Although Indonesia has the fourth largest population in the world, its history is still relatively unfamiliar and understudied. Adrian Vickers takes the reader on a journey across the social and political landscape of modern Indonesia, starting with the country’s origins under the Dutch in the early twentieth century, and the subsequent anti-colonial revolution which led to independence in 1949. Thereafter the spotlight is on the 1950s, a crucial period in the formation of Indonesia as a new nation, which was followed by the Sukarno years, and the anti-Communist massacres of the 1960s when General Suharto took over as president. The concluding chapters chart the fall of Suharto’s New Order after thirty-two years in power, and the subsequent political and religious turmoil which culminated in the Bali bombings in 2002. Drawing on insights from literature, art and anthropology, Vickers portrays a complex and resilient people struggling out of a troubled past.

Adrian Vickers is Professor of Asian Studies at the University of Wollongong. He is author of the acclaimed *Bali: a Paradise Created* (1989), as well as many other scholarly and popular works on Indonesia.
A HISTORY OF MODERN INDONESIA

ADRIAN VICKERS

University of Wollongong
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This book is the product of over thirty years of conversations with hundreds of Indonesians – at times I have not listened as attentively as I might, and for that I ask forgiveness, sampunayang titiang yening wenten wenten kirang langkung.

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A note on spelling, pronunciation and names

Indonesian has gone through several different spelling systems, and there is generally great inconsistency between public uses of these systems. For the sake of simplicity I have generally used the spelling system introduced in 1972, although Pramoedya prefers the Dutch-era ‘oe’ instead of ‘u’ in the spelling of his name, likewise Dr Djelantik prefers the pre-1972 ‘dj’ instead of ‘j’.

Syllables in Indonesian words are generally pronounced with even weight; ‘a’ is pronounced like the English ‘u’ in ‘up’; ‘e’ is usually pronounced like English ‘step’ or ‘a’ in ‘day’; ‘i’ is pronounced as in ‘hid’; ‘u’ is pronounced like ‘o’ in ‘do’; ‘c’ is pronounced like English ‘ch’; ‘sy’ is pronounced ‘sh’. Javanese is transcribed variably in the sources used, the ‘a’ is more like Danish ‘å’, and so is usually rendered as ‘o’, but inconsistently (e.g. ‘Ronggowarsito’).

Although many Indonesians have adopted the use of family names or surnames, there is a great deal of variation in personal names in Indonesia. Some people have only one name, such as Suharto and Sukarno. Many names also incorporate titles, such as the Sumatran aristocratic title Sutan in Sutan Syahrir’s name. It is quite common to change names at different stages in life, as when Suwardi Suryaningrat changed his name to Ki Hajar Dewantoro at the age of forty. Many people are known by abbreviated names for simplicity, as with Abdurrahman Wahid, know as ‘Gus Dur’, which combines a Javanese familiar title, ‘Gus’ (short for Gusti but sometimes Agus or Bagus), and an abbreviation of his main name.
## Chronology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1870</td>
<td>Beginning of a ‘Liberal Policy’ of deregulated exploitation of the Netherlands East Indies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1873</td>
<td>Beginning of the Aceh War</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1888</td>
<td>Founding of the packet steam-ship line <em>KPM</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>World depression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1894</td>
<td>Lombok War</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1898</td>
<td>General van Heutsz becomes chief-of-staff of Aceh campaign, Wilhelmina becomes queen of the Netherlands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>Ethical Policy proclaimed</td>
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<tr>
<td>1903</td>
<td>Aceh declared conquered</td>
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<tr>
<td>1904</td>
<td>Van Heutsz made Governor General</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1907</td>
<td>Raden Mas Tirto Adhi Suryo founds civil servants’ association <em>Sarekat Priyayi</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1908</td>
<td>Budi Utomo proclaimed as first official nationalist movement, Last Balinese rulers to resist Dutch rule wiped out in battle to the death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>Founding by Tirto Adhi Suryo of the Islamic Traders’ League <em>Sarekat Islam</em> becomes first mass-based nationalist party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1914</td>
<td>World War One, the Netherlands is a neutral country in the war</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1917</td>
<td>East Indies trade with Europe cut off by the war, Russian Revolution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1918</td>
<td>Death of Tirto Adhi Suryo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>Founding of the Communist Party of the Indies (<em>PKI</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925</td>
<td>Birth of Pramoedya Ananta Toer, Sharp rise in world commodity prices brings prosperity to the Indies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1929</td>
<td>Great Depression</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chronology

1930 Sukarno’s famous nationalist speech, ‘Indonesia Accuses’, given as defence in his political trial
1940 Germany invades the Netherlands
1941 8 December, US naval base at Pearl Harbor bombed by Japanese
1942 Japan invades the Netherlands East Indies
1945 15 August, Japan surrenders
17 August, Sukarno and Hatta proclaim Indonesia’s independence, signalling the beginning of the Indonesian Revolution
10 November, Battle of Surabaya
1946 Social revolutions, including Three Regions (Tiga Daerah) Revolt
Republican capital established in Yogyakarta
Federal states set up by Dutch in outer islands
1947 25 March, Linggajati agreement, first ceasefire
20 July, first Police Action
1948 Abdication of Queen Wilhelmina
19 January, Renville Agreement, Van Mook line established between Republican and Dutch territories
August, fall of Amir Syarifuddin government
18 September, Madiun Affair
December, second police action, fall of Yogyakarta to the Dutch, execution of Amir Syarifuddin by Republicans
1949 February, execution of Tan Malaka by Republican Army
1 August, official ceasefire
December, Dutch forced to take part in Round Table Agreement
27 December, Indonesia achieves full sovereignty
1950 Federal states dissolve and Indonesia becomes a unitary Republic
Korean War brings high prices for rubber and other Indonesian commodities
1955 First national elections
1957 State of war and siege declared, beginning of Guided Democracy
Dutch enterprises nationalised
1962–3 Irian Jaya (West New Guinea) campaign
1963–5 Confrontation with Malaysia
1965 ‘30th September Movement’ ‘Coup’ (Gestapa) leads to the death of 500,000–1 million people identified as Communists
Sukarno hands over power to Suharto through the 11 March Declaration (Supersemar), beginning of the New Order regime

'Act of Free Choice' legitimises Indonesia's control over Irian Jaya

Death of Sukarno

First New Order election

15 January upheavals (Malari) end the New Order's 'honeymoon' period

Pertamina Affair

Invasion of East Timor

National election

'Normalisation' of university campuses programme

National election

Mysterious killings (Petrus)

Tanjung Priok Affair involving killings of Muslims in Jakarta

Clamp-down on Islamic political leaders

National election

'Openness' campaign announced

Establishment of Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals' Association, ICMI

National election

Press bans end 'Openness'

Death of Tien Suharto

Attack on Megawati's faction of the PDI

Bre-X or Busang gold mine scandal

Asian financial crisis and drought

National election

21 May, fall of Suharto, replaced by B. J. Habibie

Legislation to create regional autonomy

National election

Referendum leads to political violence and the independence of East Timor

Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur) becomes president

Abdurrahman Wahid resigns

Megawati Sukarnoputri becomes president

National election followed by first direct presidential election

Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY) becomes president

26 December, tsunami