This book is based on my M.A. thesis (*doctoraalscriptie*), which was written at the University of Leiden in 1977. The thesis was entitled *Language policy, language planning and spelling reform in Indonesia and Malaysia*, and it contained two parts: a general treatment of the language policy and planning in the two countries, both in colonial times and after independence, and a more specific analysis of the spelling question. A shortened version of the first part was published as Vikør 1983. The second part of the thesis is contained in the present work, in a revised and improved form. The appendix about Old Malay spelling and phonology is a revised and improved form of a working paper I wrote in Leiden in Dutch during the winter of 1973–74, entitled ‘De fonologie van het Oud-Maleis’.

These works are the tangible results of my six-year study of the Malay language – in its Indonesian, Malaysian, and classical forms – at the University of Leiden. The study took place in a small but stimulating milieu of teachers and fellow students at the Department of Southeast Asian Languages and Cultures of the University of Leiden and the Royal Institute of Linguistics and Anthropology. I am strongly indebted to each of these, both in human and academic terms. Here I mention especially Professor A. Teeuw, who taught, advised, and supported me from the beginning of my study, and who was the supervisor of my M.A. thesis and both the initiator and supervisor of the paper on Old Malay.

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Dr D.J. Prentice has read a draft of the present work and improved its quality with many valuable comments. If my English now appears acceptable, it is also to a large extent due to him. The shortcomings that remain are in no way due to anybody but me.
'When the Republic changed the Dutch “oe” to “u” in official Indonesian usage, some Indonesians accepted the new convention in the spelling of their own names while others stuck to that with which they were familiar. Sukarno, to the end of his life, signed himself Soekarno. However, even while doing so, he insisted that Sukarno was the correct official spelling and his officially published works follow that usage. In consequence it has been decided to use Sukarno rather than Soekarno in this book.'


'Problems started with the correct spelling of the name – Suharto or Soeharto? Both spellings stand for the sound “u”, as in rule. Since the President writes his name Soeharto, this spelling is used in this book, though in most Indonesian words the letters “oe” have been substituted by “u” during the last two decades. (When this problem was discussed during an interview, the President evaded persistent questions, smilingly, in his characteristic way: “Well, I sign S, apostrophe, Harto.”)'