

Local Wisdom in the Polemic on Sundanese Poem

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Abstract

This essay investigates the polemic on Sundanese poem which occurred from 1952 to 1957 in *Warga* magazine, on the intention to explain the way the influence of Sundanese local wisdom works in responding to the rise of a new form of poem in Sundanese literature. This essay looks specifically at the relevance between the said polemic with Sundanese people's wisdom, by applying Peircean semiotic concept as referred to by Aart van Van Zoest (1993), along with his description on ideology. It can be concluded that Sundanese literary figures are ideologically open to changes. They have a balanced perception on both new and old forms of Sundanese poem. Sundanese poem, arguably enough, does not diminish *dangding*, *jangjawokan*, *sisindiran*, or any kinds of old forms of Sundanese poem. On the contrary, the two enrich one and the other.

Keywords: Sundanese poem, polemic, local wisdom, warga

Introduction

The polemic on Sundanese poem occurred from 1952 to 1957 in *Warga* magazine, and is recorded as the only polemic that tackles with the emergence of a new form of literature in the realm of Sundanese literature. Other emerging new forms of literature namely *wawacan*, novel, short stories, mini fiction, and even haiku did not stir similar polemic. In this essay, the polemic is investigated to explain the way the influence of Sundanese local wisdom works in responding to the rise of a new form of poem in Sundanese literature. The concluding part of this essay will show that Sundanese literary figures are ideologically open to changes, in a sense that they have a balanced perception on both new and old forms of Sundanese poem.

This polemic involves the ideology that bases the opinion of the conflicting people. Acceptance or rejection towards Sundanese poem as opposed to *dangding* is closely related with Sundanese people's

local wisdom in the 1950s. Therefore, this essay aims to answer the following question: what type of local wisdom bases the acceptance or rejection towards Sundanese poem and *dangding* in the polemic in *Warga* magazine between 1952 to 1957?

The method applied is Peircean semiotics of Charles Sander Peirce (1839-1914) and his followers, one of which is Aart van Van Zoest. Semiotics is the science of signs, dealing with interpretation of signs and anything relating to signs such as sign system and the process involved in the use of signs (van Zoest, 1993: 1).

According to Peirce, there are three deciding elements of signs, namely: (1) signs that themselves can catch, (2) that themselves point at, and (3) new signs which emerges in the subconscious of the receiver of the signs (van Zoest, 1993: 14). The relation between signs and those they point at is in a form of representation. Signs and representation lead to interpretation. Functioning the relation between signs, representation, and its interpretation is called semiosis. Based on the relation between signs and their denotation, Peirce differentiates three types of signs which are fundamental, namely: (1) icon, (2) index, and (3) symbol (van Zoest, 1993: 24). Iconic signs are signs in possibilities, not depending upon the existence of denotation, but can be linked with it based on its potential similarity; index are signs whose pattern depend upon the existence of denotation; and symbol are signs whose relation between signs and denotation is decided by regulations applied in general (van Zoest, 1993: 24).

Furthermore, van Zoest underlines the relation between ideology with signs usage. On ideology, Van Zoest explains:

Every culture recognizes its own ideology. Each ideology is rooted to its culture. If one learns a culture, he then deals with an ideology. If one learns an ideology, he then has to pay attention to its signs of culture. Finding an ideological point of departure in the context of culture is an important task. Ideology stirs culture. Ideology in the end decides the vision or perception of a group of culture towards reality. By recognizing their ideology, we will be able to understand a group of culture better (van Zoest, 1993: 54).

This description, in the end, shows that ideology is series of linkage of a number of assumptions which make signs usage possible (van Zoest, 1993: 51).

About the Terms

The term “*sajak*” in Sundanese literature is different from that of in Indonesian literature. *Sajak*, in Sundanese literature, refers more to a form of poetry; whereas in Indonesian literature, it applies more to one of the building blocks of poetry, which is called *rima*. Both terms, nevertheless, are originated from foreign languages. *Sajak* has its roots from Arabic, “*as-saj’u*”, while *rima* comes from Dutch, “*rijm*” in which is called “rhyme” in English. According to Slametmuljana (1951: 66), *sajak* is the repetition of sounds; the consonants and the vowels. The repetition of the sounds may be exactly the same as the repeated sounds or only resemble them.

Examples of *sajak*:

<i>lidi – padi</i>	<i>gunting – banting</i>
<i>peti – budi</i>	<i>patung – kunjung</i>

Untuk perulangan suara atau persamaan bunyi ini dalam sastra Sunda digunakan istilah *purwakanti*. Salmun (1958: 28-38) mencatat ada 9 jenis *purwakanti* dalam sastra Sunda, yaitu *panghuyu*, *maduswara*, *cakraswara*, *larasputra*, *mindooan kawit*, *laraswekas*, *mindooan-wekas*, *larasmadya*, dan *margaluyu*. Menurut Salmun

(1958: 28) *purwakanti-purwakanti* tersebut dapat dikombinasikan bersama dalam satu larik. Misalnya, *pangluyu* dan *maduswara* dapat digunakan bersama *laraswekas*.

Secara singkat istilah-istilah tersebut dapat dijelaskan sebagai berikut: *pangluyu* ialah persamaan suku kata akhir, *maduswara* ialah persamaan vokal, *cakeraswara* pertukaran tempat vokal yang dalam dua kata, *laraspurwa* ialah persamaan suku kata, *mindooan kawit* ialah persamaan kata pada awal larik, *laraswekas* persamaan suku kata akhir, *mindooan wekas* ialah persamaan kata akhir, *larasmadya* persamaan kata di tengah larik, dan *margaluyu* ialah persamaan kata di akhir larik dengan awal larik berikutnya (Salmun, 1958: 28-38).

The term *sajak*, in the context of Sundanese literature, has a special meaning as a form of poetry that is not *dangding*; in fact, it is assumed that *sajak* is the opposite of *dangding*. Historically, the emergence of Sundanese *sajak* has caused polemics with *dangding* up to two times (Rosidi, 2007: 7). *Dangding* is a form of poetry arranged according to the rules of *pupuh*. Each *pupuh* has its own specific rules, whether in *padalisan* (number of lines in one verse), *guru wilangan* (the number of syllables in each line), *guru lagu* (the final vowel sound in each line), *pedotan* (pause in each line), or the songs.

Iskandarwassid (1992: 130) explains that *sajak* is a form of Sundanese poetry that is not too bound. This form of poetry is influenced by Indonesian poetry, especially from the works of Chairil Anwar and the poets of the Angkatan '45 (the 1945 Generation) (Salmun, 1958: 64; Rosidi, 2007: 8). Because at the beginning of its growth, *sajak* was considered a negation of the bound form of *dangding*, in the Sundanese literary treasures, *poetry* is also called *sajak bebas* (free verse) (Rosidi, 2007: 7), *puisi baru* (new poetry), or *puisi Sunda modern* (modern Sundanese poetry). With the latter two terms, Sundanese poetry forms that have previously existed are then categorized as *puisi lama* (old poetry) or *puisi tradisional* (traditional poetry) (Iskandarwassid, 1992: 130; Sastrawijaya, 1995: 45).

Since poem, as a modern product, is part of written tradition, poem has characteristics such as: (1) generally written in short lines, (2) the line numbers in one stanza depend on necessity, (3) generally concise, and (4) generally in a form of monologue. Yet, since poem is part of modern works of literature, there is always an attempt to break free from its conventional form. Therefore, poem can be written in full lines from left to right, and it can be in a form of dialogue or a combination between monologue and dialogue. Until today, Sundanese poem is still produced and favored by Sundanese people, which is marked by the many Sundanese poems being published in Sundanese media and by competitions on Sundanese poetry reading.

Categorized as new or modern poetry, sonnets originating from Italy with certain rules as old or traditional poetry, may be categorized as *sajak*. Rosidi in the anthology *Sajak Sunda* (2000) includes, among others, the sonnets of M.A. Salmun and Wahyu Wibisana. The writing of sonnets in Sundanese literature almost coincided with the writing of *sajak*; however, in this study the sonnets are not classified as *sajak*. They are only included as part of the poem.

Research on Sundanese *sajak* is still very rare. Among the occasional publications are two books discussed here: *Kesusastraan Sunda Déwasa Ini* (1966) by Ajip Rosidi and *Puisi Sunda Selepas Perang Dunia Kedua* (1979), a report by a team consisting of Mulyono, Kosim, Karsana, and Rumini. Rosidi explains the problems of the emergence of *sajak* forms in Sundanese literature in the late 1940s to 1960s. He describes the works, the poets, the media publishing the works, the polemics, and the social contexts surrounding them. However, his own question on why the polemic about Sundanese *sajak* occurred twice while it did not happen when novels and short stories were included in Sundanese literature remains unanswered. Even so, Rosidi's research contributes greatly in this research, especially in explaining the situation of the early emergence of Sundanese *poetry*.

The latter work by Mulyono et al. describes Sundanese poetry after the Second World War. The research includes not only *sajak*, but also other forms of poetry, particularly *dangding*. It studies poetical aspects of anatomy, forms, and the relevance of poetry to changes and developments in society. The

aspects of poetry that are analyzed include the content and the versification. In addition, it also makes comparisons with poetry that appeared before the war.

From previous research, it can be concluded that *sajak* is a new form of poetry which at the beginning of its appearance was opposed to existing forms of poetry, such as *dangding*, and *sisindiran* which have binding rules. Therefore, *sajak* is also called free verse or modern poetry. The first *sajak* was written by Kis Ws in 1946 and began to be published by KTS in 1949 in the *Sipatahoenan* newspaper. Even so, R. Memed Sastrahadiprawira has unintentionally written *sajak* in the *manggala sastra* (introductory tribute) of the novel *Mantri Jero*.

The Variety of Sundanese Poetry

Iskandarwassid (1992) distinguishes Sundanese poetry forms based on time and narrative. Based on the time, Sundanese poetry is characterized by old or traditional poetry and new or modern poetry. Sundanese traditional poetry is then divided into two groups: (1) poetry in the form of stories and (2) poetry that is not in the form of stories. *Pantun* and *wawacan* are examples of story poems, while *mantra* (*jangjawokan*, *singlar*, *jampé*, *asihan*), *sisindiran* (*rarakitan*, *paparikan*, *wawangsalan*), *kakawihan* (*barudak*), and *sa'ir* (*pupujian*, *sawér*), and *pupuh* (*dangding*, *guguritaan*) are not stories. *Sajak*, on the other hand, is the new poetry.

In agreement with Iskandarwassid, Maryati Sastrawijaya divides Sundanese poetry into two groups: the traditional and modern poetry. However, in the results of her research, Sastrawijaya (1995: 45) finds that Sundanese poetry has 18 types, consisting of 12 traditional poems and 6 types of modern poetry. Included in traditional poetry are *mantra*, *kakawihan barudak*, *sisindiran*, *sawér*, *pantun*, *gondang*, *sa'ir*, *pupujian*, *wawacan*, *babad*, *guguritaan*, and *wawangsalan*. Types of modern poetry include *sajak*, poetry drama, *gending karesmen*, *jemblungan*, *rumpaka kawih*, and *rumpaka tembang cinjuran*.

From the comparison of the three opinions above, Iskandarwassid's grouping of poetry forms is more fundamental than that of Sastrawijaya and Rosidi. However, the latter two are also important to see the development of creativity from the basic forms of Sundanese poetry. Sastrawijaya's, unlike the other two, grouping includes specific forms, such as *gondang*, *babad*, and *jemblungan* poems. Meanwhile, it is interesting to note that Rosidi adds the emergence of poetry recorded in ancient Sundanese manuscripts.

Thus, the basic foundation of Sundanese poetry comprises *naskah* (scripts), *pantun*, *mantra*, *sisindiran*, *kakawihan*, *sa'ir*, *pupuh*, and *sajak*. The term *naskah* actually refers to Sundanese poetry as contained in ancient Sundanese texts. These poems contain stories written in the form of *anusbuth*, the poetry with an eight-syllable meter (octosyllabic) pattern in each line. The form of poetry in these ancient Sundanese scripts can be compared with the form of oral poetry of *pantun*. Both forms are arranged in an eight-syllable meter pattern.

Mantra is a traditional poem of "prayers" seeking for fulfillment or avoiding harm. According to Iskandarwassid (1992), *mantra* is usually formed in lines that require a rhythm to pronounce. The characteristics of *mantra*, among others, are strong rhyme and repetition. *Jajampéan*, *jangwawokan*, *parancah*, *singular*, and *asihan* are examples of *mantra*.

Sisindiran is the same as *pantun* in Malay literature, which is a form of poetry built with *cangkang* (*sampiran*/the first two lines) and *eusi* (content-the last lines). If the *cangkang* and the *eusi* are only linked by the similarity of rhyme, the *sisindiran* is called *paparikan*. However, if the initial word in the first line of the *cangkang* is repeated in the first line of the *eusi* and the second line and so on, it is repeated in the second line of the *cangkang* and then the *eusi*, it is called *rarakitan*. In addition to *rarakitan* and *paparikan*, there is also *wawangsalan* in which the link between the *cangkang* and the *eusi* is determined by a word that must be guessed.

Table 1. Sundanese Poetry According to Iskandarwassid, Rosidi, and Sastrawijaya

Iskandarwassid	Ajip Rosidi	Maryati Sastrawijaya
<i>asihan</i>	poetic drama	<i>babad</i>
<i>dangding</i>	<i>gendang karesmén</i>	poetry drama
<i>guguritan</i>	<i>guguritan</i>	<i>gendang karesmén</i>
<i>jampé</i>	<i>jangjawokan</i>	<i>gondang</i>
<i>jangjawokan</i>	<i>kawih</i>	<i>guguritan</i>
<i>kakawihan</i>	manuscripts	<i>jemblungan</i>
<i>paparikan</i>	<i>pantun</i>	<i>kakawihan barudak</i>
<i>pupujian</i>	<i>pupujian</i>	<i>sisindiran</i>
<i>rarakitan</i>	<i>sajak</i>	<i>mantra</i>
<i>sajak</i>	<i>sawér</i>	<i>pantun</i>
<i>sawér</i>	<i>sisindiran</i>	<i>pupujian</i>
<i>singlar</i>	<i>tembang</i>	<i>rumpaka kawih</i>
<i>wawangsalan</i>	<i>wawacan</i>	<i>rumpaka tembang cinjuran</i>
		<i>sa'ir</i>
		<i>sajak</i>
		<i>sawér</i>
		<i>wawacan</i>
		<i>wawangsalan</i>

Sa'ir or *syair* in Indonesian is a form of poetry derived from Arabic literature. It generally consists of four lines, and each line is made up of eight syllables, and the rhyme ends with a-a-a-a, a-b-a-b, or a-a-b-b.

Pupuh is a composition of poetry (Iskandarwassid, 1992: 115-116) that is bound by rules for both the form and content. The form is tied to the number of lines in each stanza and to the number of syllables of the final vowel sound in each line. Meanwhile, the content is tied to the character of the *pupuh*, such as sad or happy. There are seventeen types of *pupuh* known in Sundanese literature: *asmarandana*, *balakbak*, *dangdanggula*, *jurudemung*, *durma*, *gambuh*, *gurisa*, *kinanti*, *ladrang*, *lambang*, *magatru*, *maskumambang*, *mijil*, *pangkur*, *pucung*, *sinom*, and *wirangrong*. The rules on the *pupuh* are closely related to the song. Each *pupuh* has a different song from the other one. Based on the frequency, there are what are called *pupuh/sekar ageung* (big) and *pupuh/sekar alit* (small) referring to how often it is used. The four *pupuh* which include *sekar ageung* are *asmarandana*, *dangdanggula*, *kinanti*, and *sinom*, while the remaining thirteen *pupuh*s are categorized as *sekar alit*.

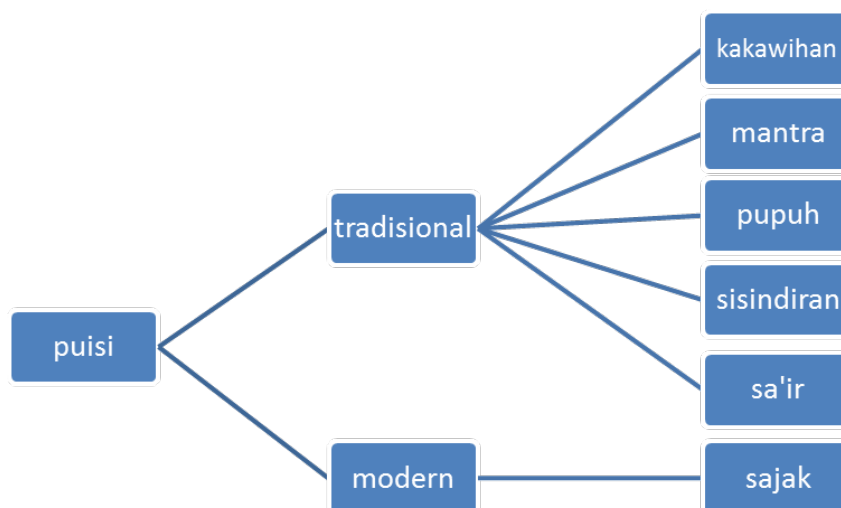
The form of *sajak* is not too binding (Iskandarwassid, 1992: 130). Therefore, at the time of its appearance in the late 1940s, it was usually called free verse, compared to the stricter form of *pupuh*. *Sajak* appeared at the time when *pupuh* was highly dominant. Actually, according to Iskandarwassid, *sajak* is still bound by the conventions of poetry, such as diction and assembly of words. Before *sajak* was popular in Sundanese literature in the 1950s, several writers had started earlier, including R. Memed Sastrahadiprawira who wrote the introduction in the novel *Mantri Jero* in 1928 and Kis Ws who wrote “Ilangna Mustika” (Losing Honor) in 1946 (see appendix 2).

The *sajak* written by Sastrahadiprawira is the opening of the novel *Mantri Jero* (Rosidi, 1966: 54), first published in 1928 by Bale Poestaka and until now continues to be reprinted. The poem describes the atmosphere of the morning: fog covering the trees, roosters and birds singing. Then, as the sun rises, the fog disappears. According to the subject of the lyrics, even though time changes, the state of the world remains the same. It is no different from the human passions that always want more. As a result, all means are taken so that the desire can be realized.

“Ilangna Mustika” by Kis. Ws was written in 1946 when he was lying in bed in the Cideres Majalengka hospital (Rosidi, 1966:59). The poem is about the lyric subject’s consciousness of all the destiny that befalls him. However, the *sajak* was lost before it was published. In 1986, Ki. Ws. rewrote it and published it in the book *Saratus Sajak Sunda* which was issued to commemorate 46 years of Sundanese poetry, on December 27, 1992. The book was edited by Abdullah Mustappa. The rewritten *sajak*, naturally, cannot replace the original version.

From the basic forms of poetry mentioned above, the larger forms are created. For example, from *guguritaan* or *wawacan* are derived from *pupuh*. When several *pupuh*s combine and form a story, the poem is called *wawacan*. If it is a historical story, the *wawacan* is called a *babad* (chronicle). *Guguritaan* descends from one form of *pupuh* used to tell something or a situation. Some of the beautiful *pupuh* in the form of *guguritaan* were written by Haji Hasan Mustapa. *Pupuh* in the form of *wawacan* were written by R. Suriadiredja with the title *Wawacan Purnama Alam*.

Graph 3. Grouping of Poetry Based on Time



Pupuh can also be combined with *sisindiran*, drama, or sound/music. Therefore, in the Sundanese literary treasures, there is known *sisindiran pupuh*, *gending karesmén*, or *tembang*. This combination also applies to the other forms. A *sajak* can merge with drama into a rhyming drama or *sa'ir* can become *nadoman* or *sawér*.

Other examples of forms, however, are not mentioned, such sonnets and haiku. Sonnet is a form of poetry that originates from Italy, while haiku originates from Japan. Sonnets are much more popular than haiku. In the 1950s, a haiku was discovered, entitled “Mangle” by Wahyu Wibisana (1957: 4). This is different from the many sonnets, among others, by Wibisana himself and M.A. Salmun. Haiku, generally untitled, is a short poem consisting of three stanzas: the first line is 5 syllables, the second line is 7 syllables, and the third line is 5 syllables. Meanwhile, sonnets comprise 14 lines. The lines consist of two parts: the octave (8 lines) or 2 quatrains (2 times 4 lines) and the sextet (6 lines) or 2 terzas (2 times 3 lines) (Slametmuljana, 1951: 150 -151).

The Polemic on Sundanese Poem

In the 1950s, Sundanese poem received a lot of responses, both from those who supported and opposed them. Differences of opinions triggered two polemics. A book called *Kesusastran Sunda Déwasa Ini* and its revised edition entitled *Mengenai Kesusastran Sunda*, Rosidi (1966: 58; 2013: 82) state that the polemic occurred twice in 1952 and 1955 in *Warga* magazine. But in an essay on *Horison* (1998: 7) magazine and on the introductory section of an anthology entitled *Sajak Sunda*, Rosidi (2007: 7) states that the polemic first occurred in *Sipataboenan* newspaper in 1950 in response to the publication of a poem by KTS (Kadir Tisna Sudjana) which was criticized by Ki Sunda. The second polemic occurred in *Warga* magazine in 1954 in response to Wahyu Wibisana's article that defends the poem which was then criticized by Yuyu Yuliaty who is pro *dangding*.

No.	Name	Number of Writing
1	Sdr K Ciamis	1
2	Ki Sunda	2
3	Sut Tisna	1
4	Suwondo	2
5	Werdaja	1
6	R. A. Affandi	1
7	Djunaedi A	1
	Total	9

After careful retracing, it appears that it was Rosidi's first observation that is correct. The polemic on Sundanese poem occurred twice, in 1952 and 1955 in *Warga* magazine. The first polemic was triggered by Ki Sunda's article entitled "Urang Sunda rék ka Marana...?" (Where will Sundanese Go to ...?) in *Warga* magazine number 46, 10 December 1952, page 1161. In his article, Ki Sunda voices his concern on the existence of poem, which to him is lacking artistic value and is a threaten to *dangding*. Ki Sunda asks the opinions of senior Sundanese literary figures to deal with this problem. It is this statement that most probably triggered the polemic.

The second polemic occurred from 1955 to 1957, in *Warga* magazines number 129 (30 March 1955) up to number 208 (12 January 1957). According to Rosidi (1998: 7-8), the polemic also occurred in other medias such as *Sunda*, *Tjandra* dan *Sipataboenan* newspaper.

This polemic resulted to 42 articles from 23 contributors (Muhtadin, 2013: 17-18), namely: Kusnadi Ps., Rukasah S. Wirasasmata, Wahyu Wibisana, R. Yuyu Yuliaty, Unus Sur., Much. Hamid, Sonda Herlina, Z. Abidin Alamsjah, Pa Etjep, Hato'an Ws, O.R. Muliapermana, Utju Sukaesih, R.A.F, N. Sriwenda, Esbar, Idit Pr., Poespita, Sutiya Tisnawijaya, Mh. Enoch, E. Tarmidi, R. Atmamiharja, R.A.F, R.E. Sulaeman, and Djadja Natasuanda.

In the second polemic, which was triggered by Wibisana's (1955: 17-19) article "Sajak Sunda" which was responded by Yuliaty (1955: 25-26) under the title "Panyandra Sajak Saderek Wahyu Wibisana," Wibisana puts forth his opinions on the importance of poem which was later negated by Yuliaty who states that poem is unimportant, and that *dangding* is the most important one. Yuliaty opines that poem is a form of decadence art. The debate was later responded by other contributors, which was divided into three groups: (1) a pro Wibisana group, (2) a pro Yuliaty group, and (3) a neutral group.

Even though poem is part of a genre in Sundanese literature, the polemic on Sundanese poem is related to wider literary problems. The people involved in the polemic often hint at problems occurred in Indonesian and world literature. For instance, when stating his opinion on the importance of poem and

dangding to Sundanese literature, Mh. Enoch compares it with the development of music in the Western world.

To refute Yuyu Yuliaty, Kusnadi Ps. states his opinions on the tendencies of arts widely debated both nationally and internationally. Nationally, there had been a debate between *Lekra* (*Lembaga Kebudayaan Rakyat*/The People's Association of Culture) group who believes in the ideology of art for the people, and Culture Manifest (*Manifest Kebudayaan*) group who believes in the ideology of universal humanism. Such a debate is very characteristic of the Western world. The ideology of art for the people stems from Marxist thoughts, whereas the ideology of universal humanism stems from liberal thoughts.

Tabel 3. List of Writers of *Saiak* and *Dangding* Polemics II 1955-1957

No.	Name	Number of Writing
1	Kusnadi Ps.	5
2	Rukasah S. Wirasasmita	4
3	Wahyu Wibisana	3
4	R. Yuyu Yuliaty	3
5	Unus Sur.	3
6	Much. Hamid	2
7	Sonda Herlina	2
8	Z. Abidin Alamsjah	2
9	Pa Etjep	2
10	Hato'an Ws	1
11	O.R. Muliapermana	1
12	Utju Sukaesih	1
13	R.A.F	1
14	N. Sriwenda	1
15	Esbar	1
16	Idit Pr.	1
17	Poespita	1
18	Sutiya Tisnawijaya	1
19	Mh. Enoch	1
20	E. Tarmidi	1
21	R. Atmamiharja	2
22	R.E. Sulaeman	1
23	Djadja Natasuanda	1
	Total	41

Resistance towards Sundanese poem and preservation of *dangding* as high literature has to do with preserving identity. Much. Hamid suggests that the term Sundanese literature stays on the ground of *paramasastra* so that the purity of Sundanese literature lasts. The acceptance and resistance towards *dangding* also has to do with the idea of progressing, with reference to the progress of Western literature which has all along spread its influence to Indonesian literature.

The progress of Western literature whose spreading was conducted through modern-style education in the 19th century, Anderson (2006) notes, has massively built acceptance towards modern knowledge at that time. Furthermore, Anderson adds that “[p]rint-literacy already made possible the imagined community floating in homogeneous, empty time,” (Anderson: 116). This condition, according to Anderson, borrowing Anthony Barnett’s words, “[allows] the intellectuals to *say* to their fellow-speakers [of the indigenous vernaculars] that “we” can be like “them”” (Anderson: 116). From

Anderson's observation, it is clear that the wave of modernism constructs the identity and ideology of the Indonesian people, which can be considered as a nation of modern-era product. This is relevant with Adipurwawidjana (1999: 92), who states that Indonesia, as "a postcolonial cultural phenomenon" could easily gravitate towards "copying the West in a form of westernisation or ethnocentrism."

Put in order, the problems arise in the polemic have to do with: (1) the term poem, (2) the origins of poem, and (3) the position of poem. Initially, the term poem refers to rhyme or repeated sounds of language in a work of literature, but in its development, the term poem shifts into a genre in Sundanese poetry. Therefore, aside from poem, there is also modern poem or free-form poem. Based on its origin, the word *sajak* in Indonesian is derived from Arabic word *as-saj'u* (عسج), but as a form of poetry, *sajak* is part of Indonesian literature. Poem, in Indonesian literature is derived from European literature, particularly Dutch literature, *gedicht*. Initially, the people involved in the polemic were indecisive, but they later agreed that Sundanese poem can be considered as part of poetry.

The middle ground for the debate finally falls on the decision that both poem and *dangding* are accepted as part of the richness of Sundanese literature. *Dangding* is the most favorite genre of poem and it has so far developed into other forms of art such as Sundanese chant. Poem, in other words, is a genre of poetry favored by the youths and is also considered as the bridge towards world literature. Relevant to this, it is worth considering that "we still have to explore the possibilities, for instance, that Indonesian literature can be postcolonial literature in a sense not as a reaction or imitation of Western literature or pretending to be the synthesis of the peaks of regional literature" (Adipurwawidjana, 1999: 89).

Conclusion

From the polemic on Sundanese poem and *dangding*, it seems that there is an ideology that bases the wisdom of Sundanese literary figures, that is, the ideology of openness. Iconically, this ideology resembles a Sundanese proverb *ngindung ka waktu ngabapa ka jaman* (perceiving time as mother, perceiving era as father), which means thinking/acting/perceiving in accordance with the advancement of an era (Djajasudarma dkk, 1997:125). Yet it is important to note that in keeping up the forward-moving era, Sundanese literary figures do not leave behind the richness of their tradition or cut themselves off of their past. This condition is articulately cited in the *rajab pamunah* (opening prayer) of a *pantun*: *teundeun di handeuleum sieum, tunda di banjuang siang, paranti nyokot ninggalkeun*, which means tradition or the richness of the past is the source of creation and the place for storing creativity.

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