


**EIGHT  
NATION MAKERS**

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**SOUTHEAST ASIA'S  
CHARISMATIC  
STATESMEN**



**WILLARD A. HANNA**

# Eight Nation Makers

Southeast Asia's Charismatic Statesmen

by Willard A. Hanna

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# Preface: Eight Out of Two Hundred Million

Of the two hundred million people who populate the political jungles of Southeast Asia, some two hundred have contrived, for good or for ill, to create about 90 per cent of the uproar. Of these two hundred, twenty or so have managed to stand out for prolonged periods in the full heat of the midday political sun. Eight of them, key figures, and generally the architects of new nations, plus some twoscore of their best friends and worst enemies, are the subjects of this book. Since the architect is often the archetype of his nation, the lives of these eight and twoscore tropical politicians point the course of modern Southeast Asian society as well as of its political history.

The cast of characters for this kaleidoscopic tableau coincides approximately but not exactly with the list of principals at any Southeast Asian summit meeting which might have been convened about January 1, 1964. South Vietnam's late President Ngo Dinh Diem, however, still receives feature billing, although he has recently and tragically departed the scene, as may others before this book is published. President Ho Chi Minh of North Vietnam appears only in one walk-on bit. I myself have never been within seeing or listening distance of Ho Chi Minh and I hesitate therefore even to introduce him. Indonesia's President Sukarno dominates the stage, but then Sukarno is by far the most flamboyant figure of the lot, the head of the biggest, most important nation, and I myself know him best—although neither he nor I would suggest that the acquaintance is intimate. The Filipinos and the Thais have produced so many matinee idols that most of them

have to be relegated to the wings in order to make space for the stage-struck President Macapagal and the stage-frightened King Bhumibol. Burma's testy dictator, General Ne Win, who shuns the footlights, is in any case up-staged by the jailed U Nu and the murdered Aung Sang, and the antic Laotian princelings yield precedence to the brash young commoner, Captain Kong Lê. Malaya's Tengku Abdul Rahman and Cambodia's Prince Sihanouk each, I trust, receives his deserts, the one as the region's most imperturbable, the other as its most frenetic prime minister.

These are the bold new leaders of a brave new-old world, but most of them are aging fast and their experiences have made others and sometimes even themselves sadder and possibly wiser. They are men of extraordinary personal attainment and versatility, quite self-assured in at least two languages, two cultures, and two world blocs, acting and reacting sometimes within one frame of reference, sometimes within another. What each of them thinks, says, or does gives the cue to what some two million to one hundred million people are going to think, say, or do, but the cues are quickly reversible. Enigmas to the outside world, these men are enigmas also to each other, for most of them know Washington, Moscow, and Peking better than the capital cities of their neighbors, and state visits notwithstanding, they still mistake the official communiqué for communication. It is time they were brought publicly together, with dossiers replacing protocol.

I wish to express to my involuntary subjects my appreciation of the fact that they have generously provided material far beyond any biographer's ability to sort out unless they themselves can be provoked by essays such as mine to the labors of autobiography. While acknowledging debts of gratitude, let me also mention: the American Universities Field Staff, which places a liberal construction upon my peripatetic employment; the General Service Foundation, which has made extra funds available without bureaucratic entanglement; the hundreds of persons who contributed, through their writings or their conversations, knowingly or unknowingly, to the bulk of my files; and finally, my wife, whose sure instinct for style and error has made my rewriting job more than doubly difficult. No small degree of censure or credit, however, attaches to myself. For many years in many lands

I have diligently peered, pried, and prodded into private and public lives, impelled by the notion that politics is people, the politics of underdeveloped areas is people of overdeveloped politics, and Southeast Asian politicians, as people, are extra-special specimens.

*Sedona, Arizona*  
*January 2, 1964*

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# Sukarno: The Devolution of a Revolutionary

Indonesia's President Sukarno, known to himself, his admirers, and his detractors alike as Bung Karno, is the prototype of the contemporary Indonesian at his best and at his worst. Brilliant, ebullient, handsome, mellifluous, dynamic, magnetic—pick any adjective signifying an extraordinarily attractive personality and it applies, or it once applied to Bung Karno. But so too do the adjectives reckless, profligate, and paranoid. Those which do not fit Bung Karno are any which signify moderation. Bung Karno is an exhibitionistic extremist who cultivates contradiction and controversy in the full realization that they make him a man whom it is impossible to ignore.

For many people—a fast dwindling number in the Western world—Bung Karno symbolizes the new Indonesia, driving, leaping, and surging ahead to achieve its manifest destiny as the world's fifth most populous nation and one of those in all respects most richly endowed by nature. For many others, including many more Indonesians than dare to say so, Bung Karno personifies the tragic betrayal of a nationalist revolution into the grasp of as unscrupulous a lot of opportunists as Southeast Asia has produced in modern times, a clique of oftentimes plausible and almost always personable rogues who model their conduct upon Bung Karno's own. For others, the inevitable focus of attention on Bung Karno illustrates the fallacy of attributing to one man primary responsibility for the immensely complicated affairs of a new nation-state. Bung Karno, nevertheless, has certainly been the kinetic and the catalytic agent in Indonesian national development ever since

1927, and his role since 1957 has been climacteric. As Bung Karno now whirls about the Indonesian archipelago and the rest of the globe, "easing" the tensions which he himself creates, his political gyrations are explainable only on the basis of his personal evolution and devolution as a revolutionary.

Bung Karno, then, absolutely commands attention and, as a strict matter of record, he has come to rely upon attention-commanding devices which vitiate his own better nature. To resort to rhetorical summation such as appeals to Bung Karno himself, he is the demagogue-demigod, the philosopher-philanderer, the miracle man-medicine man, the hero-villain of the melodramatic Indonesian revolution which he keeps revving up to a higher and higher pitch of emotional fervor. He is also the ordinary Indonesian magnified to quite extraordinary proportions, at his best a sparkling human individual, at his worst deliberately impervious to anyone else's concept of organization, rationality, responsibility, or indeed, to introduce an even more tendentious element, of political or personal morality. The Bung Karno of a few years ago was a national and an international speculation on whom a very great many people placed heavy stakes. Today Bung Karno's stock has depreciated to the point where Americans, Russians, Chinese, Japanese, Australians, British and others, including his closest Indonesian associates, are ready to sell short the moment they can see any alternative investment, their calculation being complicated, to be sure, by the unhappy fact that if they have been dealing in Bung Karno's own Indonesian *rupiahs*, their money is already virtually worthless.

#### PUPIL AND PRODIGY

About Sukarno's childhood and youth the nationalist myth has long since crystallized. Until his familiars write and publish their unvarnished memoirs, as none of them seems at all disposed to do, there is no alternative save to report the legend, which, to be sure, embodies important elements of fact. The story of Sukarno's early years, as it is now told in Indonesia, is not that of the enslaved peasant boy emancipating himself from evil feudal or foreign masters, as it might have been had the telling been delayed until recent years. Rather it is something akin to a tropical idyll

of the Java highlands, close to regions favored by the small, clever *ḱantjil* (mouse deer) and of the huge, fierce *banteng* (wild buffalo), both of which are featured in the Javanese folklore which the young Sukarno knew long before he began hearing about the crocodilelike colonial exploiters.

Sukarno was born on June 6, 1901, in Surabaja, the first son of a minor Javanese aristocrat, Raden Sukemi, and his beautiful Balinese commoner wife, Ida Njoman Rai. Raden Sukemi, a young schoolteacher, had been assigned to the island of Bali where he fell in love and married. Local opposition to the union of a Javanese and a Balinese proved to be so great, however, that the couple moved to Java and never returned. By birth, then, Sukarno combined the Javanese Muslim and the Balinese Hindu influences. From his father's line he inherited the affinity of the Javanese for mysticism and intrigue, from his mother's the glowing mental and physical vigor and the artistic instinct of the Balinese. Sukarno, who was destined to become the architect of an independent nation uniting a dozen mutually suspicious ethnic and dozens of linguistic groups, is himself a living witness that such a union can be fruitful but also that conflict is real. He has achieved national unity by arbitrarily imposing Javanese domination over semiresentful regions. Bali, the "paradise" and "temple" island of an astoundingly artistic and anachronistic Hindu people, has been especially loath to be Indonesianized and hence "exploited." Bali today is Sukarno's favorite retreat, but at Tampaksiring where he has pre-empted a hilltop overlooking a sacred spring and bathing pool as the site of one of his most stately pleasure domes, Sukarno is not a truly welcome guest.

Sukarno's parents gave him the name Kusnasosukarno, from which he himself early on dropped the "Kusnasosro." He never adopted the "Achmad" which foreign newspapers, encyclopedias, even some Indonesian sources sometimes attribute to him, misled by foreign correspondents who assumed back in 1945, when they first encountered him, that he must have a second name and that it might be Achmad. Neither did he ever adopt his father's name as a family name, a recent Indonesian innovation which Sukarno does not follow. He signs himself "Soekarno," retaining the Dutchified spelling, but the modern Indonesian usage and the official version is "Sukarno." Two further technicalities: the reso-

nant redundancy of the name Kusnasosrosukarno proclaims at once to the initiate that its bearer belongs to the Javanese ruler class, a fact which Sukarno has never been eager to underscore, even in recent years since his pretensions have become regal; the attribution to his birth of a specific day, month, and year implies that he was no ordinary child, for birth dates, like business, social, and political commitments, are left casually imprecise by the vast majority of Indonesians.

Sukarno's father earned a schoolteacher's salary, that is to say, about 27.50 florins per month, or the equivalent of U.S. \$11.00. He followed the not unusual Indonesian practice, therefore, of letting his son live with those who could and would give him better opportunity. The young Kusnasosrosukarno, being a remarkably handsome and precociously intelligent child, was not difficult to place. During his early youth he spent most of his time with his paternal grandparents in the village of Tulungagung, and in his mid-teens he entered the home of a foster parent in Surabaya. Despite prolonged periods of separation from his parents, he maintained a deep attachment for them. His father died in Djakarta during the Japanese occupation, but his mother survived until recent years, living very simply and quietly with his sister in the town of Blitar, not far from Surabaya. There Sukarno paid occasional visits, during which he displayed all the traditional marks of filial piety, his visits corresponding, his intimates point out, to periods of special crisis in his own personal or political career.

Sukarno's extraordinary gifts were recognized and applauded almost from the time he was born. His grandparents, naturally, spoiled him badly, his foster parents indulged him, and nobody ever entertained any doubt that he was a prodigy. His youthful nickname, "Djago," meaning "champion" but also "rooster," signified the strut, plumage, and courage of a prized fighting cock. Young Djago, according to the Sukarno apocrypha, dared to climb the tallest trees when his more timid companions held back. His kite flew highest. His crickets chirped loudest and kicked hardest. He caught the biggest fish, won the most and best marbles, and most consistently picked the winners in the pigeon races. Of all the village boys, he was the most dexterous in keeping the *ragam*, or wicker ball, in the air, flicking it not just with

toe or heel, but with instep, ankle, wrist, elbow, shoulder, and head. He could dance and sing. He was a good student, but not too good; in fact, said his proud elders, he was a bit "*naḱal*" (naughty), preferring daydreams to the droning recitation, using his slate less skillfully for sums than for drawing the *wajang* (Javanese puppet) figures he dreamed about. Even more than most of the village boys, young Djago was an amateur of the *wajang* shows. At village celebrations he would watch from dusk to dawn the glorious romances and adventures of the *wajang* representation of the *Ramayana*. He knew every story and every character. He could imitate the *dalang*, the puppeteer-narrator, in giving for every puppet, whether god, hero, ogre, or clown, the precise dramatic intonations. He could imitate the conventionalized gestures, postures, and movements of the puppets. He also knew the music which accompanied the performances.

To this day *wajang* remains Sukarno's passion. The profession of the *dalang*—one of the highly skilled, highly paid, highly respected traditional callings of Indonesia even today—lost a superb practitioner when Sukarno was diverted to other endeavors. Sukarno's addiction to *wajang* has resulted in recent years in summonses to the Djakarta diplomatic corps on very short notice to turn out for almost night-long performances. Some of the less culture-conscious diplomats enjoy the *wajang* shows even less than they enjoy other palace parties at which all guests are commonly required to sing and dance with gay abandon, but only until about one o'clock in the morning. Any diplomat who really observes and listens to the palace *dalang*, however, can be improving his time by learning to understand Sukarno. The *dalang* animates the delicately incised leather *wajang* figures, flashing them between the flickering oil lamp and the shadow screen, creating the illusion that gods and demons, princes and ordinary mortals all interact daily upon each other under the most implausible circumstances. The action is headlong; the heroes are reckless; yet intervals of abstruse moralizing monologue serve to hold even the most frenetic action in apparently interminable suspense. The motivations are as obscure as the plots are intricate, save that, whatever the appearance of mere violence or lust or vengeance as the theme, the leading characters represent the forces of virtue, or at any rate of valor, and almost always they emerge triumphant,

even though they must rely upon supernatural intervention. Sukarno's own favorite *wajang* character is Bima, whose name he later adopted as a nom de plume and into whose image he projects himself. Of all the *wajang* heroes, Bima is one of the most rash and arrogant, and also, of course, one of the most valorous.

The young Sukarno daydreamed of *wajang* when he was presumably at work on his lessons; he understudied the *dalang* when he crowded in with the other small boys as close to the screen as their elders would tolerate. By living vicariously the involved epics of the heroes, he absorbed something of their conflicting values. Today Sukarno believes that he himself and the Indonesian nation can disregard ordinary cause-consequence relationships as the Western world knows them. In doing so, he believes, they can sustain a vastly bewildering lot of nonconsecutive, non-resolving complications which will command the world's startled attention, as indeed they do. Anyone who seeks to impose upon Sukarno's personal development or upon that of the independent Indonesia over which he presides any pattern comprehensible to the Western mind would do well first to analyze in Western terms the plots of the Indian epics, then to define the precise nature and extent of Indonesian adaptations, then to psychoanalyze Ardjuna, Petrok, and Bima. To do so, however, is to risk coming to the conclusion that modern Indonesian history defeats the standard Western historiographic approach.

Sukarno, for all his outside interests, progressed nicely through village primary school and moved on to Europe Lager School in the East Java mountain town of Modjokerto. There, under the moderately watchful eye and stern hand of his father, at that time a teacher in the same school, he began to excel as a student. He acquired a fluent command of Dutch, and, studying with a tutor, he began to learn French as well. At this point he attracted the favorable attention of a well-to-do patron. Soon he left Modjokerto to enter his patron's home and to study in a Dutch secondary school in Surabaya.

Sukarno's sponsor and foster parent was one H. O. S. Tjokroaminoto, an editor, businessman, teacher, and political organizer. A gentleman of such astonishingly eclectic tastes that he could reconcile in his own philosophy major elements of Islam, Marx, Shaw, and other systems as unlikely to blend, Tjokroaminoto had been

instrumental in 1911 in the establishment of Indonesia's first true political party, the Serikat Islam. About Tjokroaminoto rallied at first various Indonesian businessmen—a minute class at the time—seeking to safeguard Indonesian commerce against the further inroads of the Chinese and of the Dutch, and Indonesian religious leaders seeking to sustain and quicken the Muslim faith. Whether merchants or *kiais*, Tjokroaminoto's early colleagues were also incipient nationalists. They became politically conscious and active when the Serikat Islam attracted also the leaders of Indonesia's new intellectual class—doctors, lawyers, educators, civil servants, editors, labor union organizers, some of the most conspicuous of the latter group being Eurasian or Dutch. The Serikat Islam established branches throughout the nation, and Tjokroaminoto's Surabaya home became the general clearing house also, such was the Indonesian custom of the extended family and of all-inclusive hospitality, the rooming and boarding house as well, a kind of Serikat Islam *asrama*. There might not be enough beds, but there was plenty of floor space on which one or a dozen could spread out cool pandanus sleeping mats and settle in for a night or for a long succession of nights. The kitchen was capable of keeping a big kettle of rice and various spicy side dishes always ready for anyone who cared at any time of day to make a meal. On the spacious, shaded veranda visitors could settle in for hours on end while relays of callers casually came and went. Glasses and cups were kept replenished with heavily sweetened coffee or tea, packages of funnel-shaped clove-flavored cigarettes seemed inexhaustible, and under the circumstances, relaxed conversation knew no let or hindrance. Into this home and into this company, H. O. S. Tjokroaminoto introduced the young Sukarno as his special protégé.

Sukarno then, at the age of fourteen, made his appearance at the control center of the new nationalist movement. He enrolled as a student in the Dutch secondary school and in 1920 he was graduated. His real education, however, was his life in the politically macaronic Tjokroaminoto household. In it he met and generally grew to know, to admire, and to emulate the new Indonesian nationalist leaders, men who themselves spanned the political spectrum from Muslim theocrat to Marxist theorist. Sneevleet, the Dutch founder of the Indonesian Communist Party (the PKI),

was an intimate of Tjokroaminoto's, and to Sneevleet even today Sukarno pays the most glowing tribute. Alimin and Semaun and Tan Malaka, who picked up the Marxist torch when Sneevleet was exiled, were also among Tjokroaminoto's associates, although only Alimin seems to have been an intimate. About Alimin, who triggered a bloody little pro-Communist anti-Sukarno insurrection in 1948, Sukarno has since been silent. About Tan Malaka, who conspired against him in 1946 but joined him in 1948, his feelings are mixed. Since 1956, when he brought him home from exile in Moscow, Sukarno has had second thoughts about Semaun, who has proved embarrassingly full of suggestions, some of them far to the right of the Sukarno line.

If the Communists were conspicuous at Tjokroaminoto's, so too was Hadji Agus Salim, who stood for Muslim religious modernism and Western democratic progress and constituted himself so effective a gadfly of the Communists that they were almost relieved when the Serikat Islam in 1921 expelled them. Hadji Agus Salim many years later and much more quietly opposed Sukarno and thereupon passed into political eclipse even before his death in 1954. Among others who frequented the Tjokroaminoto ménage were Hamka, the inspiration of the religiously-minded youth; Ki Hadjar Dewantoro, founder of a nationwide system of private schools of high nationalistic voltage; Kartosuwirjo, a mystic who later became leader of the fanatical and militant Darul Islam movement and in 1963 was finally captured and executed.

From the Serikat Islam Sukarno inherited no systematic philosophy; rather, he inherited an eclecticism so comprehensive that even today, after he has spent over four decades defining his own beliefs, he yearns to gather around himself all those who hold to any other, however divergent, provided only they do not personally oppose him. The Tjokroaminoto home is the model, obviously, for the "family board" around which Sukarno of late has urged all Indonesian political factions of whatever hue peacefully and happily to reunite, with him, *Papak Indonesia*, as paterfamilias.

Back in 1920, under Tjokroaminoto, the system—or rather, the systemlessness—worked out remarkably well. Most of the members of the clique were just then in process of formulating their own political, economic, and social beliefs. They were eager for



discussion and debate. Most of them, furthermore, were men of great personal appeal and of astounding intellectual attainment. Thanks to a Dutch-style education, they were frequently fluent in Dutch, German, French, and English, and were sometimes equipped with considerable Latin, Greek, or Sanskrit as well. Since they needed it to study the Koran, many of them had learned Arabic. They were always proficient besides in at least two Indonesian languages and commonly more. They read and discussed Kant, Hegel, and Schopenhauer, Rousseau, Voltaire, and Renan, Abraham Lincoln and Thomas Jefferson, Sun Yat-sen and the Emperor Meiji, Rizal and Atatürk, also, when Sneevleet bootlegged it to them, the doctrine of Karl Marx. They were avid to know more about the Japanese, the Chinese, the Turkish, the Russian, as well as the French, the American, and for that matter, the Dutch revolutions. If this sounds rather too intense, they were not, it should at once be acknowledged, assembled in continuous intellectual séance in Tjokroaminoto's home. Many of them had plenty of leisure for the more relaxed pleasures of indolence, contemplation, and polygamy.

The young Sukarno, who had already acquired a knowledge of Dutch and French and was rapidly improving his German and English, proved a worthy disciple, one who was almost overendowed with a near photographic memory and total recall. Naturally he became the favorite of the group. Under the special guidance of Tjokroaminoto, who was himself a spellbinding orator and a brilliant writer, Sukarno learned to speak and to write with an effectiveness far beyond his years. He became a frequent editorial contributor, for instance, under the pen-name of Bima, to Tjokroaminoto's newspaper, *Utusan Hindia*. As an extra dash of versatility, he contributed cartoons as well as articles. He became a popular speaker of the Tri Koro Darmo, a youth group closely associated with the Serikat Islam. In Tjokroaminoto's home, he was a constant auditor and increasingly a participant in discussions which went on and on about any subject which might be raised by a group of men who were virtually all of them exceptionally skilled raconteurs and dialecticians.

Tjokroaminoto himself thought so highly of Sukarno's abilities and promise that he decided upon a relationship more binding than that of foster parent and announced Sukarno's engagement