

Three Recent Publications in Sundanese Studies

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A warm welcome to Layung Publisher, a new publisher which has recently been active in publishing books on Sundanese culture. This publisher also enlivened the more experienced publishers of Sundanese books, such as Pustaka Jaya, Kiblat Buku Utama, and Geger Sunten. During a sluggish publishing business, let alone of Sundanese studies, Layung Publisher is courageous enough to publish books that are often considered unprofitable from a commercial perspective. These publications are significant, and they can be appreciated as valuable references for Sundanese literature and culture.

Darpan, 2019, *Généalogi Carpon Sunda* Cetakan I, 2019
xvi + 158 pp, 14 x 21 cm., ISBN 978-602-73599-8-7

One can argue that this book, originated from the author's master thesis at the Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, is one of the most valuable historical studies of Sundanese literature. This assessment is not an overstatement, considering that the studies of the Sundanese literary history have rarely been published for a broader audience than an academic circle in the university. Furthermore, even if those are existing, they are written in a modest method, which frequently only offered a kind of kaleidoscope of literary periods developed in the Sundanese region from time to time. *Généalogi Carpon Sunda* is one of the books that does not fall into such stereotype. The focus of this book is *carpon*, short for Sundanese *carita pondok* 'short story'. From its explicit title, the reader can recognize that this book aims to examine the origins and development of *carpon* in Sundanese literature.

This book begins on a theoretical and historical basis. The author underlines the importance of historical context in the formation of literary writing during the colonial period. In this context, Darpan follows Moriyama's (2005) thesis, which states that the colonialism determines the conceptions of literature perceived and developed by the Sundanese. The corpus of his study based on rich information in serials (*Pustaka mangsa*) both government and private publications, including the *Volksalmanak Sunda* (annual), *Poesaka Soenda* (monthly), *Papaés Nonoman* (monthly), *Parahiangan* (weekly), and the early books published before independence; this corpus covers a range for almost 60 years.

The following chapters are postcolonial reviews of Sundanese literature. Darpan notes that there are two colonial government policies encouraging transformation and innovation. First, the government was very passionate to (re)write stories in printed form for the Sundanese public. Second was their effort to incorporate modernity and rational ideologies for the indigenous people through their favourite genre of writing: prose.

This book criticizes the well-accepted notion among Sundanese scholars, that G.S., an initial of unknown author, through his anthology *Dogdog Pangréwong* (1930), was the first *carpon* author. Instead of determining who is "Adam" for Sundanese *carpon*, Darpan invites the reader to critically interpret *carpon* according to the conception of their respective time of production while not being trapped in the rigidity of the term. The *carpon* that we know today is different from the *carpon* that was enjoyed by the generation of Moehammad Moesa in the middle of the 19th century. This genre did not abruptly emerge, but went through a long process of imitation, mockery, and hybridity, as a reaction of the Sundanese in facing colonial's ideas of modernity. Colonialism, which brought the ideology of enlightenment and rationality, used literature as a bridge for its ideology. Literary canonization that glorifies rational, orderly attitudes was crammed into the natives, so that they were free from the remnants of the past literature which was full of nonsense. Apparently, and surprisingly enough, that this Dutch-instilled literary concept has been preserved until now. Finally, although there are typos here and there and the absent of useful index, this book is an important contribution to the history of modern Sundanese literature.

Jajang A Rohmana, *Terjemahan Puitis Al-Qur'an: Dangding dan Pupujian Al-Qur'an di Jawa Barat*, 2019. Garut: Penerbit Layung, 266 pp. ISBN 978-602-73599-9-4

A prolific researcher of Islamic and Sundanese studies, Jajang A Rohmana, presents his fascinating study of the Sundanese poetic translation of the Qur'an. This research complements his previous publications related to Islam and Sunda: *Sejarah Tafsir Al-Qur'an di Tatar Sunda* (2014), *Kinanti Tutur teu Kacatur Batur (Or.7875): Sastra Sufistik Alam Sunda Haji Hasan Mustapa [1852–1930]* (2018), and *Informan Sunda Masa Kolonial: Surat surat Haji Hasan Mustapa untuk C. Snouck Hurgronje dalam Kurun 1894–1923* (2018).

This book discusses the vernacularization process of the Qur'an through its poetic translation in the form of Sundanese *dangding* and *pupujian*. *Dangding* is a kind of poetry of Javanese meters, while *pupujian* originates from Arabic poems. While *dangding* was mostly circulated in educated Sundanese aristocrats, *pupujian* circulated mostly in oral tradition, chanted most frequently in mosques and Islamic boarding schools, notably before prayer time.

In the introduction, the author persuasively convinces the reader that the study of poetic translations in the form of metrical verses such as *dangding* and *pupujian* is very relevant in the discourse of the Al-Qur'an studies in Indonesia. Jajang A Rohmana shows the data sources he uses, sourced from published essays. For the sources of *dangding*, the author uses (1) *Riwajat Kangdjeng Nabi* by R.A.A. Wiranatakusumah (1941), (2) *Soerat Al-Baqarah* by R.A.A. Wiranatakusumah (1949), and (3) *Saritilawah Nur Hidayah* by R.

Hidayat Suryalaga (1980). Meanwhile, the sources of *pupujian* are (4) *Pupujian Al-Qur'an in Bagbagan Puisi Pupujian Sunda* (1970) compiled by Yus Rusyana, (5) *Pupujian (Al-Qur'an)* by Enas Mabarti (1974), (6) *Khataman (Al-Qur'an)* by KH Sirodjuddin Abbas (circulated ca. 1980) and *Nadoman Nurul Hikmah* by R. Hidayat Suryalaga (2001–2010).

The second chapter contains a description of the complexity of poetic translation, particularly those of the holy Qur'an, generated from the rigid rules composing *dangding* and *pupujian*. The author also explains each genre's audience: while *dangding* was circulated among Sundanese aristocrats (*ménak*) or educated groups, *pupujian* spread more widely in *pesantren* networks in West Java. *Pupujian* generally uses the four-line rule for each stanza (Quatrain), formally 8, 10, 12 syllables each line, and the final rhyme a-a-a-a, a-a-b-b, a-b-a-b.

The third chapter is a historical framework concerning the interpretation of the Qur'an in Indonesia, including the debates and controversies over the works of translation or interpretation of it. With this more general perspective, the author invites the reader to set the poetic translation of the Qur'an in Sundanese in a broader context and the dynamics behind it. The reader probably wonders about the tradition of poetic translation in other regional languages in Indonesia, which the author, unfortunately, does not explain nor gives the examples.

Chapter 4 contains the history of *tafsir* Qur'an in the Sundanese region, which is essentially a part of the author's previous book *Sejarah Tafsir Al-Qur'an di Tatar Sunda* (2014). In chapter 5, Jajang describes the poetic translators of the Qur'an in West Java. The biographical sketch of Wiranatakusumah is indeed the most scrutinized at length, while the biography of K.H. Sirodjuddin Abbas (d. 1995) is not profoundly discussed due to a lack of sources. Abbas's translation in *pupujian* form of the Qur'an, entitled *Khataman*, includes 19 short suras. Chapter 6 contains an analysis of their works. What is quite important is that the author includes verses of poetry in Indonesian and the original text in Sundanese.

The following chapters (7, 8, and 9) are detailed descriptions of the textual aspects and composers' translation techniques, demonstrating the creativity and improvisation process. Enas Mabarti's and anonymous *pupujians* collected by Yus Rusyana are closer to the source of the verse. On the other hand, we find many elaborations in the praises of Sirodjuddin and Hidayat Suryalaga.

Jajang A Rohmana's contribution may enrich the research in Sundanese literature and the study of Quranic interpretation in a broader context. What is probably lacking in this book, and perhaps will be studied by Jajang or other researchers in the future, is the public of *pupub* and *pupujian*, which is less discussed in this book. We may wonder about the role of *pesantrens* in West Java in circulating *pupujians* to their *santris* and how they connected on the wider network.

Tom van den Berg, *Puisi Sunda Zaman Belanda*. Garut: Penerbit Layung. 168 pp. Indonesian translation by Hawe Setiawan from the Dutch 'Van Kennis tot Kunst: Soendanese Poëzie in de Koloniale Tijd.'

Despite having to wait 28 years for an Indonesian translation of this book, this work remains relevant and up to date within the minimal study of Sundanese literature. This book complements Mikihiro Moriyama and Darpan's study in the context of Sundanese literature during the print culture era in the Dutch East Indies. While Moriyama focused on modernity in general based on published books for educational purposes, Darpan discussed the *carpon* (short story) genre, Tom van den Berg completed it with a study of poetry.

This book is divided into three parts. The first part, *Tuan Kebun, Misionaris dan Ilmuwan: Pandangan Orang Belanda Terhadap Orang dan Puisi Sunda*, contains the Dutch views of Sundanese people and poetry, represented by the Dutch plantation owners, missionaries, and scientists. Until the early 19th century, Sundanese people were often called mountain people (*bergmensch*), but this did not include Sundanese

aristocrats whose lifestyle followed Javanese aristocrats. Letters were written in Javanese. Roorda van Eysinga even noted around 1830 that the Sundanese aristocrats themselves would be offended if they received letters in Sundanese rather than Javanese.

The Dutch views on race, character, language, and Sundanese culture are often associated with their closest neighbour, the Javanese: their noses are flatter, their dispositions are softer and lazier, and the women are less civilized than the Javanese. Only K.F. Holle, whom Kern attributed as a “learned practitioner in the field of Sundanese language” (*den geleerden beoefenaar van het Soendaneesch*), gave a positive tone in this regard. According to him, the Sundanese are “livelier in character than the Javanese and less imaginative than the Malays.” They excel at two things, namely “kindness and flexibility.” They are less obedient and more honest than the Javanese. The glorification of Java is also part of the literary taste. When Sundanese poems (in Javanese verse) were published for the first time, Holle recites an anecdote of unawareness among the Sundanese to their language:

[...] Yes, I still remember the response of a regent, when I told him that the Garut head preacher had composed a Sundanese poem (*wawatjan*), ‘that is impossible: Sundanese is not a language!’ (Holle 1867: 451).

This chapter also discusses the policy of publishing textbooks for the Sundanese according to the tastes of the Dutch. Holle, whom his native friend, Moehammad Moesa, technically assisted, played a significant role in these “civilizing” activities. Holle tried to include European elements according to indigenous customs, especially in reading activities. These textbooks are written in the form of poetry (*wawacan/dangding*), so they can be easily practiced by the Sundanese. The Sundanese prefers to read aloud the book, not only in front of the audience but also individually. For Holle, Sundanese is like a “funnel” for Western knowledge, and poetry is the most practical means to reach the government ideas of civilization.

Holle’s efforts were not without criticism from the Dutch themselves. Koorders, initially mentored by Holle, turned in his harsh criticism of these Sundanese books, which he saw futile. If Holle was practical, Koorders’ approach seemed scientific. The actual focus of their debate was the dispute between “poetry vs. prose.” Koorders thought that writing in the form of poetry was not flexible because it had to follow the rules of the meter, so the expressions in such works were useless. He considered it as an “alienation” of language. This language only reflects the language of *tembang*, not the language that reflects people’s life.

Apart from the landlords and *taalamptenaars* (language officials), missionaries also played a role in the Sundanese language’s fate. The first missionaries who were members of the Nederlandsche Zendingsvereeniging (NZV) set foot on the coast of Batavia, first of all being G.J. Grashuis with his former students C. Albers and D. J. van der Linden in 1863, followed by C.J. Cusell and A. Dijkstra in 1864, and a year later S. Coolsma and A. Geerdink. Their arrival were not without obstacles. Residents of Priangan was cold welcoming them. They had no objection with the missions, but they prefer the peaceful status quo and fear that their arrival would trigger tensions in fanatical Islamic areas. Holle himself, ostensibly representing the government, was worried about the missionaries. Coolsma refuted this view. According to him, what the natives hated from the Dutch were their materialistic character, while the missionaries had a faith with them. However, this contradicts the reality experienced by Coolsma himself, whose Sundanese always regard him with suspicion for most of the Sundanese consider all Europeans were *kapir*. Missionary efforts to produce grammar books, compiling dictionaries, translating the bible seemed to have unsatisfactory results. They gave up hope that they would succeed in converting the Sundanese to Christianity. Towards the Sundanese language, missionaries, like landlords and language

officials, sustain a purity of the language. These actors encouraged Sundanese to write their language in a pure, simple, correct, and straightforward form, in other words, in prose. It appears that these missionaries lacked native tink-tank companions like Moehammad Moesa to Holle. Hence, their publications were not as successful as Moesa's books, which Holle sponsored.

Another point of view about the Sundanese is the view of scientists, in this case, represented by C.M. Pleyte and K.A.H. Hidding. Like Holle and Coolsma, Pleyte believed that the Sundanese could accept progress. According to Pleyte, the Sundanese must give up their inferiority by their own will in order to be able to direct themselves into the economic power of the world market. Compassion for the Sundanese will only delay his development as a human. Pleyte's point of view was economical because his main aim was to research Sundanese crafts: weaving, wood carving, iron forging. Economic works cannot be separated from the elements of myth, so in his view, that was what needed to be removed first.

Among his predecessors, K.A.H. Hidding was more revolutionary. As an anthropologist during a period in which evolution was being criticized, Hidding considered Sundanese culture a complex separate entity. He rejected western views about the primitive scale of the Sundanese, although this point of view is ultimately ironic. Hidding wanted to acquire objective knowledge of the Sundanese and so could have an influence on them. In short, landlords, missionaries, and scientists, from Holle to Hidding, in Berg's point of view, desire to rule the universe, foreigners, Sundanese.

In the second and third parts, the author tries to contrast two publications that have influenced literary life in *Tatar Sunda*. The clean side of the government's version was the role of Balai Pustaka through its weekly publication, *Parahiangan*. On the other hand, at almost the same time, private publications were furnished.

From the expressive elements employed by the *Parahiangan* poets, in the author's view, one can find a network of poetical motifs within the "mythology" of the poets. With striking patterns, we find the words *kadar*, *takdir*, *kulak canggeum*, *milik* (fate), *gurat*, *titis tulis*, *papastén*, *nasib*, all of which express 'the fate, destiny'. This poetical myth seems to imply that the Sundanese must accept the situation, no matter how bitter it is.

Poetry expresses order. For the Sundanese, poetry is not a means of artistic expression but also a means of transferring knowledge. *Parahangan*'s poems are didactic based on the norms of the educated. *Parahiangan*'s poems affirm Balai Pustaka's ideals and refute that people can improve their fate by relying on vague actions. By contrast with the poems in *Parahiangan*, poems in private publications contain resistance, as in this poem:

<i>Dangdaenan ararojag, katingalna koe simkoering, kawas merdika ngagoepaj, Meleber seungit malati, kawas merdika noe njanding, njanding rabajat noe bingoeng, noe keur nandangan sangsara, disiksa koe kapitalist, noe adatna ten beda saperti sétan.</i>	The leaves are swaying, as I saw, like the independence swaying hands, fragrant jasmines spread their scents, as the independence that comes near, comes near to the confused people, who are in miseries, tortured by the capitalist, who acts like a devil
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This poem is extraordinary in many ways. It was published on the first page of *Padjadjaran*, October 11, 1920. Modern words such as "*merdika*" and "*kapitalist*" are so easily inserted into the poem. The swaying leaves are associated with the call for the forthcoming. If in *Parahiangan* the wind is associated

with the progress of modern times, here the wind ignites the spirit of resistance. Lust (*napsu*), which has a negative connotation in *Parahiangan*, becomes something positive. They lust for independence. Not in all periodicals can we find the word independence. In periodicals patronized by prominent political figures such as Wiranatakoesoema and Djajadiningrat, this word is, as might be expected, not or rarely used.

Young Sundanese intellectuals began to question who they were and where they belonged in this world. They seek to define Sundanese identity. This includes providing insight into its geographic area in the form of poetry.

<i>Banten diitoeng ka hidji, Batawi noe kadoeana, noe katiloena Tjirebon, Priangan noe kaopatna, ieu nagri anoe opat, enggeus katjeloeke kaseboet, katelah tanah Pasoendan</i>	Banten is count as the first, Batavia as the second, Cirebon is the third, Priangan is the fourth, These four countries, Were well known and famous, Known as the land of Pasundan.
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The idea of independence in the 1920s had freed the Sundanese from ethnic primordialism. Even the *Sekar Roekoen* periodical, which is obedient to the government, published a poem that echoed the spirit of Indonesian independence and the spirit of unity. This idea of independence was often associated with the glorious past of Pajajaran, which in the Sundanese understanding, was completely independent. This book was translated successfully by Hawe Setiawan, which allows Indonesian readers to enjoy this remarkable book without having too much difficulties.