

## Book review: Jafar Suryomenggolo: Fearless Speech in Indonesian Women's Writing - Working-Class Feminism from the Global South

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global and local contexts after 9/11 probably need more attention. The significant role of ideology justified by the Salafi doctrines is something irrefutable in Salafism. Ideology stands side-by-side with structure and identity politics in determining the Salafis' behaviour and lifestyle. The Salafis always try to base their actions on certain doctrines and ideology. The author's insufficient attention to the Salafi doctrines provides only minimal explanation of the vulnerability of its actors to fragmentation and conflict even amongst the quietists themselves, for instance, between the so-called Sururi and non-Sururi, Yemeni and non-Yemeni, and Madkhali and non-Madkhali.

*Noorhaidi Hasan*

JAFAR SURYOMENGGOLO, *Fearless Speech in Indonesian Women's Writing: Working-Class Feminism from the Global South*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2021. 250 pages, \$105.00. ISBN 978-1-7936-5053-5 (hb)

This book discusses the little-known writings of working women from Indonesia. It presents a critical reading of the challenges that underprivileged women have been facing under the shadow of the darker side of globalisation. The analysis centres on legal documents, personal accounts, essays, and short stories, and is discussed from a feminist perspective, which, Suryomenggolo convincingly argues, "enables readers to see, and better understand, issues that have been ignored in mainstream male-dominated views of life and work" (p. 7). The book thus makes an original contribution to the study of female labour in developing countries.

In a meticulously detailed study, Suryomenggolo presents an intimate portrayal of working-class women from Indonesia. Through personal narration, the book details the experiences emerging from individual stories of women workers and connects them in an attempt to help the reader understand the struggles of female labourers beyond the much-publicised "economic miracle" of Indonesia's industrial policy, first implemented in the late 1970s. By presenting individual experiences, Suryomenggolo sheds light on how working-class women reflect on the exploitation of labour as well as gender discrimination over the course of a period during which capitalism has been transforming into its most aggressive form. The result is a book that narrates the stories of female menial labourers who successfully air their grievances despite social, political and cultural limitations. It presents their experiences along with their aspirations, as well as daily challenges in their personal lives. The book is structured in three parts of two chapters each, with each chapter featuring excerpts from the working women's writings.

The first part, titled “Defying Authoritarian Rule”, delves into the New Order regime’s exploitative labour policy and the heavy-handed way in which the regime suppressed worker’s unions, usually with the intervention of the military. Chapter 1 discusses a *pledoi* or *pembelaan* – a document used for legal defence purposes in criminal courts – written in 1987 by Ida Irianti, a union leader of a Jakarta-based beverage company depicted in this chapter as “the finest example of a female labour activist” (p. 48). In a similar vein, Chapter 2 features a (formerly personal) 25-page essay about injustices experienced at a Taiwanese shoe company in Surabaya as well as the intervention by the military to silence the workers, written in 1993 by Meppy Doryati Emping. In the face of the New Order regime’s stifling state surveillance, both Irianti’s *pembelaan* and Emping’s essay were not only courageous, but also, to borrow Suryomenggolo’s term, “distinctly political” (p. 48). These two cases are little-known compared to the “Marsinah case”, a cause célèbre in 1993 about a brutally murdered female worker and trade unionist, and their inclusion in this book helps the reader realise that exploitation of women’s labour was rampant under the New Order regime (1966–1998).

The second part, “Negotiating Neoliberalism”, features writings by women workers who struggled for social justice after the end of the New Order regime in 1998 amid the challenges that are still posed by the new global power structure known as neoliberalism. Chapter 3 highlights the fact that many Indonesian women workers face sexual harassment, but that the majority are reluctant to report it, mainly because of the politics of *malu* (shame, shyness or restraint) and the fear of losing their jobs. This chapter discusses how several women workers recorded their personal stories of sexual harassment and found support from the Federation of Workers across Factories (*Federasi Buruh Lintas Pabrik*). Chapter 4 discusses an essay written by a single mother struggling for maternity protection. Both chapters in this section illustrate the struggle of women workers to ensure a safer workplace in the post-authoritarian period.

In the final part, titled “Liberating Self”, Suryomenggolo focuses on Indonesian migrant workers in Hong Kong. Chapter 5 features published personal accounts written by Rini Widyawati and Astina Triutami, while Chapter 6 discusses fictional texts written by various migrant workers, focusing on two pioneering anthologies of short stories titled *Penari Naga Kecil* (*Little Dragon Dancer*, 2006) and *Geliat Sang Kung Yan* (*Writhing of the Kung Yan*, 2007). Echoing the gist of Chapter 1, the personal accounts in Chapter 5 serve as “political notes of one’s life story” (p. 153) – this time coming from women migrant workers living abroad. The fictional accounts in Chapter 6 prove to be as important as the non-fictional ones, as literature can become a space for self-expression in the search for freedom, notably before the arrival of social media.

Suryomenggolo concludes that, considering these women’s fearless writings, there is “a burgeoning working-class feminism in the Global South” (p. 209).

A notable strength of the book is that it shows how individual events and non-academic narratives, written by underprivileged working-class women without a university education, can be studied and considered academically. The book was published at the right moment and remains highly relevant, given how current and yet underappreciated the issue is.

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GURHARPAL SINGH / GEORGIO SHANI, *Sikh Nationalism: From a Dominant Minority to an Ethno-religious Diaspora*. (New Approaches to Asian History). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021. 264 pages, 5 maps, £22.99. ISBN 978-1-3165-0188-7 (e-book)

Gurharpal Singh and Georgio Shani's book is a timely contribution to the study of Sikh nationalism for two reasons. First, the year-long farmers' protests in India that culminated in 2021 with the repeal of three contentious farm laws brought an intense spotlight to bear on Sikhs and Sikh nationalism. Second, debates triggered by census methodologies in the UK and elsewhere have drawn attention to Sikhs as an ethnic category, and prompted renegotiations of definitions of what constitutes an ethnicity.

The authors set out their intention at the outset – to challenge existing tropes of nationalism, and to reconceptualise Sikh nationalism away and apart from the dominant Marxist framework that sees nations as imagined communities, brought into existence after the fact of creation of nation-states, especially in the erstwhile colonies. To this end, the authors present Anthony D. Smith's model of nationalism as a more appropriate fit to the Sikh case than the classic formulations of Benedict Anderson and Paul R. Brass.

Smith's critique of nationalism is based on the ethnosymbolic approach, which views nationalism as the result of primordial communities evolving to adapt to modern political structures. Smith used the term *ethnie* as the preferred nomenclature for a set of features that bounded such primordial communities together in their collective movement through history. The *ethnie* includes a shared origin myth, common culture, language and claims to a defined, bounded territory. Drawing on Smith, the authors assert that the Sikh *ethnie* is anchored to the Khalsa – the brotherhood of baptised Sikhs – and to a territorial boundedness with the geographical limits of Punjab.

The book provides a comprehensive overview of the history of Sikh nationalism, from its birth to developments as late as 2018, covering a period of roughly 550 years. Throughout each chapter of this broad sweep of history, the authors succeed in striking a balance between summing up existing debates and