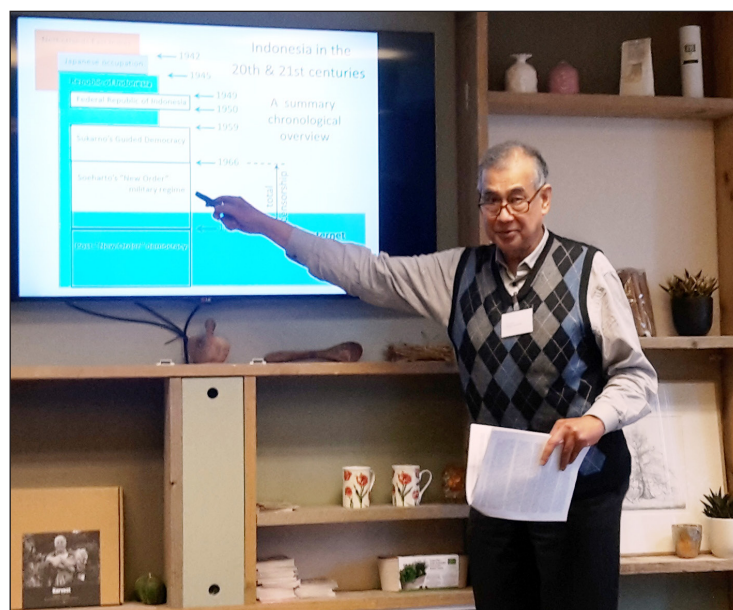


About Waruno Mahdi



Waruno Mahdi lecturing on word-borrowing between Mon-Khmer and Malayo-Polynesian languages at the Leiden University Centre for Linguistics (October 2014). (Photograph by Tom Hoogervorst).



Waruno Mahdi discussing the role of internet in bringing down the Suharto regime (Digital disruptions in Asia, May 2016, Leiden). (Photograph by Tom Hoogervorst).

This double issue of *Wacana, Journal of the Humanities of Indonesia* on “Languages of Nusantara” is specially dedicated to Waruno Mahdi, who has been an extremely kind, helpful force in the field of Malay linguistics and Austronesian studies in general. His prolific output and out-of-the-box thinking have greatly benefited the field. With the great support of the Faculty of Humanities of Universitas Indonesia and as a medium for scholarly discussion in the field of Humanities and Social Sciences, *Wacana* is able to present in this special issue a number of scientific contributions as result of recent research by experts in the field.

The idea of this *Festschrift* originated a few years ago from conversations about the study of languages in Indonesia when the editors of this issue met each other in Leiden on several occasions. In almost every discussion about the study and research of Malay and Indonesian languages, the name of Waruno Mahdi popped up. We were also aware of the positive reception of and admiration for his scholarly work by many other academics. This inspired us to come up with the initiative to prepare a special publication on “Languages of Nusantara” in cooperation with *Wacana*. In 2018 Mahdi has also published his article “The first standard grammar of Malay; George Werndly’s 1736 *Maleische spraakkunst*” in *Wacana, Journal of the Humanities of Indonesia* Vol. 19 No. 3 (on “Malayic language studies”). We are now very pleased to present the following personal impressions of colleagues and a representative of the family honouring Waruno Mahdi.

From Bogor to Berlin

MAARTEN LEONARD VELDHIJZEN

Waruno Mahdi, known affectionately as Uno, was born in Bogor (then also called Buitenzorg), West Java, Indonesia, on 25 May, 1943. He is the eldest child of Izak Mahdi and Louise Hardey and the elder brother of five sisters. Waruno’s father served Indonesia’s interests abroad from the very beginning. During the Indonesian National Revolution, Izak Mahdi represented Indonesia as a diplomat in Singapore and Bangkok.¹ Afterwards he represented the Indonesian Republic in Beijing and Moscow, taking his family along wherever he was posted.

Waruno’s international upbringing led him to study chemistry at a university in Moscow, the Mendeleev University of Chemical Technology. He graduated with honours in 1965 and carried out his PhD research from 1965 to 1967. Unfortunately, this trajectory was prematurely terminated as a result of political turmoil in Indonesia. Under the regime of Indonesia’s second president, Suharto, in power from 1967 to 1998, Waruno and others loyal to Soekarno faced fierce opposition from the military attaché at the Indonesian embassy. At the age of twenty-five, his passport was invalidated, making him technically stateless and trapped in the USSR.² As he was inclined neither to

¹ More information on this period of the family’s life can be found in John Coast (2015).

² See David T. Hill (2014) and Waruno Mahdi (2001) on the lives of Waruno and other Indonesian

join the pro-Soviet *Overseas Committee* of the Indonesian Communist Party nor the Maoist factions in Beijing, Waruno was exiled to Voronezh in 1969, in complete isolation from the Indonesian community.

His ordeal ended only in 1977, when – still without a valid passport – he managed to escape from Russia to West Berlin by train.³ There he was granted political asylum. Upon arrival in Berlin, he found that his academic qualifications were not accepted because of the political tensions caused by the Cold War. As a result, in western Europe he is not formally an engineer. Nevertheless, Waruno's skills were eventually recognized by the Fritz Haber Institute of the Max Planck Society in Berlin, where he is acknowledged as an academic and was employed as such from 1978 to 2008. Waruno took German citizenship in 2000, at the age of fifty-seven. In appreciation of his academic activities, he remains affiliated to the Fritz Haber Institute, where he has still had a room for the past thirteen years.

Alongside his original training in chemistry, during his time in the USSR Waruno developed a particular interest in historical linguistics, descriptive linguistics, and culture history. He publishes on Malay, Malagasy, and a range of other Austronesian languages. His geographical area of interest is remarkably broad and includes maritime Southeast Asia (including Indonesia), mainland Southeast Asia, Madagascar, and the wider Indian Ocean region.

REFERENCES

- Aleida, Martin. 2017. "Saya masih bisa hidup", in: Martin Aleida (ed.), *Tanah air yang hilang; Wawancara dengan orang-orang "klayaban" di Eropa*, pp. 33-47. Jakarta: Kompas.
- Coast, John. 2015. *Recruit to revolution; Adventure and politics during the Indonesian struggle for independence*. Edited by Laura Noszlopy. Copenhagen: Nias Press.
- Hill, David T. 2014. "Indonesian political exiles in the USSR", *Critical Asian Studies* 46(4): 621-648.
- Mahdi, Waruno. 2001. "Melancong ke dunia Marxisme-Leninisme", *Kalam* 17: 55-122.

exiles in the USSR.

³ This episode of Waruno's life is described in Martin Aleida (2017).