



Riots, Pogroms, Jihad: Religious Violence in Indonesia

By John T. Sidel



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In October 2002 a bomb blast in a Balinese nightclub killed more than two hundred people, many of them young Australian tourists. This event and subsequent attacks on foreign targets in Bali and Jakarta in 2003, 2004, and 2005 brought Indonesia into the global media spotlight as a site of Islamist terrorist violence. Yet the complexities of political and religious struggles in Indonesia, the most populous Muslim country in the world, remain little known and poorly understood in the West. In *Riots, Pogroms, Jihad*, John T. Sidel situates these terrorist bombings and other "jihadist" activities in Indonesia against the backdrop of earlier episodes of religious violence in the country, including religious riots in provincial towns and cities in 1995-1997, the May 1998 riots in Jakarta, and interreligious pogroms in 1999-2001. Sidel's close account of these episodes of religious violence in Indonesia draws on a wide range of documentary, ethnographic, and journalistic materials. Sidel chronicles these episodes of violence and explains the overall pattern of change in religious violence over a ten-year period in terms of the broader discursive, political, and sociological contexts in which they unfolded. Successive shifts in the incidence of violence—its forms, locations, targets, perpetrators, mobilizational processes, and outcomes—correspond, Sidel suggests, to related shifts in the very structures of religious authority and identity in Indonesia during this period. He interprets the most recent "jihadist" violence as a reflection of the post-1998 decline of Islam as a banner for unifying and mobilizing Muslims in Indonesian politics and society. Sidel concludes this book by reflecting on the broader implications of the pattern observed in Indonesia both for understanding Islamic terrorism in particular and for analyzing religious violence in all its varieties.



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Riots, Pogroms, Jihad: Religious Violence in Indonesia By John T. Sidel Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #158659 in Books
- Brand: Brand: Cornell University Press
- Published on: 2006-11-02
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.00" h x .72" w x 6.04" l, .92 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 304 pages

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Editorial Review

Review

"John T. Sidel has written an original, wise, and lasting book unlike the vast majority of breathless, ambulance-chasing, and shallow studies of ethnic and religious violence. If you are more interested in the deep historical and structural causes of political violence—in the accumulation of social dynamite—rather than the particular match that lights the fuse, then, this is the only book you'll need to understand contemporary Indonesia."—James C. Scott, Sterling Professor of Political Science and Anthropology, Yale University

"John T. Sidel's method and conclusions—and, indeed, the very aims of his analysis—are pathbreaking. Riots, Pogroms, Jihad is destined to become one of the most important works in Indonesian studies of the post-Suharto period. It will be critical to scholars and policymakers eager to understand the dynamics of Indonesian politics and society. Political scientists, historians, and anthropologists working outside of Southeast Asia will also find in this book a fruitful guide to developing new ways of thinking about religion and violence elsewhere in the world."—Danilyn Rutherford, University of Chicago

"Beneath the many phenomena of violence that John T. Sidel has amply researched, he rightly discerns and repeatedly describes a key role for anxieties about religious identity."—Theodore Friend, Foreign Policy Research Institute, Philadelphia

"This is an important and original book that compares diverse contexts and manifestations of religious violence across Indonesia. Riots, Pogroms, Jihad is strongly grounded in empirical evidence and the author's deep familiarity with Indonesia."—Nancy Lee Peluso, University of California, Berkeley

From the Back Cover

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About the Author

John T. Sidel is Sir Patrick Gillam Professor of International and Comparative Politics at the London School of Economics and Political Science. He is the author of *Capital, Coercion, and Crime: Bossism in the Philippines* and coauthor of *Philippine Politics and Society in the Twentieth Century*.

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