

# Population Trends in Indonesia

WIDJOJO NITISASTRO



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by Widjojo Nitisastro

Prepared under the auspices of the  
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**For my wife Darsih  
and my daughter Wida**

## Preface

Indonesia today is the world's fifth most populous country, its approximately 120 million people ranking it below the United States and somewhat ahead of both Pakistan and Japan. Until the appearance of this book, however, no comprehensive study had been made of its population. By undertaking the first informed assessment of earlier, widely ranging population estimates and by his careful analysis of Indonesia's 1961 census, Professor Widjojo Nitisaastro has made an important contribution to an understanding of Indonesia's past as well as its present problems, both political and economic.

His careful and discerning assessment of the incongruities among the several colonial surveys of Java's population and his rectification of distortions inferred from them provide a much more reliable basis for insights into the social history of nineteenth-century Java. His account of the impact of the Japanese occupation and the revolution on birth rates and population distribution is important for an appreciation of the age distribution of Indonesia's present and future population.

For those who seek to understand contemporary Indonesia and its economic and political prospects, Dr. Widjojo's masterful and painstaking analysis of the 1961 census and his projections from these data will prove of special and, indeed, indispensable importance. The remarkable accuracy of his earlier projections from the 1930 census is an indication of the soundness of his methods. The population projections which he bases on 1961

census data forecast the probable growth rate not only of Indonesia's total population but also of the different components of this population. He finds startling disparities in the sizes of age groups in the population, differences which have tremendous consequences for Indonesia's immediate future. His analysis points up the fact that, because of the low birth and high mortality rates during the Japanese occupation and the revolution, Indonesia has until now enjoyed what in effect has been a major reprieve from the necessity of rapid economic development. As a consequence, during the past two decades the annual numbers of those entering the labor market and those pressing for secondary and higher education were relatively stable. But this reprieve has ended, for as a result of the more stable economic and political conditions commencing in the early 1950's the birth rate rose markedly while mortality rates fell. Thus, the number of Indonesians in the 15-24-year age group, which began to increase gradually during the period 1967-1970, will expand much more rapidly after 1971. As Dr. Widjojo emphasizes, during the period 1966-1976 there will be "a radical rejuvenation of the working-age population," with the population component aged 15-24 years almost doubling in this one decade. As the number of those entering the labor force suddenly doubles, "each entrant will literally bring his brother along, and the brother will want a job as well."

This, of course, points up the conclusion that not only is the need for economic development in Indonesia immediate, but much of this activity should be labor-intensive. Undoubtedly the present decade (1970-1980) is the crucial period. The adverse social consequences of the rapid upsurge in the number of entrants into the labor force will be most heavily felt in Java, where the extent of the agricultural base can no longer be expanded and where two-thirds of Indonesia's population is crowded into an area smaller than the state of New York. Planned migration from Java to the outer islands and the loss of population resulting from the massacres of 1965-1966 can have only a mini-

mal effect upon the overall picture. It is impossible to look at Professor Widjojo's data without concluding that for Java the need for birth control is desperately urgent. Birth control cannot, of course, have rapid enough results to ease the economic strains attendant upon such large numbers surging into the educational facilities and labor market in the 1970's. But from Dr. Widjojo's data one can only infer that unless the rapid and widespread practice of birth control is promptly introduced, Indonesia's population may reach approximately 227 million by 1991 (about 125 million on Java alone) and thereafter increase at an accelerating rate.

GEORGE MCT. KAHIN

*Ithaca, New York*  
*January 1970*

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All views expressed in this book, as well as the errors and omissions, are entirely my responsibility.

*Djakarta*  
*March 1970*

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