

1. Record Nr.	UNINA9910819235803321
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Titolo	Indonesian destinies [[electronic resource] /] / Theodore Friend
Pubbl/distr/stampa	Cambridge, MA, : Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003
ISBN	0-674-03735-9
Descrizione fisica	1 online resource (641 p.)
Disciplina	959.803
Soggetti	HISTORY / Modern / 20th Century Indonesia Politics and government 20th century
Lingua di pubblicazione	Inglese
Formato	Materiale a stampa
Livello bibliografico	Monografia
Note generali	Bibliographic Level Mode of Issuance: Monograph
Nota di bibliografia	Includes bibliographical references and index.
Nota di contenuto	Frontmatter -- Preface -- CONTENTS -- Prologue: The Largest Muslim Nation -- SUKARNO -- 1. Indonesia, the Devouring Nurturer -- 2. Guided Chaos -- 3. Ego, Voice, Vertigo -- 4. Mass Murder -- SUHARTO -- 5. The Smile of Progress -- 6. The New Majapahit Empire -- 7. The Sound of Silence -- 8. The Last Years of Living Securely -- 9. Behind, Beyond, Beneath the Power Structure -- 10. Indonesia Burning -- SUCCESSION -- 11. Forcing Out Suharto -- 12. Stroke -- 13. New Leaders, New Islam -- 14. Election 1999: Reds, Greens, Blues, Yellows -- 15. East Timor -- 16. Anarcho-Democracy -- Epilogue: Sukarno's Daughter in the Palace -- Chronology -- Sources -- Notes -- Glossary -- Index
Sommario/riassunto	"How can such a gentle people as we are be so murderous?" a prominent Indonesian asks. That question--and the mysteries of the archipelago's vast contradictions--haunt Theodore Friend's remarkable work, a narrative of Indonesia during the last half century, from the postwar revolution against Dutch imperialism to the unrest of today. Part history, part meditation on a place and a past observed firsthand, Indonesian Destinies penetrates events that gave birth to the world's fourth largest nation and assesses the continuing dangers that threaten to tear it apart. Friend reveals Sukarno's character through wartime collaboration with Japan, and Suharto's through the mass murder of communists that brought him to power for thirty-two years. He guides our understanding of the tolerant forms of Islam prevailing among the

largest Muslim population in the world, and shows growing tensions generated by international terrorism. Drawing on a deep knowledge of the country's cultures, its leaders, and its ordinary people, Friend gives a human face and a sense of immediacy to the self-inflicted failures and immeasurable tragedies that cast a shadow over Indonesia's past and future. A clear and compelling passion shines through this richly illustrated work. Rarely have narrative history and personal historical witness been so seamlessly joined.

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Reviews of this book: An engaging romp through the 54 years of Indonesia's existence, its scope is a broad one. Part personal memoir, part history, part economic treatise, it makes for a useful (and bang up-to-date) introduction to the unknown archipelago, particularly valuable in light of the absence of much in the way of competition.--The Economist

Reviews of this book: Mr. Friend succeeds in making Indonesia comprehensible because he uses a wealth of contemporary Indonesian contacts to paint a lively historical, sociological, anthropological and at times gossipy portrait of the country. For those who know little about Indonesia and for those who know much, this is a captivating rendition.--Jane Perlez, New York Times

For foreigners and Indonesians alike, Theodore Friend's book is a rich informative source to better understand the country's post-colonial history. This scholarly work has an engaging, often reflective narrative style that is always full of details from numerous interviews conducted since the writer first started visiting the country, sometime in 1967-1968.--Mohammad Sadli, Jakarta Post

This is an outstanding general history of Indonesia over the four and a half decades since its troubled independence, won after 300 years of Dutch colonial rule. But it is also a reliable, insightful guide to the dynamics of current Indonesian politics, and the troubled but principled and (so far) surprisingly robust presidency of Megawati Sukarnoputri.[Friend] enjoyed exceptional access to the nation's key leaders during the dramatic transition to democracy in 1998-2000. His consequent blending of scholarship and hands-on direct experience informs every page of this book.--Martin Sieff, Washington Times

Reviews of this book: [Fri
