



MULO class at Ketabang, Surabaya, in the 1920's. Ruslan Abdulgani seated in the front row, far right.

MY CHILDHOOD WORLD

(Ruslan Abdulgani*)

Edited and Translated by William H. Frederick

I was born in Plampitan, a *kampung* (neighborhood) in the city of Surabaya, East Java. It is situated on the east bank of the Kali Mas, which flows through Surabaya and divides it in two. Just to the south of Plampitan the river branches, and the Kali Ngemplak flows to the east. Wedged in between the Kali Mas and the Kali Ngemplak is the place where I was born.

Plampitan was not the only *kampung* in this part of Surabaya. There were Peneleh, Ngemplak, Jagalan, Kalianyar, Pandean, and many others, covering about fourteen square kilometers in all. The boundaries of these *kampung* were defined by the *straat*, the paved roads of the city. Inside this line, within the *kampung*, there were only narrow dirt alleyways called *gang*. People who lived in the *kampung* along the alleyways were thought to be socially inferior to those whose homes fronted on the wide asphalted streets.

My mother lived at Plampitan, Gang V, Number 15. She was my father's second wife, and at the time of their marriage was a widow with four children: Subakti, Gunardjo, Munginten, and Muginah. My father already had five children by his first wife; she also lived in Plampitan, but on Gang II, just where the alley ran perpendicular into the paved road. Father spent more time at his first wife's house than he did at ours, perhaps because it was closer to his businesses.

My childhood was tied up in the close daily life of the *kampung*. The houses stood cheek-by-jowl, without a suggestion of a front yard or a garden. Even the luckiest ones, like my mother's, had only a small space about a yard wide separating them from their neighbors. The *kampung* children played in front of the houses in the alleyway, which measured about ten by one hundred meters. That was the extent of my early childhood world. There, dressed in my "monkey pants"--shorts with straps over the shoulder--I played hide-and-seek, marbles, and tiddly-winks, and raced crickets and flew kites.

My *kampung* is nearly without shade now, but things were different when I was growing up. In front of our house stood two guava trees,

* Dr. H. Ruslan Abdulgani, who has held many prominent positions in the Indonesian government (among them Minister of Information and Minister of Foreign Affairs), and who has served as Indonesia's Ambassador to the United Nations, needs no further introduction to readers of this journal. Since his retirement from government service in 1971, Dr. Abdulgani has devoted his time to writing and lecturing. One of his most important projects is the completion of his autobiography, of which the translation presented here is only a small portion. The full work is scheduled for publication in English and other languages at a later date.

and about fifteen *jambu* trees were scattered about the neighborhood. There were also six *sawo* trees, from which came the best wood for our catapults, several *kelor* trees, which gave us a medicinal gum and a fruit used in making broth, and a *kedondong* tree. Other varieties, long since cut down, lined the main street in those days. I particularly enjoyed climbing for sweet-smelling *tanjung* blossoms and for *kenari* nuts, which gave you a bad earache if you ate too many.

On the east side of Plampitan grew an enormous banyan, and under it was the "sacred" grave of Kiyai Pasopati. Still further to the east were the graves of the ordinary folk, a reminder of the days when people were buried in their own yards instead of in regular cemeteries like Botoputih, Tembok, and Kapaskrampung. Mother, who had a good sense of humor, used to explain that once, in the days of the Buddha, each house in Surabaya had had its own plot and a person could therefore be buried in his own ground. But one day the Jogodolok¹ appeared out of the blue. Crash! The whole city was shaken as if by an earthquake. And that was how all the houses came to be pushed up so close against one another. . . .

There were two *langgar*, or prayer-houses, in my kampung. One of them was located on the east side and had fallen into disrepair; no one bothered to restore it, and it was dubbed the "ghost langgar." (Later the place was torn down to make way for a kindergarten built by Aisyah, the Muhammadiyah² women's organization.) The other langgar was directly across from our house, and can still be seen today. Mother said that my great-grandfather helped to build it, and I can remember my father making frequent contributions for repairs when they had to be done. In 1957 or so, the young men of the kampung, with the approval of their elders, declared that henceforth the building would be called a *mesjid*, or mosque. Over the years, Friday services there had come to attract a great many people, even from outside Plampitan; according to custom, any house of prayer which held over forty persons could have the honor of being called a mosque. Even today tents are set up each week for the two hundred or more faithful who come to say their Friday prayers.

At the western end of the kampung, where our alleyway ran into the asphalt road, was a guardhouse. Here the men and older boys of the neighborhood took turns standing the night watch. They had a large wooden gong on which to beat out a warning, a few spears, and some long, two-pronged sticks used to trap thieves and keep them at arm's length.

I can still remember my mother waking me when the wooden gong sounded in the middle of the night. A steady pounding meant there was a fire or a burglar, a more irregular beat that someone had been stabbed or murdered. The sound always frightened me, and I shook with terror whenever I heard the bad news being passed from one kampung to the next far into the night.

At that time, which must have been around 1918, electricity and running water had not yet reached our kampung. Each evening Mother lit the hanging kerosene lamps. Water for bathing and laundry came from a

-
1. A local name given to a statue representing (according to Dutch scholars) the thirteenth-century king of Singosari, Kertanegara.
 2. The progressivist Moslem association founded in Yogyakarta in 1912 by K.H. Achmad Dachlan.

well, and even as a small child I often helped draw it. Drinking water was purchased from a Madurese, who used cans strung on a shoulder-pole to carry it from the public spigot out on the asphalted road. To keep the water cool, we poured it into a large, partially buried, earthenware jug. My mother said it was our version of a refrigerator. When we were thirsty we dipped and drank straight from a ladle made from a length of bamboo and half a coconut shell.

Like every other alleyway in the kampung, ours had its own *sinoman*, a kind of neighborhood organization. The group was based upon the typically Indonesian principle of *gotong-royong*.³ Everyone in our alleyway who was considered a true resident was a member and paid regular dues. The money was used to purchase all the paraphernalia required for weddings and funerals, which was then shared as the occasion arose. Our *sinoman* owned several funerary litters, the equipment necessary for washing and purifying a corpse, water barrels, shrouds, and a small gong which was customarily struck to announce that a corpse was ready to be prepared for the grave. For weddings, the *sinoman* had a tent-like affair with big wooden props and a sheet-metal roof, as well as dozens of plates, cups and saucers, teapots, forks and spoons, and other utensils. There were also two kinds of flooring, one called *kloso* made from woven *pandan* leaves, and the other a thick cloth which served as a carpet.

The head of the *sinoman* was chosen at a kampung meeting, as were his assistants, whose job it was to collect the contributions and keep track of all the equipment. They received nothing in the way of payment. The entire organization was truly an example of *gotong-royong*. If someone in the neighborhood fell into difficulty, for example if there was a death in the family, everyone helped--not just by virtue of paying dues to the *sinoman*, but also by personally lending a hand with the work or by giving *selawat*, small gifts of money, rice, sugar, coffee or other things, to the bereaved family. After the funeral ceremonies, the family distributed coins wrapped in small pieces of paper. This was also called *selawat*.

When there was a wedding, everyone helped set up the big tarpaulin in front of the house in which the celebration was to take place. Then all the neighbors brought their bamboo beds and set them in rows for the guests to sit on. Each *sinoman* member also gave the family holding the wedding a gift called *buwuhan*, consisting of either money, or rice, coffee, sugar, meat, eggs, or some other kind of foodstuff. After the ceremonies were over, the family was expected to reciprocate with a *buwuhan* of their own, usually a household article of one sort or another. Most often people gave items which could be purchased in large quantities, such as glasses or plates. But since social status was involved, families occasionally went out of their way to give a fine glass, a porcelain cup, or a silver fork or spoon. They were then regarded as being rather high on the social scale. If, on the other hand, a family gave out cheap goods, enamel-ware for example, they would be branded as tightwads and their social standing would suffer accordingly. Of course, *sinoman* members who were poor or of genuinely modest means were not expected to compete socially in this fashion.

The sixty or so families living in my neighborhood reflected something of the heterogeneous social character of Surabaya. Their ways of life and even their daily tasks were extremely varied. In the next

3. Mutual assistance, mutual cooperation.

house on the right lived a shoemaker, Pak Achdjab. He had five assistants, two of whom were his own sons, Amin and Fakh, with whom I often played. Pak Achdjab prayed at the langgar faithfully and regularly, often conducting the service himself. He also became very active in Muballigh Muhammadiyah, the propaganda arm of the Muhammadiyah.

Next door to Pak Achdjab lived Pak Achmad Djais, the famous tailor. He was known not only for his many Dutch clients, but for his daring opposition to what he thought was old-fashioned Islam, and for his membership in Dr. Soetomo's Parindra party. Many of the people who regularly prayed at our langgar came to believe that Pak Achmad Djais was an eccentric and a bit on the extreme side. Once, in the middle of a Friday sermon being given at the mosque in the neighboring kampung of Peneleh, he pulled out his red handkerchief and waved it about, demanding that the sermon be given in Javanese rather than in Arabic, so that everyone might understand it. The incident caused quite an uproar among the orthodox! My mother said that she agreed with what Pak Achmad Djais was trying to get across, but thought his method lacked discretion. I never was told whether the protest brought about any changes or not, and I wasn't curious enough to ask.

These two neighbors, the shoemaker and the tailor, were quite representative of the class of indigenous craftsmen in those days. One might place them in the category of "upper middle-class." "Upper," that is, compared with most other Indonesians, and "middle" compared with the Dutch, Eurasians, Chinese, and Arabs.

* * *

My birthdate, November 24, 1914, is recorded on a page of a large book and written in the hand of my maternal grandfather, who had mastered the *pégon*,⁴ Javanese, and Roman scripts. We called the volume a *primbon*, and in it were noted the dates of births, marriages, and deaths in our family. I had no birth certificate of the type issued by the government to *priyayi*⁵ children, some of whom were my schoolmates at the Sulung HIS.⁶ For my father was not a *priyayi*. We were kampung people, and often made unkind jokes about the *priyayi*, calling them "dèn-bèi pentol,"⁷ which was meant to ridicule their traditional knotted cloth headdress.

My father owned a provisions shop located out on the asphalt road, between the entrances to Gang I and II. In legal documents he was identified as "Doolgani, Doelgani, or Abdulgani." He was an entrepreneur with upper middle-class status, approximately equal to that of a Chinese shopowner according to the notions of the day. Father sold staples such as rice, sugar, coffee, and cooking oil, as well as tinned

4. Javanese written in Arabic script.

5. In a vague sense, and especially before 1945, the Indonesian "upper crust," determined by birth as well as by occupation and education.

6. Abbreviation of Hollandsch-Inlandsche School (Dutch-Native School), which was approximately equal to an elementary school and used Dutch and Malay as languages of instruction.

7. Dèn and bèi are short forms of the aristocratic titles of radèn and ngabèi respectively. Pentol refers to the knob or knot at the back of the distinctive headcloth worn by a Central Javanese aristocrat.

goods, soft drinks, candies, and a variety of other things. He had three assistants to help him; one of them, a Chinese by the name of Wak So, often slipped me chocolates off the shelf.

My father also owned a taxi stand on Gang II. He had seven cabs, all Fiats, and employed five drivers and five apprentices. The latter helped start the cars, which were the old-fashioned kind and required cranking. There were also a number of houses which Father owned and rented out.

My father's philosophy was that people should live thriftily and not owe money to others. People were not meant to live like the priyayi, gambling at cards and falling into debt. His advice was always the same: invest your own capital in some commercial enterprise, use any profit as capital for reinvestment, and live on the income yielded by this second venture. Ideally, then, one should only enjoy the profit on profit.

Unlike my mother, Father did not take his prayers very seriously, and perhaps because of this, as well as his business interests, Sukarno once described him as a typical petit bourgeois. That was in 1959, and Bung Karno, who 35 years earlier had lived with the Tjokroaminoto family across from Father's store, laughed when he recalled that he probably still owed my father for the cigarettes he was given on credit.⁸ In any case, my father was no priyayi, and held most members of that class in low regard, except for a few like Tjokroaminoto. Especially in his philosophy, he was much more a calvinistic capitalist than anything else.

My mother was a religious tutor (*guru ngaji*), and her classes were attended by children from all over Plampitan. Lessons were given in our house from 6:30 A.M. to 10:00 A.M., with a half-hour break in the middle. During recess, my mother and older sister served a simple meal for a reasonable price. There was no charge for the lessons.

There were about thirty pupils, mostly girls. Our dining room was used as the girls' class, and the boys sat in another room. Each brought his own *turutan*⁹ and Koran, though we had extra copies of both at home. The lessons, which consisted mostly of reading and recital, were not given systematically; nor were the pupils divided into graded groups. They all sat together, receiving individual attention according to his or her ability, for some were beginners and others had already begun reading the Surat Al-Fatehah or the Surat Yasin.¹⁰ The

8. H.O.S. Tjokroaminoto, the leader of Sarekat Islam, lived in Plampitan for a number of years. From 1916-21, the young Sukarno boarded with the family. Ruslan Abdulgani was not personally acquainted with either "Dènmas Marsaid" (Tjokroaminoto) or "Kusno" (Sukarno) at the time. His father and mother, however, knew the former individual and supported the Sarekat Islam, especially in its favoring the cause of Javanese shopowners against Chinese competition. Javanese-owned shops (toko Jowo), like Abdulgani's father's establishment, were in those days scattered along the main road in the Plampitan-Peneleh area.

9. A kind of primer in Arabic script, containing practice reading and spelling material and including the last 38 books of the Koran. The texts of these books are the shortest in the Koran and are considered ideal for beginning reading exercises.

10. Books 1 and 36 of the Koran, respectively.

children arrived in the morning with no bell to mark the beginning or end of their lessons, set their books on wooden stands, and began reading aloud. Armed with a rattan cane, Mother would listen to the jumble of shouting, reciting voices. If someone made a mistake, the rattan would rap that pupil's bookstand sharply and Mother would make the necessary correction. As a small boy I watched all this, sometimes even following the lessons. I never failed to be amazed at how careful and precise my mother seemed to be in spite of the chaotic conditions. Only when I was older did I begin to doubt her thoroughness.

Although Mother was strict in her own attention to daily prayers, fasts and charitable contributions, she was extremely tolerant with us children on religious matters. She encouraged us to pray regularly and to fast, but there was never any question of pressure or compulsion. From time to time Mother told the story of a savage, man-eating giant called Jumak Jujo, who was chained away in some secret place. He was strong enough to bite through his chains, but they became whole again every time the call to prayer was heard. If there ever passed a day in which there was no call, it would mean disaster for all Moslems. Jumak Jujo would succeed in breaking free and gobble everyone up! I listened earnestly to this tale, and always felt relieved to hear the summons to prayer come from the langgar across the way.

The only thing Mother ever really forced us to do was read the Surat Yasin each week and on this she was very strict. So every Thursday evening my brother, Mustari, and I sat cross-legged on a mat, facing our bookstands and Korans, and read off the whole chapter by rote. We didn't understand a word. I still recall that when we made mistakes--as we frequently did when we first began--Mother did not hesitate to rap our bookstands or even our hands with a long, thin bundle of palm ribs. It frequently brought me to tears, but Mother never compromised. Obviously she was still very much influenced by ancestor worship, because according to her the main reason for reading the Surat Yasin was "to make the graves of our ancestors light." I still don't really understand what she meant by "light graves."

Although Mother had various ways of encouraging us to pray, she made it clear that keeping God in our hearts and thoughts was even more important. If we had the opportunity to pray, then we should pray; if we didn't, then we should think about God at the time we would normally say prayers. God is always watching, she said. We were also advised to observe *puasa*, the Moslem fasting month. Mother told us that fasting was good for self-discipline and would keep us safe and sound, *kuat dan selamat*. That, in fact, was the main goal in her life: to be *kuat dan selamat*. To her, *kuat* meant strong economically and socially, as well as in the sense of being able to resist temptation. If one was strong enough to withstand the trials and burdens of life, to endure sufferings and sorrow, one could survive and come through it all safely, *selamat*. That was the way one avoided being swallowed up in the struggle of life. According to Mother, this inner Holy War, this war between good and evil, had to be fought even more fervently during the fasting month. But in the last analysis, what counted most in fighting it was not outward appearances but one's innermost self. It didn't really matter how earnestly one appeared to pray, or how wan one looked while fasting; one's heartfelt intentions were far more important than these. And even if one succeeded in truly overcoming temptation, there was always the fate and well-being of others to consider. What you didn't need in the way of material goods should be

given to the needy among the masses, the *wong cilik*.¹¹

All through my childhood, and even later, when as an adult I held various positions in the government, Mother reminded me of three duties: when you meet someone or come to a crossroads, don't forget to say "Peace be with you" (*Assalam alaikum*), even if you just murmur it to yourself; don't look up to the powerful and rich without at the same time looking down at the ordinary folk (*rakyat*) and considering their needs; and always remember God. Once I asked my mother where God was. She smiled at me and whispered, "In your heart! That is why you must never forget Him."

Mother also asked that, after we were grown up and independent, we children remember to be *sing Jowo*, which translates roughly as "Javanese in thought" or simply "truly Javanese." By giving us a number of examples, Mother made clear that "sing Jowo" meant being polite, friendly and open towards others, cooperative, helpful, and so forth. All this was especially important when it came to the relationship between children and their parents, and in this regard "sing Jowo" also meant to be helpful to parents, to support them when they were no longer able to do so themselves, and to give them tender loving care. I often heard my mother discussing with some of her friends the sad stories of certain children they knew who, although they had risen in society and were doing well, paid no attention to their parents. They were called *ndak Jowo*, which literally meant "not Javanese." (The same term was often used by *kampung* people in a somewhat different sense, meaning "crazy" (*gila*) or "cracked" (*sinting*).)

It may be a little confusing to someone who didn't grow up with it, but I should explain that similar words were used to describe something rather different. Small children who weren't yet old enough to understand the danger of fire, sharp knives, broken glass, and the like, were considered *durung Jowo*, literally "not yet Javanese." Children who were a bit older but were still ill-behaved, who picked on their brothers and sisters for example, were also said to be "durung Jowo." On the other hand, the child who got along well with his family, did good deeds for his grandparents, and helped his mother, was described as being *wis Jowo*, which means that he understood how to behave properly as a member of a Javanese family.

My mother was obviously syncretic in her beliefs. She placed the most emphasis on the essence of religious doctrines, and had a talent for reconciling different ones. You might say that she was an expert in the art of compromise, particularly where Islam and Hindu-Buddhism were concerned. (Mother had no understanding at all of Christianity, which to her was the religion of the Dutch. To become a Christian was, simply, to become Dutch.) In her last words she called herself a descendant of good Moslems, but what she said, did, and believed was very much tied to old traditions and ancient Javanese teachings (*kejawèn*) from the Hindu-Buddhist period and before. However many of these she tried to cast aside, however much she adjusted to Islamic doctrine, however regularly she prayed, fasted, and gave alms, Mother's life and philosophy remained full of the varied past.

She believed, for example, in the law of *karma*, in the sense that one's fate is decided by one's deeds and that good breeds good just as

11. Literally, the "little man," with a meaning approximating *rakyat*, "the people," "the masses."

evil breeds evil. She also accepted the Buddhist doctrine of *nitis*, the reincarnation of the soul. If someone lived like an animal, she used to point out, after death his soul would enter the body of an animal. Someone who lived a fairly good life would be reincarnated as a good human being. In addition to ideas such as these, Mother taught us the traditional Javanese prohibitions against the so-called "five M's" (*Mo-limo*): stealing, lying, murder, drunkenness, and promiscuity.¹² And on each of our birthdays, she sent food offerings to be placed on the grave of Kiyai Pasopati in Gang VI.

According to my mother, Kiyai Pasopati was the founder of the kampung of Plampitan. She heard this from her grandmother, but historically speaking the story probably goes back to the late eighteenth or nineteenth century, at any rate sometime after Surabaya was subjugated by Mataram in 1623.

The grave of Kiyai Pasopati can still be seen today. It lay in the cool shade of an old banyan until about 1930, when the tree was destroyed in a fire started by a spark from an incense pot. Every Thursday night people sent offerings to the grave. Mustari and I often climbed up in the tree and spied on people as they brought their little bundles of food and, occasionally, coins. When they left, we often filched the money; it wasn't anything unusual, and the other kampung children often did the same thing. We also played games around the tree and swung on the sucker roots which hung down from its branches. From time to time, of course, we realized what we were doing and became a bit frightened by the tree and the "sacred" grave beneath it . . . but we always seemed to recover.

According to the legend Mother told, Kiyai Pasopati had been a man with a rather odd habit. It was so strange, in fact, that we called it *nglakoni*, which meant that no one in the whole kampung understood it. Every night at midnight Kiyai Pasopati walked backwards from his home in the eastern part of Plampitan to the western end. He did this in all seriousness and, except if he was ill, without fail.

Kiyai Pasopati also had some interesting companions. First there were some remarkably large bats. When they left their roosts in the banyan at sunset, they always swooped over the Kiyai's grave to bid him farewell for the evening. There were also some roosters which wandered loose through the kampung at night. A thief once entered our alleyway and grabbed one of the birds by the wings, but the rooster began to squawk: "It's nice to be carried, oh, how nice it is to be carried." In his astonishment the thief dropped the rooster, which promptly turned into a human head and rolled about the ground, roaring with laughter. Needless to say, the man took to his heels.

Mother was the one who told us these stories, and from her tone of voice we could tell that she really believed in the miraculous powers of Kiyai Pasopati. She admitted that she had never seen any of the incidents with her own eyes, and was repeating legends handed down from her grandmother. But she did know that after Kiyai Pasopati died and was buried beneath the banyan tree, it was said that wedding processions must never pass there unless they did so in silence. So wedding parties would go by without making a sound, to show their respect. Only when they were well beyond the gravesite would the talking and music start up again. It was commonly believed that if someone broke this unwritten rule, trouble would follow. There might be a

12. In Indonesian: Mencuri, Membohong, Mabok, Main-main, and Membunuh.

fight, for example, or a general disturbance in the kampung, or even a death among those who attended the bride and groom.

Kiyai Pasopati was not the only one who possessed supernatural powers. In the kampung of Plampitan Lor, to the north of us, there lived a man called Wak Kiyai Doko. I once saw him with my own eyes, standing in front of his house with no shirt on. Many people in the kampung said that he possessed *ilmu gotot*, which meant that he knew how to make himself invulnerable. He also had the power to control the weather. If there was too much rain and the kampung flooded--which in fact happened quite often in those days, before municipal government provided our area with a proper drainage system--Wak Kiyai Doko could make it rain less or even stop the downpour altogether. In times of drought, people said, he could cause the rains to begin sooner than they ordinarily would. The kampung people had faith in Wak Kiyai Doko's powers and came to him in times of difficulty. He helped them without asking anything in return, for his gifts, as he reminded us, really came from God Himself.

But it was whispered that Wak Kiyai Doko sometimes went out in the middle of the night to steal things from the rich in other kampungs. He never did this in Plampitan, and he never kept any of the loot for himself, but distributed it to the poor and needy. I guess it was a local version of the Robin Hood story. His house was small and modest, and as a child I used to pass it often, walking along with my friends. I never dared to look straight at it, but just glanced sideways, full of admiration for the occupant but still a bit uneasy and afraid of his special powers.

* * *

It may surprise the reader, but my mother was really quite a patriot. At least, she had a definite awareness of and feeling for patriotism, nationalism (*rasa kebangsaan*), and the masses (*rasa kerakyatan*). At the same time it must be admitted that her ideas were far from perfect and were, in fact, somewhat negative and narrow in scope. For one thing, they were limited to the Javanese as a separate people. Mother loved to tell how the Javanese had once been noble and free, but were defeated by the Dutch and their assistants, the Chinese. She said that we need not worry, however, for the Dutch had won through trickery, and everyone knows that gains made through deceit cannot last. In the end the Javanese would again rule in their land. They would once more be free, but this would come about only after a blood bath.

Mother heard these prophecies from her grandmother and also from Pak Kasirin, an elderly relative. He lived in the kampung of Kapasari and I was often taken to visit him. His house was simple and his finances were obviously inadequate. I often eavesdropped while he and Mother talked. Once she asked when we would be free again, and he replied that he didn't know for certain, but that the old folk agreed it would only be after much blood had flowed. Maybe his own generation would not live to see the victory, he said, but their children would.

I have never forgotten his words. They came back to me very vividly when we became independent in 1945, at the cost of much bloodshed. My mother also reminded me at the time how true Pak Kasirin's vision turned out to be. She was always much more impressed with what Pak Kasirin had said than with the famous Joyoboyo prophecy, whose main points she knew but rarely mentioned. Only when the Japanese entered

entered Indonesia did she refer to the truth of Joyoboyo's words, which described the arrival of a "race of bantam cocks" (*bongso jago katé*).

Mother's brand of patriotism contained a streak of wariness with regard to the Dutch, as well as an anti-Chinese element. I was always warned to be very cautious in dealing with Dutch people, because, as the saying went, "*londo iku retiné: alon-alon mbondé*." This was a bit of wordplay which simply meant that the Javanese name for the Dutch (*londo*) should be taken literally, for they were in the habit of slowly tightening the shackles on their subjects. As for the Chinese, Mother described them as cunning and only interested in backing the winning horse. She taught me a folk rhyme which went:

"Ice hanging on a piece of straw,
A bald Chinese daren't go to war"

Mother's explanation was that in earlier times the Chinese used to wear their hair in long braided queues. A modernist movement, however, encouraged them to cut off their queues and become "bald"; it was the Chinese who had broken with tradition that one had to watch out for. At least that is what my mother said.

Despite feelings of this sort, it was a simple fact of life that our kampung was multiracial. To the left of our house lived an elderly Eurasian widow by the name of Smit. She rarely went outside, but occasionally poked her head out a window. If Mother happened to be out in front, they would chat in what people used to call bazaar-Malay. Directly across from Mrs. Smit lived another Eurasian woman, Mrs. Lammers, with her adult sons "Mister" Eduard and "Mister" Arthur, and two daughters called Greta and Lisa. Eduard worked for the State Railways. He was a bachelor, and every day before work he exercised with barbells and weights. I could see from my window how much he loved showing off his muscles. Arthur was a bit retarded; he had no job and lounged around the house with nothing to do. Greta was married and had a son called Willy, and we often played together although he was younger than I. Once Arthur told Willy not to play with me anymore, but his nephew ignored him. The other daughter, Lisa, was a rather promiscuous young woman who had boy friends calling on her nearly every afternoon. They would hug and kiss behind the flower pots. Almost every night she went out with some Eurasian man and never got home until very late.

There was also a Mr. Prins in our kampung. He owned a car repair business, when I often played and looked for pieces of scrap metal to use as toys. Other Eurasians lived out on the asphalted road, but the only names I can recall now are Robijn, Painter and Dijkes. I don't know why or how, but they all seemed to know my mother. Mrs. Robijn in particular used to call on us, and Mother returned the visits. Finally, there were the Dutch sailors who came to the kampung to drop in on Eurasian friends. We were always on our guard at these times, for people said that Dutch sailors often got drunk and caused trouble. It was even quite common for a kampung mother to frighten her crying child into silence by saying, "You'd better watch out or a Dutch sailor will come to take you away!"

How did the people of Plampitan feel about the Eurasians and the Dutch? To begin with, they were all the same thing and usually all called *londo*, Hollanders. The people of my kampung knew very little about the Dutch way of life, which is perhaps understandable since many of them were illiterate. Even those who could read and write, however, had no direct contact with the Dutch community, and were equally removed from the Eurasians who resided in their own neighborhoods. They

lived close together, but there were no channels of communication; they encountered each other daily, but walked by in silence and met only with their eyes.

So kampung people knew very little about the Dutch beyond their reputation for such wild behavior as drinking, singing and dancing on Saturday nights. They certainly had no notion, for example, of Dutch cultural activities, religion, or science. The two communities lived as if they were deaf, dumb, and blind toward each other--despite the fact that they passed in the streets and stores and trams every day.

In addition to the Eurasians, there were also a few Chinese in our kampung. In one family, the father was a carpenter and there were three or four relatives living in the same house. I don't remember their surname but their son Wang Fu, who was smaller and younger than I, often came to my house to play. I always teased him by announcing in very grave tones that he couldn't play with me unless he promised not to eat pork, and not to tell his parents what I had said. Apparently he followed my instructions and refused to eat dishes with pork in them for his mother soon became very angry and could not understand why her son wouldn't eat his food. Once I even told Wang Fu that he had to pray as I did. I taught him to stand behind me and imitate the way I bent forward and also to read the Al-Fatehah, which he did in an odd sort of way. I was only fooling around, of course, and never took any of this seriously.

Wang Fu's parents worked hard. From early in the morning until late at night they sawed and planed, turning big logs into tables and chairs and other kinds of furniture. When they took an occasional break they sometimes smoked a water-cooled pipe filled with a pre-lit tobacco mixture. As they did this they talked to each other in loud voices which could be heard all over the neighborhood. There was a kampung expression for people who spoke too loudly: they sounded "like a Chinese who has just been robbed." But of course the Chinese I am describing had not been robbed; they were just chatting among themselves. At night they frequently gathered in front of their house and sang Chinese songs to the accompaniment of a kind of cello. Usually this happened late in the evening, long after prayers at the langgar were over, so the other people in the kampung didn't mind.

I have many pleasant recollections of Wang Fu. Although the local people called his father a *singkeh*¹³ carpenter, and my mother warned me of the slippery, bald Chinese who didn't dare to go to war, to this day I remember Wang Fu with considerable fondness. I used to learn things in Chinese from him, for example "cakfang," which I think meant "to eat." Of course, I had no way of knowing whether it was Cantonese or Mandarin. It didn't really matter, anyway. Once I had my friend teach me how to say "Wang Fu wants to sleep at my house tonight." I practiced the words until I knew them by heart, and then said them to Wang Fu's mother. She laughed when she heard me and indicated that she had

13. A Chinese born in China; a Chinese immigrant. The term often has a strong pejorative sense.

understood . . . then she told Wang Fu in Chinese that he could do no such thing.

Wang Fu and I remained close friends until I went to MULO.¹⁴ He became an apprentice carpenter and I continued being a student. Even after his family moved to the kampung of Kaliasin in 1928, I often went to visit him and he occasionally returned to Plampitan. Later on, though, they moved again and we lost contact.

On the main road near our kampung there were two snack stands owned by singkèh Chinese. They spoke Chinese at home and in their daily work, and knew only one or two words of bazaar-Malay. At five in the morning their shops were already open and ready to serve coffee, tea, iced lemonade, and other drinks, as well as an assortment of sweets to go with them. A special feature of these singkèh-owned stalls was that they always had a pretty, young Indonesian waitress serving the customers. Such girls were supposed to be decoys and attract young men, especially taxi drivers, to eat and drink at their establishment. Usually the girl was already the concubine or mistress of the singkèh owner, but even so, she was used in this way.

This concubinage system was really an exploitative device used by the singkèh Chinese, who were economically far stronger than the majority of Indonesians. It also involved the sexual exploitation of the village girls of Cermee, Lamongan, Sidoarjo, and other nearby areas.

There were also two *peranakan*¹⁵ Chinese in our kampung. We called them *cino* rather than singkèh or anything else. They worked as cashiers in the Dutch trading concerns of Borsumij and George Wehry. Even at home the *cino* rarely spoke Chinese, and were quite fluent in Dutch and Malay. They read newspapers such as *Pewartu Surabaya* and *Sin Tit Po*. Later one of their daughters was a classmate of mine at the MULO in Ketabang.

I was able to find out as much as I did about our Chinese neighbors because at the end of each day I used to get together with the other children at the langgar to gossip and wait for evening prayers to begin. There we could watch everyone, especially the foreigners, as they came home from their jobs or, if they were from another part of the city, as they visited friends. We were always very curious about all these comings and goings, and asked each other all manner of questions about the people we saw. If no one knew the answers that particular evening someone would be certain to have found out within a day or so, perhaps by asking their parents or questioning the newspaper boy. And then we would eagerly exchange the latest intelligence. That little group of children hanging around the langgar at dusk was a source of surprisingly accurate information about the neighborhood.

And what of Arab influence on our kampung? It was not directly apparent, for no Arabs actually lived there. Nevertheless, there was indeed an influence and it was felt by everyone. The house opposite ours, for example, belonged to an Arab named Seban Wachid. We knew this because every time the house was vacant a sign was put up,

14. Abbreviation of Meer Uitgebreid Lager Onderwijs (Extended Lower Education), a Lower Secondary School in which the language of instruction was Dutch.

15. A Chinese born in Indonesia and, usually, of a Chinese father and Indonesian mother.

informing people in Dutch that the place was for rent and information could be obtained from Seban Wachid on Kampemen Street, which was in the Arab section of the city. The sign reflected the fact that Arabs invested their capital heavily in the kampung. Plampitan was not the only one, for I often saw similar signs in places like Peneleh, Kramat-gantung, Genteng, Bubutan, and so forth. They all bore the names of Seban Wachid, Alamudi, or Martak.

The Arab community also exerted its influence on our kampung through small-scale retail trade. Almost every day an Arab passed through the neighborhood peddling folk remedies (*jamu*), costume jewelry, prayer beads, and other items packed in baskets slung from a carrying pole. The pictures these men sold made a particularly deep impression on me. They were rather like comics today, but they illustrated entirely different things: the tortures reserved for liars and cheats, the fate of sinners cast into Hell, the suffering of people who broke God's commandments, and, of course, the angels who greeted anyone who managed to reach Heaven. There were also some pictures whose impact was even more direct; they showed a hair-thin bridge hanging over a ravine full of crocodiles and other savage beasts, which waited open-mouthed for sinners to fall. For some reason, such things fascinated me.

But my mother never bought any of the pictures, and insisted that they were quite unnecessary. It was sufficient to be able to see into one's own soul. What's more, the peddlers were Arabs, many of whom made a too comfortable living by lending money to poor Javanese at exorbitant interest rates. Most Arabs were hypocrites, Mother said. They claimed that usury was forbidden, but they themselves lived by all manner of usurious practices.

Arab customs were most apparent in our kampung among the women, most of whom wore a *kudung*, or veil, whenever they went visiting. It did not cover the face completely, but was draped over the head to cover the ears and the sides of the face. Like all the other women, my mother and sisters dressed in this fashion whenever they called on people. The head covering had social significance indicating that the woman who wore it was a real kampung person and not one of the so-called *dèn-ayu*¹⁶ or *priyayi* class. I see this as one aspect of Arab influence, which began with the spread of Islam here.

Moslem influence was apparent in other ways, too, such as the celebrations of Muhammed's Birthday (*Maulud Nabi*), and the Prophet's journey to Jerusalem and ascension to Heaven (*Isra-Mi'raj*), as well as the events at the end of puasa. It was the latter which always impressed me most, especially the end-of-fast prayers said on *Idul Fitri* eve and on the day itself. As a sign that the fasting had ended, two rockets were fired into the evening sky, one from the Kemayoran Mosque and the other from the Peneleh Mosque. After finishing our meal and reciting the final prayer, we children used to go around to all the houses which had electric lights, looking on the walls and fences for the little lizards we called *cicak*. The idea was to catch them and rip open their mouths. I couldn't really stomach that part of the game and rarely joined in. But it was common practice in the kampung, since legend had it that the *cicak* had once nearly betrayed the Prophet. When he hid himself in a cave to escape the pursuing Quraysh, he was

16. A shortened form of *radèn ayu*, a title used by married Javanese women of aristocratic status.

given away by the lizard's distinctive "chikchak" call. The enemies, so the story goes, heard the sound and threw rocks into the cave. One struck the Prophet on the mouth and knocked out one of his teeth. Fortunately he was able to keep from crying out in pain and the Quraysh went on their way without ever knowing that their prey had been there all the time. Another kampung custom was related to this episode in the Prophet's life: people sometimes filed their teeth flat, supposedly in recognition of the fact that Muhammed had once lost a tooth.

When I was a child Idul Fitri services were not held out in the open, but inside the local langgar. Afterwards everyone competed to see who could offer his hand first to the *imam* and his *khotib*, the priest and preacher. Then, accompanied by the sound of firecrackers, we would go calling on all the older people of the kampung. We kneeled before them and asked forgiveness for our sins . . . and then waited for the money which they customarily gave children on this occasion.

Another thing which impressed me was the custom of taking the alms offering to the kampung *modin*.¹⁷ In those days there was no Alms and Offering Committee as there is now, and the modin was expected to redistribute offerings of rice and so forth to the needy. Some years later, my father and mother broke with tradition and started giving directly to the poor families; the modin was rich enough, they said. I was always asked to compile a list of families deserving assistance.

An important part of Idul Fitri celebrations was the lighting of firecrackers, which of course stuck in my childish memory. The more crackers a person exploded, the higher his social standing was thought to be. As a result, there was often quite a competition among the neighbors, which in Surabaya slang is called *jor-joran*. The term can be used in a good sense, as when Sukarno brought it up in a 1965 speech in honor of the PNI's¹⁸ 38th anniversary. He said there was a kind of *jor-joran* between the PNI and the PKI¹⁹ in the sport of holding mass meetings, and suggested that the same eagerness for competition could better be applied to service to the Nation and the Revolution. But the word also had a bad connotation, for in their effort to compete on Idul Fitri the kampung people wasted their money on an incredible variety of fireworks, some of them tied in strings five or ten meters long. All for the sake of status! The next morning the alleyway would be swept and the shreds of colored paper from the crackers would be piled up in front of each house ready to be burnt. The bigger and pile, the greater the prestige . . . at least so the kampung people felt.

I can't say I didn't take part in the competition. I was forever begging my parents to buy more fireworks, and many times sneaked out at night to collect some of the papers from the neighbors' exploded crackers. I took them over to our own pile to make it look just a little bit higher before being burned.

The influence of Islam was also felt on Muhammed's Birthday, when everyone in the kampung gathered at the langgar. The head of the sinoman had already made arrangements as to who should bring bowls of fruit or boiled rice or side dishes of meat and vegetables. After the

17. One who calls the faithful to prayer (muezzin).

18. The Indonesian Nationalist Party (Partai Nasional Indonesia).

19. The Indonesian Communist Party (Partai Komunis Indonesia).

story of the Prophet's life was read, the food was divided equally among all those present. No one ever had to bring too much, and everyone always got enough to eat; it had all been carefully worked out ahead of time.

I still remember this kampung celebration vividly and once used it as an example of the principle of justice based on true equality and collectivity (*sama rasa sama rata*). It illustrated very nicely Karl Marx's dictum of "from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs," for each sinoman member in the kampung was asked to contribute what he could afford, and received what he needed. I used this example publicly in the 1960's, at a time when the PKI propaganda program and our indoctrination efforts were in vigorous competition with each other. My intention was to show that as far as implementing socialist reforms was concerned, Marxist theories were in no way superior to Islamic practice.

One of the ceremonies performed on the Prophet's birthday involved the reading of a certain book which we called *Berjanji*. Few people in the kampung understood what was being read, though everyone knew it was about the life of Muhammed; in the middle we all rose and shouted "Glory, Glory . . .," and for this reason it was also known as the Glory Book. I myself thought that "Berjanji" should be translated literally as the "Book of Promises," and it was only much later that I learned that the book's title actually comes from the name of the poet who wrote it, Ja'ar Al-Barzanji. The piece was composed for a literary contest in the tenth or eleventh century and was apparently considered to be of high quality, for it was brought to Indonesia by the first Moslem proselytizers and eventually ended up in my kampung.

There were also smaller ceremonies marking the anniversary of Muhammed's flight to Jerusalem and his ascension to Heaven. On these occasions I remember, for example, hearing the tale of Buroq, the fabulous winged horse which carried the Prophet across the Seventh Heaven to God's Holy Seat. But no alms were offered and there were few of the other activities which took place on more important holy days.

Usually my mother would tell us the significance of a celebration shortly before it began. As a child I was fascinated by her story of how the Prophet was born in a state of purity, circumcised and fragrant. His bosom had already been entered by the Lord and his heart washed clean of impurities, just as it said in the first line of the *Al-Insyirah*.²⁰ Mother would also tell us how Muhammed as a young orphan was teased by naughty children, who thought it amusing to give him packages with camel dung inside. But when he opened them in front of his tormentors, the bundles always turned out to be filled with mouth-watering things to eat. Thanks to the power of Almighty God, the Prophet was never deceived or harmed when he was a child. If he played or walked in the blinding sun, a cloud sheltered him. He was respected by other children because he never told lies and never did anything wrong. He helped people in trouble and gave to the needy. His teachings and his life are still faultless examples for all men to follow.

Mother also described for us the Prophet's journey to Jerusalem and his ascension of the Heavenly Ladder to the Seat of the Lord. She told us about what he saw there, especially Heaven and Hell, and about

20. Book 23 of the Koran.

his meetings with the other prophets. When she related the story of Buroq to us, she used to point solemnly to an old painting of the winged horse, inscribed with Arabic letters.

In addition to all the foreign influences, and those of Islam and pre-Islamic beliefs, other peoples and ideas were of consequence in our kampung. These came not from abroad but from groups within our own nation, and their role in kampung life is unforgettable.

Most important were the Madurese. We had several families of them in the kampung, and had contact with others who just passed through. The ones who lived in our alleyway made a living by selling *saté*²¹ or *soto*,²² or by carrying and peddling water. (There were two kinds: tap water for drinking purposes, and river water for sprinkling around the outside of one's house in dry, dusty weather.)

The best-known soto-seller in our neighborhood was Wak Ringgit. A *ringgit* in those days was 2½ Dutch cents, rather a lot of money to most Indonesians. This particular man was very fussy about the quality of his soto, and refused to cater to those who couldn't afford to pay 2½ cents to sample his cooking. It was quite a sum to pay for a bowl of soto, and he became famous. Among the water-sellers, Pak Dokremah was known everywhere. He was given his name, which was actually a nickname, because every time someone asked him something in Javanese, he replied, "dok remah" which means "I don't understand." And he wasn't faking; he really didn't understand Javanese at all. Despite his advanced age, Pak Dokremah was remarkably strong, and, like all Madurese, always accepted offers of work, regardless of what kind or when they might be. The people of Madura have a keen sense of self-respect and are very proud. Though they often lived, compared to the rest of the neighborhood, in impoverished conditions, they never begged. I never knew a Madurese to be a tramp or a panhandler. The only ones who begged were crippled or deformed. Friends helped by carrying them to a certain place, where they called upon their fellow men to be charitable to the handicapped . . . which was different from begging in the usual sense.

Every day Madurese women walked through the kampung selling salted fish, meat and vegetable dishes, *rujak*,²³ *dawet*²⁴ and other things to eat and drink, which they carried in big bundles on their heads. They were very strong and walked erect even when the loads were heavy. And they were very daring and aggressive in their sales approach, too. They appeared not to need the money at all, and if a prospective buyer offered too low a price, these Madurese women would put on a poker face and reply saucily "If you haven't got the money, don't bother to bargain!" The Madurese were a stern people, and strange in some ways. They seemed to enjoy taking all sorts of oaths, like "Strike me dead if I'm not telling the truth," and they also had a reputation for knife-fighting.

21. Meat on small bamboo skewers, grilled and dipped in a sauce.

22. A hearty soup, usually made with beef tripe or chicken and supposedly of East Javanese and Madurese origin.

23. Sliced unripe fruit in a pungent sauce, with many local variations.

24. A drink made from coconut milk, soybean flour, and palm sugar.

Apart from the food-sellers, a few other Madurese passed through our kampung. "Ooo-eng, ooo-eng!" they cried, and went around asking to buy second-hand articles: old bottles, scrap iron, torn clothing, bicycle wheels, broken chairs, old shoes, and many other worthless things. They refused nothing, and my mother often sold her used goods and trash to these dealers. Usually they put a cloth over one shoulder and called out their distinctive "ooo-eng." Those were the signs of their profession, but even today I don't know the real meaning of what they called out.

The people of my kampung often ridiculed the Madurese and made little jingles that poked fun at their dark skins and their reputed miserliness. Despite this, the Madurese who lived in the neighborhood were both feared and respected, and--though no one would ever have admitted--appreciated. The main reason was that they were willing to do any job. They were also very pious people, and as a rule prayed devoutly and respected the "sacred" graves of Kiyai Pasopati, Sunan Ngampel, and the like.

Several families from the Outer Islands lived in our kampung, and they were the other Indonesians who influenced our lives. There were a couple of people from Maluku, a few from Manado, and several more from various parts of Sumatra. The kampung people regarded them as being different from themselves; that is, not--or at least not yet--of the same nation, or *bangsa*.

It must be remembered that this was in the 1920's. Only in 1927 or 1928, when I was a MULO student and the kampung were beginning to be stirred by the movement led by Dr. Soetomo and Sukarno, did I ever become aware of the term "Indonesia" and the aspirations for national unity. It was at the same time that the influence of the Youth Oath²⁵ began to be felt in my kampung. The words and music of *Indonesia Raya*, later our national anthem, were also just becoming familiar to the people in my neighborhood.

The Ambonese from Maluku and the Menadonese were referred to by the kampung people as Dutch. They called them "londo Ambon" or "londo Manado," probably because they went to church on Sunday as the Dutch did, and were not part of the sinoman. Needless to say, they never visited the langgar either. So they were more Dutch than anything else in the eyes of the kampung residents, who said they "weren't real kampung people" and "weren't like the Javanese." The Sumatrans were treated somewhat differently, since they occasionally went to pray at the langgar with us. They were called *wong Padang*, which means "people from Padang" in Javanese, and were considered to be "real kampung people." Such was the logic of the people I grew up with.

Certainly the kampung people at the time had rather simple and primitive notions about national solidarity. Thinking back on the nature of their nationalism, I am reminded of European nationalism during the Middle Ages; in a similar fashion, religion was the thread that bound people together.

Besides the foreigners and the non-Javanese in our midst, there were other strangers: people who came into Surabaya from outlying

25. The oath or agreement (*Sumpah/Ikrar Pemuda*) to strive for one nation, one people, and one language, made at the Second Indonesian Youth Congress, October 28, 1928.

villages to sell a variety of goods. Our kampung was always busy with this kind of trade and bustle. Each morning village women came selling sweets like fried bananas, rice-balls rolled in sesame seeds, glutinous rice-cakes, and so on. They were homemade in or near Plampitan, and the villagers merely acted as hawkers. Even earlier in the day, men walked through the alleys selling hot coffee, tea, and folk brews made from ginger root and other herbs and spices. They also sold lunch packages of boiled rice to workers down at the shipyards or the harbor, for they really only passed through our area on their way to the northern part of the city. Other men used to come by selling *tahu*²⁶ every day, and pieces of sugar cane when the season came for the mills around Surabaya. And ice-sellers appeared at mid-day on the big streets and in the alleys of the kampung. We children could choose between a glass of crushed ice with flavored syrup poured over it, or a simple kind of popsicle which had a piece of rice stalk for a stick.

Sometimes the villagers would come to the house and offer homemade salt to my mother. This product was manufactured illegally in the countryside; all legal salt was sold by the government-run monopoly, and no one else was allowed to produce it. The penalty for breaking this law was imprisonment. But these village women would come to the kampung anyway, slip through the narrow passage between our house and the neighbor's, and enter through the back door. Then they would open up the bundles they were carrying, camouflaged with a few carrots or cucumbers on top, and begin bargaining. Mother usually brought their village-processed salt in spite of the fact that we always had a good supply of "government salt," which was made up into neat blocks and looked, to tell the truth, a great deal cleaner and whiter than the village stuff. But Mother used to say, "I feel sorry for these women. They live near the sea at Kenjeran and Kaliwaron and Sidoarjo. The Dutch don't own the salt in the ocean. It is ours, and the Lord gave to us to use. So why should the Dutch forbid us to take it? Typical of them!"

According to the laws laid down by the colonial regime, my mother was an accomplice to the crime of trading in illegal goods. But her standards were different from those of the government, and she took the risk. In everything she did, she tried to show that the suffering people of Java had her sympathy. Once the village salt peddlers didn't show up for three months. They had apparently been arrested by the police and thrown into jail for a week for selling the salt God gave the Javanese. But that didn't stop them, and they were soon back at our door selling salt again. When my mother wondered admiringly how she could dare sell salt once more, one of the women replied, "How am I to eat if I don't keep on doing it?"

Clearly the life of the common people in those days was difficult; the salt monopoly of the colonial government was just one of the injustices felt by the general population. When the news reached our kampung of Gandhi's now-famous march to the sea, which encouraged the people of India to make their own salt, my mother was deeply impressed. She said, "There! The Javanese should come together in the same way. The Dutch would surely be defeated!" Then she cut a picture of Mahatma Gandhi from a magazine and placed it on the wall beside the portrait of another foreigner: Sultan Abdulhamid of Turkey, who according to Mother had helped the Acehnese in their war against the Dutch.

26. Bean-curd cakes.

So far I have spoken mostly of the good side of kampung life, or at least the side about which nothing especially bad can be said. But there were some aspects of my neighborhood and its society which were not at all admirable. I especially recall the bad habits of some of the ordinary laborers. They were about five households whose members often got together to play cards and other games, and wagered on the results. As they gambled they frequently drank rice wine or imported brandy and ate baked fish with chili sauce, which of course encouraged more drinking. Sometimes they all ended up drunk and arguing among themselves. This group rarely went to the langgar, but not one among them neglected his obligations to the sinoman. For them, neighborliness was more important than religion.

Another negative aspect of kampung life in those days was the gambling involved in pigeon racing. At the eastern end of our alleyway several people kept pigeons, for which they built special lofts on high bamboo stilts. Races were usually held on Sunday. The birds were taken three or four kilometers away and released to fly home to their roosts. The first to land was the winner, and a small wooden gong was struck to announce each bird's arrival. Of course there was a good deal of betting among the racing fans; some pigeons became so famous they were known everywhere by name. Each Sunday you could see the pigeon fanciers standing around the lofts and hear the sound of the wooden gong echo through the kampung as the birds reached home.

Another form of entertainment was also rather undesirable. It was called *tandakan* and involved professional female dancers called *tandak* or *lèdèk*. When they performed, they didn't wear a blouse (*kebaya*) but just a breast cloth, and this was thought to be very risqué. The performances were given by troupes from smaller towns outside Surabaya, and they even brought their own *gamelan* orchestra. Many of the girls were quite attractive and it is hardly surprising that such evenings occasionally got out of hand, especially if some of the audience was drunk. Needless to say, conservative Moslems considered activities of this kind as being beyond the pale. Our own area never had too many problems with *tandakan*, which was far more popular in Plampitan Lor and other places. The people of my kampung took their religion seriously and so did not care for gambling or dancing or drinking; at the same time, however, they were quite tolerant towards some of these things and could not be called fanatics.

Some people in my kampung used to sponsor *wayang kulit*²⁷ shows whenever they held weddings, circumcisions, and other celebrations. I remember seeing one of these performances when I was small. It was the story of Betoro Kolo, the Destroyer, and my older brother Gunardjo took me. My mother warned me that, if you went to see this particular story, you were not allowed to leave early or fall asleep in the middle; if you did, Betoro Kolo might sneak up and eat you! So I sat close to my friends up near the *dalang*,²⁸ and ate sour fruit and bitter-tasting nuts in hopes that these would keep me awake. But of course they didn't, and I had to be awakened at the end of the performance.

Nothing in my kampung environment encouraged me to learn about, let alone love, wayang. I have never really had the opportunity to study and understand the philosophy behind this art form. Yet Gunardjo

27. The traditional Javanese leather puppet.

28. The puppeteer and narrator in wayang performances.

had a whole collection of wayang kulit, and Mugenah, my older sister, was always telling me to buy the *Pakem Ringgit Purwa* series published by Balai Pustaka (sold in Plampitan at Notodipuro's bookstore in Gang II). These books told all about wayang and the favorite wayang stories. But I was not terribly interested at the time; even now I don't understand why. Perhaps the stories were too abstract for me, and not relevant to daily life as I saw it. Perhaps, too, there was more fighting than I felt comfortable with; it was often over women, and never very logical, since so much depended on the use of magical or mystical weapons. It was probably opinions of this sort which once caused Bung Karno to call me "culturally ignorant." That was in 1958, when he discovered that I was not interested in the wayang performances which he often gave at the palace. He even told my wife to go out and buy some children's wayang comics for me. I just laughed.

Mas Wilopo²⁹ once tried to explain to me the attitude Prabu Kreshno took when he faced a crisis. At the time we were discussing the October 17, 1952 incident in which representative government was seriously challenged. When I criticized Mas Wilopo for not taking a more resolute stance as Prime Minister, he patiently reminded me of the approach which Prabu Kreshno, on whom he apparently modeled himself, took in a similar situation. I replied that I really didn't understand wayang at all, and he was dumbfounded.

Perhaps the reason can be found in the "marginal" character of my family, which lived between cultures. We were not fully Javanese, for we were in the Islamic fold. Yet we were not fully Moslem in culture either. On this account some people have regarded me as being "culturally uprooted."

Thinking about this marginal cultural position reminds me of the little bands of traveling storytellers in Surabaya. They would go through the kampung and, if you called them over and agreed on a price, they would sit in front of your house and tell stories of the Prophet and the Moslem saints to the accompaniment of drums and gongs. In between the songs they told jokes and made funny allusions and satirical remarks. Sometimes they told about Joko Tingkir, Joko Tarub, and other folktale figures. These were all basically Javanese stories with a good deal of Islamic mystical tradition thrown in.

As for *ludruk*, a cultural form famous in Surabaya and East Java, it had little influence on me as a child. It was not very well developed at that time, and besides, ludruk players never visited our kampung. I first came into contact with ludruk after I entered HIS, and then somewhat later, in the 1930's, when the Pak Durasim players helped further the national movement that was building in those years.³⁰

One aspect of kampung life affected me so deeply that even today remembering it causes me some pain: the manner in which enmity between kampung children was shown. It was quite usual for a child to be given a nickname, which was generally taken up by all the children in the neighborhood. The name was often nasty or ridiculous, and the main point was to make a fool out of the child to whom it applied, or to

29. The lawyer and politician, Prime Minister 1952-53.

30. A native Surabayan, Durasim developed ludruk into a form of entertainment which possessed a modern spirit and a certain sophistication. His efforts were closely connected to those of Dr. Soetomo, and the two worked together frequently.

make fun of some defect he might have. Usually the names were insulting, such as when a child who smelled was called "Stinky" or one who had eye trouble became "Blinky." I was given the nickname of Dahulu or "Early," for reasons I have never been able to figure out. Some said I liked to keep to myself a lot.

When there was a difference of opinion between two children, they first called out these nicknames and then began threatening each other. The other children, far from trying to be peacemakers, urged them on with rhymes and dares like "Pull his ear if you dare to fight!" And of course when one of them touched the other's ear, the fighting would get worse. At this point, everyone ran away, leaving the combatants alone. Then grown-ups usually appeared on the scene to break up the fight, though it sometimes happened that even they took sides and started yelling at each other.

When serious disagreements arose, or when fist fights were broken up before they could be resolved, the two children involved often became "official" enemies. The status took hold following a ceremony witnessed by the other children in the neighborhood. The procedure was for the enemies to touch the tips of each other's pinky fingers. A further step, in serious cases, gave the enemies the right to hit each other on the backside, unless this area was "protected" with a hand. It was really quite amusing to see a child go around with his hand behind him, knowing that if he forgot to do this, his enemy could hit him. One had always to be on guard, and sometimes such quarrels lasted for weeks or even months. Another ceremony was held when the two children decided they had had enough. They touched their thumbs together this time, and this marked their official reconciliation.

I went through all this a couple of times. The first occasion involved a boy much bigger than I who said something nasty about my mother. The second concerned two boys who wouldn't let me join a game because, they said, I couldn't run fast, which wasn't true at all. Then they accused me of preferring to play with foreigners, in this case Wang Fu, rather than with the "regular" kampung kids.

I was easily hurt as a child, especially if I felt that I had been treated unjustly or if someone in my family were spoken ill of. I did not forget such things easily, but my approach at the time was usually to remain silent. Just as I rarely forgot kindness or favor when it was shown to me, I found it difficult not to remember insults and ridicule. Ever since my childhood I have tried to overcome this sensitivity, but it has not been an easy task. Possibly the reason is to be found in the very deep influence which kampung life had on me at a time when I was most vulnerable.

Although I have not said anything about it until now, the modern world--by which I mean, really, the West--also had various effects on our kampung. One of them was visible in the way we all loved soccer. We had our own team called Riboet which means "commotion" but was also an acronym for a Javanese name meaning "League of Growing Perfection." Other kampung groups were called "Jasmine," "Vampire," "Race," and so on. The playing fields were at Pasar Turi and Ketabang, and everything was quite informal; there were no admission charges, and the players didn't even wear shoes. If my brother was playing on the Riboet squad against another kampung, I usually went with him to watch and to act as a kind of water-boy by throwing chunks of refreshing ice to the players. Unfortunately our team was not the best and suffered frequent defeats.

I often played soccer with the other kampung children on the river bank. There were no goal posts; we just took off all our clothes, except our underpants, and put them in piles to mark the goals. Those who took positions close to the river had to be good swimmers, since when the ball went "out" the nearest player had to dive in after it. We all knew the basic rules of soccer, but rarely paid any attention to them. Our games frequently ended up as free-for-all . . . but of course that was what we loved best of all.

Another modern influence in the kampung could be seen in the person of a Sumatran doctor named Salih. He was, strangely enough for us, called a "Javanese Doctor" (*Dokter Jawa*) by the Dutch because he had graduated from the local medical school. Dr. Salih lived in the northern part of Plampitan, and was the sole representative of the world of Western science in the area. His patients were mostly Eurasians and Chinese, but a few Indonesians also went to him.

In those days kampung people were still frightened of doctors, and were truly petrified of the prospect of being taken to the hospital. I once had jaundice when I was little, and my parents sent me outside the city to the village of Tandes, because they were afraid the doctor would hear about my illness. I remained in the house of some village people for a whole week, eating a concoction of hair lice and mashed bananas, which was believed to cure jaundice. It was only after 1925, when I was already attending HIS, that my parents were willing to ask the doctor's help if someone in the family fell sick.

Dr. Salih owned a large, rather fierce dog which barked constantly. During the doctor's surgery hours we children used to hear both the barking and the sound of people crying as if in pain. That was when we took turns at peeping through Dr. Salih's keyhole, trying to see what terrible cause there was for the commotion. There was no limit to our imagination. According to a story told by one of these little "observers," Dr. Salih once treated someone who had boils on the soles of his feet. The patient was told to stand on a board coated with tar, to which the boils would of course stick. Then the doctor, our informant said, would bring in his dog and make him bark and growl at the patient, who leaped forward in fear and trembling. The ulcerated skin and pus were left on the tarred board; all the doctor had to do was apply some salve and bandage the patient's feet. Every time I heard that dog bark I had visions of the remarkable techniques used by successful, modern doctors!

I was further discouraged from becoming very interested in medicine when I heard one of my friends describe what you had to do in order to become a doctor. You had to spend years slicing up corpses, he said, as well as cleaning up festering boils. And then you had to take the final examination, which was to eat a sandwich of bread and live worms. If you couldn't do it, you didn't graduate and become a doctor. I can hardly describe the manner in which this particular narrative affected me. Whenever I saw Dr. Salih leave his house, I would stare at him in awe . . . and horror. Was it possible that this man had cut up dead human beings and eaten worms? What fantastic nerve and determination he must have!

Dr. Salih had an assistant whom we called Wak Opas, and whom my father later hired to take me to and from school when I began attending the HIS in Sulung. I once asked him if all the stories I heard about Dr. Salih were true. He said he really didn't know, since he was never allowed to enter the surgery room.

It was only during the Revolution that Dr. Salih and I became personally acquainted. At that time he was already over 65 years old and was, along with Doel Arnowo,³¹ quite active in the effort to collect money for the Indonesian Independence Fund. He moved from place to place along with the evacuees, using his medical skills to help those injured in the fighting. He still remembered my father and his provisions shop, but could not recall that I was one of the boys who gathered tanjung blossoms from his tree. He laughed heartily when I told him about the great "secrets" we made up about him and his medical knowledge. To this day I remember Dr. Salih as a very quiet man, but a true independence fighter nevertheless. His deeds did a lot more good than the speeches given by political agitators in those revolutionary days.

* * *

It seems appropriate to end this account of my childhood in Plampitan by noting that it would be a mistake to think that kampung life was simply poor and of low standard, or lacking in refinement. The former view was held by the Dutch, and the latter reflects the attitude of the priyayi. As I have tried to show, my kampung was a dynamic place, where many influences met and mixed. It was also a community which had certain refinements, among them an admirably democratic form of collectivism. And I am sure that Gang V in Plampitan was not much different in these respects from any of the innumerable alleyways and kampung scattered throughout Surabaya.

31. A well-known East Javanese PNI leader, who grew up in a kampung not far from Plampitan.