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Some preliminary remarks on the antecedents of modern Indonesian literature

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SOME PRELIMINARY REMARKS ON THE ANTECEDENTS OF MODERN INDONESIAN LITERATURE

To the best of my knowledge very little has been written about the literature written in Bahasa Melaju rendah (Low Malay) before 1920. There are one or two articles which mention the availability of translations of Chinese historical novels,¹ but there seems to be no bibliographic account of the fictional reading matter available to Indonesians around the turn of the century. This article is therefore a preliminary attempt, in an area where much research remains to be done, to fill this lacuna.

In an early article² G. Schlegel mentions the desire for reading matter among the Indonesian-Chinese who were unable to read Chinese characters leading to the translation and publication of various historical novels particularly from the *Sam Kok* (Three Kingdoms) cycle of stories. The earliest date which Schlegel mentions (for a Javanese translation) is 1859 but I suspect that the first printed novels were published shortly around the time of the press regulations of 1856. Not all of these novels dealt with remote history. There is one story, *Lawah-lawah Merah* (The Red Spider) which came out in a lavishly illustrated edition³ (according to the advertisement on the cover, the first illustrated book to appear in Java) in 1875. It is a large book, quarto size, and runs to about a hundred pages. The print and the

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¹ Nio Joe Lan's articles on "De Indo-Chineesche Literatuur" in *De Indische Gids*, Jan. 1937, pp. 32-47; Mar. 1937, pp. 231-246; April 1937, pp. 311-329 contain a lot of useful information, which is also to be found in his book: *Sastera Indonesia-Tionghoa*, Djakarta 1962.

Kwee Kek Beng also gives some information in "Het Zoogenaamde Bataviaasch Maleisch", *Koloniale Studiën*, 1923, Deel 1, pp. 424-438.

² G. Schlegel, "Chinese-Malay and Javanese Literature in Java", *T'oung Pao*, Vol. II, 1891, pp. 148-151.

³ *Lawah-lawah Merah*, Ogilvie & Co., Batavia 1875.

7.
Āñjaneya, Āndhra, 124,5 x 60 cm. Acht bewegl.
Gelenke, ein Haltestab.

8.
Rākṣasa, Āndhra, 134 x 55,5 cm. Fünf bewegl.
Gelenke, ein Haltestab. Seltene Form des Doppel-
Auges im Profilgesicht.

Alle Aufnahmen vom Verfasser. Die Original-
Figuren stammen aus der Versammlung des
Verfassers.

dialect were available from lending libraries⁹; finally there were these editions brought out by Chinese publishers in small attractive formats. In this category mention should be made of Lie Kim Hok's version of a Hindu tale, *Siti Akbari* which Nio Joe Lan mentions as a masterpiece.¹⁰

To judge from their publications, however, it appears that the three people most responsible for giving a stimulus and a direction to the writing of original stories in an Indonesian setting were F. H. Wiggers, H. Kommer and F. Pangemanann, the first two being Dutch, the last Menadonese. All three were journalists at one time or another and editors of Malay language newspapers.¹¹ They wrote fluently in popular Malay and seem to have been equally at home in Indo-Dutch and Indo-Chinese communities.

The most prolific of the three appears to have been F. Wiggers, who besides translating various official statute books into Malay also helped to translate *Le Comte de Monte Cristo* in conjunction with Lie Kim Hok.¹² The most interesting translation he made was of Melati van Java's *Van Slaaf Tot Vorst*.¹³ This is an imaginative reconstruction of the Surapati legend spiced with references to sacred kris and *djampe-djampe* (spells), and full of intrigue and romance. At a brief glance it appears that Abdul Muis' two novels, *Surapati* and *Robert Anak Surapati* are very largely based on the two volumes of Melati van Java's novel.¹⁴

Besides translations Wiggers wrote some original stories. One of

⁹ Dr. Ph. S. van Ronkel, "Catalogus der Maleische Handschriften in het Museum van het Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen", *Verhandelingen B. Genootschap*, Deel LVII, 1909, p. 312, describing a handwritten version of *Sja'ir Ken Tamboehan* writes: *Dit, 2070 dubbelverzen bevattende, handschrift vertegenwoordigt eene voor het Bataviaasche lezerspubliek geadapteerde bewerking der bekende Ken Tamboehan materie.*

¹⁰ Nio Joe Lan, "De Indo-Chineesche Literatuur", *De Indische Gids*, Jan. 1937, pp. 38 and 39: *Zijn (Lie Kim Hok) meest beroemde creatie is het episch dichtwerk Siti Akbari, een Hindoesch verhaal . . . . het werk neemt hierin zoowat dezelfde plaats in als Homerus' Ilias in de Grieksche Literatuur; and Sastera Indonesia-Tionghoa*, p. 29.

¹¹ Wiggers is mentioned as being editor of *Pembrita Betawi* in 1903. Kommer is mentioned in *Overzicht van de Inlandsche en Maleisch-Chineesche Pers 1920* as editor of *Pewarta Soerabaja*. Pangemanann is mentioned in J. F. H. Later: "De Maleische Pers", *De Indische Gids*, 1915, Deel 2, p. 1268.

¹² *Sastera Indonesia-Tionghoa*, p. 28.

¹³ *Dari Boedak Sampe Djadi Radja (menoeroet karangannya Melati van Java tersalin dalem bahasa melajoe renda oleh F. Wiggers)*, 2 vols., Albrecht & Co., Batawi 1898.

¹⁴ Muis acknowledges this; v. p. 188 *Surapati*, Balai Pustaka, Djakarta 1950.

these which runs into several small volumes is the story of *Njai Isah* (1903). The heroine of the story is Isah, the faithful *njai* (mistress) of a Dutch factory administrator Paul Verkerk and the villain is a lascivious young Dutch woman, Poppi, whose sexual appetite appears insatiable and who solicits the help of the whole entourage of the Indonesian procuring system (*dukun* (native doctor), *mah* (old woman) and servant girl) to win Verkerk from Isah. This book, although this is not explicitly stated, like many others of its type probably has some basis in fact. The narrative is full of rather sensational events (a man runs amok — there is attempted suicide and so on), clandestine meetings, illicit relationship and mysterious praeternatural occurrences.

Another interesting work of Wiggers' is a short one-act play *Lelakon Raden Beij Soerio Retno* (1901).¹⁵ The play is very similar in construction and theme to a French *pièce à thèse* and inclines me to think that it is a free translation of a European play. The plot of the play concerns a priyayi whose son is a spendthrift student of medicine in Batavia. The son continually borrows money from his mother and sister and is finally driven to steal some money from the collected tax-money which his father as Collecteur is responsible for. The father surprises him in the act of taking the money, but when he discovers that his wife has condoned his son's action he lets his son take the money. Mother and son are overjoyed and do not notice the father go within. Suddenly there is a shot and the innocent daughter rushes in to announce that her father has committed suicide. Curtain. Like all such plays this is very didactic in tone and at the end of the printed version is appended the moral: *orang toewa teristemewa satoe iboe djangan terlaloe toeroet anak poenja maoe* (a parent, especially a mother, should not yield too much to her child's wishes).

F. Pangemanann wrote two stories of more or less the same nature concerning events that took place in Batavia.¹⁶ The first story *Rossina* was written in *sja'ir* form and became very well known and a source of inspiration for many similar narratives. It was published by Balai Pustaka in a version edited by Tulis Sutan Sati in 1933.¹⁷ This story

¹⁵ F. Wiggers, *Lelakon Raden Beij Soerio Retno*, Oeij Tjaij Hin, Batavia 1901.

¹⁶ F. Pangemanann: *Tjerita Rossina*, Tjoe Toei Yang, Batavia, 1903. *Tjerita Si Tjonat (Satoe kapala Penjamoen di djaman dahoele tempo tahun 1840. Jang betoel soeda kedjadian di Batavia)*, Tjoe Toei Yang, Batavia 1900.

¹⁷ *Sja'ir Rosina (Soeatoe Tjeritera jang Sesoenggoehnja Terdjadi Dikota Betawi)* Dipetik dari karangan F. D. J. Pangemanann oleh Toelis Soetan Sati, B.P. 1090, Batavia-Centrum 1933.

and Pangemanann's prose work *Tjerita Si Tjonat* (1900) both deal with *perampok* (bandits) who terrorised the countryside round Batavia and who perpetrated various murders, kidnappings and thefts. Although the bandit always succeeds in kidnapping the beautiful lady, in accordance with the conventions of the romantic adventure story, the bandit never succeeds in his attempted rape, but is prevented in the nick of time by the prompt intervention of the hero.

Sja'ir Rosina reads well and is written in a racy, entertaining style. One slightly irritating feature in the narrative is the use of flash-back sequences which impede the fluent progression of the story. This use of flash-back is fairly common in the fiction of the time and is probably derived from the practice in Chinese novels.

Sja'ir describing almost contemporaneous events seem to have been fairly popular at this time. Besides the number of traditional *sja'ir* which were translated into *Melaju rendah* (Low Malay), there were others which described fairly recent historical events, sometimes with a lot of anti-Dutch satire.¹⁸ Other works were of an erotic nature¹⁹ and again probably circulated in the lending libraries of the time. One of the most famous *sja'ir* of the time which went into several editions, including one in Sundanese, is *Njaie Dasima* (1897).²⁰ This is the story about a *njai* who is persuaded to leave her *tuan* (interestingly an Englishman since the story is set in 1813 during the period of Raffles' regency) to marry a rogue. The story ends very tragically when Dasima is murdered by her husband and his accomplice who are eventually brought to justice. The Englishman and his daughter by Dasima, Nanci, return much saddened to England.

Although in form and content this story is similar to several others, it is far superior to other contemporary works. There are no irritating flash-backs; the narrative proceeds smoothly without too much digression and the dialogue is recorded in a lively, attractive manner. It is a pity that *Balai Pustaka* did not publish a version of this story

¹⁸ Ph. S. van Ronkel, *op. cit.*, p. 347, describing the *Sja'ir Perang Muntinghe 1: Hekeldicht op den oorlog op Palembang 1819-21 aldus genoemd naar d. Ned. commissaris Muntinghe (Idler Menteng)* . . . . *De term hekeldicht is in zooverre juist, dat de toon tegen de Hollanders minachtend en vijandig is.*

¹⁹ H. H. Juynboll: *Catalogus van de Maleische en Sundaneesche handschriften der Leidsche Universiteits Bibliotheek*, Leiden 1899, p. 30, describes one poem thus: *een gedicht van erotischen inhoud in 190 verzen. Het is slecht geschreven en de taal is Bataviaasch Maleisch. Het volgt op de hikayat Pandji Sumirang.*

²⁰ O. S. Tjiang, *Sair Tjerita di tempo tahun 1813 Jang Belon Brapa Lama Soeda Kadjadian di Batawi Terpoengoet tjeritanja dari Boekoe: NAJAE DASIMA*. Ijap Goan Ho, Batawi 1897.

since it is an excellent example of its kind. Furthermore the story is now part of Djakarta folklore and, I believe, has been the subject of various plays and has very recently been made into a film.

Another *sja'ir* of the time is a version of Cinderella, *Boekoe Pantoen Dari Tjeritanja Nonah Asschepoester*. (*Anak jang dihinaken oleh Mamatirinja*) (1890). Since it might be of some interest to see how Cinderella was translated into Malay at that date, the following two verses are offered as a specimen:

Sih Nonah girang die dalam la atie
 Sebab tida taoe sangkanja inie
 Pakean kotor mendjadie bresie
 Satoe kokie sepertie lah Poetrie

 Itoe djim kasie lah lagie
 Satoe pasang tjenella poetie
 Sebenarnja moeroep seperti apie
 Boeat Nonah pake die kakie.²¹

I should perhaps point out that although there was no uniformity in the spelling of the time, the orthography in this *sja'ir* is peculiarly eccentric.

H. Kommer, the third figure mentioned earlier, wrote several short stories, all of them allegedly based on true incidents. His stories are distinctive by reason of the rather macabre elements. In *Siti Aisah*,²² for example, the story concludes with an errant wife running away from her husband to rejoin her lover, only to find that the latter has committed suicide in despair when she left him earlier. Whereupon she promptly follows him by committing suicide in her turn. (The story is described as being *lutju* (funny) which makes one think that either Kommer had a warped sense of humour or that *lutju* can mean funny-peculiar as well as funny-ha!-ha!). In the story *Nji Paina* (1900)²³ the heroine is forced to become the *njai* of a wicked Dutch overseer,

²¹ The girl was overjoyed/ because she had not thought/ that dirty clothes could become clean/ and a servant become a princess. The geni gave her something else/ a pair of bright slippers/ which really flashed like a flame/ for the girl to wear on her feet.

²² H. Kommer: *Tjerita Siti Aisah Atau Tjinta Hati Jang Sabenar Tjinta. Satoe Tjerita jang betoel soedah terdjadi di tanah Preangan*, A. Veit & Co., Batavia 1900.

²³ H. Kommer: *Tjerita Nji Paina*, A. Veit & Co., Batavia 1900. (This includes the story *Nji Sarikem*.)

tuan Briot. She then deliberately contracts small-pox so that she can give it to Briot when he embraces her. In the end Briot dies but Paina, although badly marked, survives and marries happily. In *Njai Sarikem* (1900) the heroine is forced to marry a man she does not love, but on the wedding day the real lover turns up, runs amok and murders everyone.

One gets the impression that forced marriages, faithful and faithless *njai*, were a common subject in the fiction of the time. A number of such stories appear to have been composed by Raden Mas Tirta Adhi Soerjo, a well-known journalist of the period and one time editor of *Medan Prijaji* and *Pembrita Betawi*. He wrote a sort of contemporary West Javan 1001 Nights under the title: *Doenia Pertjintaan 101 Tjerita jang soenggoe soedah terdjadi di Tanah Priangan* (World of Romance, 101 Stories which really happened in Priangan) (1906). I have read the second story in this series *Seitang-Koenig*.²⁴ It is a very entertaining and amusing short story of how the faithful Sundanese *njai* of a Dutchman tricks a lascivious Arab who threatens her with court proceedings for an unpaid debt, unless she is willing to go to bed with him. The story is written in colloquial Malay and contains an exquisite scene in which the Arab is kept on tenterhooks by the preparations which Njai Mina makes, as he is kept in agonizing expectancy. Finally everything is ready but at the very moment when the Arab thinks he is going to get what he wants the *njai*'s protector bursts in and threatens him with a gun. To placate the latter's wrath he has to pay out a large sum of money and goes away much humiliated to the amusement of everyone else. The incident is very similar to the famous scene in the *Lysistrata* where the same type of thing occurs; it could only be considered indecent by those who fail to appreciate that kind of Aristophanic humour.

The translations and the elaborated accounts of actual events were two main sources of reading matter in Indonesia round about the turn of the century. The third source was the newspapers and journals of the period. Newspapers written in Bahasa Melaju rendah, such as *Selompret Melaju* and *Bintang Surabaya* published serialized fiction regularly in their columns. For the most part these serials are rewrites of traditional literature, the Arabian Nights stories, the *Hikajat Pantja Tanderan* (after Abdullah bin Abdul Kadir's version), stories of Abu

²⁴ Raden Mas Tirta Adhi Soerjo: *Seitang-Koenig*, Brouwer & Co., Makassar 1906.

Nawas and an assortment of animal fables and myths of *djin* and *radja*. Occasionally Chinese stories were included and sometimes more original material. In some numbers of *Selompret Melaju* for 1880 there is an account of a recent voyage to Kalimantan by a European adventuress (the *Kesah pelajaran* of Ida Pfeiffer translated by A. F. von de Wall).

It is interesting to note, however, that by 1908 readers of *Bandera Olanda*,²⁵ an illustrated weekly in Malay published in Amsterdam and distributed to Indonesia, registered a protest at this kind of fiction which was considered to be inappropriate in the context of the times. They requested something of more educational benefit, something contributory to the formation of a nationalist consciousness.

A much more significant area of journalistic influence was the reporting of numerous sensational incidents which occurred throughout the country. Reading *Selompret Melaju* one is struck by the staggering number of cases involving murder, rape, adultery, fraud, robbery and other crimes. The columns of *Bintang Betawi*, also filled with such accounts, provided a rich source of material for writers of popular fiction.²⁶ The report of two or three column inches in the press was the basis of a novel for the enterprising writer. Mas Marco Kartodikromo's first novel, *Mata Gelap*²⁷ (1914) was apparently one of this genre and was based on an account in *Selompret Melaju*.²⁸ From the very slight evidence available²⁹ it appears that the story is basically of the same romantic type as the novels of Wiggers and the others.

This type of fiction was very popular in the first few years of this century and then its popularity appears to have waned as writers tried to write more original fiction of a different character. Nevertheless sensational accounts continued to fill the columns of the newspapers and occasionally were turned into books. The persisting popularity of sensational documentary fiction is an interesting feature of the sociology of reading matter in Indonesia. A very recent example of this writing is the case of Dantje and Anna Mutia which created a sensation in

²⁵ *Bandera Olanda*, Amsterdam 1908. Supplement to no. 25.

²⁶ *Sastera Indonesia-Tionghoa*, p. 34.

²⁷ Mas Marco: *Mata Gelap*, Bandung 1914. I suspect that this is the book which Bodenstedt: *Sprache und Politik in Indonesien*, Heidelberg 1967, mentions as *Amok* (p. 155 note quoting *Bintang Suradi*).

²⁸ Some information about this novel can be gleaned from the pages of *Doenia Bergerak* where the editor, Mas Marco himself, engaged in a controversy about the book's merits.

²⁹ *Doenia Bergerak* no. 30, 1914, p. 5. *Dalam bagian pertama, jaitoe jang telah kita* (editor of another paper) *trima mentjeritaken seorang djedjaka jang amat lekas atinja ketarik pada roepa parasnja perampoean manis.*

Indonesia some years ago. The facts of the case were brought out in book form before the official trial took place in 1969! In many ways the writing is comparable with the equivalent material in America and England, cf. Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood* and Ludovic Kennedy's *10 Rillington Place*.

Concurrent with the expansion of the press after 1906³⁰ there appears to have been a greater demand for a more substantial fiction. The nationalists and radical newspapers were feeling their way towards a creation of national identity and, although initially they appear to have been content to keep to the romantic pattern already established, there are one or two examples of a more realistic note creeping into the fiction of the period. Thus besides the succession of adventure and crime novels which continue to be published and the early publications of Balai Pustaka, there are some indications of a more politically conscious readership. Some time before 1913 Abdul Muis published *Surapati* as a serial in *Kaoem Moeda*,³¹ a nationalist journal. Historical fiction is always part of an incipient nationalist consciousness, since by historical example it seeks to demonstrate national greatness and create a sense of pride and solidarity. Certainly this seems part of the intention of the version of *Surapati* which Muis had published in 1950. The book was advertised as being about to appear in 1913 but I cannot find any evidence that it did in fact appear then.

In the weekly which Muis began to edit from Bandung in 1913, *Hindia Serikat* (United Indies) there appeared as a feuilleton, *Saidjah*, also written by Muis. The story is set in a small village near Sukabumi (in West Java) and is an attempt to describe the society of such a village. Saidjah is the pretty, young, but ignorant, Sundanese wife of an honest, poor husband Soekatma. The *loerah* (head of the village) desires Saidjah whom he tries to win round by various devices. Using this as a flimsy plot Muis describes with great humour and sensitivity the intrigues and the organisation of the small community, and deals satirically with the abuse of authority and the small scale corruption. The style of the narrative is amusing and the language colloquial with a fair sprinkling of Sundanese words. The most attractive feature of the work is the satire and the absence of the heavy moralistic tone which characterises so many other works of the period. Interestingly

³⁰ For a succinct account of the expansion of the press in this period see Oey Hong Lee's recent book, *Indonesian Government and Press Under Guided Democracy* (Ph.D. thesis) IDC, Zug, Switzerland 1971, pp. 7-9.

³¹ This information is obtained from an advertisement in *Hindia Serikat*, 1913.

it is one of the few Indonesian works which does not deal with an educated, or at least literate, stratum of society.

It was shortly after this period that Balai Pustaka began to publish regularly original novels in Malay.³² It is out of place to discuss the Balai Pustaka novels here but it is important in the context of the discussion of the early non-Balai Pustaka novels to mention that the publication of original Malay novels by the official Government publishing house was intended to offset the potential pernicious influence both in moral and political spheres, of contemporary publications and to provide 'fitting' reading matter.³³

The final novel which I wish to discuss is Semaun's *Hikajat Kadirun*. This originally appeared as a feuilleton in *Sinar Hindia* (The Light of the Indies), the organ of the radical branch of the Sarekat Islam. The *Persoverzicht* of 1920 describes it as a *tendenz roman*, since it clearly is putting over a political thesis. It has been described as a curious mixture of elements, 'political idealism, romanticism and religious sentiment'.³⁴ To my mind the most attractive parts of the book are those which attempt to describe the conditions of growing immiseration in the villages and the inability of the villagers to put their finger on the causes of this condition. The turning point of the story occurs when Kadirun, a government official, a junior priyayi, is sent to report on a meeting of the P.K.I. He is impressed by what he hears and thus becomes converted to the ideology of the party. Apparently this type of occurrence was fairly frequent and senior priyayi were constantly warning the government against sending junior officials to report for this very reason.³⁵

From a literary point of view, as Professor Teeuw says, much of the book can be criticised but sociologically it is interesting as evidence of a much more politically committed type of fiction than anything which had existed ten years previously. Mas Macro carried on this

³² The first of these novels is M. Siregar: *Si Djamin dan Si Djohan*, Commissie voor Volkslectuur, no. 324, Batavia 1918; although strictly speaking it is an adaptation of a Dutch novel in a Batavian setting.

³³ Dr. C. Hooykaas: *Over Maleische Literatuur*, E. Brill, Leiden, p. 188: *Kortom, er kwam allerlei Schund op de markt, en in groote hoeveelheden.*

Het Gouvernement heeft gemeend hier te moeten ingrijpen: door geschikte leerstof te geven aan de tienduizenden abiturienten van zijn scholen, wilde het verdringen wat politiek en zedelijk ongeschikt geacht werd.

³⁴ By Professor A. Teeuw in *Modern Indonesian Literature*, The Hague 1967, p. 16.

³⁵ This information was supplied to me in conversation with Lance Castles, Heather Sutherland and Ong Hok Ham.

tradition of nationalist literature but the situation in the early twenties was so politically repressive that his books were banned.

What I have tried to show so far is that there was a thriving literature in Malay in existence before the rise of Balai Pustaka and it is wrong to dismiss all this literature as trash. There was a lot of rubbish, as there was among Balai Pustaka publications, but against this must be set the work of Lie Kim Hok, *Sja'ir Rossina*, *Njaie Dasima*, the versions of traditional *sja'ir* and *hikajat* published both by Dutch scholars and Chinese publishers and the growing nationalistic literature which was, so to speak, nipped in the bud.

For the second part of this paper I should like to analyse the works so far described with respect to their content and suggest the influence that some of these works had on subsequent Indonesian literature.

To repeat what has often been said about the language of these works, the syntax and spelling, judged from the standards of official Bahasa Melaju, are unorthodox. A number of the words and expressions used are not found in the officially promoted language. The Bahasa Melaju rendah, particularly as spoken in Djakarta, has a number of special peculiarities which have been discussed in detail elsewhere.³⁶ Yet despite the irregularity and the lack of uniformity of the language a number of the novels come over as being far more in touch with the spoken language and closer to the ground than the sometimes very artificial language to be found in the later novels from West Sumatra. Occasionally in these later novels there is a burst of colloquial language but this happens very rarely.³⁷

The novels can be classified fairly easily into types. Chronologically the first of these are the translations of the Chinese novels. They are primarily stories of *kedjahatan* (wickedness) and have been described succinctly and accurately as stories of black and white morality in which the good eventually triumph.³⁸ A good example of this type is Lie Kim Hok's novel in three volumes, *Pembalasan Dendam Hati* (Revenge), (1907), which is a story of adultery, murder and revenge set in the con-

³⁶ Kwee Kek Beng, *op. cit.*, and Hans Kähler, "Dialect and Language", *Lingua*, Vol. 15, 1965, pp. 497-515; id., *Wörterverzeichnis des Omong Djakarta*, Berlin 1966.

³⁷ e.g. in A. Muis: *Salah Asuhan* (1928) 4th printing, 1952, pp. 162 ff., and *Pertemuan Djodoh* 2nd printing, 1952, pp. 139 ff., and M. Siregar, *op. cit.*, 2nd printing, 1949, pp. 12 ff.

³⁸ Kwee Kek Beng, *op. cit.*, p. 435: ..... *de goeden worden steeds beloond, zoo niet tijdens hun leven, dan na hun dood; de slechten krijgen steeds hun verdiende straf.*

text of provincial Chinese aristocracy. One of the characteristics of this type of fiction, although notably absent from Lie Kim Hok's work, is the detailed description of what is according to Western taste rather gruesome. The following passage from *Lawah-lawah Merah* describing the execution of the villain is representative.

*Itoe algodjo kasi kaloeur lagi satoe piso, jang sembarang sadja. Gagangnja itoe piso, ada tertoeelis . . . mata maka moekanja itoe toekang potong soeda penoe sama dara. Pisonja Roumi soeda masoek dalem satoe mata dari pemboenoe itoe.*³⁹

This kind of scene is very familiar to anyone who has seen a film *silat*, a film of Chinese heroes and bandits particularly as produced by film studios in Hong Kong. Under this category of *kedjahatan* stories can be included the stories of the Indonesian bandits who also come to very bad ends.

The second distinctive type of fiction is the literature concerning the figure of the *njai*. In all examples of this, whether written by Dutch, Chinese or Indonesian writers the relationship between the colonial and his *njai* is always given at least implicit approval and the villain in these stories is always the one who tries to come between the *tuan* and his *njai*.⁴⁰ In some accounts, for example in the *Sja'ir Njai Dasima* and *Njai Isah* (Wiggers), the relationship is regarded as almost idyllic. In the former the reader feels very sympathetic towards the Englishman who is heartbroken when Dasima tells him she wants to leave. To illustrate the writer's attitude to the relationship take the following verses from *Njai Dasima*:

Dasima oentoengnja bagoes sekali
Dapet Toeang orang aseli
Sala sedikit Toeannja tiada pedoeli
Tiada taoe oentoengnja diblangkali

Toeang W. liat Dasima pergi
Menangis tiada tertahan lagi⁴¹

³⁹ p. 90. The executioner took out another knife at random. — On the handle of that knife was written "eye", so the face of the butcher (the villain) was then covered with blood.

Roumi's knife had already entered one of the murderer's eyes.

⁴⁰ This theme occurs in the following books: O. S. Tjiang: *Njaie Dasima*; F. Wiggers: *Njai Isah*; Raden Mas Tirto Adhi Soerjo: *Seitang-Koenig*.

⁴¹ Dasima was very lucky/ she had a toean who was a proper (?) gentleman/ If she made small mistakes he didn't mind/ She didn't know how lucky she was then. When Toean W. saw Dasima go,/ he wept unable to control his emotions.

With the rise of Balai Pustaka this theme of the *njai* disappears from Indonesian literature, although there are still one or two traces of it, in *Sengsara Membawa Ni'mat* (Suffering Brings Pleasure) and *Sebabnja Mendjadi Hina* (The Reason for Her Fall)⁴² for example. Nevertheless, as mentioned earlier, the theme is preserved in Djakarta folklore and familiar to most of Indonesian society. It re-emerges in recognisable literary form after the Second World War where it is the subject of various short stories, e.g. *Djongos dan Babu* (Servant and Maid) by Pramoedya Ananta Toer.

Closely tied to the *njai* literature are all the stories which contain reference to *dukun*, spells, witchcraft and mystical power. This seems to have been a common theme in Dutch colonial novels, in fact the title of one of these books is *Goena-Goena*⁴³ (Magic Recipes). In Indonesia the interest, if not the belief, in a realm of praeternatural experience is universal. In a number of the works discussed a form of magic is employed either to attract someone or to make a person antipathetic to another. The magic consists usually of burning some incense (*menjan*), acquiring a concoction from a *dukun* — which sometimes contains some rather disgusting ingredients — and reciting the appropriate *djampe-djampe* (incantations). Anyone familiar with Indonesian society is aware how widespread recourse to magic is⁴⁴ and hence it is not surprising that it frequently occurs in the early literature which focusses upon a social stratum particularly prone to this behaviour.

Again in the later Balai Pustaka literature there is relatively little mention of such incidents. The notable exception to this is in the novels of Marah Rusli. In both *Sitti Nurbaja* and *Anak dan Kemanakan* (Son and Nephew) characters resort to the use of spells.⁴⁵ The use of *guna-guna* is also a major theme in the first part of A. St. Pamoentjak's novel *Pertemuan* (Meeting), but as in the case of so many Balai Pustaka novels the story is overtly moralistic and didactic. The first

⁴² T. Sutan Sati: *Sengsara Membawa Ni'mat*, B.P. 829; Weltevreden 1928, Vol. 2, pp. 40 ff.; Eder: *Sebabnja Mendjadi Hina*, B.P. 998; Batavia-Centrum 1932, pp. 28 ff.; cf. Soetono D. Arifin: *Andang Teroena*, B.P. 1425, (1949 edition) p. 11.

⁴³ P. Daum: *Goena-Goena* (1889) 4th edition, Amsterdam 1941.

⁴⁴ That there is a reluctant half-belief in magic even in circles educated to scepticism is evident from passages in Suwarsih Djojopuspito: *Buiten het Gareel*, Utrecht 1940, p. 58, and P. A. Toer: *Bukan Pasar Malam*, B.P. 1836, Djakarta 1950, Chapter 8.

⁴⁵ *Siti Nurbaja* (1922) 8th printing, 1957, p. 66. *Anak dan Kemanakan* (1956), p. 89.

part of the novel ridicules the practice of going to a *dukun* for spells and the second part of the novel describes the dangers of getting involved with prostitutes and gamblers. Nevertheless the description of *guna-guna* in the story is quite detailed and is an interesting supplement to the earlier literature. The picaresque novel *Muda Teruna* (A Young Man) also contains one or two references in passing to spells and magic.⁴⁶

The final category of stories is of those which might loosely be called romantic, that is which have as their theme idyllic love, enforced separation of the lovers, forced marriages and suicides and love-pacts. This type of plot occurs fairly early in the literature under discussion. It is for example one of the main threads of *Lawah-lawah Merah*, and I suspect that forced marriages and marriages of convenience are a common feature of Chinese fiction. This predilection for the romantic plot would perhaps explain the popularity of the European novels which were translated, particularly those of Alexander Dumas.

The two stories by Kommer *Njai Paina* and *Njai Sarikem*, particularly the latter, both have romantic themes. It seems clear that the forced marriage and the separation of true lovers was a fairly established theme in the early years of the century, and that the writers of the twenties, both those working for Balai Pustaka and those writing for other publishers, were simply enlarging on an established theme.

An example of how established the romantic convention had become is a small book by S. Goenawan entitled *Regent Nekat* (The Determined Regent) (1924). Goenawan was a member of the P.K.I. and the head of a publishing company which intended to publish books by Lenin, Sneevliet, Tan Malaka and others.

In 1924 Goenawan had already written and published a short biography of Semaun,⁴⁷ full of exhortation to continue the party struggle. The book *Regent Nekat*, however, turns out to be a very maudlin story about a *tukang kaju* (carpenter) who loves and is loved by a Regent's daughter. Initially the parents will not hear of any such union but the daughter attempts suicide and this finally persuades the parents to agree to the marriage with her lover. The revolutionary implication is, one supposes, in the breaking down of class barriers. The story is grossly sentimental and completely worthless except as an example

⁴⁶ *Pertemuan* (1927) 3rd printing, 1956, p. 84; *Muda Teruna* (1922) p. 14 and pp. 85 ff. cf. S. Hardjosoemarto and A. Dt. Madjoindo: *Roesmala Dewi*, B.P. 1028 (1932) pp. 90 ff.

⁴⁷ S. Goenawan: *Semaun*, Pambatjaan Ra'jat, Bandoeng, 1924 (?).

of how nationalistic writers can become beguiled by the romantic convention.

In order to demonstrate more closely the influence of this early literature on later novels I should like to look at the construction of *Sitti Nurbaja* since it seems to me almost certainly indebted to early tales of romance and intrigue.

There are three points which seem to confirm this. The first relates to the device which was discussed earlier, the flash-back sequence. In the Indo-Chinese novels the device works in this fashion. A set of events is described leading to a climax when a murder or a kidnapping takes place. The next part of the narrative describes the situation some time after this, and at first sight it appears that this second situation bears no relation to the first, but then gradually it transpires that the principal character is the same in both cases, and a flash-back sequence is used in order to cover the period elapsing between the end of the first situation and the beginning of this second one. This technique is very common in the early fiction and occurs in an exemplary fashion in the early *Lawah-lawah Merah*.⁴⁸

It will immediately be recalled by those who have read *Sitti Nurbaja* that this is exactly what happens between the first part of the novel and the second. At the end of the first part the hero, Samsulbahri, commits suicide when he hears of the death of Sitti Nurbaja. The second part then proceeds to describe two officers of the colonial army and appears to have no connection with the foregoing chapters. But then it transpires that one of the officers is Samsulbahri who did not succeed in committing suicide and has joined the army. The deception by which it appears that the two parts have no connection, and secondly the way in which it is revealed who Lieutenant Mas really is, suggest very strongly the influence of Indo-Chinese literature.

The second aspect of the novel which suggests Indo-Chinese influence are the melodramatic⁴⁹ incidents. The apparent resurrection of Samsulbahri is an example of this. It is exactly the kind of event which appears in the Chinese stories. In *Pembalasan Dendam Hati* precisely the same thing occurs. Tjoo Kiang Tjiang whom the hero thinks he has killed and whose death he bitterly regrets turns out to be alive after twenty

⁴⁸ It also occurs in *Sja'ir Rosina*, *Si Tjonat*, *Pembalasan Dendam Hati* and other stories.

⁴⁹ The term is taken from Harry Aveling's article: "Sitti Nurbaja. Some Recon-siderations", *B.K.I.* Deel 126, 1970, pp. 228-242.

years disappearance during which time he has suffered from loss of memory.

The device of poisoned food is a characteristic of Marah Rusli's novels and occurs in *Sitti Nurbaja* where the victim is the heroine herself and in *Anak dan Kemanakan* where the victim is the innocent Marah Udin. I can think of no other novel of Balai Pustaka where this device is used. Usually death occurs as a result of accident or as a result of an angry quarrel. Yet poisoned food occurs in the Indo-Chinese works. In *Tjerita Njonja Kong Hong Nio* (1900) by Kommer, Njonja Kong Hong Nio dies when she eats a poisoned cake in the same manner as Sitti Nurbaja.

Finally, in another story of Kommer's, *Nji Paina*, there occurs an event which is remarkably similar to one in *Sitti Nurbaja*. Readers of the latter will remember that Sitti Nurbaja, the beautiful heroine with all the virtues, after great inner struggle agrees to marry Datuk Meringgih to save her father from the disgrace of going to prison for debt. In *Nji Paina* tuan Briot threatens to throw Paina's father, Niti, into prison, also for debt, unless Paina agrees to become his *njai* (mistress). This is her reaction when her father tells her the situation:

Koetika Niti sampei di roemahnja, ia lantas panggil istrinja dan Paina, teroes tjeritaken kahendaknja toean Briot, Nji Paina tiada menjahoet satoe apa; tjoema ia mengkeretken giginja dan marah serta liatin ajahnja . . . ia berkata.

"Apa djadi njainja tjeleng itoe?"

Tiada sekali-kali. Bebrapa banjak orang moeda soeda lamar padakoe, tetapi koe soedah tampik dan sekarang koe hendak didjadiken boedaknja si tjeleng alas itoe." . . .

Achirnja Nji Paina moelai dapet belas kasihan pada ajahnja . . . berkata: "Baiklah koe toeroet maoenja toean Briot aken djadi njainja".⁵⁰

The similarity between the two incidents is unmistakable.

The combination of these three features leads naturally to the con-

⁵⁰ *Nji Paina*, pp. 21 ff.: When Niti arrived back at his house he called his wife and Paina and then told them what toean Briot wanted. Nji Paina didn't say anything in reply. She clenched her teeth and looked angrily at her father and said: "Become the mistress of that swine? Never. Lots of young men have proposed to me, but I've refused them and now I'm expected to become the slave of that swine . . . ."

Finally Nji Paina began to feel sorry for her father and said: "Alright I'll agree to what toean Briot wants. I'll become his mistress".

clusion that Marah Rusli was heavily influenced in the construction and devices of his novels by the Indo-Chinese Malay works which he quite probably read as a young man a little after the turn of the century.

At this stage it would clearly be rash to make any positive statements about the extent of the influence of the early literature in Melaju rendah but perhaps one can make some tentative remarks working from the analysis so far. The antecedents of Indonesian literature reveal a variety of types of literature ranging from bandit novels to near-realistic accounts. After the rise of Balai Pustaka some of the various genres disappear, since the Balai Pustaka novels tend to emphasise the conventional romantic plots to the exclusion of the others. Nevertheless through the twenties and thirties there are traces of the earlier types of novel in publications of both Balai Pustaka and the Indo-Chinese press. Hence it is possible to observe some sort of literary influence from the earliest publications in Malay to the first modern Indonesian novels.

C. W. WATSON

Postscript

After completing this article I read the newspaper *Bintang Timur* over the year 1963. In the cultural supplement (*Lentera*, edited by Pramoedya Ananta Toer) of the Sunday edition there is a lot of information about what I have called the antecedents of modern Indonesian Literature and what the *Lentera* writers call literature of the *periode assimilatif*. The articles provide far more biographical information than I have included in my article, and their documentation is more complete than mine. Nevertheless I have decided to let my article stand as it is, since in various respects (bringing to light new facts and trying to give a general review of the literature) it can be considered complementary to the *Lentera* articles.

Copies of many of these early works were mentioned in *Bintang Timur* as being available at the time of writing (1963) in the Library of the Museum Negara. The copies which I read were kindly made available to me by the Librarians of the Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde and the Leiden University Library. I should like to take this opportunity of thanking them, and the Social Science Research Council of the United Kingdom for providing me with the funds which enabled me to visit these Libraries.