

# Indonesia

a travel survival kit



lonely planet

# **Indonesia**

**a travel survival kit**



**Indonesia - a travel survival kit**  
**First Edition**

**Published by**

Lonely Planet Publications  
PO Box 88, South Yarra, Victoria 3141, Australia  
Lonely Planet Publications  
PO Box 2001A, Berkeley, CA 94702, USA

**Printed by**

Colorcraft, Hong Kong

**Photographs**

Ginny Bruce, front cover - Ikan Pasar, fish market, Jakarta  
Mary Covernton (MC), back cover, back flap  
Hugh Finlay (HF)  
Peter Freeman (PF)  
Alan Samagalski (AS), movie billboards page, people pages, back flap  
Tony Wheeler (TW)  
Royal Tropical Institute, Historical Photograph Archives, Amsterdam - page 17

**Illustrations**

Anthony Jenkins - pages 73, 137, 144, 145  
Nicholai - pages 392, 394, 395

**Published**

September 1986

**Bali & Lombok**

The 'nuts and bolts' information about Bali and Lombok in this book is identical to the information in *Bali & Lombok - a travel survival kit*.

National Library of Australia Cataloguing in Publishing

Bruce, Ginny

Indonesia, a travel survival kit

Includes index.

ISBN 0 908086 81 4

1. Indonesia - Description and travel - 1945- -  
Guidebooks. I. Covernton, Mary, 1945- . II.  
Samagalski, Alan. III. Title.

915.98'0438

©Lonely Planet Publications 1986

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, except brief extracts for the purposes of review, without the written permission of the publisher and copyright owner.

**Ginny Bruce** arrived in Australia from Britain and virtually went straight from the airport to Lonely Planet. Several months later after slaving over the LP word processors, as well as having cowered from emu attacks in the far north of Australia, scuba-dived on the Great Barrier Reef, and sold helmets and Dinky Toys in a fire museum in Sydney, there wasn't much else left to do except go to Java which she trampled over end-to-end for this book. Her other travels have included Mexico, Japan, Thailand, Burma, Sri Lanka, Hong Kong, Turkey and assorted European countries. Ginny has also spent a short time tackling Humanities at Sussex University and subsequently worked for *Which* magazine in London.



**Mary Covernton** was born on the outskirts of the Barossa Valley, the prime wine producing region of South Australia. She spent much of her life in Adelaide where she went to university, and worked variously as an advertising copywriter, journalist and book-editor. While hitching around Australia she worked on fishing boats in the Northern Territory, for a mining company and on a huge pastoral property in the Pilbara region of Australia's remote north-west, then set off to England and Spain to live for five years. Mary joined Lonely Planet several years ago, has edited and rehabilitated numerous books, co-wrote our *Bali & Lombok* guide, contributed to *South-East Asia on a Shoestring*, and attacked Sumatra for the Indonesia guide. She has now left Lonely Planet and returned to Adelaide.



**Alan Samagalski** came to Lonely Planet in 1982 after a lengthy stay on the Indian subcontinent, having left the Melbourne University genetics department and a stumbling career at Melbourne's 'Last Laugh' and 'Comedy Cafe'. Alan subsequently disappeared into China and emerged some months later armed with copious notes and maps which eventually came together as *China - a travel survival kit*. Just when we thought he'd never stop writing he got on a plane for Indonesia to research the outer islands for this book. He has also contributed to or updated other Lonely Planet books, including *Australia*, *Hong Kong*, *Macau & Canton* and *South-East Asia on a Shoestring*.



### This Edition

Apart from the three writer-researchers who worked their way through Indonesia from end to end numerous other people contributed to the production of this book. At the Lonely Planet office in Australia Richard Everist edited and shepherded the book through to completion; Lindy Cameron edited and proofed the Bali and Lombok sections; Ann Logan typeset; and Todd Pierce drew maps, designed and pasted up the book. Everybody else lent a hand.

The Indonesia section of *South-East Asia on a Shoestring*, which over the years has grown from around 50 pages to over 200 in the 5th edition, formed the basis for this book. Grateful thanks must go to the many travellers who over the years have written with suggestions and corrections for that book. In addition to people credited in the most recent edition of that book or in our *Bali & Lombok* guidebook we'd like to thank:

Michael Aaronson (USA), Averil & Tom Ackroyd (NZ), Tord Andersson & Kristin Olsson (Sw), Mark Austin (NZ), Mark Baker (USA), Alessandro Baronti (It), Andrew Barton (UK), Mrs Virgil Bodeen (USA), Stefan Braunwalder (CH), Craig Bullock (UK), Mark Cohen (USA), John Cooper, Nigel Daniel (Aus), Francois Dery (C), Cathy Doherty & John Adams (Aus), June Donsworth (Aus), Simon Drimer (Aus), Peter Dyce (Aus), Hugh Finlay (Aus), Pete & Gil Flegg (UK) for their very detailed letter, Philip Graham (Aus), Philippe Golay (CH), Tom Harriman & Jan King (USA), Simon & Geraldine Harris (Aus), Sue Hartshorne (Aus), Richard Haverkamp (NZ), Ute Hellmich (D), Peter Helsby (Aus), Ruth Hesselyn (NZ), Mary Jackson (USA), Jack, David Jeffcock (UK), Val Jones & J Campbell for their letter on Tanatoraja, Kerrie & Gerard, Steven Langoulant (Aus), A Leonard (USA), K Lloyd (Aus), Keith Lott for notes on southern Sulawesi, Cameron Mewburn, George Monbiot (UK), Andy Neale (Aus), Brian & Maureen Nicol (HK), Enid Nuttall (Aus), Pam Olink & Leicester Cooper (Aus), Heinrich Schaluck (D), Harton & Judy Semple (USA), David

Stanley & Pam Corbett (NZ), Neil Taylor (UK), Peter Ricketts (Ind), Pat Ryan (Aus), Carl Salicath (N), Mr Sancoyo (Ind), Helga Schmidbauer (D), Ellen Sheeley (USA), Lincoln Siliakus (Aus), Kerry & Michele Snyder, Bob & Pam Thompson (USA), Norman Tod (UK), Andrew Turnell & Jenn de Vries (Aus), Dale W van Dalsem (USA), Jonathan Weiland (USA), Gill Whybrow (UK), Wendy & Kerry Watson (Aus), Andy Winter, J Woodell (Aus)

Aus - Australia, C - Canada, CH - Switzerland, D - West Germany, HK - Hong Kong, Ind - Indonesia, It - Italy, N - Norway, NZ - New Zealand, Sw - Sweden, UK - UK, USA - USA

Thanks also for the last minute letter from Darien Brown (Aus) giving us the exciting news that there are once again flights between Darwin in Australia's Northern Territory and Timor in Nusa Tenggara. See the 'Stop Press' section in the *Getting There* chapter.

### A Request

All travel guides rely on new information to stay up to date. At Lonely Planet we get a steady stream of mail from travellers and it all helps - whether it's a few lines on a postcard or a stack of closely-written pages. Everywhere prices go up, new hotels open, old ones close, some degenerate, others get renovated, bus routes change, bridges collapse and roads are finally surfaced. Remember, this book is meant to be a guide, not a gospel - since things go on changing it can't tell you exactly what to expect all the time, but hopefully it will point you in a few of the right directions and save you some time and money whilst you're at it! So if you find things aren't like they're described in the book then don't blame the authors - instead, write to Lonely Planet and help make the next edition better. As usual, the writers of useful letters will get a free copy of the next edition, or another Lonely Planet book if you prefer.

# Contents

<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	7
<b>FACTS ABOUT THE COUNTRY</b> History - Population & People - Geography - Religion - Holidays & Festivals - Language	8
<b>FACTS FOR THE VISITOR</b> Visas - Customs - Money - Costs - Climate - Health - Accommodation - Food - What to Take & How to Take it - Surfing, Diving & Snorkelling - Travelling in Indonesia - General Information - Photography - Books - Media - Maps	55
<b>GETTING THERE</b> Round-the-World Tickets - From Australia - From Britain - From Europe - From the USA - From Canada - From Singapore - From Hong Kong - Other Entry & Exit Points - Tickets out of Indonesia	99
<b>GETTING AROUND</b> Air - Road - Hitch-hiking - Driving - Motorcycles - Bicycles - Rail - Boat - Local Transport	104
<b>JAVA</b> History - The Javanese - Economy & Geography - The Wayang - The Mahabharata & Ramayana - The Gamelan - Arts & Crafts - Books - Getting There - Getting Around	115
<b>Jakarta</b> Around Jakarta	136
<b>West Java</b> Jakarta to Merak - Merak - Down the West Coast - Labuhan - Carita Beach - Krakatau - Ujong Kulon National Park - Bogor - Around Bogor - Pelabuhanratu - Bogor to Bandung - Bandung - Around Bandung - Bandung to Pangandaran - Pangandaran - Cilacap - Cirebon	164
<b>Central Java</b> Yogyakarta - Around Yogya - Prambanan - Borobudur - Jatijajar Cave - Magelang - Wonosobo - Dieng Plateau - Near Dieng - Ambarawa - Gedung Songo Temple - Solo - Around Solo - Semarang - Pekalongan - Tegal - Kudus - Around Kudus	203
<b>East Java</b> Malang - Around Malang - Panataran - Blitar - Pacitan - Madiun - Surabaya - Around Surabaya - Madura Island - Trowulan - Mojokerto - Probolinggo - Mt Bromo - Pasir Putih - Situbondo - Kaliklatak - Banyuwangi - Nature Reserves in East Java	257
<b>BALI</b> History - The Balinese - Economy - Geography - Religion - Arts & Crafts - Music, Dance & Drama - Books - Getting There - Getting Around	294
<b>South Bali</b> Kuta & Legian - Sanur - Serangan Island - Benoa - Nusa Dua - Ulu Watu	316
<b>Denpasar</b>	334
<b>Ubud</b> Denpasar to Ubud - Around Ubud - Ubud to Batur	340
<b>East Bali</b> Gianyar - Sidan - Bona - Klungkung - Kusamba - Goa Lawah - Padangbai - Tenganan - Candidasa - Amlapura - Tirtagangga - Amlapura to Rendang - Bangli - Besakih - Nusa Penida	353
<b>South-West Bali</b> Sempidi, Lukluk & Kapal - Tanah Lot - Mengwi - Blayu - Marga - Sangeh - Tabanan - Kediri & Krambitan - Rambut Sawi - Negara - Gilimanuk	367
<b>Central Mountains</b> Penelokan - Batur & Kintamani - Penulisan - Lake Batur & Mt Batur - Bedugul - Mt Batukau - Routes through Pulkun	369
<b>North Bali</b> Singaraja - Singaraja Beaches - Around Singaraja-West - Seririt to Gilimanuk - Around Singaraja-East - Yeh Sanih - Yeh Sanih to Amlapura	377
<b>SUMATRA</b> History - The Sumatrans - Geography - Fauna & Flora - Dope - Getting There - Getting Around	387

<b>Riau Riau Archipelago</b> – Tanjung Pinang – Penyengat Island – Singkep Island – Penuba Island – Other Islands – Pekanbaru	401
<b>Lampung Panjang &amp; Bakauhuni</b>	415
<b>South Sumatra Palembang</b>	416
<b>Jambi Jambi</b>	419
<b>Bengkulu (Bencoolen)</b> Bengkulu – Around Bengkulu – Kerinci	420
<b>West Sumatra Padang</b> – Mentawai Islands – Siberut – Padang to Bukittinggi – Bukittinggi – Around Bukittinggi	422
<b>North Sumatra Medan</b> – Lake Toba Area – Medan to Lake Toba – Brastagi – Bukit Lawang – Binjai – Prapat – Lake Toba – Sibolga – Nias	441
<b>Aceh Banda Aceh</b> – Sabang – Other Islands – Meulaboh – Simeulue – Banda Aceh to Medan – Other Places	466
<b>NUSA TENGGARA History</b> – The Nusa Tenggara's – Economy – Language – Money & Costs – Getting Around	476
<b>Lombok Ampenan</b> – Mataram – Cakranegara – Sweta – Narmada – Lingsar – Suranadi – Sesaot – Lembar – Sukarare – Kuta – Kotaraja – Tetebaru – Lendang Nangka – Labuhan Lombok – Gili Air, Gili Meno & Gili Trawangan – Bayan – Senaro – Mt Rinjani – Sembulan Bumbung & Sembulan Lawang	481
<b>Sumbawa Labuhan Alas</b> – Alas – Taliwang – Sumbawa Besar – Moyo Island – Mt Tambora – Bima-Raba – Sape	512
<b>Komodo</b>	525
<b>Flores Labuhanbajo</b> – Reo – Ruteng – Waerana – Bajawa – Around Bajawa – Ende – Detosoko & Camat – Keli Mutu – Moni – Wolowaru – Wolonjita, Jopu & Nggela – Maumere – Around Maumere – Larantuka	530
<b>The Solor &amp; Alor Archipelagos</b> Solor – Adonara – Lembata – Lewoleba – Balauring – Lamalera – Alor & Pantar	556
<b>Timor Kupang</b> – Beyond Kupang – Soe – Kefamenanu – Atambua – Atapupa – Maubara – Same – Ermera – Baucau – Laga – Tutuala – Viqueque & Venilale – Roti – Savu	561
<b>Sumba Waingapu</b> – Around Waingapu – Waikabubak – Around Waikabubak	575
<b>KALIMANTAN History</b> – The Dayaks – Wildlife – Entering & Exiting Indonesia via Kalimantan – Getting There – Getting Around – Banjarmasin – Banjarbaru – Martapura – Cempaka – Palangkaraya – Balikpapan – Samarinda – Tenggarong – Up the Mahakam River – Tarakan – Pontianak – Singkawang	589
<b>SULAWESI Getting There</b> – Getting Around	622
<b>The South-Western Peninsula</b> Ujung Pandang – Around Ujung Pandang – Pare Pare – Sengkang – Watampone – Salayar Island	626
<b>Tanatoraja Rantepao</b> – Around Rantepao – Makale – Palopo	642
<b>South-Eastern Peninsula</b> Malili & Soroako – Kolaka – Kendari – Buton Island	663
<b>Central Sulawesi</b> Pendolo – Tentena – Poso – Palu – Donggala	665
<b>North Sulawesi</b> Gorontalo – Kwandang – Manado – Bitung – The Sangir-Talaud Islands	674
<b>MALUKU History</b> – Climate – Staples & Spices – Getting There – Getting Around	692
<b>Ambon Kota Ambon</b> – Around Ambon	700
<b>The Banda Islands</b> Bandaneira	709
<b>Southern Maluku</b>	717
<b>Northern Maluku</b> Ternate – Tidore – Halmahera	717
<b>IRIAN JAYA History</b> – Books – Visas – Permits – Money – Getting There – Getting Around	724
<b>The North Jayapura</b> – Biak	732
<b>The Baliem Valley</b> Wamena – Walks in the Baliem Valley	739
<b>Other Destinations</b> Merauke – Tanah Merah – Agats – Freepot Copper Mine – Sorong	747
<b>INDEX</b>	749

# Introduction

---

Like a string of jewels in a coral sea, the 13,000 islands of the Indonesian archipelago stretch almost 5000 km from the Asian mainland into the Pacific Ocean. And like jewels the islands have long represented wealth. A thousand years ago the Chinese sailed as far as Timor to load up cargoes of sandalwood and beeswax; by the 16th century the spice islands of the Moluccas were luring European navigators from the other side of the world in search of cloves, nutmeg and mace, once so rare and expensive that bloody wars were fought for control of their production and trade. The Dutch ruled for almost 350 years, drawing their fortunes from the islands whose rich volcanic soil could produce two crops of rice a year, as well as commercially valuable crops like coffee, sugar, tobacco and teak.

Endowed with a phenomenal array of natural resources and strange cultures, Indonesia became a magnet for every shade of entrepreneur from the west – a stamping ground for proselytising missionaries, unscrupulous traders, wayward adventurers, inspired artists. It has been overrun by Dutch and Japanese armies; surveyed, drilled, dug up and shipped off by foreign mining companies; littered end to end with the 'transmigrants' of Java and Bali; poked and prodded by ethnologists, linguists and anthropologists turning fading cultures into PhD theses.

But one group which Indonesia has never really attracted is the tourist. With the exception of Bali, Torajaland, and the huge Hindu-Buddhist monuments of Borobudur and Prambanan in central Java, all of which attract huge numbers of visitors, the islands of western Indonesia are often seen as places to pass through on the way down to Australia or on the way up to the Asian mainland – rather than as destinations in their own right – whilst the outer islands are considered too expensive

to reach or too difficult or time-consuming to travel in. Both views are out-of-date. Travel in some parts of the outer islands can still be tedious, but over the last few years things have improved considerably; there are more roads and more buses, more ferry, shipping and air connections between the islands, and the rather neglected tourist industry is finally being given a significant push by the government of Indonesia – making it easier to travel there than ever before.

Indonesia possesses some of the most remarkable sights in South-East Asia and there are things about this country you will never forget: the flaming red and orange sunsets over the mouth of the Kapuas River in Kalimantan; standing on the summit of Keli Mutu in Flores and gazing at the coloured lakes that fill its volcanic craters; the lumbering leather-skinned dragons of Komodo Island; expatriates in Yogyakarta using an Asian language – *Bahasa Indonesia* – as the common means of communication; the funeral ceremonies of the Torajas in the highlands of central Sulawesi; the Dani tribesmen of Irian Jaya wearing little else but feathers and penis gourds; the wooden *wayang golek* puppets manipulated into life by the puppet-masters of Yogyakarta; the brilliant coral reefs off the north coast of Sulawesi.

You can lie on your back on Kuta Beach in Bali and soak up the ultra-violet rays, paddle a canoe down the rivers of Kalimantan, surf at the island of Nias off the coast of Sumatra, trek in the high country of Irian Jaya, catch butterflies the size of your hand in central Sulawesi, eat your way through a kaleidoscope of fruit from one end of the archipelago to the other, stare down the craters of live volcanoes, learn the art of batik in Yogyakarta or the techniques of kite-making from any Indonesian kid – almost anything you want, Indonesia has got!



---

# Facts about the Country

---

## HISTORY

### In the Beginning

From the 7th century BC there were well-developed and organised societies in the Indonesian archipelago. The inhabitants knew how to irrigate ricefields, domesticate animals, use copper and bronze, and had some knowledge of sea navigation. There were villages – often permanent ones – where life was linked to the production of rice, the staple crop.

These early Indonesians were animists, believing that all animate and inanimate objects have their own particular life force, *semangat* or soul. Certain people had more *semangat* than others – such as the tribal and village leaders, and the *shamans* or priests who had magical powers and could control the spirit world. The spirits of the dead had to be honoured since their *semangat* could still help the living; there was a belief in the afterlife and weapons and utensils would be left in tombs for use in the next world. Supernatural forces were held responsible for natural events, and evil spirits had to be placated by offerings, rites and ceremonies. In a region where earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and torrential rainstorms are common events, a belief in malevolent spirits is hardly surprising.

Villages, at least in Java, developed into embryonic towns, and small kingdoms (little more than collections of villages subservient to petty chieftains) developed by the 1st century AD, together with their own ethnic and tribal religions. The climate of Java, with its hot, even temperature, plentiful rainfall and volcanic soil, was ideal for the wet-field method of rice cultivation, known as *sawah* cultivation, and the well organised society it required may explain why the people of Java and Bali developed a more sophisticated civilisation than those of the other islands. The dry field or *ladang* method of rice

cultivation is a much simpler form of agriculture and requires no elaborate social structure.

The social and religious duties of the rice-growing communities were gradually refined to form the basis of *adat* or customary law – a traditional law that was to persist through waves of imported religious beliefs – Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam and Christianity – and which still remains a force in Indonesia today.

### The Coming of Hinduism & Buddhism

One of the puzzles of Indonesian history is how the early kingdoms on Sumatra, Java, Kalimantan and Bali were penetrated by Hinduism and Buddhism. The oldest works of Hindu art in Indonesia, statues from the 3rd century AD, come from Sulawesi and Sumatra. The earliest Hindu inscriptions, in Sanskrit, have been found in West Java and eastern Kalimantan and date from the early 5th century AD.

Several theories regarding the influx of Hinduism and Buddhism have been proposed. Large scale immigration from India is generally ruled out and there is no evidence for the theory that Indian princes, defeated in wars in India, fled to the islands of South-East Asia and established kingdoms on the Indian model. Certainly Indian traders brought Tamil, the language of southern India, but only Brahmins could have brought Sanskrit, the language of religion and philosophy. Some Brahmins may have followed the traders as missionaries – although Hinduism is not a proselytising religion. On the other hand Buddhism is a proselytizing religion and was carried far from its Indian homeland.

Another theory holds that the early Indonesians were attracted to the cultural life of India in much the same way Elizabethan English were to Italy, and the Indonesian aristocracies played

an active role in transferring Indian culture to Indonesia by inviting Brahmin priests to their courts. Possibly it was hoped the new religions could provide occult powers and a mythological sanction for the Indonesian rulers – as had happened in India. This theory fits in well with the mythological and mystical view of history which has persisted since the beginning of recorded Indonesian civilisation. In the Hindu period the kings were seen as incarnations of Vishnu and even after the arrival of Islam the dynasties traced their lineage on one side back to Mohammed and from there to the prophets and Adam – but on the other side it was traced to the heroes of the *wayang*, the indigenous puppet theatre of Java, and to gods whom orthodox Muslims considered pagan. One Sumatran dynasty even claimed descent from Alexander the Great and as late as the second half of the 19th century the rulers of Solo were boasting a special alliance with Nyai Lara Kidul, the Goddess of the South Seas, and with Sunan Lawu, the ruler of the spirits on Mt Lawu.

#### **The Development of Early Sea Trade**

Foreign traders were attracted by the Indonesian archipelago's unique local products – the foremost were spices, which were used as flavourings and also to preserve food (meat in particular). Sumatra was famous for gold, pepper and benzoin (an aromatic gum valued especially by the Chinese) – but the real 'Spice Islands' were the tiny specks in the region now known as Maluku (the Moluccas): Ternate, Tidore, islands off the coast of Halmahera, Ambon and Banda. On these islands grew nutmeg and cloves which could be used as spices and preservatives, in the manufacture of perfumes, and for medicinal purposes. By the 1st century AD Indonesian trade was firmly established with other parts of Asia, including China and India. Indian trade, the more active of the two, linked India, China and Indonesia with Greece and Rome – Ptolemy mentions

the islands of Indonesia in his writings as early as 165 AD.

#### **The Early Kingdoms: Srivijaya, Shailendra & Mataram**

The Sumatran Buddhist kingdom of Srivijaya rose in the 7th century AD and while its power has been absurdly romanticised, it nevertheless maintained a substantial international trade – run by Tamils and Chinese. It was the first major Indonesian commercial seapower, able to control much of the trade in South-East Asia by virtue of its control of the Straits of Melaka between Sumatra and the Malay peninsula.

Merchants from Arabia, Persia and India brought goods to the coastal cities to exchange for both local products and goods from China and the spice islands. Silk, porcelain, Chinese rhubarb (peculiar for its medicinal properties) came from China in return for ivory, tortoise shell, rhinoceros horn, cloves, cardamom and pepper, as well as precious wood like ebony and camphor wood, perfumes, pearls, coral, camphor, amber and the dull reddish-white precious stone known as cornelian or chalcedony. Exports to Arabia included aloes for medicinal uses, camphor, sandalwood, ebony and sapanwood (from which a red dye is made), ivory, tin and spices. By the 13th century woollen and cotton cloth, as well as iron and rice were being imported by Sumatra.

Meanwhile, on Java, the Buddhist Shailendra and the Hindu Mataram dynasties flourished on the plains of Central Java between the 8th and 10th centuries. While Srivijaya's trade brought it wealth, these land-based states had far greater manpower at their disposal and left magnificent remains, in particular the vast Buddhist monument of Borobudur and the huge Hindu temple complex of Prambanan.

Thus two types of states evolved in Indonesia. The first, typified by Srivijaya, were the mainly Sumatran coastal states – commercially oriented, their wealth derived

## 10 Facts about the Country

from international trade, their cities highly cosmopolitan. In contrast, the inland kingdoms of Java, separated from the sea by volcanoes (like the kingdom of Mataram in the Solo River region), were agrarian cultures, bureaucratic, conservative, with a marked capacity to absorb and transform the Indian influences.

By the end of the 10th century, the centre of power had moved from Central to East Java where a series of kingdoms held sway until the rise of the Majapahit kingdom. This is the period when Hinduism and Buddhism were syncretised and when Javanese culture began to come into its own, finally spreading its influence to Bali. By the 12th century Srivijaya's power seems to have declined and the empire broke up into smaller kingdoms.

### The Hindu Majapahit Kingdom

One of the greatest of Indonesian states and the last important kingdom to remain predominantly Hindu until its extinction was Majapahit. Founded in East Java in 1293, the kingdom had a brief period of conquering glory but in the late 14th century the influence of Majapahit began to decline.

The power of the kingdom was largely due to the rigorous action of one of its early prime ministers, Gajah Mada. Gajah Mada was a royal guard who put down an anti-royalist revolt in the 1320s and then, during the reign of Hayam Wuruk, brought parts of Java and other areas under control. The kingdom has often been portrayed as an Indonesian version of Rome, with its own vast empire, but it is now thought that its power did not extend beyond Java, Bali and the island of Madura. If Gajah Mada did have some control over the other islands he did not govern them like the Romans governed Europe or the Dutch governed Indonesia – it's likely to have been trade which linked these regions and at the Majapahit end this trade was probably a royal monopoly.

Hayam Wuruk's reign is usually referred

to as an Indonesian Golden Age, comparable with the Tang Dynasty of China. One account, by the court poet Prapanca, credits the Majapahits with control over much of the coastal regions of Sumatra, Borneo, Sulawesi, Maluku, Sumbawa and Lombok, and also states that the island of Timor sent tribute. The kingdom is said to have maintained regular relations with China, Vietnam, Cambodia, Annam and Siam but by 1389 – 25 years after the death of Gajah Mada – the kingdom was on the decline, and the coastal dependencies in northern Java were in revolt.

### The Penetration of Islam

Islam first took hold in north Sumatra, where traders from Gujarat (a western state in India) stopped en route to Maluku and China. Settlements of Arab traders were established in the latter part of the 7th century, and in 1292 Marco Polo noted that the inhabitants of the town of Perlak (present day Aceh) on Sumatra's north tip had been converted to Islam.

The first Muslim inscriptions in Java date back to the 11th century and there may even have been Muslims in the Majapahit court at the zenith of its power in the mid-14th century. But it was not until the 15th and 16th centuries that Indonesian rulers turned to Islam and it became a state religion. It was then superimposed on the mixture of Hinduism and indigenous animist beliefs to produce the peculiar hybrid religion which predominates in much of Indonesia, especially Java, today.

By the time of Majapahit's final collapse at the beginning of the 16th century, many of its old satellite kingdoms had declared themselves independent Muslim states, with much of their wealth based on their position as trans-shipment points for the growing spice trade with India and China. Islam spread across the archipelago from east to west and followed the trade routes. It appears to have been a peaceful transformation – unlike Arab and Turkish conversions made at the point of the

sword. The spread of Islam in Indonesia is often described as if it happened simply because it was Islam, like some contagious disease.

While pockets of the Indonesian population are fundamentalist Muslims, such as the Acehnese in northern Sumatra, the success of Islam was due, on the whole, to its ability to adapt to local customs. The form of Islam followed in much of Indonesia today is not the austere form of the Middle East, but has more in common with Sufism, a mystical variant of Islam brought into India from Persia and possibly carried into Indonesia by wandering sufist holymen and mystics.

### **The Rise of Melaka & Makassar**

By the 15th century the centre of power in the archipelago had moved to the south-west of the Malay peninsula, where the trading kingdom of Melaka (also spelt Malacca) was reaching the height of its power. The rise of Melaka, and of trading cities along the north coast of Java, coincided with the spread of Islam through the archipelago – the Melaka kingdom accepted Islam in the 14th century. Though centred on the peninsula side of the Straits, the Melaka kingdom controlled both sides, based its power and wealth on trade, and gathered the ports of northern Java within its commercial orbit. By the 16th century it was the principal port of the region, possibly one of the biggest in the world.

By the end of the 16th century a seapower had risen in the Indonesian archipelago – the twin principalities of Makassar and Gowa in south-west Sulawesi. These regions had been settled by Malay traders who also sailed to Maluku and beyond. In 1607 when Torres sailed through the strait which now bears his name, he met Makassar Muslims in west New Guinea. Other Makassar fleets visited the north Australian coast for several hundred years, introducing the Aborigines to metal tools, pottery and tobacco.

### **The Arrival of the Portuguese**

When the first Europeans arrived in the Indonesian archipelago they found a varying collection of principalities and kingdoms. These kingdoms were occasionally at war with each other, but also linked by the substantial inter-island and international trade over which successive powerful kingdoms – Srivijaya, Majapahit and Melaka – had been able to exert control by virtue of their position or their seapower.

European influence from the 16th to 18th centuries, was due to the penetration of individuals and organisations into the complex trading network of the archipelago. Marco Polo and a few early missionary-travellers aside, the first Europeans to visit Indonesia were the Portuguese. Vasco de Gama had led the first European ships round the Cape of Good Hope to Asia in 1498; by 1510 the Portuguese had captured Goa on the west coast of India and then pushed on to South-East Asia. The principle aim of the first Portuguese to arrive in the Indonesian archipelago was the domination of the valuable spice trade in Maluku – the Molucca islands. Under Alfonso d'Albuquerque they captured Melaka in 1511, and the following year their ships arrived in the Maluku.

Portuguese control of trade in Indonesia was based on their fortified bases, such as Melaka, and on their supremacy at sea and the failure of their various foes to form a united front against them. This allowed them to exercise a precarious control of the strategic trading ports that stretched from Maluku to Melaka, Macau, Goa, Mozambique and Angola. From a European point of view the Portuguese were pioneers who opened up the trade routes from Europe to Asia, forerunners of European expansionism. From an Indonesian point of view they were just another group of traders who found their way to the spice islands. The coming of the Portuguese to Indonesia did not represent a fundamental alteration of Indonesian society or trade – even the capture of Melaka did not

## 12 Facts about the Country

fundamentally change anything. The face and the colour of the rulers changed, but local traders took no notice of political boundaries and allegiances if they did not effect trade.

The initial Portuguese successes encouraged other European nations to send ships to the region – notably the English, the Dutch and the Spanish, the latter establishing themselves at Manila in 1571. By the time these new forces appeared on the horizon the Portuguese had suffered a military defeat at the hands of Ternate and were a spent force. It was the Dutch who were going to eventually lay the foundations of the Indonesian state we know today.

### **The Coming of the Dutch**

A badly led expedition of four Dutch ships, under the command of Cornelius de Houtman, arrived at Banten in West Java in 1596 – after a 14 month voyage in which more than half of the 249 crew died. A Dutch account of Banten at the time gives a lively picture:

There came such a multitude of Javanese and other nations such as Turks, Chinese, Bengali, Arabs, Persians, Gujarati, and others that one could hardly move . . . that each nation took a spot on the ships where they displayed their goods the same as if they were in a market. Of which the Chinese brought of all sorts of silk woven and unwoven, spun and unspun, with beautiful earthenware, with other strange things more. The Javanese brought chickens, eggs, ducks, and many kinds of fruits. Arabs, Moors, Turks, and other nations of people each brought of everything one might imagine.

The Dutch got off to a bad start. They made a bad impression on the Javanese by killing a prince and some of his retainers, concluded a meaningless treaty of friendship with the ruler of Banten, lost one of their ships when attacked by the Javanese north of Surabaya, but nevertheless returned to Holland with goods which yielded a small profit for their backers. Other independent expeditions followed

and met with varying success – some ships were captured by the Spanish and Portuguese. The behaviour of the Dutch was uneven and so was their reception but Dutch trade expanded quickly, partly because regional Indonesian leaders took advantage of the higher prices which Dutch and Portuguese competition generated.

Then in 1580 Spain, the traditional enemy of Holland, occupied Portugal and this event prompted the Dutch government to take an interest in the Far East. The government amalgamated the competing merchant companies into the United East India Company, or the VOC (*Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie*), with the intention of creating a force to bring military pressure to bear on the Portuguese and the Spanish. Dutch trading ships were replaced by heavily armed fleets with instructions to attack Portuguese bases. By 1605 the Dutch had defeated the Portuguese at Tidore and Ambon and occupied the territory themselves – but it was another 36 years before they captured Melaka.

### **The Foundation of a Dutch Empire**

The founder of the Dutch empire in the Indies was Jan Pieterszoon Coen, an imaginative but ruthless man. Amongst his achievements was the near-total extermination of the indigenous population of the Banda Islands in Maluku. Coen developed a grandiose plan to make his capital in Java the centre of the intra-Asian trade from Japan to Persia, and to develop the spice plantations using Burmese, Madagascan and Chinese labourers.

While the more grandiose plans were rejected he nevertheless acted vigorously in grabbing a monopoly on the spice trade as he had been instructed. An alliance with Ternate in 1607 gave the Dutch control over the source of cloves, and their occupation of Banda from 1609-21 gave them control of the nutmeg trade. As the Dutch extended their power they forced

a reduction in spice production by destroying excess clove and nutmeg plantations, thus ruining the livelihoods of the local inhabitants but keeping European prices and profits high. After capturing Melaka from the Portuguese in 1641 the Dutch became masters of the seas in the region. They held a monopoly of the clove and nutmeg trade, and also had a hold on the Indian cloth trade, and on Japanese copper exports. By the middle of the century they had made their capital, Batavia, on the island of Java, the centre of trade on a route from Japan to Persia via Ceylon and India. They defeated Makassar in 1667 and secured a monopoly of its trade, and eventually brought the Sumatran ports under their sway. The last of the Portuguese were expelled in 1660 and the English in 1667.

#### **The Disruption of Trade Patterns & the Unification of Java**

The first effect of Dutch power in the Indies was the disruption of the traditional pattern of trade by their attempts – with some success – to achieve a monopoly of the spice trade at its source. The company's policy at this stage was to keep to its trading posts and avoid expensive territorial conquests. An accord with the Susuhunan (literally 'he to whose feet people must look up') of Mataram, the dominant kingdom in Java, was established which permitted only Dutch ships, or those with permission from the VOC, to trade with the spice islands and the regions beyond them.

Then, perhaps unintentionally, but in leaps and bounds, the Dutch developed from being one trading company amongst many to the masters of a colonial empire centred on their chief trading port at Batavia. Following a 'divide and rule' strategy the Dutch exploited the conflicts between the Javanese kingdoms and, in 1678, were able to make the ruler of Mataram their vassal and to dominate his successors.

They had already put Banten under

their control by helping the ruler's ambitious son to overthrow his father. In 1755 the Dutch split the Mataram kingdom into two, Yogyakarta and Surakarta (Solo). These new states and the five smaller states on Java were only nominally sovereign, dominated by the Dutch East Indies Company. Fighting amongst the princes was halted, and peace was brought to East Java by the forced cessation of invasions and raids from Bali. Thus Java was united – what the native kings had failed to do for centuries had been achieved towards the end of the 18th century by a foreign trading company with an army that totalled only one thousand Europeans and two thousand Asians.

#### **The Decline of the VOC**

Despite some dramatic successes, the fortunes of the VOC were on the decline by the middle of the 18th century. The Dutch monopoly of the spice trade was finally broken after the Dutch-English war of 1780-84, by the Treaty of Paris which permitted free trade in the east. Dutch trade in China was outstripped by European rivals, and in India much of their trade was diverted by the British to Madras. In addition, the emphasis of European trade with the east began to shift from spices to Chinese silk, Japanese copper, coffee, tea and sugar – over which it was impossible to establish a monopoly.

In 1740 the Dutch suffered their first serious setback in their stronghold of Batavia. The causes of the 'Batavian Fury' are hard to unravel but the growing number of industrious Chinese traders and artisans proved to be a flashpoint, creating suspicion amongst the local population. The Dutch made moves to limit the number of Chinese immigrants and began to deport the unemployed to Ceylon or the Cape of Good Hope. Rumours spread among the Dutch that the Chinese planned to revolt, and among the Chinese that they would be thrown overboard once they were on the deportation ships. In this atmosphere of unrest

## 14 Facts about the Country

the government was unable, and perhaps unwilling, to stop the ensuing massacre of thousands of Chinese. The result was a rebellion that soon spread across Java and was to lead to the Third Javanese War of Succession (1746-57). The slaughter of Chinese had great significance in Java and the suspicion and jealousy aroused then still remains a potentially explosive issue today.

Dutch trading interests gradually contracted more and more around their capital of Batavia. The Batavian government increasingly depended, for its finances, on customs dues and tolls on goods coming into Batavia and taxes from the local Javanese population. Increased smuggling and the illicit private trade carried on by company employees helped to reduce profits. The mounting expense of wars within Java and of administering the additional territory acquired after each new treaty was made also played a part.

The VOC turned to the Dutch government at home for support and the subsequent investigation of VOC affairs revealed corruption, bankruptcy and general mismanagement. In 1800 the VOC was formally wound up, its territorial possessions became the property of the Netherlands government and the trading empire was gradually transformed into a colonial empire.

### **The British Occupation & the Java War**

In 1811, during the Napoleonic Wars when France occupied Holland, the British occupied several Dutch East Indies posts including Java. Control was restored to the Dutch in 1816 and a treaty was signed in 1824 under which the English exchanged their Indonesian settlements (such as Bengkulu in Sumatra) for Dutch holdings in India and the Malay peninsula. While the two European powers may have settled their differences to their own satisfaction, the Indonesians were of another mind. There were a number of wars or disturbances in various parts of

the archipelago during the early 19th century, but the most prolonged struggles were the Paderi War in Sumatra (1821-38) and the famous Java War (1825-30) led by Prince Diponegoro. In one sense the Java War was yet another war of succession, but both the Paderi War and the Java War are notable because Islam became the symbol of opposition to the Dutch.

In 1814 Diponegoro, the eldest son of the Sultan of Yogya, had been passed over for the succession to the throne in favour of a younger claimant who had the support of the British. Having bided his time Diponegoro eventually vanished from court and in 1825 launched a guerrilla war against the Dutch. The courts of Yogya and Solo largely remained loyal to the Dutch but many of the Javanese aristocracy supported the rebellion. Diponegoro had received mystical signs that convinced him that he was the divinely appointed future king of Java, and the news spread among the people that he was the long-prophesied Ratu Adil, the prince who would free them from colonial oppression.

The rebellion finally ended in 1830 when the Dutch tricked Diponegoro into peace negotiations, arrested him and exiled him to Sulawesi. The five year war had cost the lives of 8000 European and 7000 Indonesian soldiers of the Dutch army. At least 200,000 Javanese died, most from famine and disease, and the population of Yogyakarta was reduced by half.

### **The Exploitation of Indonesia by the Dutch**

From the time the first Dutch ships arrived in 1596 to the declaration of independence in 1945 is a period of almost 350 years – but it was not a stable period. The first Dutch positions in the archipelago were precarious ones, like the first Portuguese positions. Throughout the 17th century the VOC, with its superior arms and Buginese and Ambonese mercenaries, fought everywhere in the



islands. Despite Dutch domination of Java, many areas of the archipelago – including Aceh, Bali, Lombok and Borneo – remained independent.

Fighting continued to flare up in Sumatra and Java, and between 1846 and 1849 expeditions were sent to Bali in the first attempts to subjugate the island. Then there was the violent Banjarmasin War in south-east Borneo during which the Dutch defeated the reigning sultan, but the longest and most devastating war was the one in Aceh which had remained independent under British protection (the two had an active trade). In 1871 the Dutch negotiated a new treaty in which the British withdrew objections to a possible Dutch occupation of Aceh. The Dutch declared war on Aceh in 1873, and the war went on for 35 years until the last Aceh guerilla leaders finally surrendered in 1908.

Even into the 20th century Dutch control outside Java was still incomplete. Large-scale Indonesian piracy continued right up until the middle of the 19th century and the Dutch fought a war in Sulawesi against the Buginese. Dutch troops occupied south-west Sulawesi between 1900 and 1910, and Bali in 1906. The 'birds head' of West Irian did not come under Dutch administration until

1919-20. And ironically, just when the Dutch finally got it all together they began to lose it. By the time Bali was occupied the first Indonesian nationalist movements were getting underway.

The determined exploitation of Indonesian resources by the Dutch really only began in 1830. The cost of the Java and the Paderi Wars meant that, despite increased returns from the Dutch system of land tax, Dutch finances were severely strained. When the Dutch lost Belgium in 1830 the home country itself faced bankruptcy and any government investment in the Indies *had* to make quick returns. From here on Dutch economic policy in Indonesia falls into three overlapping periods: the period of the so-called 'Culture' System, the Liberal Period, and the Ethical Period.

#### The Culture System

A new Governor-General, Johannes Van den Bosch, fresh from experiences of the slave labour of the West Indies, was appointed in 1830 to make the East Indies pay their way. He succeeded by introducing a new policy called the *cultuurstelsel* or Culture System. It was really a system of government-controlled agriculture, or as Indonesian historians refer to it, the *Tanam Paksa* (Compulsory Planting).



## 16 Facts about the Country

Forced labour was not new in Java – the Dutch merely extended the existing system by forcing the peasants to produce particular crops, including coffee which the Dutch introduced. Instead of land rent, usually assessed at about two-fifths of the value of the crop, the Culture System proposed that a portion of a peasant's land and labour would be put at the governments disposal. On this land a designated crop, suitable for the European market, was to be grown. The amount of labour expended on the land was to be equal to the amount which would be spent if rice was being grown on it. Where the crop exceeded the value of the land rent under the old assessment the surplus would be paid to the villagers, and the government would bear the loss of any crop failure due to circumstances outside the peasant's control. In the remainder of his time and on the remainder of his land the peasant could grow rice for his own consumption.

In practice things did not work out that way and the system produced fearful hardship. The land required from the peasant was sometimes as much as a third or even a half of his total land. In some cases the new crops demanded more labour than the maximum allowed for, the government did not bear the losses of a bad harvest, and often the Culture System was applied on top of the land tax rather than replacing it. When the cash crop failed the peasant had no money to buy the rice he would otherwise have planted on his land. In some regions the population starved because the Javanese Regents (princes) and their Chinese agents forced the peasants to use almost all their rice land to grow other crops. In the 1840s there was severe famine in some areas because of the encroachments on rice-lands.

The system was never applied to the whole population – by 1845 it involved only 5½% of the total cleared land, so its impact on the Javanese was very uneven. Amongst the crops grown was indigo (a

plant from whose leaves a violet-blue dye is extracted) which required arduous cultivation, and sugar which took twice the labor required of rice fields. Experiments were made with a variety of crops – tea, tobacco, pepper, cinnamon, cotton, cochineal, silk – but the three main profit-makers were coffee, sugar and indigo, the latter two displacing food crops.

The system was, however, a boon to the Dutch and to the Javanese aristocracy. The profits made Java a self-sufficient colony and saved the Netherlands from bankruptcy. That this gain was made by appropriating all available profits and making the peasants bear all the losses was irrelevant to the Dutch, who believed that the function of a colony was to benefit the coloniser and that the welfare of the indigenous people should not interfere with this.

### The Liberal Period

In the 10 years after 1848 efforts were made to correct the worst abuses of the Culture System. The Liberals in the Dutch Parliament attempted to reform the system, but retain the profits while alleviating the conditions of the peasants. They were committed to reducing government interference in economic enterprises and were therefore opposed to the system of government-controlled agriculture in Indonesia. Their policies advocated opening up the country to private enterprise – in the belief that once the peasant was freed from compulsion, productivity would increase and everyone would be swept to prosperity by the forces of a free economy. But to make the archipelago safe for individual capitalists and to free the Indonesians from oppression were, in fact, two conflicting aims.

From the 1860s onwards, government monopolies were abolished primarily on crops which were no longer profitable anyway. Things moved more slowly for other crops; in 1870 a law was passed by which control of sugar production would