Traditions Redirecting Contemporary Indonesian Cultural Productions

Traditions Redirecting Contemporary Indonesian Cultural Productions

Edited by

Jan van der Putten, Monika Arnez,
Edwin P. Wieringa and Arndt Graf

Cambridge
Scholars
Publishing

Traditions Redirecting Contemporary Indonesian Cultural Productions

Edited by Jan van der Putten, Monika Arnez, Edwin P. Wieringa
and Arndt Graf

This book first published 2017

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN (10): 1-4438-8993-8
ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-8993-3

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

PREFACE

In 2015 the Republic of Indonesia celebrated the 70th anniversary of its independence, an event that understandably filled the hearts of many Indonesian citizens with joy and pride. 2015 also marked the 50th anniversary of an attempted coup d'état and its horrifying aftermath in the mass killings of people associated with the Indonesian Communist Party (Partai Komunis Indonesia, PKI) and other left-wing organisations. During the period after another regime change in 1998, a number of one-time victims and their children have come forward with their stories about the events of 1965, while commemorations of the victims have indicated that the wounds inflicted by the atrocities committed 50 years ago are deep and have yet to heal.

The year 2015 also witnessed the first time Indonesia presented itself prominently on the world literary stage by becoming the guest of honor at the annual Frankfurt Book Fair. Four scholars of Indonesian literature based in German universities took this opportunity to organise a conference about modern Indonesian cultural expressions since independence in direct connection with the book fair. This volume contains a selection of the papers that were presented during the conference, which focused on the topics of the Indonesian cultural production of the past 70 years and representations of the traumatic events of the mid-1960s.

Many parties have made this conference and this ensuing volume possible, for which we wish to express our sincere gratitude. First and foremost we thank all the presenters and other participants who made it a wonderful conference with critical discussions; the Goethe University of Frankfurt and its organising committee chaired by Holger Warnk, who hosted the event; the German Research Foundation (DFG) for providing the financial means for the conference; and the Departments of Southeast Asian Studies of the Universities of Frankfurt, Hamburg, and Cologne. The conference was opened with a speech by the Indonesian Minister of Education and Culture and vividly continued with a performance of the group Servants of the Words, featuring Elisabeth Inandiak, Endah Laras, Jennifer Lindsay, Landung Simatupang, Tommi Simatupang, and Christina Schott. In this performance different languages, genres, and media were used in a fascinating combination, showing how creativity was triggered

by the travelling word through processes of media change and translation. This performance provided an inspiring start for the presentations and discussions that day. The second day was opened with a panel discussion entitled “Writing Political Violence and Trauma” led by Alex Flor and featuring the speakers Pam Allen, Ayu Utami, and Mery Kolimon. This discussion formed the prelude to the first session of paper presenters about Indonesian literary reflections on the tragic events of 1965 and their aftermath. We extend our sincere gratitude to all these performers and speakers without whom the conference would have been less special.

We are also grateful to the members of the group at Hamburg University, including Bettina David and Yanti Mirdayanti, who helped us with the first brainstorming session conceptualising our plans for a conference. Martina Heinschke, also a member of this group, assisted us all through the process of the organisation, for which we are very appreciative. Gratitude is also due to Mirko Wittwar, our English language editor, who has done wonderful work on such short notice and Kris Williamson, who checked the final edition.

INTRODUCTION

JAN VAN DER PUTTEN

In the course of history, processes of cultural exchange and internalisation, adoption, and translation within maritime Southeast Asia and with other Asian regions resulted in the production and further distribution of knowledge in the form of narratives or texts in a variety of forms and manifestations. During early modern times new frames of religious and secular knowledge were introduced and developed with the help of writing systems used for the preservation and dissemination of materials. However, for a long time the production and dissemination of textual material were dominated by orality and stage traditions, while hand-written or epigraphic and iconographic texts seem to have arrived later and to have been limited to palace and religious temple traditions. Although transformed and adjusted in accordance with contemporaneous contexts, oral, stage and manuscript traditions have maintained successful positions as media for textual production. To give a few examples of these ongoing traditions, mention can be made of the continuation of oral expressions in religious prayers of different denominations, the ever popular declamation of poetry in public readings, the performances given by stage and dance troupes inside and outside theatre buildings, and hand-written copies made of older texts for religious and/or commercial purposes. Hosting an enormous variety of languages and detached ethnic groups, each with their own languages and cultural traditions, insular Southeast Asia is characterised by an extremely rich collection of local oral and stage traditions that in recent times have increasingly been fostered and vigorously preserved. In particular in Indonesia, this trend has continued and was enhanced in recent years as a consequence of regional autonomy laws that were implemented in the beginning of the new millennium and have boosted the nation's as well as the people's interest in their cultural heritage. Tellingly, since the mid-1990s, Indonesian researchers of oral and manuscript traditions have organised themselves in associations that coordinate research projects and organise conferences, the Asosiasi Tradisi Lisan (Assosciation for Oral Traditions) and the Masyarakat Pernaskahan Nusantara (The Indonesian Association for Nusantara Manuscripts) respectively.

Only in the last quarter of the 19th century printing became available on a large scale in Southeast Asia, not long afterwards followed by the technology to screen moving pictures that spawned the formation of cottage industries in the different colonial settlements in the region. Also radio and gramophones became increasingly popular in this period, to become part of an elite lifestyle but also to experience wider distribution through communal "listening sessions". The 1920s definitely seem to have been a pivotal decade for an extensive growth of political organisations and awareness of the people, truly an Age in Motion (Shiraishi 1990). This political empowerment went hand in hand with an acceleration of the textual production in the region when newly-founded periodicals and newspapers started to disseminate short or serialised tales, theatre troupes travelled the region to stage highly commercial shows together with innovative and more critical dramas, while small film and music industries created stardom that were the pride of the budding pre-nationalist societies. The two most brightly shining stars of this period were Miss Riboet, who toured Southeast Asia with her Orion Malay opera troupe, and Devi Dja who started with the competing Dardanella theatre group and in the late 1930s continued her career in Hollywood (see Cohen 2006, 2010).

The colonial government of the Netherlands East Indies greatly expanded its territory, authority, and bureaucracy during the decades around the turn of the 20th century, and a system of high colonialism with its so-called ethical policy encroached more and more upon the everyday lives of the colonised peoples. This policy entailed the infamous *mission civilisatrice*, which was complemented or partly substituted by "modernising missions" to enable the metropole to extend and enhance its domination over the colony and compensate for the negative economic standing on the world market by improving the exploitation and management of the natural resources of the colonies. Through a variety of education and training programmes, the Dutch authorities imposed European values and standards as the yard stick for the development of society in its colonies. Censorship and political control were designed to further make sure that the population would be introduced to modernity in a safe and peaceful way, but the genie of political emancipation had already escaped its confines and the people's demands for political rights and self-determination became stronger in the 1920s, only to increase further during the 1930s.

In 1908 Dutch authorities had installed a committee of popular literature that was designed to look after the production and distribution of indigenous texts in Latin script. The Advisor of Native Affairs, Godard

Arend Johannes Hazeu, initially presided over this committee but was soon replaced by Douwe Adolf Rinkes, who became the founding director of the autonomous Bureau of Popular Literature, better known as Balai Pustaka, in 1917 (Jedamksi 1992). In the first decades after its establishment, the Bureau gradually became to be considered one of the means to curb a surge of popular literature churned out by local press media, and mainly written by authors of Chinese or Eurasian descent. Their main topics of crime, romance, and occasionally social criticism were not deemed to foster the right development of the native spirit that would be in tandem with the government's educational policies. The discourse about the future of the colony and the readiness of its population to embrace western-based concepts of state and nationhood formed the backdrop against which presumed differences between popular and serious literature were brought forward and discussed. Indigenous writers became infused with an awareness of values in literary writings that could build the people's pride and shape a future nation's readership. The mission of modernisation had caught on and was propagated through texts produced and performed by western-educated intellectuals (see Maier, this volume).

In 1928 political activists selected Malay as the language to unite the future nation. The propagation of Malay throughout the archipelago of the future Indonesian state was intensified, but its distribution to new geographic regions and sociocultural domains seems to have made real progress only during the Japanese occupation when Dutch was abolished and Malay was modernised at an accelerating pace. After the Japanese surrender there seems to have been little doubt what language was to be used for the newly proclaimed nation, while the ensuing revolution and its imagery as being fought by a budding generation of angry young men and women charged it with enough emotion to become the people's language (Anderson 1990, 139ff). In the independent republic, language authorities started to implement linguistic developmentalism in an attempt to somehow balance the propagation of the national language with its highly modernised registers with the maintenance of local languages in order to preserve traditions vested in these "regional" or "ethnic" languages. It will not come as a surprise to note that the discourse on the modern, developing nation was carried out in the supra-ethnic register of Indonesian, thereby enhancing its reputation of being the only means for modern communication in the post-war independent Republic of Indonesia. The textual production of that period followed this general development and was ideologised to serve sociopolitical groups that became increasingly polarised in the course of the 1950s. In a rather simplistic way of representing the complex and often chaotic situation on

the ground (Lindsay 2012), three groups of artists and cultural workers are most commonly distinguished: a first group embracing global or universal values and opening up to the world (Gelanggang group), a second group who wanted to develop the nation by saving the people from poverty (LEKRA, Lembaga Kebudayaan Rakyat, Institute of People's Culture), and a third group of Muslim cultural activists striving to use their art for missionary purposes (LESBUMI, established in 1962). Of course, the reality was more complicated and a clear or strict distinction between different branches of the cultural production was non-existent, e.g. the most important film director of the 1950s, Usmar Ismail, was instrumental in the formulation of the first Cultural Manifesto of the Gelanggang group in 1950 (cf. Heinschke 1996). In the early 1950s he worked together with Basuki Resobowo, a well-known painter whom Usmar had asked to become art director in his newly established film company Perfini. A decade earlier, Basuki Rebowo had starred in the movie the "Laughing Mask" (*Kedok Ketawa*), and at Perfini he would design film sets as well as scripts, one of which was "Exalted Guest" (*Tamu Agung*, 1955), a faintly disguised satire about President Soekarno. He was a man of many talents who, at the end of the 1950s, would become a leading figure in the visual arts section of LEKRA.

The process of political and cultural polarisation peaked in the early 1960s when a group of writers issued a Manifes Kebudayaan (Cultural Manifesto) in protest of the dominating and censoring practices of LEKRA that was affiliated with the Indonesian communist party. In 1959 President Soekarno had taken full control of the government and increasingly turned to the PKI for support. The PKI was the third-biggest communist party of the world, after the Chinese and Russian parties, and had developed its powerbase in the cities as well as in rural areas with its Indonesian Peasant Organisation (Barisan Tani Indonesia, BTI), demanding that land reform and crop-sharing laws should be more rigorously implemented, so that the conflict with the newly-established state of Malaysia, which began in early 1963, would be successful (cf. Mortimer 2006, 269). In 1964 BTI launched its aggressive campaign of one-sided actions (*aksi sepihak*) to evict landlords from their lands and divide the latter among small tenants who were members of the organisation, which increasingly led to violent clashes in the countryside. The same year LEKRA and its subsidiary organisations, such as the Indonesian Music Body (Lembaga Musik Indonesia, LMI), continued their pressure on the President to purify Indonesian cultural life from capitalist and imperialist influences, which resulted in the infamous bans on the distribution of Western pop music referred to as *ngak ngik nguk* by Soekarno (Rhoma 2012) and on the

import of American feature movies that in turn led to the shutdown of many movie theatres (Said 1991, 69-75).

In retrospect, it seems logical that the intensifying polarisation of Indonesian society would lead to an inevitable detonation, which was triggered by the actions of the so-called 30 September Movement (Gerakan 30 September, G30S) in 1965. Although the actual motivation for the attempted coup by members of the Movement and the counter actions under the command of Major-General Soeharto will be forever unclear, due to the death of the key agents and the obliteration of a great deal of the historical documents, the tragic events as such are clear enough and have had a sweeping impact on the course of Indonesian history. In the night of 30 September 1965 a few leading communist figures in cooperation with a few army units abducted and killed seven top-ranking officers of the Indonesian army under suspicion of planning a coup themselves a few days later. Immediately army units came into action and the badly organised initial coup was put down within 24 hours. In the following months right-wing forces tried to purge the Indonesian society of all communist and left-wing elements by eradicating the members of the PKI and its subsidiary organisations through incarceration, exile, and murder. The estimated number of victims of the ensuing mass killings is about half a million people (cf. Cribb 1991, Roosa 2006). A staggering President Soekarno eventually relinquished state power to Soeharto on 11 March 1966, and immediately the new man in charge officially banned PKI, rounded up state ministers in the cabinet, and started to purge the army ranks and political bodies of elements sympathetic to Soekarno's left-wing inclinations. The economic crisis Indonesia had been experiencing over the previous years was one of the main concerns for the New Order regime that started arranging with foreign creditors to pay off its large debts and opening up the country for western investors to start new enterprises (accumulating bigger debts than before in the wake). The regime also gave free reign to army-run businesses, such as the Logistics Body BULOG and Pertamina oil company, monopolising the distribution of basic necessities of food and fuel, to further expand their operations and dominate the economy, which improved the state's economy while at the same time impoverishing its population.

Corruption became increasingly rampant, and student organisations that initially had supported the establishment of the new regime increasingly turned against it during the following decade. The government clamped down on political and cultural freedom, arguing that it was a hazard for stability and peace that were considered a prerequisite for an economically healthy nation. The regime designed policies for a top-down development

of economic and social fields, with Jakarta as its all-powerful centre and reconfigured a national culture that consisted of a selection of regional art forms put on a national stage and separated from its socio-religious context. Formal and structured indoctrination started when the authorities implemented their plans to make Indonesian citizens into loyal followers of the Pancasila state ideology. A special programme was introduced in 1978 that involved compulsory courses with examinations on all levels of the educational system and all government and army services. It was through these often scorned courses and seminars and the national history classes at school that the regime tried to homogenise the society and distribute an extremely one-sided and otherwise simplified view of the national history. This official history displayed the Indonesian armed forces as liberators of the nation, as they had defeated the colonial overlords in the struggle for independence or Revolution (1945-49) and the demonic forces of communism two decades later.

Further policies entailed that the public sphere was thoroughly depoliticised by reducing the role and number of political parties, thereby securing the central role of the government party GOLKAR, banning any political activities of students' and any other organisations, strictly censoring mass media, and severely limiting the freedom of arts. Left-wing cultural activists had been killed or imprisoned, and the remaining authors, filmmakers, playwrights, and other creative thinkers, were either co-opted by the government, had shifted to safer jobs that could earn them a living, or struggled further to make ends meet and try to encode their works with more subtle criticism that would not be immediately detected by the censorship boards. In literary writing and stage performances a lasting tendency towards surrealist and absurdist texts is apparent as having originated after the massacres of the mid-1960s. Works by Putu Wijaya, Danarto, Sutardji Calzoum Bachri, and also later Seno Gumira Ajidarma and Taufik Ikram Jamil are frequently set in a world that denies reality, while some works by Mangunwijaya, Kuntowijoyo, Putu Wijaya, and, more recently, Nukila Amal and Eka Kurniawan make use of a more magical realistic setting in which traditional characters can be seen as representing and commenting upon contemporary situations. However, realism remained the dominating narrative style throughout the period in which modern expressions were produced in Indonesia. The internationally well-known author Pramoedya Ananta Toer applied this style throughout his career, starting in the late 1940s. Being one of the top officials of LEKRA, he was imprisoned in 1965 and exiled to the island of Buru in the Moluccas, where he continued to compile and reconstruct stories from his memory which, for want of writing materials, he delivered

to his fellow exiles by word of mouth. Only at the end of his period in exile was he able to write those stories down that he revised, elaborated and edited into the four volumes of his famous "Buru Quartet" and the "Girl from the coast" (*Gadis Pantai*) in the early 1980s. The well-known poet and playwright Rendra is another cultural activist who continued to voice his critical views on the regime he encoded into his works. He paid dearly in the form of incarceration and being banned from performing. Many of Rendra's poems and plays were written in the context of students' protest and broached social ills and abuses wreaked by Soeharto with his family and cronies.

The authoritarian and technocrat regime focussed all its policies around the continuation of its power and wealth, using the concept of *pembangunan* (construction, development) as a mantra that everyone should yield to and work for. The complex of cultural performance and artefacts, which in the period immediately after independence had been at the heart of the building of the nation (Lindsay 2012, 6), was demoted to become an auxiliary to represent the nation abroad, attract foreign tourists and occupy some domestic recreational spaces, rather than function as an expression of the people's psyche or enhance emotional attachment to the nation. As in many other fields of activity, Jakarta was made into the uncontested centre for the arts, where national institutions oversaw cultural spaces such as the Taman Ismail Marzuki, a cultural centre that was established in 1968 and funded by the local government. The town grew into a megacity where official permits for shows and publications had to be requested and "blessings" in the form of advice (*pengarahan*) from some high official or a nod from a senior member of one of the central art organisations could be obtained; without these forms of approval local cultural expressions would stand little chance of ever going beyond their local confines. As a consequence authors, dancers, stage groups, journalists, poets, et cetera flocked to the city of Jakarta, together with millions of other entrepreneurs and wanderers.

In the 1990s, when the New Order regime showed signs of slackening the reins of their hold over the public sphere, the infrastructure of the cultural world was by and large already in the hands of a few multinational businesses that incorporated media branches as one of the fields of their activities. When in 1988 the Indonesian government allowed commercial television companies to start broadcasting, Soeharto's sons and his daughter, Tutut, viewed this new enterprise as a lucrative expansion of their huge business empires (cf. Sen and Hill 2000, 111-13). In the publishing sector the Kompas Gramedia group and the Tempo group came to control the market of newspapers, magazines and book publishing, and

recently they have also added television and radio stations to their already broad array of activities (cf. Haryanto 2011). The accumulation of cultural media in the hands of a few tycoons that started under Soeharto's reign has continued after he was forced to step down, but state censorship was lifted and a new era of feverish democratisation kicked in. *Reformasi* dawned, expectations and hope galore. However, despite all initial beliefs and anticipations that now the old regime had vanished, old structures soon would be reformed, it would take until the middle of the following decade, after devastating natural disasters had wrecked parts of Aceh and Central Java and took hundreds of thousands of casualties, that a slow democratisation process seems to bear fruit. Furthermore, the election of President Joko Widodo in 2014 seems to have returned hope to many Indonesian hearts.

Probably the most conspicuous characteristic that has marked the public sphere in all its aspects of sociopolitical and cultural activities since the end of the New Order regime is the increasing visibility of Islam. Already in the initial stage of Soeharto's reign, Islam became a slightly more apparent part of the public sphere, particularly after the oil boom of the early 1970s and the Iranian revolution of 1979 had changed Islam's prominence on a world stage. In the 1980s the government further institutionalised Islam in the educational system and in social life, while the organisation of Muslim intellectuals (Ikatan Cendekiawan Muslim Se-Indonesia, ICMI), established in 1990 by later President Habibie, has had far-reaching influence and impact on the political and bureaucratic system. Since the power change of 1998 Islam has increasingly permeated social life, and although officially a religiously pluralist society, nationalist and especially regional politics have gravitated towards stricter adherence to Islamic tenets, with several Islamic organisations and pressure groups striving for even stricter rules to regulate the social life of Indonesian citizens. Similar attempts to persuade the vast Islamic majority of the population to follow a more pious lifestyle is ubiquitous in popular cultural expressions such as religious soap series (*sinetron*), reality shows featuring competitions to become the best *imam* or the youngest prodigious child to memorise the text of the Qur'an on television, while hundreds of didactic stories are churned out in cheaply produced books, some of which have made it into mainstream blockbuster movies as well. In short, many cultural workers have made Islam an important part of their cultural identity that they express and shape through their works, which increasingly forge a more general cultural identity of the nation.

The second prominent creative force of the formation of the cultural realm that has come to the fore during the past few decades is the

increasing importance and number of female cultural activists who have become leading members of Indonesian society. After the organisations striving for women empowerment had considerable success during the reign of President Soekarno, the New Order regime turned back the clock by banning organisations such as *Gerwani* (*Gerakan Wanita*, a left-wing women's emancipation movement) and reverting the official state's imagery of women into merely the supporters of their husbands and mothers of their children. After increasing national and international pressure on the regime after widely publicised crimes, such as the brutal murder of the factory worker Marsinah in 1993, this imagery became increasingly contested by political activists such as Dita Indah Sari and Rotua Valentina Sagala, theatre directors and social activists such as Ratna Sarumpaet, filmmakers such as Mira Lesmana, journalists and novelists such as Ayu Utami, and many others. Ayu's novel *Saman* can safely be considered one of the important factors that changed and innovated the cultural paradigm of Indonesia in the new millennium. The novel relates the story of the renegade priest Saman who becomes a social activist defending the rights of plantation workers in south Sumatra. Assisted by four, very liberal-minded women, he eventually succeeds in fleeing abroad before the security services are able to capture him. This tale, published in the advent of the power shift of 1998, pioneered a host of other novels and works created by women in the excitement of entering a new era of political and cultural freedom. Unsurprisingly, the novel also triggered vehement criticism from conservative Muslim quarters and remnants of the old regime, who considered the open sexuality and active political roles of its female characters unbecoming or even "unnatural" for Indonesian women. Even though the initial enthusiasm and newly attained freedom of the *Reformasi* period soon drifted towards disillusionment, female cultural activists have become a permanent characteristic of the cultural world, exploring the freedom that had been achieved after the change of power.

Traditions redirecting the present

This volume is the result of a conference organised by staff members of the departments of Southeast Asian Studies of the Universities of Frankfurt, Hamburg, and Cologne in October 2015 on the eve of the largest trade fair for books in Frankfurt with Indonesia being the guest of honour. In the preliminary outline and plans for this project we thought of charting the main ideas about modern Indonesian literature since independence and give a survey of the main studies and works of

Indonesia's cultural production of the last 70 years. As a matter of course, these plans turned out to be a little too ambitious, and therefore we soon decided upon taking stock of what was considered important in Indonesian culture in the year 2015, with the official Indonesian contribution to the book fair in Frankfurt as an important indication of what cultural authorities of Indonesia considered important.

Presenting itself as the biggest archipelagic state of the world under the motto of "17,000 Islands of Imagination", the Indonesian national committee presented a host of literary and other artistic events at the special pavilion designed in style as seven interconnected islands dedicated to different aspects of its culture: manuscripts, comics, cooking, book display, interviews, and performances, digital learning, and oral performances. Many more events took place in other venues within the book fair's enormous premises and also in other institutions in Frankfurt, Bonn, Berlin, and some other German cities. The committee managed to cleverly compensate for a lack of newly translated Indonesian books into German–an absolute prerequisite for the German book fair–with numerous performances by authors, artists, puppeteers, musicians, dancers, filmmakers, theatre groups, and other cultural performers. The two major topics of the articles compiled in this volume–the nation's trauma after the horrific events in the context of the 1965 political turmoil and the impact of globalisation on cultural productions–form a fair representation of the most important trends in Indonesia's artistic expressions in recent years.

Henk Maier's opening piece "Indonesian Literature–A Double History" sets off this volume with an overview of modern Indonesian literature by tracing and playing with the different Indonesian terminologies for the concept of literary writing. Maier explores important strands in the literary history of Indonesia by discussing a number of key figures responsible for the textual production and literary criticism in Indonesian who selected and emphasised certain trends of writing while side-lining others, thereby clearly enhancing efforts to make Jakarta into the political and cultural centre of the nation after independence was reached. One of the most obvious victims of these canonising practices was trashy reading materials churned out by the hundreds of thousands at ubiquitous small print-shops and sold by the kilo on markets or distribution centres such as Pasar Senen in Jakarta. Authors such as Mira W., Fredy S., Ashadi Siregar, Eddy D. Iskandar, Teguh Esha, Titiek WS., and many other producers of a *sastra pop* genre, which translates into "popular literature", only now become a little better appreciated since academics have parted with the view that only "high" literature would be worthy of scholarly inquiry. This genre encompasses the popular stories

from the turn of the 20th century predominantly produced by people of Chinese-Malay or Indo-European origin, to the romances of the 1930s and 1950s produced in and distributed from urban centres such as Bukittinggi, Medan, Makassar, Singapore, to name a few, to the Islamic didactic stories produced by large publishers, comics, and cosmopolitan chick lit or *metropop* of the main Indonesian publisher, the Kompas Gramedia group.[1] Maier ends his thoughtful essay with suggesting that the very idea of literature, or Indonesian *kesusasteraan*, has changed from a writer and literary critics driven or controlled collection of apposite stories into a market of products that is determined by buyers and readers.

Shards of memory: Representations of 1965 and its consequences

The first part of the book furthermore comprises five chapters that all deal with reflections on the traumatic experiences of the Indonesian nation caused by a failed coup on the eve of October 1, 1965. Especially since 1998, when Soeharto was forced to step down, there has been a steady flow of fictionalised and factual ego-documents that has triggered much scholarly attention in recent years, particularly with regard to female victims once active in the emancipatory Gerwani organisation.[2] In more general theoretical terms, this topic connects to the field of memory studies, which in the past decades has made an academic comeback based on the works of Pierre Nora as well as Jan and Aleida Assman. Recent years have witnessed the publication of stimulating works by scholars such as Chiara de Cesari, Ann Rigney, and Astrid Erll.[3] The focus of these studies is how certain, often traumatic, events are represented in narratives in a variety of media that are periodically renewed, changed, rehearsed, repeated, performed, remediated, et cetera, in order to become or stay part of the collective memory of a certain group of people. As may be expected, elements in a nation's society have a certain interest that a particular narrative will continue to stay in the core of this collective memory and therefore will try to manipulate the maintenance of the so-called "site of memory". Individual memories and narratives have little chance to enter into this site of memory if no political clout is generated to mobilise certain powers. Those in power will like to stay in power and are

[1] See Diah Arimbi's contribution in this volume.

[2] Reference is made here to studies by Saskia Wieringa (2010, 2011), Kate McGregor and Vannessa Hearman (2007), Kate McGregor (2012), Vanessa Hearman (2012), and Anett Keller (2015).

[3] Please refer to de Cesari and Rigney 2014, Erll and Rigney 2009.

very reluctant to share with other parties. As time passes, a younger generation who has not experienced the events themselves but heard about it through the media as well as from the members of the older generation will possibly start questioning the version that dominates the collective memory because new power relations are established, new information is unearthed, or other possible factors that trigger change in the configuration of the site of memory.

The 1965 traumatic experiences are no exception from this general picture, and in the first contribution Pam Allen discusses two recent novels by the Indonesian authors Laksmi Pamuntjak (*Amba*, 2012) and Leila Chudori (*Pulang*, 2012) through the lens of post-memory, which refers to memories and narratives produced and experienced by members of generations who have not lived through the events that are commemorated. Allen particularly looks into how these authors use the state of exile to explore the meanings of home, love, and betrayal. Both novels have a love relation at their core, and their main protagonists have places where they were exiled to: the prison island of Buru in *Amba* and Paris in *Pulang*. This second novel—and especially its geographical and historical setting—is also the topic of Henri Chambert-Loir's chapter. Chambert-Loir gives a critical assessment of how in Chudori's *Pulang* the place of exile is romanticised to an extent that it has little connection with the historical place of Paris, especially when it refers to the revolutionary time of the 1960s that is used as the setting for a first encounter of the main Indonesian protagonist with his future French wife. He also problematises the fictionalisation of the historical characters of exiled Indonesian intellectuals, which is too distanced from their real lives and ideas the author examined and used to shape the fictional characters of the novel.

Jan van der Putten explores the most frequently watched movie of the Indonesian national cinema, *Treachery of the 30th of September Movement*, which was compulsory viewing for a generation of Indonesian citizens, from primary school to university students, government civil servants as well as military personnel. The chapter discusses how this film forms one of the cornerstones of the site of memory that was constructed and maintained by the New Order authorities in close connection with the educational system and a special programme for indoctrination. The film is further analysed from a filmic point of view in connection with Astrid Erll's notions of remediation and premediation (Erll 2009), while also the issue of the enhancement of the film's authenticity is discussed with reference to Sara Jones's work on East German Stasi documents (2014). As the last part of the chapter a concise comparison with the cinematographic work of Joshua Oppenheimer is given, where it is argued that his movies

have the potential to shake Indonesians out of a stupor of suspended disbelief caused by the grand partisan narrative the New Order regime constructed and implanted in the minds of millions of its citizens.

In the next chapter Monika Arnez deals with Ahmad Tohari's trilogy *The Dancer of Paruk Village*, which features a traditional female dancer in a small village on Java's south coast during the period of political and military upheaval as a consequence of the 1965 takeover, while focusing on the film *The Dancer* that was based on the novels and released in 2011. Using anthropological works by Spiller (2010) and Wessing (1999), she analyses how the novel and film depict the tradition of eroticism in dance performances that are immediately connected with fertility rites in the Javanese countryside. Arnez also explores the visualisation of emotions that is used in the movie to express the traumatic experiences depicted in the narrative. Rather than silencing and thereby perpetuating the trauma, the director has tried to show the feelings of somewhat naive traditional village dwellers under attack of modern, left-wing political forces that not even reformist Islamic power could quell.

The last chapter in this section of the book is by Mikihiro Moriyama who revisits Ajip Rosidi's book *Child of the Homeland,* published in 1985. The book has distinct autobiographical characteristics in depicting how a young Sundanese artist moves to Jakarta in the early 1950s to carve out a life for himself in the volatile political and cultural capital of a nation in turmoil. However, Moriyama is not that interested in the possible historical roots of the novel, although these are not fully discarded. Instead, he rather zooms in at a few other themes that are also clearly recognisable in the novel, such as the propagation of religion, national politics during the Soekarno and Soeharto regimes, and ethnic and social issues that played at the time the novel is set.

Instances of globalisation: Managing the heritage in local and global trajectories

The second part of the book comprises another five chapters containing essays about how forces of globalisation have impacted upon the local and linguistically surprisingly homogeneous cultural productions of Indonesia. Inspired by the seemingly contradictory terms of "cosmopolitan patriotism" (Appiah 1997) and "rooted cosmopolitanism" (Kymlicka and Walker 2012), Michael Bodden lays out the premises of this section about how Indonesian modern authors and theatre makers display cosmopolitan identities to frame their narratives replete with local traditional images and experiences. In intriguing ways these authors negotiate between the national level—which

they principally identify with by using Indonesian, the local plane through myths and experiences displayed in their texts—and a global plane by imagining themselves as part of and on a par with a universal human culture. To argue and explore these themes, Bodden analyses Pramoedya Ananta Toer's 'Buru' tetralogy (1980-88), Mangunwijaya's *Burung-Burung Rantau* (Migratory Birds, 1992), and Ayu Utami's *Bilangan Fu* (The Number Zero, 2008), which all demonstrate their own divergent forms of rooted cosmopolitanism.

After a concise recapitulation of the history of modern Indonesian national theatre that initially was considered western and elitist, and after explaining that during the New Order regime theatre makers increasingly explored local traditions to circumvent censorship, Barbara Hatley's article continues by discussing performances of three Javanese theatre companies. After Soeharto's dismissal, theatre practitioners needed to readjust to the changed sociopolitical climate, which had become less authoritarian and was characterised by regional autonomy that foregrounded and stimulated local culture and identity (see also Hatley with Hough 2015). As a consequence, new forms of performances emerged, mobilising neighbourhood communities and focusing on local stories and places, though very much in conversation with global cultures. These activities resulted in hybrid forms such as street parades reclaiming public spaces in which traditional hobby-horse trance dances are mixed with hip-hop-style musical performances, celebrating an eclectic admixture of the local and the global.

In the next chapter Andy Fuller discusses the works of two prolific authors who have built substantive oeuvres in the past few decades: Seno Gumira Ajidarma and Afrizal Malna. Fuller discusses the ways in which these authors negotiate the ever problematic relationship with city life in Jakarta, which is considered not only a megacity populated by tens of millions of inhabitants but also a cultural entity constituted by the writings of these two authors and their precursors. The article focusses on Seno's ironical *Cosmopolitan Fart* (*Kentut Kosmopolitan*), which explores the ways Jakartans deploy to get by when enduring the often harsh living conditions found in the city. Seno uses the city as a site for intellectual and theoretical investigation, exploring ideas of western postmodern thinkers such as Barthes, Althusser and Appadurai in his urban explorations. The relationship of the poet, playwright, and essayist Afrizal with Jakarta is much more problematic. He considers Jakarta a site of expectation, novelty, and ambition, but represents it through images of student riots in 1974 and 1998, which gravely affected his life as a poet. His poems draw on a combination of montage and surrealism in which the language gives a

highly fragmented and extremely ambivalent view on modern Indonesian life in the city.

The authors Diah Arimbi discusses in chapter 10 have a much less ambivalent and more positive view of life in the big city of Jakarta. Clearly belonging to a body of literature that is meant to entertain readers rather than trouble them by depicting the social ills of modern city life, the *metropop* novels Diah examines predominantly deal with women who have successful careers and relational problems or take issue with, and by and large abide by, the norms of the patriarchal Indonesian society. Still, it is Diah's contention that the authors of these novels also carve out a cosmopolitan identity by using a mixture of colloquial and standard Indonesian peppered with English words. This last feature is agonisingly obvious in the titles of the novels, which frequently make use of common English expressions with a pinch of Southeast Asian hybridisation. These novels and their authors are intimately connected with social media, which in the case of one novel are used as the medium and format to present the story.

The globalised world is very much part of modern Indonesian imaginations that are constituted in cultural productions. Although it may seem that connecting to a more global discourse outside Indonesia is a rather modern phenomenon, it may be argued that for a very long time the whole cultural configuration of maritime Southeast Asia has been characterised by the localisation of outside cultural and societal traditions and practices. One very conspicuous and highly influential tradition introduced in the region is Islam, which also was briefly mentioned by Michael Bodden as providing a source for another form of cosmopolitan identity in modern Indonesian productions, by perceiving Indonesian Islamic practices as flawed as compared to a religious centre while at the same time being very much embedded in Indonesian culture, as observed in El-Shirazy's best-selling novel *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* (Verses of Love). In the last chapter of this book Edwin Wieringa analyses the most salient features of a number of poems by one of the best known Indonesian poets who has foregrounded a clear Islamic identity during his poetic career of the past 50 years: Taufiq Ismail. Wieringa elucidates that in complete agreement with his religious moralistic and didactic mission, Taufiq raises his poetic voice against the ills he detects among the people of his beloved Indonesia, when it comes to social behaviour, politics, or culture. The poems were selected from the three-volume bilingual edition of his complete poetical oeuvre that was published in 2014 with translations by the late Amin Sweeney who candidly mentioned in the introduction that he was not always that favourably disposed towards the content of some of

the poems. Rather than focusing on those of Taufiq's poems that contain social criticism, Wieringa thoughtfully and thoroughly explores the meanings of some of his more religious and philosophical poetry which, as he rightfully acclaims, is one of the most prominent characteristics of Southeast Asian cultural productions from days of yore up to the present day.

Bibliography

Anderson, Benedict R.O'G. 1990. *Language and Power: Exploring Political Cultures in Indonesia*. Jakarta/Kuala Lumpur: Equinox Publishing.

Appiah, Kwame Anthony. 1997. "Cosmopolitan Patriots." *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 23 (3), Front Lines/Border Posts: 617-39.

Cohen, Matthew Isaac. 2006. *The Komedie Stamboel: Popular Theatre in Colonial Indonesia, 1891-1903*. Athens: Ohio University Press.

—. 2010. *Performing Otherness: Java and Bali on International Stages, 1905-1952*. Basingstoke/New York: Palgrave MacMillan.

Cribb, Robert. 1991. *The Indonesian Killings 1965-1966: Studies from Java and Bali*. Clayton: Centre of Southeast Asian Studies, Monash University.

De Cesare, Chiara and Ann Rigney. (eds) 2014. *Transnational Memory: Circulation, Articulation, Scales*. Berlin: de Gruyter.

Erll, Astrid. 2009. "Remembering across Time, Space, and Cultures: Premediation, Remediation and the "Indian Mutinity." In *Mediation, Remediation and the Dynamics of Cultural Memory*, edited by Astrid Erll and Ann Rigney, pp. 109-38. Berlin/New York: de Gruyter.

Erll, Astrid and Ann Rigney. 2009. *Mediation, Remediation, and the Dynamics of Cultural Memory*. Berlin/New York: de Gruyter.

Haryanto, Ignatius, 2011. "Media Ownership and Its Implications for Journalists and Journalism in Indonesia." In *Politics and the Media in Twenty-first Century Indonesia: Decade of Democracy*, edited by Krishna Sen and David T. Hill, pp. 104-18. London: Routledge.

Hatley, Barbara with Brett Hough. 2015. *Performing Contemporary Indonesia: Celebrating Identity, Constructing Community*. Leiden/Boston: Brill.

Hearman, V. 2012. "South Blitar and the PKI Bases: Refuge, Resistance and Repression." In *The Contours of Mass Violence in Indonesia (1965-68)*, edited by Douglas Kammen and Katharine McGregor, pp. 182-207. Singapore: NUS Press.

Heinschke, Martina. 1996. "Between GELANGGANG and LEKRA: Pramoedya's Developing Career." *Indonesia* 61: 145-69.

Jedamski, Doris. 1992. "Balai Pustaka–A Colonial Wolf in Sheep's Clothing." *Archipel* 44: 23-46.

Jones, Sara. 2014. *The Media of Testimony: Remembering the East German Stasi in the Berlin Republic*. Houndsmills: Palgrave Macmillan.

Keller, Anett. (ed) 2015. *Indonesien 1965 ff. Die Gegenwart eines Massenmordes: Ein politisches Lesebuch*. [Hrsg. für die Südostasien-Informationsstelle.] Berlin: Regiospectra Verlag.

Kymlicka, Will and Kathryn Walker. 2012. "Rooted Cosmopolitanism: Canada and the World." In *Rooted Cosmopolitanism: Canada and the World*, edited by Will Kymlicka and Kathryn Walker, pp. 1-27. Vancouver: UBC Press.

Lindsay, Jennifer. 2011. "Heirs to World Culture 1950-1965, An Introduction." In *Heirs to World Culture: Being Indonesian, 1950-1965*, edited by Jennifer Lindsay and Maya H.T. Liem, pp. 1-27. Leiden: KITLV Press.

McGregor, Kate. 2012. "Mass Graves and Memories of the 1965 Indonesian Killings." In *The Contours of Mass Violence in Indonesia (1965-68)*, edited by Douglas Kammen and Katharine McGregor, pp. 234-62. Singapore: NUS Press.

McGregor, Kate and Vannessa Hearman. 2007. "Challenges of Political Rehabilitation in Post-New Order Indonesia: The Case of Gerwani (the Indonesian Women's Movement)." *South East Asia Research*, Vol. 15 (3): 355-84.

Mortimer, Rex. 2006. *Indonesian Communism under Sukarno: Between Ideology and Politics, 1959-1965*. Singapore: Equinox Publishing.

Rhoma Dwi Aria Yuliantri. 2012. "LEKRA and Ensembles: Tracing the Indonesian Musical Stage." In *Heirs to World Culture: Being Indonesian, 1950-1965*, edited by Jennifer Lindsay and Maya H.T. Liem, pp. 421-52. Leiden: KITLV Press.

Roosa, John. 2006. *Pretext for Mass Murder: The September 30th Movement and Suharto's Coup D'État in Indonesia*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

Said, Salim. 1991. *Shadows on the Silver Screen: A Social History of Indonesian Film*. Jakarta: Lontar Foundation.

Sen, Krishna and David T. Hill. 2000. *Media, Culture, and Politics in Indonesia*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press.

Shiraishi, Takashi. 1990. *An Age in Motion: Popular Radicalism in Java, 1912-1926*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Spiller, Henry. 2010. *Erotic Triangles: Sundanese Dance and Masculinity in West Java*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Wessing, Robert. 1999. "A Dance of Life: The Seblang of Banyuwangi, Indonesia." *Bijdragen tot de taal-, land- en volkenkunde*, Performing Arts in Southeast Asia 155 (4): 644-82.

Wieringa, S. 2010. *Penghancuran Gerakan Perempuan: Politik Seksual di Indonesia Pascakejatuhan PKI* [The Destruction of the Indonesian Women's Movement: Sexual Politics in Indonesia after the Fall of the PKI], Yogyakarta: Galangpresss.

Wieringa, Saskia Eleonora. 2011. "Sexual Slander and the 1965/66 Mass Killings in Indonesia: Political and Methodological Considerations." *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 41 (4): 544-65.

CHAPTER ONE

INDONESIAN LITERATURE: A DOUBLE HISTORY

HENK MAIER

Kesoesasteraan was a word that emerged in conversations and publications in Batavia, administrative centre of the Dutch Indies, in the early 1930s. And before long, it was appropriated by local literati, Dutch-trained, tried and tested in European forms of thinking and very much aware of the fragile force of their own ways of life; involved they were in the activities of the colonial administration-sponsored publishing house of Balai Poestaka and eager to develop the ideas about a "new literature" explored by Poedjangga Baroe, a little magazine founded in 1933. *Kesoesasteraan*. In Malay conversations it was used to refer to *literatuur*, a Dutch term that primarily stood for "artful kind of writing", or "fiction" perhaps. And discussions about the question of which writings should be included in *kesoesasteraan* were to be as lively as the dialogues about their relevance in the sociocultural context of the Dutch Indies and, later, Indonesia. By the early 1940s–the wonders of print, mail services, and radio–some authors had become actively familiar with *kesoesasteraan,* and they explored the reach of the word in their writings and performances. Others, however, ignored it, unwilling or unable to join the conversations among this small crowd of literati centred in Batavia, Dutch-oriented, alienated from the people. Why would the flood of printed tales rolling over the islands, entertaining readers, showing new possibilities in living life, need such a lofty name? Why not simply stick to the term *roman* and keep on writing new ones, inspiring critical thinking among their readers? What would readers gain from using this new word? And what to say of the murmurings of Muslim teachers who were already very critical of *roman* anyway? And how did the language used by these intellectuals, based in Batavia, relate to the world of local farmers, workers, traders and teachers? Writers in the Indies may have shared the dream of an independent nation, yet most of them were silently or publicly

wondering what the role of their work might be in this so-called *kesoesasteraan*, intimidating and elitist as the word sounded.

Kesoesasteraan was a novel word. A grandiose word. A grandiloquent word. *Kesoesasteraan* carried echoes of other words. Echoes of *sastera* or *sastra* most of all, of course, a word that can be found in older Malay texts with reference to "sacred scriptures", "books of divination". To books, that is, which are consulted by rulers and courtiers to make sense of the future, as yet unknown and unexperienced by humans–and at school the writers around Poedjangga Baroe must have been told that this older Malay word *sastera* refers to the Sanskrit term *shastera*, "rules, writing about philosophical matters": writing the future acts on rules. *Kesoesasteraan* also carried echoes of *poestaka*, "ancestral books and sayings", the word that was used by the publishing house of Balai Poestaka, whose Malay novels helped shape the basis of *kesoesasteraan*, the roots of the tree of literary writing, so to speak. And echoes of *luh mahfuz*, the book in which, according to Muslim teachings, past, present and future of humans are laid out. And then, there is the word *literatuur,* a term that was used for certain kinds of texts not only by Dutch-speaking intellectuals in the Dutch Indies, but also by some Malay writers who, aware of their Chinese ancestry, used it to refer to their own artful texts, which presented their readers with a wide variety of pictures and images of the multi-cultural colonial world in which they lived.

Kesoesasteraan is a monumental term. A brilliant term. The word *sastera*–evocation of tradition, reminder of the future–is embellished with Sanskrit *soe*, a word that refers to "good" and "beautiful" at same time, and that embellishment seems to give *sastera* an intriguing ambivalence: not every form of writing, no matter how sacred and futuristic, is necessarily good and beautiful at the same time. And not all "good and beautiful" writing is necessarily "literatuur" as Dutch dictionaries must have told local readers in the Indies: "literatuur" refers to "the written works of art in a particular language", but also to "all the writings in a particular language". That looks like a double-edged definition, and intellectuals in the 1930s, leaning on their Dutch education and creating novel Malay words and concepts on the waves of nationalistic fervour, may have thought that the addition of *soe* would neutralise "literatuur"'s ambivalence. But then, it creates another ambivalence that they, in turn, may have thought to balance by foregrounding contrastive notions of, respectively, "artful" and "relevant" over connotations of "beautiful" and "good". And then, around this *soesastera* another affix is added: the circumfix ke-an is supposed to give abstraction, generalisation and comprehension to *sastera* and *soesastera* alike. *Ke-soe-sastera-an*, in