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# Biographical Profiles: James and Mochtar Riady

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**Southeast  
Asian  
Personalities  
of  
Chinese  
Descent**

**A Biographical  
Dictionary**

Volume I

Edited by  
**Leo Suryadinata**

Foreword by  
**Wang Gungwu**

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the Tang brothers' contribution to Laos' development highly.

Chen Ke Qi is a sports and music lover. In sports, he is a bodybuilder and had started training when he was fifteen years old. He insisted on exercising four times a week to keep his body physically fit. In supporting sports events, he once donated a sum of 3,000,000 baht to secondary schools in Thailand for the archery training of students in the hope that through such training, they will be well skilled when it comes to qualifying for the Asian Games.

As for his passion for music, on 18 October 1999, he led a choir in singing for guests at the dinner of the International Teochew friendship meeting.

Chen Ke Qun, the third brother, is an accountant and entrepreneur. He was educated in Laos and Cambodia before he continued his studies in Australia. In 1969, he graduated with a bachelor's degree in commerce from the University of New South Wales, Sydney and then returned to Laos to help in the Tang family business. His father made him fully responsible for the business in Vientiane.

In 1975, during the war in the Indochina region, he brought his parents, two sisters, wife and children, nephews, and nieces to Australia. At the time, as an accountant, he felt that a systematic accounting management system was important for the Tang family business. Hence, in 1978, he started to visit Chen Ke Qi in Thailand to help him work out an accounting system. Following this, he visited France to work out a similar accounting system for his two other brothers' business there. This has helped to propel the Tang family business to greater heights.

Chen Ke Qun had made trips to different parts of the world to seek the best place to establish his business, before finally

settling down in Hong Kong. He felt that Hong Kong was an important business port that could perform a supporting role for his brothers' business in France and Thailand. In 1982 he established Tesana Ltd. in Hong Kong. The company exports different kinds of food products such as vermicelli, salted eggs, and canned food to Europe, America, Australia, and Africa. It has become one of the biggest exporters of Hong Kong food products.

*Lim Boon Hock*

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## Riady, James Tjahaja

(Lie Zen, 李白, Li Bai, 1957–)

*Businessman, Indonesia*

James T. Riady, the son of Mochtar Riady, is the Deputy Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of the Lippo Group (see entry on Mochtar Riady). He lived in the United States in the 1980s where he managed the investments of Lippo Group in the U.S. and served as the President of Worthen Bank of Arkansas. He returned to Indonesia in 1988 and followed the footsteps of his father in establishing a banking career. He is very well connected in business networks and has established good relationships across the

spectrum, most notably with former U.S. president Bill Clinton and former Indonesian presidents B.J. Habibie and Abdurrahman Wahid. After the fall of Suharto in 1998, James Riady was appointed as a special envoy of the president to win back foreign capital amidst the financial crisis that swept across Asia. He is currently the Chairman of the Pelita Harapan University in Jakarta and has established private Christian schools catering for different social classes in Indonesia.

Born in Indonesia on 7 January 1957, James T. Riady is the son of Mochtar Riady and Suryawai Lidya. Since young, James was groomed by his father to be a businessman. To train him to be independent, his father sent him to Macau for studies when he was only 8 years old. After four years in Macau, James continued his studies in Australia. He graduated in accountancy and economics from the University of Melbourne in 1977. James served an internship with the Irving Trust and Investment Bank in Little Rock, Arkansas in the United States and did a 10-month internship at Stephens Finance Ltd. in Hong Kong before returning to Indonesia in 1979. In Indonesia, he built his reputation as an aggressive young banker at Bank Pertiagaan Indonesia (BPI) — the backbone of the Lippo Group, led by his father Mochtar Riady — where he poached three vice presidents from Citibank to join his company.

In 1982, James married Aileen Hambali. They gave birth to two sons and two daughters. James and Aileen lived in the United States for several years where he was appointed by his father to look after Lippo Group's U.S. investment. In 1984, Lippo Group bought \$16 million worth of stocks from Worthen Bank of Arkansas. James assumed an increasing authority in the distressed Worthen bank. He negotiated business on his father's behalf during Worthen's crisis. When two of the

principal officers resigned to take responsibility for the bank's losses, James became the bank's president.

The Riadys sold their investment in Worthen at a loss in the late 1980s. James then moved to Los Angeles, where he bought the Bank of Trade in California, the oldest Chinese-American bank in the region. He renamed it Lippo Bank and concentrated on an Asian American clientele. However, in 1990, The Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation had found repeated banking violations at Lippo Bank, issuing three separate cease-and-desist orders against the bank, citing slapdash management and questionable transfers of funds.

When he was 30, James returned to Jakarta from the United States. He later became the Chief Executive Officer of Lippo Group. He brought the American "go-getting" style to Lippo Group that differed from Indonesian low-key business practices. James was criticized on two fronts: Chinese-Indonesian businessmen found him too brash and Americanized, and indigenous businessmen questioned his loyalty to Indonesia given the amount of business his company invested abroad.

James was known to have a close relationship with former U.S. President Bill Clinton. He had known Bill Clinton since he was doing an internship in Little Rock, when Clinton was the state attorney-general of Arkansas. Moreover, when James became the president of Worthen Bank of Arkansas, Hillary Clinton served as the bank's attorney. James was one of the few non-American to be personally invited by Clinton to attend the pre-inaugural economic summit in 1992. The Riady family was also invited to attend the inauguration of Bill Clinton as president of the United States in 1993. After Clinton became president, James had made at least 20 visits to the White House and had met privately with the president three

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times. James also attended the Asian Pacific Economic Conference in Seattle in November 1993, and was on hand for President Clinton's November 1994 visit to Indonesia.

James Riady was a major contributor to the Democratic Party in the 1996 U.S. election campaign. The Republican Party questioned the Lippo Group's donations suggesting the aim was to influence U.S. government policy. The Riady family and executives of Lippo Group have contributed money the Democratic National Committee since 1991, despite the fact that foreign contributions to U.S. campaigns are against the law. An investigation on the financial scandal of the 1996 presidential campaign was carried out by the United States Senate in 1998. James was indicted and had pleaded guilty to campaign finance violations by himself and his corporation. In 2001, he was ordered to pay a fine of \$8.6 million — the largest monetary penalty ever levied in a case of unlawful campaign finance — and was put on probation for two years and was ordered to do 400 hours of community service.

In May 1998, following the fall of President Suharto, Indonesia witnessed a massive anti-Chinese violence across its major cities. Many ethnic Chinese business people brought their capital with them in their flight to safer haven overseas. During that time, James Riady stayed put in Indonesia and insisted that he would not leave the country and would not liquidate any big local investments. The then President B.J. Habibie appointed him a "business ambassador" to win back foreign capital and gave Lippo Bank first call on government recapitalization funds in 1999.

After two years of low-profile restructuring, James helped to bring Lippo Group to a comeback from the verge of collapse in the beginning of 2000. James also has a reputation as a wheeler-dealer, juggling dozens of Lippo deals at any one time and profiting in the stock

market — he is considered Indonesia's most successful businessman at raising funds in the capital market.

Besides his business endeavours, James has also contributed to the private education sector in Indonesia. He has a vision to start 10 schools for the upper-class people, 100 schools for the middle-class people, and 1,000 schools for the lower-class people. As a result, Sekolah Pelita Harapan (SPH), which adopts a Christian curriculum, was established by Lippo Group in 1993. James is currently serving as the Chairman of a Christian university, Universitas Pelita Harapan, established by his father.

Since converting to Christianity in 1990, James has been an ardent evangelical. His management approach has an evangelical aspect that encourages his employees to attend church retreats and introduce them to the Christian faith. Apparently, many staff of the Lippo Group are also devout Christians and have fervently prayed for the success of the group's projects. James had planned to quit the family business and enter into Christian ministry.

*Hoon Chang Yau*

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## Riady, Mochtar

(Lie Mo Tie, 李文正, Li Wenzheng, 1929–)

*Businessman, banker, Indonesia*

**M**ochtar Riady, the Chairman and Founder of Lippo Group, is a renowned banker and businessman. He was ranked #14 in *GlobeAsia* list of 150 Wealthiest Indonesians in 2010 and #38 in Forbes Indonesia 40 Richest List in 2010. His company, Lippo Group, controls over 50 subsidiaries and employs more than 50,000 people. His business empire spans across the Asia-Pacific region, with presence in areas such as financial investments, property and urban development, retail and services, information technology and a variety of industrial activities. The Lippo Group also controls the largest private healthcare and hospital group in Indonesia and sponsors an education foundation that operates schools, universities and a recently inaugurated nanotechnology research institute named after Mochtar Riady himself. Mochtar Riady has received Honorary Doctorate titles from Golden Gate University in San Francisco, California and Southeast University in China. He was also bestowed the status of Honorary Citizen by the cities of Xiamen, Nanjing, Putian and Meizhou in China.

Son of a batik trader, Mochtar Riady was born in the city of Malang in East Java on 12 May 1929. His aspiration to become a banker began since he was 10 years old. This ambition emerged from his experience of being awed by the majestic office building of the Nederlandsche Handels Bank (NHB) which he passed by everyday on the way to school. Mochtar was an anti-colonial activist and the president of the East Java Overseas Chinese Student Association during his school days in Java. He supported the Indonesian

guerillas and participated in anti-Dutch demonstrations. His dream in becoming a banker was derailed in 1947 when he was arrested by the Dutch authorities and exiled to Nanjing, China. There, he took the opportunity to study philosophy at the then Nanjing University (now Southeast University). He fled to Hong Kong because of raging wars in China, and returned to Indonesia in 1950.

Upon his return to Indonesia, Mochtar's pursuit of a career in the banking industry was again postponed. In a relatively deprived environment, his father advised him against entering the banking sector which was then an industry only for the affluent. Following his marriage in 1951, Mochtar lived in the town of Jember in East Java to run a small store belonged to his in-laws. Within three years it became the largest store in town. In 1954, he departed for Jakarta, against his family's wishes, to pursue his dream of becoming a banker. He was confident that he would realize his ambition despite his lack of experience or business networks in Jakarta. He began to work for a small company in Jakarta's trading district for 6 months. This job opened up many new opportunities and allowed him to build new business relationships.

Later Mochtar opened a small shipping business with an acquaintance. His first foray into banking finally began when a friend informed him that Bank Kemakmuran, a small bank owned by Andi Gappa was in dire financial state. Mochtar convinced Gappa to appoint him as a director of the bank. Without any banking experience and accounting skills, Mochtar learned as he journeyed on. Within a year he managed to turnaround Bank Kemakmuran. He then moved on to Bank Buana in 1964, where he again made his mark by steering the bank through a recession and allowing it to emerge stronger than before.

In 1971–1975 Mochtar successfully developed the Panin Bank — a new bank from the merger of three other banks — into one of the largest private banks in Indonesia. He was poached by business tycoon Liem Sioe Leong to join Bank Central Asia (BCA). He soon became Liem's right-hand man in the bank and was given a 17.5% share. He left BCA in 1990 to focus on expanding the Lippo Group that he founded. When Mochtar was appointed to BCA, its assets were merely IDR 12.8 billion, and when he left, its assets were worth IDR 5 trillion. In each bank, Mochtar managed to craft a success story for himself. His outstanding skills and experience in revitalizing ailing banks have earned him the title: "The Magic Man of Bank Marketing". Many also respect him for continuing his business in Indonesia during the May 1998 anti-Chinese riots, when many wealthy businessmen fled overseas.

Lippo Group has become a multinational group of companies spanning the Pacific basin with interests in financial investment, property and infrastructure development, retail, education and media. As Mochtar ages, he began to delegate responsibilities to his sons, James and Stephen, who will inevitably be the successors to the business empire. At the shareholders Annual General Meeting of Lippo Bank on 4 March 2005, Mochtar resigned from his position as the Chief Commissioner of the Bank. His resignation marked the end of the Riady family's direct involvement in the management of the bank.

To create a lasting legacy, Mochtar Riady began to venture into education and health sectors over the past decade or so. Apart from establishing a private Christian university, Pelita Harapan, he has also established dozens of Christian schools, and more recently, an institute of nanotechnology, named after himself. Most of these world-class facilities, together with the Siloam Hospital for upper

class patients, are housed at Lippo Karawaci — a town located west of Jakarta developed by Lippo Group, where the Riady family resides.

Mochtar Riady has a deep conviction to promote quality education in Indonesia. He believes that education, or more precisely, the development of human resource, is the key to developing a strong nation. He is also committed to philanthropic work in the region, through the development of education and health care. He plans to build one thousand "Schools of Hope" in remote areas of Indonesia to offer free education for the underprivileged. He has financially supported the establishment of Putian University in Fujian, China, and Ma Chung University in Malang, Indonesia. In 2007, Lippo Group donated S\$21 million to the National University of Singapore Business School. The funds have been used to build a Mochtar Riady Building to honour the founder of the Group, and to fund two distinguished professorships named after his sons James and Stephen Riady. In 2011, Mochtar Riady donated S\$5 million to Singapore Management University to set up the Mochtar Riady Scholarships to support undergraduates from China and Indonesia.

Mochtar Riady is regarded as a visionary magnate whose business philosophy and experience have become an inspiration for budding entrepreneurs. He is an avid reader and an active writer. He has authored three books: *Searching for Opportunities amidst Crisis* (1999), *Nanotechnology Management Style* (2004) and *Ancient Philosophy and Modern Management* (2006).

*Hoon Chang Yau*

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## Robredo, Jesse Manalastas

(林炳智, Lin Bingzhi, 1958–2012)

*Political leader, Philippines*

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Jesse Manalastas Robredo was known for his attempt at steadfastly implementing good governance that stemmed from a genuine concern for others. Born on 27 May 1958, he served as secretary of the Department of the Interior and Local Government. He was appointed by President Benigno C. Aquino III because of his success as Mayor of Naga City, as well as his untarnished reputation in the field of governance.

In the wake of the Philippines' People Power Revolution in 1986, Jesse Robredo responded to President Corazon C. Aquino's call to dedicate oneself to public service. He abandoned his executive position at San Miguel Corporation to head the Bicol River Basin Development Program in Naga, his hometown. In 1988 he won in the elections to become mayor of Naga by a slim margin. He was twenty-nine.

Once the queen city of the Bicol region, the Naga that Robredo inherited from his

predecessor was a dispirited provincial town of 120,000 souls with a 8-million-peso debt. Traffic clogged its tawdry business district and vice syndicates operated at will. City services were fitful at best. Meanwhile, thousands of informal settlers filled Naga's vacant lands.

Under Robredo's leadership as mayor for three consecutive terms of three years each, Naga blossomed into a model city, regaining such a status after having been downgraded to third class during his first stint as mayor. Naga bested bigger and richer urban centres when it was recognized thrice as the "Most Business-Friendly City" by the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry, thus elevating it to the Hall of Fame. Naga is also a winner of the Asian Institute of Management-Ford Foundation Galing Pook Innovations Program Award, and the recipient of the Presidential Gawad Pamana ng Lahi Award of the DILG. It was named "Most Child-Friendly City" in 2006 by the Philippine Council for the Welfare of Children, and received the Galing Pook Foundation's Award for Continuing Excellence.

During Robredo's incumbency, Naga received more than 150 awards and recognitions in diverse fields of local administration. These include being named Most Cost-Effective City in Asia by the United Kingdom's *Foreign Direct Investment Magazine* (2005); being the Public Service Awardee for Local e-Governance from the United Nations Department of Public Administration and Finance (2004); receiving the Women-Friendly City Award from the U.N.-Habitat and the U.N. Development Fund for Women (2004); being chosen Model City for Government Procurement from the World Bank and Procurement Watch (2003); being a CyberCity Awardee for its i-governance initiatives from the United Nations Development Programme (2002);

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