Mrazek, Rudolf.

A Certain Age: Colonial Jakarta through the Memories of its Intellectuals.


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I use the old (which is pre-1972 and pre-1947) spelling for the Indonesian words in the text: wajang, krontjong, or petjok, and not wayang, kroncong, or pecok. It was how my interviewees spelled the words throughout their lives and mostly still when I met them. The local names, in contrast (again following my interviewees), I spell in the post-1972 way: Jakarta not Djakarta, Bandung not Bandoeng, or Yogyakarta not Djokjakarta. Personal names, also, I spell depending on how I saw a particular person write his or her name: thus Soemardjan (in the old spelling) or Mangunwijaya (in the new spelling).

In an interview, all in one language (as a general rule, Indonesian), a word or part of a sentence might suddenly be uttered in another, in most cases in Dutch, often in English, sometimes in Javanese or in other local languages and dialects. There was always a significant reason for this change: the switch or slip always marked some memory of the past, some moment of the present, mostly both. The flavor and the substance of the interviews thus changed. Only most crudely am I able to evoke this difference by using italics for these words and events. (This is why sometimes an English word or sentence in my English text, strangely, appears in italics.)

When mentioning or quoting Indonesians, I often use their name that comes first, for instance, “Rosihan” for Rosihan Anwar. It does not signify any particular familiarity between me and the person. It is the way Indonesian names (not the family name following the given name necessarily) are structured and used.

Lastly, I do not introduce and explain my interviewees by giving their bibliographies as they enter. I want these people to appear (like me) carried by the moment of our talking. I believe that all the facts and dates relevant to what they and I wanted to convey are there, in how we talked, at a certain age, in this promenade fashion. A list of the interviewees, with their full names and the dates and the places of the interviews, can be found at the end of the book.