

**NATIONAL LITERATURE,
REGIONAL MANIFESTATIONS**

CONTEMPORARY INDONESIAN LANGUAGE
POETRY FROM WEST JAVA

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PREFACE

This thesis has its genesis in a number of sources. Although I had undertaken postgraduate research in the 1980s on the history of family and inheritance law in West Java, I had not taken a close interest in the development of literature in Indonesia. Allied with my developing general interest in the 1990s in poetry and literature, although not specifically Indonesian language literature, it was the advent of the internet revolution -- for myself in early 2001 -- that convinced me that there was a great deal occurring in Indonesian literature that was accessible through internet press as well as book publications. My interests in writing original poetry in English, and later in Indonesian, led me to the conclusion that I should deepen my knowledge and appreciation of modern Indonesian literature, particularly poetry. Given my earlier research and visits to West Java it also seemed natural that I should focus on literary developments in that province. The result has been the current thesis which was completed over the period 2002 to 2006.

As my Bibliography indicates I have relied primarily on Indonesian and English language book publications as sources for material. However, a considerable amount of material is derived from the Indonesian language press, primarily in internet but also printed form, over the period 2001 to 2006. In particular, the Bandung mass media publication *Pikiran Rakyat* has been important as a source of material about developments in poetry writing in West Java. The current thesis is unusual in the field of research into contemporary Indonesian literature in that it has tried to take account of literary material appearing in the press. This approach is not without its pitfalls, but I believe in the case of the intersection of the local and regional with the global, it is an approach that will be seen to be increasingly fruitful as a 'meeting point', between the oral and printed cultures of a geographical area.

The poems that appear in this thesis are to be found in publications by the authors or in anthologies that are in the public domain. No poems have been used that have not been published at least in Indonesian mass media. More often than not they represent key works by the poets concerned that have found publication in book or anthology form many times over. In so far as the English translations of these poems is concerned, unless specifically acknowledged as derived from earlier versions by others, these translations represent new or first translations, by myself. If other versions existed, I was not aware of them, and hence could not take into account the insights they may contain. In some cases, which are acknowledged in the thesis, I have noted previous translations by other literary translators and where I felt they needed to be altered, I have done so. The result is a new translation of a poem, where the work of the previous translator is acknowledged. In part, this reflects my own beliefs about the dialectic nature of literary translations. Each new translator will see new meaning or insights that all others, including myself, may not have appreciated or which can be expressed more clearly and accurately in English.

In so far as stylistic conventions are concerned, I followed my sense of what seemed most appropriate in each case. In referring to the works by literary critics, I have generally referred to them in the thesis by their full name or by their surnames, where the shortened version of the name is appropriate. However, where I refer to the poets themselves, I have generally used their full name or their first names, where a shortened version of the name is appropriate. I believe this follows the convention of current academic discourse when referring to poets about their works.

Regarding the references I make in the text to the various literary festivals or gatherings of poets. I have decided to use the original names in Indonesian in

italicized form rather than attempt an English gloss, even though a full explanation in English of developments and the meaning in English is given. In part, this has occurred because of the nature and meaning of the Indonesian words used. For example, the words *muktamar* or *cakrawala* have no direct generally accepted equivalents in English. While some of the Indonesian words used come close to direct English equivalents it seemed best to opt for consistency in the text at this point in time.

Terms in English for religious or spiritual concepts derived from the Indonesian can also be quite fraught with difficulty in getting the balance right in this respect too. The stance taken in this thesis is the expectation that some words such as *santri* or *pesantren* are now readily known in that form and I have not italicized these kinds of words in the text. In so far as the term *Sufi* is concerned, I have adopted the convention of generally using the term capitalized but not italicized, in English. This follows current general usage in English, although there are times in the text when I have felt that use of the lower case gets closer to the nuance that appears in much Indonesian writing and essays on the theme. However, for consistency's sake I have followed the general convention in English usage.

Finally, this thesis has been written with an eye to the future. We need to deepen our knowledge of the literary and cultural worlds of those with whom we share our Asian-Pacific future. If the thesis can make a useful contribution in this direction it will be an encouraging outcome for all of us.

