. As historian Heather Sutherland remarked to me years later, the convergence of timing and interest is an especially crucial combination for scholars embarking upon their path of deep research.

I'd not yet met the new Foundation Professor of Indonesian Studies, but from my vantage point on the South Lawn, I immediately recognised Arief Budiman from the photos I'd seen in the newspapers and magazines I read every day in the basement of the nearby Baillieu Library. He was walking slowly along the yellow brick path running parallel to the reflection pool, dressed casually in a patterned shirt and sandals, gently swinging a calico bag over his shoulder. He struck a lonely figure, or was he simply in deep contemplation, or was it just a post-lunch haze?

In early 1998, as I turned my mind to a dissertation topic, Charles Coppel's attention was decidedly preoccupied with the fate of ethnic Chinese Indonesians, about whom he had written his own thesis and spent many years researching. As we sat down to consider my options, the Indonesian economy was in the grip of the Asian Financial Crisis, and Indonesian-language news agencies were reporting small but increasingly frequent



Fig. 1 (above): Book cover, *Reformasi: Crisis and Change in Indonesia*, edited by Arief Budiman, Barbara Hatley and Damien Kingsbury, Monash Asia Institute, 1999.

attacks on businesses owned by ethnic Chinese Indonesians. The government rhetoric was turning decidedly nationalistic. Sensing something far more profound was afoot than I could have imagined, Charles set the scene, and I began to see the possibilities for a merging of my interests in the politics of Indonesia and human rights. It was at this point that Charles suggested we immediately head upstairs to meet the new Professor of Indonesian Studies, Arief Budiman. He would, Charles suggested, make a very good advisor for such a research project. I recall that Arief's

response was enthusiastic and informative, but also deferential to Charles' knowledge on the subject of Indonesia's ethnic Chinese. I'm pretty sure I was not aware at that time that Arief was ethnic Chinese, nor did I know about his famous brother Soe Hok Gie, though I had heard of his protest against his former rector and his eventual dismissal from Universitas Satya Wacana.

The wave of anti-Chinese sentiment and violence in early 1998 erupted into rioting and mass violence across Jakarta and other cities by mid-May of that year, leading to the eventual fall of Soeharto's New Order government (1966–1998). Arief easily stepped into a role as media commentator and, luckily for us, he provided up-to-date analysis on the day-to-day machinations at play during this period of transition.¹ Our cohort of Indonesia-followers in Melbourne shared the sense of euphoria felt by the students and pro-democracy leaders on the streets of Jakarta, but also the devastation for the victims of the violence, including mostly ethnic Chinese but also the urban poor.

Together with Tiong Djin Siauw and others, Arief established the Committee Against Racism in Indonesia (CARI) to bring attention to the plight of the victims and to open conversations long taboo in Indonesia about underlying, systemic, and structural racism. In Melbourne in late 1998, CARI held a series of important community meetings and seminars with visiting speakers from

Cold War Tropes and Cultural Politics in Indonesia, 1950-65

Stephen Miller

Cold War anti-communism and the tropes that accompany it continue to be a part of Indonesian politics in the 21st century.¹ These tropes are not only part of public discourse in Indonesia, but also infuse discussions of Indonesian history, both inside and outside of the country. They dehumanise the victims of the political genocide of 1965-66 and also distort and obscure our view of the politics of the period between the recognition of Indonesian sovereignty and the emergence of the New Order regime under Major-General Suharto.

This was a time when different visions of the new republic's future were considered, debated, and struggled over, including an intense struggle in cultural arenas. It was also the period of the most intense Cold War competition between the "West" on one side and "Communism" (i.e., Stalinism) on the other. In Indonesia both sides of this struggle comprised broad and diverse fronts. Not only this, both sides, generally in complete sincerity, presented themselves as champions of "democracy" or "justice" against the "oppression" of their opponents (whether this was presented as an opposition to imperialism, or an opposition to Stalinism, amongst other possibilities).

In the context of the ongoing influence of Suharto's anti-communist regime and the collapse of the Stalinist regimes of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, it has continued to be common to present one side of this conflict as naively representing a struggle for freedom in opposition to Russian-style authoritarianism. This essay is to counter any naive presentation of the role of the more liberal elements of the cultural anti-communism before 1965-66.²

Given what we now know about the cultural Cold War, and especially given the actual historical outcome of the wider political struggle in Indonesia – one of the bloodiest political genocides in history and the establishment of a regime clearly more authoritarian than its predecessor³ – this seems like an attitude that is not only unsustainable and arguably ethically problematic, it also distorts our understandings of key elements of Indonesian history. The events of 1965-66 and the regime that they instituted were a culmination of prior developments. Basically, the repression and bloodshed of 1965-66 did not fall from the sky.



Fig. 1: Members of the Lekra National Secretariat workshop in the early 1960s. Jane Luyte and Oey Hai Djoen, the key patrons of the secretariat are standing in the back row, second and third from left (Photo courtesy of Oey Hai Djoen).

While participants may have sincerely felt that they were fighting for "democracy," "freedom," or other just causes, it is clear that they were also part of manoeuvres that did not prioritise these ideals, and arguably led to authoritarian outcomes in Indonesia (and elsewhere). There is plenty of evidence for this. Charles Coppel recognises the key alignment of the Cultural Manifesto with the CIA-backed Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF).⁴ The role of the army in developing and supporting the Manifesto was obvious to many contemporaries (for instance, in the army's material support for the pro-Manifesto All-Indonesia Writers' and Artists' Conference in 1964). The "conceptor" of the Manifesto has admitted that he worked covertly with the army intelligence during this period.⁵ In a 1993 paper responding to a liberal anti-communist, Sitor Situmorang, the leader of the radical nationalist Institute of National Culture in the 1960s, presented the period as one of diverse and competing poles of power, in which artists across the political spectrum, not least those who were Lekra-aligned, could and did suffer suppression before 1965.⁶

While we still need further research into anti-Left repression from 1950-1965, it is clear that there was regular repression throughout the period. This included jailing prominent figures, such as the novelist Pramoedya Ananta Toer and the poet Agam Wispi. It is also clear that the success of the Left (e.g., cultural groups like Lekra and the women's organisation Gerwani), like that of the Communist Party of Indonesia (PKI) itself, was the result of its ability to attract and organise members on a voluntary basis. The PKI was never a party of state, nor were any of its "fellow traveller" organisations (such as Lekra) state institutions. People joined freely

for a variety of reasons, but clearly among them was a belief that these organisations would contribute to the creation of a society with less inequality and more social justice. And it can be argued that in areas such as the arts, women's rights, and labour, such organisations did have at least some positive influence.

Cold War tropes not only misrepresent the politics of culture; they also tend to distort our view of the art works produced by artists and cultural workers sympathetic to the PKI. If, instead of seeing the cultural Left primarily as championing Stalinism, we understand it as a part of a popular movement, it becomes easier to see and understand key elements of cultural activity around Lekra. For example, it makes sense that critics should develop a vision for Indonesian cinema inspired by Italian neo-realism and progressive elements of classic Hollywood,⁷ rather than focusing on pat ideas of "Socialist Realism." The focus on the reportage literature of amateurs, rather than on sympathetic established authors like Pramoedya or Utuy Tatang Sontani,⁸ also makes sense if literature is seen as integrated with the building of a mass movement. Similarly, Lekra's enthusiastic and early engagement with popular arts, such as folk theatre and dance, is best understood as part of efforts to build grassroots political engagement.

This is not to say that many leading figures (and ordinary activists) did not hold and perpetuate illusions in the authoritarianisms of Stalinist countries. Rather, it is to say that there was not a monopoly of authoritarian politics on one side. The power of the PKI and other organisations, like Lekra, relied on their ability to attract voluntary support, and they never held any significant institutional

Indonesia, positioning the status of Indonesia's ethnic minorities, women, and other marginalised groups at the centre of academic and community discourse. In a rare example of such a focus in his own academic work, a few years later, Arief wrote a short chapter titled, "Portrait of the Chinese in Post-Soeharto Indonesia" for Charles Coppel's *Festschrift Chinese Indonesians: Remembering, Distorting, Forgetting*.² In it he examines the proposition that 1998 had led to some positive changes in *pribumi* (native Indonesian) perceptions of the Chinese, who were slowly abandoning one-dimensional stereotypes. Likewise, he argues that there was a shift in the "self-perception" of the Chinese themselves, who now felt emboldened to emerge from their "cocoon," as Arief described it, and assume their rightful place as citizens. Nonetheless, after what he saw as the initial phase of "euphoria," Arief went on to observe that a "correction" was underway within a community wary of a backlash: "Chinese Indonesians are still trying to find their place in Indonesia, but now, within a still unstable society undergoing a slow transition towards democracy, this is not a simple process and its outcome cannot be predicted."³

A few months after the New Order collapsed, I distinctly recall huddling in and listening attentively to Arief's advice on the significant barriers still before a researcher embarking on investigations like those I was

planning – namely, to examine the position of Indonesia's ethnic Chinese and especially the recent violence ushering in the reform era. Despite the hopefulness of the early post-New Order mood in Indonesia, he advised me to keep a low profile and consult with only trusted sources, which included many of his own close contacts. As a fledgling fieldworker and outsider seriously nervous about tackling the task ahead, I clearly remember him conveying this rather frightening set of instructions with his characteristic smiles and giggles. A cool, calm approach to a problem he'd faced with courage so many times himself. It was a reassurance that I very much needed at the time, and one that I often remembered with appreciation throughout my time in the field. Not to mention the doors opened to me by the mere dropping of his name!

Arief's presence as a senior academic in Melbourne at this critical time in Indonesian history certainly played a large part in generating a high level of energy and dynamism within the wider Melbourne, and indeed Australian, Indonesianist academic community. At this time, Arief was at the centre of a renewal of connections across institutions, which led to a number of seminal events and collaborations, beginning with one of the earliest major conferences held after the fall of the New Order. Titled, *Democracy in Indonesia? The crisis and beyond*, the conference was held at the ABC's Southbank studios in Melbourne in December 1998, convened by Arief, Damien Kingsbury,

and Barbara Hatley from Monash University. The conference included speakers – both scholars and activists – from Australia and Indonesia, and the event resulted in the book *Reformasi: Crisis and Change in Indonesia* [Fig. 1].⁴ In his own chapter in the book, Arief's observation of this moment in Indonesia's history reflected his consistently optimistic outlook;

"Even though there are many uncertainties and difficulties facing Indonesia over the short term, it is not too unrealistic to hold an optimistic hope for the more distant future."⁵

In the early 2000s, the University of Melbourne's standing as a centre for Indonesian studies and related activity was also greatly enhanced by an influx of Indonesian students, largely due to the opportunities offered with the expansion of Australian and Indonesian government scholarship programs, but also significantly due to the pull of Arief himself. The energy, dedication, and deep knowledge of Indonesia available to those who were lucky enough to find ourselves in Melbourne at this time provided a rare opportunity then (and even rarer today) to immerse ourselves in and embark on deep study of Indonesia.

An emblematic figure in Indonesia, Arief represented an intellectual and social activism that fuelled many young adult Indonesians in this *reformasi* period, further enhanced

civilian or martial power (a fact underlined by the ease with which they were swept away by the emergent Suharto regime and its supporters). Presenting them as primarily authoritarian, therefore, misrepresents what these organisations meant to their members, misrepresents key features of anti-communism, misrepresents the struggles of the 1950-65 period, and, in the process, comes dangerously close to justifying the repression of 1965-66.

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Notes

- 1 Stephen Miller (2018). *Zombie Anti-Communism? Democratization and the Demons of Suharto-Era Politics in Contemporary Indonesia*. In Kate McGregor, Jess Melvin & Annie Pohlman. *The Indonesian Genocide of 1965: Causes, Dynamics and Legacies* (pp. 287-310). Palgrave Macmillan.
- 2 For an articulate elaboration of such an approach by a figure close to Budiman, see Goenawan Mohamad and Harry Aveling (ed. and trans.) (2011). *The 'Cultural Manifesto' Affair Revisited: Literature and Politics in Indonesia in the 1960s*, a signatory's view. Monash Asia Institute Press.
- 3 See Jess Melvin (2018). *The army and the Indonesian genocide: mechanics of mass murder*. Routledge; Kate McGregor, Jess Melvin & Annie Pohlman. *The Indonesian Genocide of 1965: Causes, Dynamics and Legacies* (pp. 287-310). Palgrave Macmillan; John Roosa (2020). *Buried histories: the anticommunist massacres of 1965-1966 in Indonesia*. The University of Wisconsin Press; amongst many others.
- 4 On CIA-backing for the CCF, see (amongst others) Frances Stonor Saunders (1999). *Who paid the piper?: the CIA and the cultural Cold War*. Granta.
- 5 See Keith Foulcher (1986). *Social commitment in literature and the arts: the Indonesian "Institute of People's Culture", 1950-1965*. Centre of Southeast Asian Studies, Monash University, p. 125-126; Bodden, M. (2012). "Dynamics and tensions of LEKRA's modern national theater, 1959-65". In J. Lindsay and M. H. T. Liem (Eds.), *Heirs to World Culture: Being Indonesian 1950-1965*. KITLV Press.
- 6 Keith Foulcher (1994). "The Manifesto is not dead": *Indonesian literary politics thirty years on*. Centre of Southeast Asian Studies, Monash University.
- 7 Stephen Miller (2015). *The communist imagination: a study of the cultural pages of Harijan Rakjat in the early 1950s*. PhD Thesis, University of New South Wales, Australia.
- 8 Foulcher (1986); Miller (2015).

when Ariel Heryanto arrived at the university a little while later. Arief initiated a series of Friday seminars on all manner of topics related to politics and society, which generated a dynamic and vibrant discourse between students and scholars, Indonesians and Australians, a spirit of exchange and inquiry that continues until today.

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Notes

- 1 <https://www.insideindonesia.org/friend-or-foe-2>
- 2 Lindsey, Tim and Helen Pausacker (eds.). 2005. *Chinese Indonesians: Remembering, Distorting, Forgetting*. Singapore: ISEAS.
- 3 Budiman, Arief. 2005. "Portrait of the Chinese in Post-Soeharto Indonesia." In *Chinese Indonesians: Remembering, Distorting, Forgetting*. Singapore: ISEAS, p. 101.
- 4 Budiman, Arief, Barbara Hatley, and Damien Kingsbury (eds.). 1999. *Reformasi: Crisis and Change in Indonesia*. Clayton, Australia: Monash Asia Institute.
- 5 Budiman, Arief. 1998. "The 1998 crisis: change and continuity in Indonesia", In *Reformasi: Crisis and change in Indonesia*, edited by Arief Budiman, Barbara Hatley and Damien Kingsbury, Clayton Vic., Monash Asia Institute: 57.