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Literary infrastructure in West Sumatra, Indonesia
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Citation

Sudarmoko, S. (2021, May 26). *Literary infrastructure in West Sumatra, Indonesia*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3179457>

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Title: Literary infrastructure in West Sumatra, Indonesia

Issue Date: 2021-05-26

CHAPTER 1

REVISITING A PRIVATE PUBLISHING HOUSE IN THE INDONESIAN COLONIAL PERIOD: PENJIARAN ILMOE

THE PUBLISHING activities run by Penjiaran Ilmoe, a publisher located in Fort de Kock, discussed in this chapter show how the publishing house holds an important part in the literary infrastructure in a region. The publishing house is not only publishing literary works written by writers, but also influencing, and to some degree is influenced by, the literary dynamics take place around the location of a publishing house. The primary function of the publisher is to publish new works of literature, distribute the works, attract writers to write and publish their works, and develop themes or forms of literary works. Publishing houses operate within their local context, made up of non-literary aspects such as social, religious, political, educational, and economics. Roman Pergaoelan, a series of literary publication launched by Penjiaran Ilmoe which was established during the Indonesian colonial period (1938-42), faced numerous challenges in keeping the readers and subscribers. These included protests from *adat*, religious group well as from the colonial rulers in regard to the published contents. It also had to manage the distribution coverage, find suitable works, keep and expand publishing networks, and arrange strategy to maintain their existence. In this regard, the publishing house occupies an important position within the literary field. As a vital part of literary infrastructure, it is necessary to study this site of literary production.

This chapter gives a brief history of Penjiaran Ilmoe, a private publishing house in West Sumatra during the late colonial period.⁵ Penjiaran

⁵ This chapter was previously published in the *Journal of Indonesia and the Malay World*, 2010, vol. 38 (111), pp. 181-216.

Ilmoe's activities were an important contribution to Indonesian intellectual and literary development at the time. Its publications covered a wide variety of fields, from politics, religious and social issues to literature and included both textbooks and books for general readers. Although relatively free from the control of the colonial government because of its location in a peripheral area, Penjiaran Ilmoe was taken to court due to the content of its publications. In one case an author, Martha, whose work was published by Penjiaran Ilmoe was accused of causing offence not only by religious parties but also by the colonial government (Romanita, 1941: 73). The purpose of this chapter is to enrich the understanding of the history of Indonesian literature, in particular in West Sumatra, with respect to literary publication and the sociological factors involved. In doing so, in this chapter I discuss the activities of Penjiaran Ilmoe, its staff, including its writers, its book distribution system and the books and periodicals it published, which form the primary source material of this chapter, with particular emphasis given to the popular Roman Pergaoelan series. Published bi-weekly, Roman Pergaoelan focused on the prose (novel and compilation of short stories) written by authors coming from West Sumatra and some other places in Indonesia. By discussing the publishing house and its activities, I aim to show that the publishing house is an important component of literary infrastructure in West Sumatra. Penjiaran Ilmoe operated at all stages of literary infrastructure and thus provides a vital insight into the literary practices of West Sumatra and Indonesia more broadly.

A Brief Overview about Penjiaran Ilmoe and Roman Pergaoelan

Penjiaran Ilmoe was founded in June 1939 at Bioscoopstraat 90 in Fort de Kock. During this era, publishing was dominated by Balai Pustaka which had been established by the Dutch government with the purpose to publish and distribute readings for schools and public libraries.⁶ Penjiaran Ilmoe's main purpose of publishing books was to educate the general public

⁶ The back page of Kamizir's work *Spider Komplot Lawa2 (Spider the Bat Syndicate)* (1940: 78) features an announcement: 'Places you need to know in Fort de Kock are: 1st Bank Nasional established in 1930. 2nd N.V. INKORBA established in 1937. 3rd Penjiaran Ilmoe established in 1939. These are firms owned by your own people!' *Di Fort de Kock. Adres jang perloe toean kenal, jaitoe: 1e. BANK NASIONAL didirikan 1930. 2e. H. My. INKORBA N.V. didirikan 1937. 3e. Firma PENJIARAN ILMOE didirikan '39. Peroesahaan bangsa toean sendiri!*

and to inculcate readers with a nationalistic spirit. Publications by Penjiaran Ilmoe can be divided into three categories: social movement books, educational texts, and Roman Pergaoelan (RP). Social movement books addressed issues related to the betterment or modernising of society, for example by the founding of organizations (mostly religious organizations), state affairs, law, and other related issues. The educational publications of Penjiaran Ilmoe included language course books, school textbooks and reference books. The third division, the RP series, was a fortnightly literary series 60-120 pages in length. This series is the primary subject of this chapter.

The name 'Roman Pergaoelan' has two meanings. First, it implies various colours, forms or portraits of relationships, as indicated by a statement from the editors saying, "We will not be discouraged from keeping ROMAN (Indonesian word meaning: colour-forms or image) PERGAOELAN (society) in the public eye during these times of change."⁷ Secondly, it describes a literary genre: a novel or short story collection about relationships as the primary theme of the series. Stories within the RP series were themselves divided into four categories — history, politics, social commentary and detective stories. RP was intended by the editors of Penjiaran Ilmoe to be an alternative to Balai Pustaka and to provide material for the general public, especially young people. As mentioned in a statement by the editors, the purpose of RP was 'refining language use and encouraging the habit of reading. They [the novels] contain information and inspire critical thinking. Therefore the types of *roman* [novels] that are appearing in large numbers at the present time are of great value to Indonesian society in its present formative stage' (Hs. Bakri, 1939). The editors also stated that:

The stories published in RP take up many columns in newspapers, and are the subject of repeated debates because of the uproar they create in society. People who read *Persamaan – Sinar Sumatra – Pemandangan – Abad XX, Oetoesan* and other newspapers will undoubtedly understand the 'position' of RP in Indonesian society. As its name suggests, RP always provides readers with stories about the characteristics

⁷ *Tidaklah kita akan berpatah hati memperlihatkan ROMAN (warna-bentoek atau gambaran) PERGAOELAN kepada masyarakat, dalam zaman pantjaroba ini.* (From a statement attached to D. Umri's *Di Samping Kerobohannya Kota Bondjol*, 1940, p. 76). In the purpose of keeping the meaning of roman as fictional work comparable to novel, in this thesis I use the word 'roman' throughout.

(ROMAN) of our social life (PERGAOELAN). (Merayu Sukma's *Joerni Joesri*, 1940: front page)⁸

While RP was specifically published by Penjiaran Ilmoe, similar fictional series were published under different titles by other publishers in Medan (North Sumatra), Padang (West Sumatra), Batavia, Solo (Central Java), Malang and Surabaya (East Java), and other smaller cities. Publications from Padang and Medan were similar to RP in terms of length, size and themes and some authors who wrote for RP also published *roman* with other publishers. Most RP were originally written in Low Malay, using simple or popular dictions and grammars, and many were either translations or adaptations of foreign language novels. Detective stories, such as *Bereboet Wang 1 Million* (Fighting Over One Million Dollars) (B. Delannoy, translated by M. Kasim, 1939), were a popular source for translation. The use of translated material in addition to original works was initiated due to the editors' intentions to expand the diversity of texts available for public reading.

The first *roman* was probably published in June 1937. This information is drawn from the republished Thaher Samad roman *Student Dokter* which states on its front page:

This story is an RP publication from June 1937 four years ago. Due to overwhelming requests, we are printing it again for the second time, in June 1941.⁹

However, *Sinar Sumatra* newspaper (2 November 1939) informs us that publication of the RP series began in June 1939: 'The books have been published since last June, starting as monthly magazines, and subsequently printed twice a month with Penjiaran Ilmoe in Fort de Kock as their publisher.'¹⁰ This

⁸ *Tjerita2 R. Pergaoelanlah baroe jang sampai mehabiskan berkolom-kolom soerat kabar, bahkan sampai bertoebi-toebi diperbintjangkan orang saking gemparnja masjarakat lantaran tjeritanja. Orang jang membatja Persamaan – Sinar Soematra – Pemandangan – Abad XX, Oetoesan dll. tentoe mengerti sampai dimana “kedoedoekan” R. P. dalam masjarakat Indonesia. Memang sebagai namanja, R. P. senantiasa menjadjikan tjerita2 jang mengenai ROMAN (warna) dalam PERGAOELAN hidoep.*

⁹ *Tjerita adalah penerbitan R.P[roman pergaoelan] boelan Juni 1937 empat tahoen jang lampau. Oleh karena terlaloe banjak permintaan, maka sekarang kita tjetak kembali boeat kedoea kalinja, jaitoe Juni 1941.*

¹⁰ *Boekoe2 itoe diterbitkan semendjak Juni jang baroe laloe, moela2 sebagai madjallah boelanan, kemoedian diterbitkan doea kali seboelan dengan “Penjiaran Ilmoe” di Fort de Kock selakoe penerbitnja.*

suggests that the first publication of *Student Dokter* (The Medical Student) may have been a trial issue for surveying potential readers and the market, as no RP publications have been found to have been published in the period between Samad's *Student Dokter* and *Archa* (Statue) in 1937, and Maisir Thaib's two romans *Mister Man* and *Timbunan Majat di Selat Dardanellen* (The Heap of Deads in Dardanellen Strait) in 1939. It may have taken the publishers two years to accumulate enough capital and literary material in order to ensure regular fortnightly publication of the RP series starting in 1939.

The Penjiaran Ilmoe office was a well-known gathering place for students and the general reading public in Fort de Kock because, as was common for publishers at the time, Penjiaran Ilmoe also functioned as a bookshop (*boekhandel*), providing schoolbooks and novels by other publishing houses in West and North Sumatra.¹¹ Penjiaran Ilmoe had connections with other publishing houses in North Sumatra and at one point had an agreement with them standardising the price of roman.¹² This price regulation was supported by the conference of writers, journalists and publishing houses that took place in Medan on 17 December 1939.¹³ The conference had been organised by Adi Negoro¹⁴ to respond to the negative reactions of readers and the general public (especially Islamic organi-

¹¹ Most RP contain a list of books, both fiction and nonfiction, available at the Penjiaran Ilmoe bookshop. See, for example, an advertisement for textbooks in Arabic for Islamic schools students available at Penjiaran Ilmoe on the back page of Martha's *Kamang Affaire* (1939: 73).

¹² The price of every RP in Fort de Kock and Medan was the same: i.e. f0, 18. See the front page of A. Damhoeri's *Zender Nirom* (1940) and the announcement placed on the back page of SZ. Kamisir's *Spider Komplot Lawa2* (1940): 'Announcement! The price of RP has returned to normal. We increased it in line with an agreement with our colleagues in Medan to raise prices together. But theory is different from practice. That's all right, isn't it?' *DIMAKLOEMKAN! Kembali harga RP sebagai biasa poela. Tadinja kita naikkan, karena soedah dipoatoeskan dengan kollega2 di Medan akan sama2 menaikkan harga. Tetapi teori berlain dengan praktik. Tidak afa-afa boekan?*

¹³ Some other publishers of novels in Medan at the time were *Madjallah Dunia* Pengalaman, Lukisan Pudjangga, Gubahan Maya, Tjendrawasih, and *Mustika Alhambra*.

¹⁴ His original name was Djamaluddin gelar Datuk Madjo Sutan (14 August 1904- 8 January 1967). A well-known journalist in Indonesia, he studied at STOVIA, Jakarta (1918-1925) and in Germany and the Netherlands (1926-1930). He was editor-in-chief of *Panji Pustaka* magazine (1931) and *Pewarta Deli* newspaper in Medan (1932-1942). He also led *Mimbar Indonesia* magazine (1948-1950) together with Prof. Soepomo. He worked for National News Agency ANTARA until his death and was involved in political and educational activities. His works include *Revolusi dan Kebudayaan* (Revolution and Culture) (1954), *Ensiklopedi Umum dalam Bahasa Indonesia* (Popular Enciclopedia in Bahasa Indonesia) (1954), *Darah Muda* (Young Blood) (novel, 1931), *Asmara Jaya* (Glorious Romance) (novel, 1932) and *Melawat ke Barat* (A Visit to the West) (novel, 1950).

zations) toward these reading materials (Bakri, 1939).¹⁵ The conference shows that writers and publishing houses involved in the production of *roman* attempted to forge a united front against their critics.

Penjiaran Ilmoe seemingly did not publish any books during the Japanese occupation (1942-1945),¹⁶ but began to function again as soon as Indonesia gained independence in August 1945. New books published by Penjiaran Ilmoe at the time included *Sjahrir Pegang Kemoedi* (Sjahrir Takes the Lead) (Natsir Thaib, 1946), *Pengertian Politik: Tata Negara* (Understanding Politics: State Administration) (Tamar Djaja, 1946), *Sedjarah Pergerakan Politik Indonesia* (The History of Indonesian Political Movement) (Tamar Djaja, 1946), *Islam dengan Politik* (Islam and Politics) (Aziz Thaib, 1946), *Islam sebagai Ideologie* (Islam as Ideology) (M. Natsir, 1950), and *Panti Pengetahuan Politik* (The Source of Politics Knowledge) (Tamar Djaja, 1950), titles which indicate Penjiaran Ilmoe's continuing role in developing civil society. Some RP series were republished in Medan after the Japanese occupation by the publishing house Tjerdas. This republication may indicate a lack of other texts available for publishing, but the fact that Tamar Djaja, previously the chief editor at Penjiaran Ilmoe, became the head of Tjerdas, suggests that he may have wanted to use the RP series to attract more readers and develop a wider readership in Medan.

Historical Background

A brief look at the social, educational, economic, and religious development found in Indonesia will enable us to better understand the era in which the Penjiaran Ilmoe publishing house was established. Throughout the Padri and Kamang Wars in the 1920s, West Sumatra experienced

¹⁵ Tamar Djaja (1955: 209) also notes: 'In other places, too, people engaged in lively discussions about dime novels. Not long after, those discussions extended to an exchange of opinions about roman publication in general, which at that time was thriving in East Sumatra and West Sumatra, especially after Mohammad Hatta issued a statement from his faraway place of exile: we do not agree with the publication of those kinds of roman. *Di lain 2 tempatpun orang ramai membitjarakan roman pitjisan dan pemitjaraan tidak lama kemudian meluas sampai pemikiran2 mengenai seluruh penerbitan roman jang pada waktu itu di Sumatera Timur dan Sumatera Barat sangat meriah. Lebih2 setelah dari Mohamad Hatta sendiri dari tempat pembuangannja jang djauh itu didengar pernjataannja: tidak setudju dengan penerbitan djenis roman2 itu.*

¹⁶ However, every roman I read in KITLV bore the stamp of Borneo Minseibu, a censorship body of the Imperial Japanese army in Kalimantan. This deserves further investigation.

rapid changes introduced by political and religious parties and organizations. A number of new, modernising organisations arrived in West Sumatra, including Muhammadiyah, an Islamic organisation founded by Ahmad Dahlan on 18 November 1912 in Yogyakarta, which became established in West Sumatra in 1927. While the Communist Party also existed in the area,¹⁷ the religious—mainly Islamic—organisations secured the most prominent social positions in West Sumatra, and people vigorously used these organizations as a medium for expressing their ideas and aspirations. The main reason why Islamic organisations such as Muhammadiyah became popular and widely accepted within West Sumatra was because of the many returnees and scholars from the Middle East who shared similar views. Political activities of the organisations were divided, with those led by the younger generation, the *Kaum Muda*, made up of those who had recently returned from studying in the Middle East and were strongly influenced by the Wahabi movement there, and others led by the older generation, who held closely to their Minangkabau *adat* or custom.

Fort de Kock, where Penjiaran Ilmoe was located, was an important place in Sumatra because it was the capital of the Padang Highlands regency (*keresidenan Padang Darat* or *Padangsche Bovenlanden*) and was therefore the centre of educational, economic, social and religious development in the region. The first European-style school in West Sumatra opened in Padang in 1825 (Graves 2007). In Fort de Kock, the first primary school (*sekolah rendah*) was established in 1843, followed by other schools in several places in inland Padang *nagari*. Pupil numbers at these schools increased steadily, reaching a peak in 1870 when schools could not accommodate all the students who wanted to enrol. Most of those who were rejected in West Sumatra went to attend religious schools in Aceh instead, or to traditional Islamic schools in the form of *surau* education in West Sumatra. But many parents wanted their children to become state employees, which required a diploma issued by a secular school. Competition for government jobs was intense: in 1911, for example, thousands of candidates applied for 100 positions. In an effort to meet the need for secular education, some people started to open private schools of their

¹⁷ A book about the Communist Party published by Penjiaran Ilmoe (second ed. 1945) was entitled *Trio Komunis Indonesia: Tan Malaka, Alimin, Semaoen, Berikut Stalin dan Lenin*.

own, with as many as 23 private schools operating in Padang in 1912 (Taufik Abdullah and Budhi Santoso 1983: 66-104). Although operated by locals, these private schools adopted the curriculum of European-style schools.¹⁸ For Penjiaran Ilmoe, this rapid growth in education was significant because by the 1930s there were a large number of literate and educated people who made up the readership of the various publishing houses.

The economic conditions of West Sumatra also improved during the 1930s-40s. Part of the greater economic prosperity can be attributed to the new policy of coffee plantations in the beginning of the 20th century introduced by the Dutch colonials, the implementation of *ethische politiek* in the field of education in particular, and the establishment of new schools. Increasing opportunities for education and improved economic conditions triggered growth in the number of young people who entered schools with hopes for possible employment within the civil service.

Publishing Houses in West Sumatra

Apart from the publisher Balai Pustaka and the *Pujangga Baru* periodical, there were several other private, commercial publishers which had an interest in publishing literary books during the colonial period. Besides commercial motives, private publishers also sought to educate and enlighten the general public. Many people having received formal education, working as editors, owners, and readers at different publishing houses, shared a vision of educating others by making reading materials more available. Unlike in Balai Pustaka and other Dutch printing houses such as Noordhoff and Kolff & Co, private publishers elevated local people who have received formal education to high-ranking positions, such as managers or writers (Farid and Razif, 2008: 279-80, Kuitert, 2020).

Although Balai Pustaka had the authority bestowed upon it by the government to choose what books to publish and distribute, and it held a central place in literary life in colonial Indonesia, it did not publish enough to satisfy readers, either in terms of volume of books produced or diversity of material. Between 1925 and 1941, Balai Pustaka published around

¹⁸ For more reading about education in West Sumatra during the colonial period see Graves (2007, in particular chapters 5-7) and for an interesting discussion on the special case of school textbooks in West Sumatra see Suryadi (2006).

872 book titles in various languages such as Javanese, Malay, Dutch, Sundanese, and Madurese (Balai Pustaka 1948: 19). The increase in graduates of local and Dutch schools, and in returnees from study in the Middle East, led to the creation of a new reading public, hungry for reading materials that addressed their experiences. Some also wanted outlets for their own writing. There was a great imbalance between the small number of publishers and books published, and the large audience. In addition to meeting the sheer demand for reading material, private publishers had other missions to fulfil. Some, of course, pursued purely commercial interests, by publishing pornography, for example. The production of pornography by private publishers may have later provided grounds for widespread disapproval of *roman picisan* (dime novels), cheap and sensual books which became popular after Indonesia's independence. This dismissive attitude towards dime novels deserves further investigation to compare it with prevailing attitudes toward other kinds of roman.¹⁹

During this pre-independence period, new publishing houses sprang up in places such as Padang, Padangpanjang, Fort de Kock, and Payakumbuh. Some specialized in the publication of schoolbooks, books about *adat* (custom), local and traditional stories, and religion.²⁰ By the end of 1939, there were 33 publishers in West Sumatra, including companies which published daily, weekly, fortnightly, and monthly (Indisch Verslag 1940: 129). These publishers worked in various languages. The most widespread language was Malay, used by 30 different publications, followed by Malay-Chinese²¹ (2) and Dutch (1).

Most of the publications from these new publishing houses were newspapers. According to Asma Naim and Mochtar Naim (1975: 6-9), by the middle of the 20th century, there were at least 118 newspapers and

¹⁹ See for example the discussion on defining pornography in literary works by Organisasi Pengarang Indonesia in Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana et al. 1957. *Apakah Bacaan Tjabul?* (What is Pornographic Readings?) Jakarta: Dinas Penerbitan Balai Pustaka.

²⁰ For further reading on publications in West Sumatra, see Suryadi (2002).

²¹ Malay-Chinese was quite different from the Malay used by many Indonesians, as it was used exclusively by the Chinese community as a medium of communication with non-Chinese business associates, and was categorised as *Melayu Pasar* (Market or Bazaar Malay). The use of Malay-Chinese in literary works by the Chinese Peranakan community also contained different grammatical structures and vocabulary from what is known as *Melayu Tinggi*, or High Malay.

magazines published in West Sumatra.²² Some newspapers and magazines were published to cater towards the readers of a particular community such as *Barito Koto Gadang* (Fort de Kock, 1929-32), *Boedi Tjaniago* (Fort de Kock, Drukkery Agam, 1922), *Soeara Kota Gedang* (Fort de Kock, Vereeniging Studiefonds Kota Gedang, 1916-17), *Al Achbar* (Padang, 1913-14, in Arabic), *Al I'laam* (Koto Toeo, Ampat Angkat, 1922-23), *Moeslim India* (Padang, Moeslim India, 1932), *Algementeen Advertieblad* (Padang, Padangsche Snelpres, 1921, in Dutch), and *Bintang Tiong Hoa* (Padang, Tiong Hoa Ien Soe Kiok, 1910-15).

Ownership and Editorial Staff

The managing director of Penjiaran Ilmoe was Tamar Djaja, born in 1913.²³ He carried out several activities in business and trading, publication, politics, and writing. He was a member of the board of *Angkatan Muda Indonesia* (Indonesian Youth Generation), as well as chief editor of the *Genderang Syahid* weekly, information chairman for the West Sumatra branch of Masjumi,²⁴ chief editor of the weekly publication *Berdjuang*, and head of the government Information Office. He moved to Jakarta in 1950 to become central information head of Masjumi, and subsequently chief of the publication section of the Department of Religion from 1953 to 1956. Tamar Djaja wrote several books and articles in newspapers and magazines after Indonesia's independence, mainly through Islamic publishers such as Panji Masjarakat, based in Jakarta, and was actively involved in various institutions related to Islam and the press in Java (Horton 2009: 5-6, 15).

²² Hendra Naldi (2008:5-8) mentions that during the period of 1900-1930, in particular, there were 53 newspapers published in West Sumatra.

²³ Tamar Djaja's name appears at the top of the list of Penjiaran Ilmoe staff on the back page of an RP special edition (Lebaran edition 1 Sjawal 1359 H). His full name and title, H. Tamburrasjid Tamar Djaja Gelar St. Rais Alamsjah, indicate that he had significant position within society and religious fields as well. In this book there also appears a list of people who managed and supported the production and distribution of the books published by Penjiaran Ilmoe, wishing a happy Idul Fitri to their readers.

²⁴ *Majelis Syuro Muslimin Indonesia*, Council of Indonesian Muslim Association, an Islamic based organisation since its establishment in 1943 and became a political party from 1945 until it was banned in 1960 because supporting PRRI in West Sumatra.

The owner and financial backer of the Penjiaran Ilmoe publishing house was someone known as Datoek Pamoentjak.²⁵ This is probably Sjamsoeddin Datoek Pamoentjak, who was deputy director of Bank Nasional between 1934 and 1941, and director from 1947 to 1953 (Aziz Thaib et al. 1970: 127-131). Sjamsoeddin Datoek Pamoentjak's biography can be found in Aziz Thaib's book, from which the following summary is drawn. Datoek Pamoentjak was born in Kampung Pisang IV Koto in 1905. After graduating from a *volkschool* he then continued his studies in an Islamic school in Padangpanjang. His father was a farmer and also a goldsmith. Datoek Pamoentjak also took part in his father's trading business in Lubuk Sikaping in Pasaman. He was an activist involved with Sjarikat Rakyat, a social and political organization in Padangpanjang. Difficulties related to his involvement in Sjarikat Rakyat forced him to move to Gunung Sitoli, where he opened a new trading business. He later returned to Lubuk Sikaping and in 1935, when Bank Nasional had been operating for five years, he obtained the position of deputy director, under B. St. Burhamam as director. He went to Payakumbuh every Sunday and to Batusangkar every Thursday to supervise the activities of bank branches. During the Japanese occupation, when people across Indonesia including West Sumatra were suffering economically and socially, the bank ceased its activities and Datoek Pamoentjak returned to running his own business. After the declaration of the independence of the Republic of Indonesia, he returned to the bank and served as director from 1947 until 1953. He died after a short illness during a business trip to Jakarta in September 1953 (Aziz Thaib et al 1970: 98).

Datoek Pamoentjak's association with both Bank Nasional and Penjiaran Ilmoe is significant, in light of the bank's mission to improve social conditions. Bank Nasional was founded in 1930 by traders in Bukittinggi who wanted to raise and organize funds to help needy West

²⁵ A debate attached to Tamar Djaja's novel *Sebabnja Saja Bahagia* (The Reason of My Happiness) (1940) between Habe Espei, H. Siradjoeddin Abbas, and Tamar Djaja states: 'I, Siradjoeddin Abbas (editor) disagree with Mr Tr. Djaja. Of course we disagree, because he is a man of roman while I am a man of religion. He is well known because of someone else's capital, that of Mr Dt. Pamoentjak, while I am well known because of the work I do.' *Saja* (Siradjoeddin Abbas (ed.) *berlain dengan t. Tr. Djaja. Memang berlainan, beliau toekang roman, saja toekang agama. Beliau tersiar namanja karena kapital orang lain karena kapital t. Dt. Pamoentjak, sedang saja oleh karena pekerdjaan saja* (p. 80).

Sumatrans, especially those who had lived and studied in Middle East.²⁶ In the beginning, the bank was a cooperative (*koperasi Abuan Saudagar*) but later became a bank for administrative reasons. Bank Nasional provided support to smallholders to help strengthen the economy. As noted by Taufik Abdullah and Budhi Santoso (1983: 88-89), some of Bank Nasional's divisions were N.V. Inkorba, N.V. Nusantara, and N.V. Candi Minang. As a company which had a close relationship with the bank, Penjiaran Ilmoe received support from other bank subsidiaries. For example, the reward for the highest sales by a book distributor was a *batik* cloth provided by N.V. Inkorba.

Based on information from Mohammad Hatta (1939: vii) and Taufik Abdullah and Budhi Santoso (1983: 88-89), it is possible that Penjiaran Ilmoe also received financial support and guidance from the bank. According to Taufik and Budhi Santoso (1983: 88-89), Bank Nasional operated several smallholder companies as pilot projects under the guidance of, and funded by, the bank. In his introduction to a book published by Penjiaran Ilmoe entitled *Mentjari Volkenbond dari Abad ke Abad* (Searching for the United Nations for Centuries) (1939: vii), Hatta acknowledges Anwar Sutan Saidi for helping in the publication of his book. Anwar Sutan Saidi, an influential figure in Bukittinggi in the 1930s and 40s with close connections to the intellectual movement, was also the director of PT Bank Nasional, and the founder of Taman Siswa in Fort de Kock.

In order to provide evaluation, suggestions, and other comments for its improvement, the publishers assembled a consultative committee comprised of people well-known in Fort de Kock, many of whom were directly related to Bank Nasional. The committee members were Datoek Pamoentjak himself, H.M. Yatim (director of N.V. Inkorba), Anwar Sutan Saidi (director of Bank Nasional), H.Dt. Madjolabih (director of N.V. Handelv) and Sjech Daoed Arrasjidi (an ulama or religious leader in Bukittinggi) (Djaja, 1941: 4).

²⁶Anwar Sutan Saidi, one of the founding members of Bank Nasional, wrote in his article "Bank Desa di Sumatera Barat" (1969. s.n) about the revitalization of the self-management of the state fund in order to strengthen the economy.

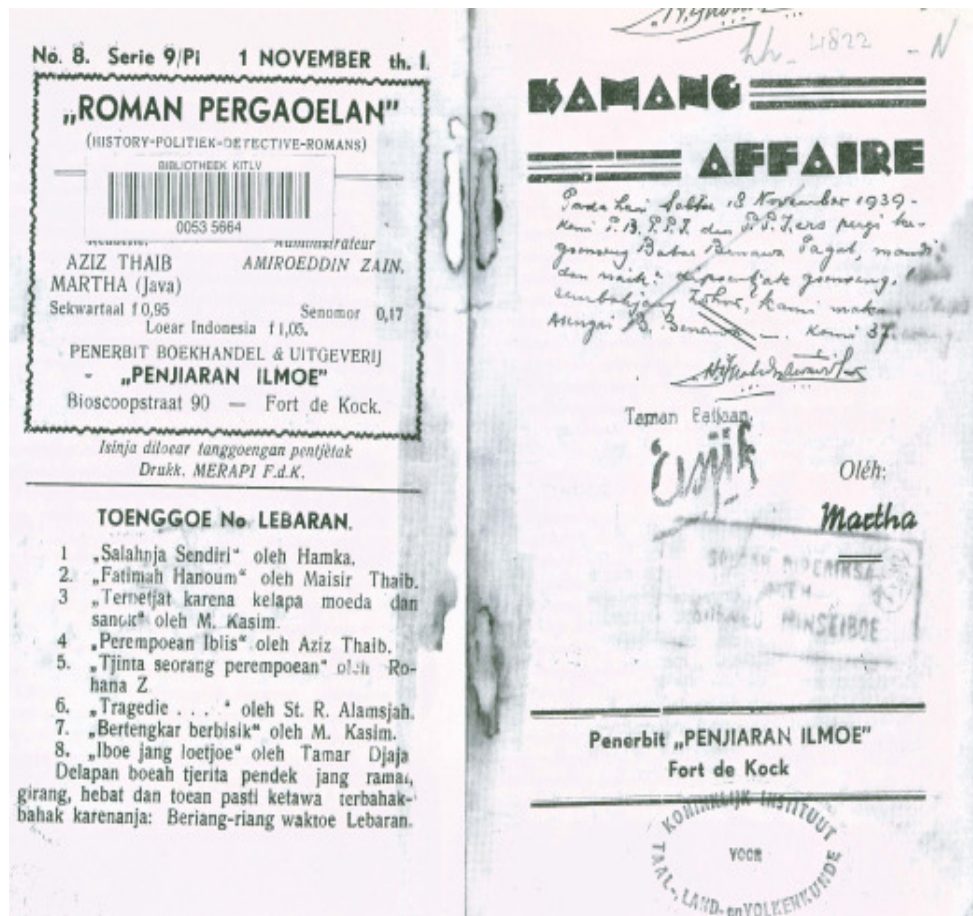


FIGURE 1 Cover page of a roman published by Penjiaran Ilmoe and information on its editorial staff Courtesy of KITLV, Leiden.

The permanent editors of the RP series were Aziz Thaib, Maisir Thaib, and Amelz (A. Manaf el Zamzani). Other staff at Penjiaran Ilmoe included B. Doice who worked as an illustrator and in the marketing division, and A. Moenir and Kamaroellah who were distributors (*looper*) and sellers (*verkoper*) of Penjiaran Ilmoe. Writers published in RP often doubled as distributors. The authors of RP published by Penjiaran Ilmoe came from all over Indonesia, including, for instance, Merayu Sukma (originally Mohamad Sulaiman Hasan) who was born in 1914 in Balikpapan, North Kalimantan, and who grew up in Banjarmasin, South Kalimantan, and Trimurty (1912-2008) from Solo, Central Java.

The Lebaran special issue of RP from 1 Sjawal 1359 AH (1940) provides information about writers, distributors and associates, among them

Martha (Maisir Thaib),²⁷ director of Normal Islam Rantau, an Islamic school founded by a social organisation called Musyawarah Thalibin in South Kalimantan, Mohd. Kasim, a teacher (*Gep. Onderwyzer*), in Kota Nopan, S.K. Trimurty in Semarang, Merayu Sukma in Malang, M. Dimiyati in Solo, and Andjar Asmara in Yogyakarta. According to this special issue, those who had close connections with Penjiaran Ilmoe included S. Rahmansjah, Aziz Thaib (director of Drukkery Timoer Fort de Kock), H.M. Jatim (director of N.V. Inkorba Fort de Kock) and Anwar Sutan Saidi (director of Bank Nasional). There were several more distributors in Fort de Kock and others in Jambi, Banjarmasin and Padang, suggesting that Roman Pergaoelan had a readership extending far beyond West Sumatra alone.

Distribution of Penjiaran Ilmoe Books

The RP series enjoyed wider distribution than was commonly achieved by Balai Pustaka, reaching beyond Indonesia into Malaysia and Singapore. This broad level of distribution shows that West Sumatra was not an isolated region, received large influences and gave significant contribution in the literary field in the neighbouring places. Agents, many of which were also bookstores, were the main medium of distribution. Most of the agents were *perantau* (temporary migrants) of Minangkabau descent running businesses outside West Sumatra. Penjiaran Ilmoe tried to maintain a network of agents by holding competitions: the most loyal and successful seller would be rewarded with books and gifts, such as *batik* cloth. The following announcement appeared on the back page of the RP special edition *Lebaran Number 1 Sjawal 1359*:

Reward: As 1941 is coming, we urge our agents to clear all monies owing. Those whose accounts are in the best order will be rewarded with 10 issues.

²⁷ Martha (Maisir Thaib), born on 7 January 1920, was one of the editors of RP. He wrote roman entitled *Timbunan Majat di Selat Dardanella* (1938), *Kamang Affair* (1939), *Oestaz A Masjoek* and *Leider Mr. Semangat*. The last two titles were banned by the Dutch Secret Police and copies of them cannot now be located. Martha finished his studies at Normal Islam Padang and then moved to Ponorogo (1938) to teach at Pondok Pesantren (Islamic Boarding School) Gontor. He then moved to South Kalimantan to build and lead a private Islamic school. Martha was imprisoned in Sukamiskin in West Java for over a year because *Leider Mr. Semangat* was judged by a Dutch court to be subversive. For more information about Martha see his autobiography *Pengalaman Seorang Perintis Kemerdekaan Generasi Terakhir Menempuh Tujuh Penjara* (1992).

- No 1. Books to the value of f5 - your choice
- No 2. Books to the value of f4 - idem
- No 3. Books to the value of f3 - idem
- And so on, all of them will get *Poesaka Indonesia II*.²⁸

The result of a similar competition was announced in 1939 on the back page of M. Kasim's book:

Penjarian Ilmoe Publisher
RP Rewards

Agents with paid remittances to the highest value:

1. A. Hamid Ibrahim Pajakumbuh: a piece of high quality "Inkorba" batik cloth.
2. Hr. M. Nahar, Sei. Penoe: a book "Health".
3. A. M. Thalib, Samarinda (Borneo): a book "Education".

Remember! Roman Pergaoelan will present rewards every three months. And for the next three months, the rewards will be more valuable and considerable.²⁹

Another method of the publisher's promotion and market expansion was to send staff to go abroad to survey new markets, promote the publisher and its books, and perform other related promotional activities. The announcement below, from the inside back cover of a book by Hs. Bakry, suggests that increased distribution was directed towards Sumatra, Java, Singapore and Malaysia. These places had more people graduated from formal educations and therefore more potential readers and larger markets were available. The many Minangkabaus who temporarily migrated (*merantau*) to these regions were also potential readers for a Minangkabau-

²⁸ M. Kasim. 1940. *Bereboet Wang 1 Million*, p. 81.

Hadiah

Karena 1941 datang, haraplah agenten menjeter loenas2 segala toenggakannja. Oentong jang paling dan beres storannja diberi hadiah sampai 10 nomor.

No 1. boekoe2 seharga f5.- boleh pilih

No 2. " " f4. - idem

No 3. " " f3. - Idem

Dan seterusnya masing2 Poesaka Indonesia II

²⁹**Penerbit: Penjarian Ilmoe**

Hadiah Roman Pergaoelan

Agent jang paling banjak dan beres storannja,

No. 1. A. Hamid Ibrahim Pajakumbuh satoe helai Batik haloes special "Inkorba".

No. 2. Hr. M. Nahar, Sei. Penoe seboeah boekoe "Kesehatan".

No. 3. A. M. Thalib, Samarinda (Borneo) seboeah boekoe "Pendidikan".

Ingat! R. Pergaoelan setiap kwartal akan memberi hadiah. Dan hadiah boeat kw. jad. lebih besar dan berharga.

based publisher such as Penjiaran Ilmoe. The announcement states:

Sales Promotion of RP. RP is growing in popularity. In order to support its development, we have dispatched promoters all over Indonesia and Malaya. They are: 1st. Mr Darwis who is covering all of Java, 2nd. Mr M.St. Bagindo who is covering Jambi, Southern Sumatra and Lampung. 3rd. A.M. Malin Moedo whose areas are Bagan Siapi-api and Western Kalimantan, and 4th. M. Soeleman in Singapore and Malaya. In this way, the promotion of RP is constantly expanding.³⁰

A third method of promotion was to place book advertisements and reviews in newspapers and magazines that were published in many different places. Some newspapers contained reviews or small advertisements introducing new books. Usually newspapers provided a column with information on books they had received from publishers. Some of the reviews in newspapers or magazines were then quoted by editorial staff and placed on the front or back pages of a following edition. This was not only the case for Penjiaran Ilmoe's books, but also for books produced by other publishers in Batavia or Medan. For example, an edition of *Journalist Alamsjah* contains a quotation of a review of A. Damhoeri's *Menanti Soerat dari Rantau* (Waiting for Letters from Abroad), published in Medan, originally written in a school magazine named *RAYA* from Padangpanjang.

The publisher also periodically gave appropriate discounts to agents or distributors to increase sales. These discounts served to keep distributors loyal and to attract fresh distributors. On the back page of a work by Hamka (p. 65) an announcement states:

To all book distributors!

Beginning with this number, the discount for distributors is 25%.

Payments should be sent every 15 days, so we do not find ourselves under pressure with printing matters. Outstanding debts should be paid immediately and all unsold copies be returned. Your attention to these matters is appreciated. Our

³⁰ *Propagandisten R. Pergaoelan. Roman Pergaoelan kian hari, kian digemari djoega. Oentoek menambah kemadjoennja, kita meoetoes beberapa propagandisten keseloeroeh Indonesia dan tanah Melajoe jaitoe: 1e. Sdr. Darwis keseloeroeh djawa. 2e. Sdr. M. St. Bagindo ke daerah Djambi, Sumatra Selatan dan Lampoeng. 3e. A. M. Malin Moedo kedaerah Bagan Siapi-api dan Borneo Barat. 4e. M. Soeleman ke Singapore dan tanah Melajoe. Dengan demikian, propaganda R. P. semakin loeas.*

communication should always be maintained in order. Thank you. Adm.³¹

Reader Profile

Penjiaran Ilmoe had a growing audience of increasingly readers who graduated from formal and traditional schools. In the beginning, the RP series was published fortnightly, usually on the first and twentieth of each month, with 1,000 copies printed per issue, but as readers' demands rose and management improved, its circulation volume reached about 5,000 copies per issue, the highest of any publications at the time. Some of the series were re-printed in second editions, including the story of *Oestaz A. Masjoek* (The Teacher A. Masjoek) by Martha, which was re-printed three times and sold more than 10,000 copies (Tamar Djaja 1955: 208).³² The real number of readers may have been many more, as a single copy was probably read by more than one reader.

The price of each issue of RP was f0.18, while the price of a subscription for 3 months was f1. In comparison with the price of rice in 1939, finest quality rice cost f0.90 per ten litres, f0.63 per ten litres of medium quality rice, and f0.50 per ten litres of the lowest quality rice (Indisch Verslag 1940: 356). So a three-month subscription to RP cost almost the same as ten litres of high quality rice. From these prices, we may conclude that RP was reasonably affordable.

Information about the readers of Penjiaran Ilmoe's books can also be derived from an announcement attached to the back page of Kamizir's *Spi-*

³¹ *Kepada seloeroeh agenten!
Moelai nomor ini, korting diberikan kepada agenten 25%.
Storan wang, hendaklah dikirim tiap tiap 15 hari sekali, soepaja kami tidak terlaloe terdesak oeroesan tjetak. Storan jang lama, hendaklah selesaikan dengan segera, dan segala restant hendaklah dikembalikan. Diharap para agenten memperhatikan. Hendaknja perhoeboengan kita senantiasa terdjaga rapi.
Terima kasih.
Adm.*

³² 'In the history of publishing houses, the publication of these roman has broken all records. Whereas the usual print run for a book or roman magazine is 1,000 copies, the print run for these romans can reach 5,000 copies, with many of them being reprinted.' *Didalam sedjarah penerbitan, penerbitan roman2 inilah jang telah memetjahkan rekor oplag. Kalau tadinja tiap2 oplag buku maupun madjalah roman biasanja hanja mentjapai 1.000 eksemplar, kemudian dapat mentjapai 5.000 eks, sekali terbit dan tak djarang ada jangdibuat tjetak ulangan.* I did not find a copy of *Oestaz A Masjoek* during my research. It is possible that all copies of this roman were destroyed following its controversy.

der Komplot Lawa2. It contains comments, quoted from a letter and an interview, by three important individuals — Mochtar Loethfie, Iljas Jacoub and M. Yamin³³ —praising the contents of the RP series. While announcements of this kind were intended as advertising, they also construct a portrait of the readers of *Penjiaran Ilmoe* publications, and the RP series in particular, as coming from various levels of society, including both leaders and ordinary people.

Sinar Sumatra newspaper (2 November 1939) notes, in an editorial comment, that the RP series is an example of good reading material. The editor predicts the widespread distribution of the publication in the future, and his words also imply that RP enjoyed a good standing in society.

Finally we are glad to hear from all sides that the business carried on by *Penjiaran Ilmoe*, including the publication of RP, seems to have been well received by all its customers with pleasing results. So henceforth we may expect its journey to be a profitable and happy one.³⁴

³³ The announcement is: 'What the leaders say: Indonesia. "This letter is to acknowledge and thank you and your colleagues for your parcel. The content (RP) seems to me like a dawn breeze brushing away the listlessness, worries, anxieties and sorrows that usually plague the caravans crossing the deserts of dreams. For that reason your contributions are of great value, especially *Penjiaran Ilmoe*." (Mochtar Loethfie) "This book (RP), besides being a complete roman type of story, also depicts realistically the hidden behaviour of human beings. Even though it originates from the imagination it is played out in realistic form. I congratulate the writers from afar." (Iljas Jacoub).'

Apa kata pemimpin; Indonesia soerat inilah oentoek berterima kasih dan sjoekoer atas kiriman sdr. Dan kawan2 sdr. *Isinja (Roman Pergaoelan)* saja pandang sebagai angin fadjar jang mehilangkan lesoe, roesoeh, tjemas dan piloe jang biasa menggoda kafilah jang sedang melaloei sahara idaman. Maka dari itoe mahal harganja djasa sdr2 itoe, istimewa *Penjiaran Ilmoe* (Mochtar Loethfie).

Boekoe ini (R.P) selain dari sebagai satoe tjerita roman jang berawal dan berachir, djoega ia meroepakan dengan njata sifat2 manoesia jang tersembunji sekalipoen asalnja kebanjakan fantasi, tetapi ia sampai terhampar dengan roepa jang sesoenggoehnja. Kepada pengarang2nja dari djaoeh saja oetjapkan selamat (Iljas Jacoub). (p. 76). Mochtar Loethfie and Iljas Jacoub were the leaders of *Persatuan Muslim Indonesia* (Permi), an Islamic organisation founded in Padangpanjang, West Sumatra, in 1930. They, together with another leader, Djajaluddin Thaib, were sent to Boven Digul in 1934 by the Dutch government because of their political activities. M. Yamin (1903-1962), born in Talawi, Sawahlunto, West Sumatra, was an author, an important poet and a translator of literary works. He was one of those who proposed the Indonesian language as the national language. He became minister of the judiciary (1951-1952), minister of education and culture (1953-1955) and minister of information (1962-1963). Yamin also asked the *Volksraad* to abolish the exile of the three people above in Boven Digul. His speech before the *Volksraad* appeared in *Sinar Sumatra*, 20 July 1939.

³⁴ *Achirnja kita merasa girang mendengar dari kiri kanan bahwa sekarang oesaha jang dikerdjakan oleh Penjiaran Ilmoe, didalam mana termasuk penerbitan Roman Pergaoelan kabarnja telah mendapat samboetan dari segala langganannja dengan satoe hasil jang*

Maisir Thaib notes in his biography (1992: 43) that when he moved to South Kalimantan in 1939 to chair an Islamic school, many people in his new home were already familiar with him: 'Based on writings in "Pedoman Masyarakat" magazine and novels in "Roman Pergaoelan", readers in South Kalimantan already knew me through their readings.'³⁵ Judging by the list of distributors of Penjiaran Ilmoe publications, we can estimate that many regions, like South Kalimantan in this example, contributed to Penjiaran Ilmoe's readership.

Balai Pustaka Censorship Compared to Publications by Penjiaran Ilmoe

To study a particular publisher is an essential aspect of analyzing the literary works of a particular place and era. Publishers hold the keys to producing and distributing literature, because they control the process of selecting and editing texts to be published. The selection process is not always rule- and standard-governed. Some publishers exert an enormous influence over their authors, in some instances performing much unnecessary editing because of their own ideology, language preference, preferred themes, and even preferred authors. In the pre-independence period in Indonesia, this practice commonly operated as a form of implicit regulation by publishers, especially Balai Pustaka.³⁶ Balai Pustaka exerted a great influence upon the shape of books that it published, and as time passed it became more and more hegemonic and exercised greater power in choosing texts deemed to qualify according to its own sets of rules and standards.³⁷

By filtering books and constructing reading lists, Balai Pustaka also controlled the books produced by private publishers which the general public could read (Balai Pustaka 1948: 29-30). Almost every private pub-

menjenangkan, sehingga dengan demikian boleh diharap ia akan menempoeh oentoeng dan bahagia dalam perdjalanannja.

³⁵*Dengan tulisan-tulisan dalam majalah "Pedoman Masyarakat" dan novel-novel dalam "Roman Pergaoelan", masyarakat pembaca di Kal-Sel sudah juga berkenalan dengan saya secara bacaan.*

³⁶For further reading on Balai Pustaka, see for example Watson (1972), Jedamski (1992), Faruk (2002) and Hilmar Farid and Razif (2008).

³⁷This attitude of Balai Pustaka is famously reflected in the cases of Abdoel Moeis' *Salah Asuhan* and Armjin Pane's *Belenggu*, in which the authors came under strong pressure from the publishing house (Balai Pustaka 1948: 72).

lisher had to send their books to Balai Pustaka to be subjected to their scrutiny. For this purpose Balai Pustaka established a special committee, in 1938, through which to inspect all lending libraries (*taman bacaan*) which lent books to the public in Java. The motivation behind the launch of this committee was the fear of the spread of ‘wild’ (*liar*) and ‘pornographic’ (*cabul*) reading materials among the Indonesian people. Balai Pustaka sent its own books to the lending libraries so as to restrict lending only to the books it provided. By the end of 1941 (Balai Pustaka 1948: 29-30) there were around 1,400 private libraries and lending libraries which regularly bought books from Balai Pustaka, and as a result, Balai Pustaka held a strong monopoly not only in deciding reading materials, but also in the matter of book distribution.

Umar Junus (2004: 55-57) contrasts the self-imposed visions and intentions of Balai Pustaka with those of other publishers. Besides ensuring that literary works were free from the influences of anti-Dutch politics, Umar Junus explains that Balai Pustaka avoided or censored anything that could be considered ‘improper’. From 1920 onwards, the works published by private publishing houses outside Balai Pustaka, like the RP series, were therefore considered by many in the general public to be more ‘attractive’ and more vocal in comparison to Balai Pustaka books. In most of the RP books the authors discuss and explore politics, education, religious practice, social organisation, and other issues, thereby risking the disapproval of the Dutch colonial establishment. Umar Junus’ observation is even more meaningful in this context, highlighting how, in contrast to Balai Pustaka publications, the RP series could attract readers’ attention and express the voice, hopes and dreams of the people.

Many of Penjiaran Ilmoe’s publications were intended to strengthen civil society and to support Indonesia’s independence movement. In some books, for instance, there are descriptions of social organizations, such as political parties or the League of Nations, along with details of their structures and responsibilities, as well as descriptions of the French and American Revolutions, and introductions to important Indonesian figures. One such case was *Poesaka Indonesia* (Indonesian Heirloom), the first book containing biographical information on important Indonesian leaders.³⁸

³⁸ The back pages of *Angkatan Baroe* by Hamka (pp. 65-67) state: ‘Major publication! Forthcoming! Appearing in a few days’ time! “POESAKA INDONESIA”. Indonesian people everywhere! There has never been a book published that could be called “Indonesian

Event the structure of a post-independence government was discussed in Penjiaran Ilmoe publications, before the nation of Indonesia was realised. The effort of Penjiaran Ilmoe to prepare Indonesia for nationhood was its response to the nationalist movement which had been nurtured by such events as Sumpah Pemuda (Youth Pledge) in Jakarta in 1928, and Kongres Bahasa Indonesia (Congress of Indonesian Language) in Solo in 1930.

Penjiaran Ilmoe Publications and Public Controversy

Some of the RP publications, whose contents which were seen as hurtful towards certain parties or groups, created great controversy. Even though the Dutch government did not itself condemn these readings, there were other groups, particularly *ulama* and high-ranking *adat* leaders, who responded to them negatively. Penjiaran Ilmoe, however, demonstrated that it was accepting of feedback from its readers. According to the editor, the publishers had predicted strong reactions to these works from their readers and society in general before they had even been published:

From the beginning, we predicted and believed that there would be bedlam in Minangkabau society if the story of “OESTAZ A MA’SJOEK” alias Goeroe Tjaboel was published. Because the story is really about the pillars of society, especially about the

heritage”. There have been many books published on politics and history, there have been romans and other books, but a book serving as the “heritage” of all the Indonesian people has never yet been seen. For that reason, in a few days’ time, we will purposefully issue a major publication entitled “POESAKA INDONESIA”. This book will really be a heritage item for our people. Apart from a complete history of Indonesia, the book will contain biographies of Indonesian leaders, their lives and struggles in this new age, making it a big, thick book. Every biography will be accompanied by pictures of the leaders described. ... To make the book available to everyone, we are deliberately keeping the price low: Before publication f 0.96. After publication f 1.35. Place your orders now. This is an opportunity you must not miss. Publisher: Penjiaran Ilmoe, Fort de Kock.’ *(Penerbitan Besar! Bakal Terbit! Sedikit hari lagi! “POESAKA INDONESIA” Ra’jat Indonesia seloeroehnja! Beloem pernah diterbitkan seboeah boekoe jang boleh dinamakan “Poesaka Indonesia”. Telah banjak boekoe-boekoe jang diterbitkan beroepa politik, sedjarah, romans sebagainja, akan tetapi seboeah boekoe jang boleh mendjadi “poesaka” bagi ra’jat Indonesia seoemoemnja, beloem kelihatan. Karena itoe sedikit hari lagi sengadja akan diterbitkan boekoe besar dengan title: “POESAKA INDONESIA”. Boekoe jang betoel-betoel akan mendjadi poesaka bagi bangsa kita. Berisi selain dari sedjarah Indonesia jang lengkap, djoega riwayat pengandjoer-pengandjoer Indonesia kehidoepan dan perdjoeangannja dizaman baroe sehingga ia akan mendjadi seboeah boekoe jang tebal dan besar. Tiap-tiap riwayat akan memoeat gambar dari pemimpin-pemimpin jang diriwayatkan ... Soepaja boekoe terseboet dapat dipoenja oleh rata-rata ra’jat kita, maka sengadja dimoerahkan. Sebeloem terbit f0.96. Sesoadah terbit f1.35. Lekaslah pesan dari sekarang. Satoe kesempatan jang tak boleh toean abaikan. Penerbit: Penjiaran Ilmoe, Fort de Kock.)*

religious schools of the present, from which have come some shocking rumours about the conduct of teachers toward their female students. This issue has become a public secret within Minangkabau society. (Umri, 1940: 75)³⁹

This controversy over Martha's *Oestaz A Ma'sjoek* continued to spread, with responses pouring into newspapers with criticism of, as well as support for, Martha's work. An editor of RP explained:

It is not surprising if the book has created tumultuous press in Padang and Tapanuli. Many columns of newspaper pages contain reviews of the book. On the part of the religious teachers, as represented by a person identifying himself as H. Abdoellah, we have received continuous attack for 9 days after *Persamaan* published its review. By other parties, the book has been received with boisterous agreement. The conflict between these two parties is not, obviously, a remarkable event. (Umri. 1940: 75)⁴⁰

Two letters of criticism, one anonymous and the other by a writer named Balis, appeared in *Sinar Sumatra* newspaper. The anonymous author writes:

After hearing the title of the story that would be published we were all impatiently awaiting the day of the book release, because according to rumour Martha would depict a story that really happened. While not giving my own opinion about whether the story is real or not, what lessons can we draw after reading it? It only gives a bad picture of social lives at

³⁹ *Sedjak bermoela, kita telah menjangka dan mejakinkan bahwa Minangkabau akan gempar bila tjerita "OESTAZ A MA'SJOEK" alias Goeroe Tjaboel kita terbitkan. Sebab tjerita itoe betoel-betoel mengenai tiang masjarakat, teroetama mengenai sekolah-sekolah agama zaman sekarang, dimana diroepakan beberapa kedjadian jang menjolok mata jang dilakoekan oleh goeroe terhadap moeridnja jang perempoean. Soal ini di Minangkabau telah mendjadi rahsia oemoem.*

⁴⁰*Tidak heran kalau boekoe ini, telah menjebakkan pers di Padang dan Tapanoeli mendjadi riboet. Berkolom-kolom halaman s. k. [surat kabar] memuat pertimbangan akan isi boekoe itoe. Dari pehak kaoem goeroe agama seperti jang ditoelis oleh orang jang menamakan dirinja H. Abdoellah, kita mendapat serangan habis-habisan sampai 9 hari bertoroet-toroet PERSAMAAN memoeat koepasan itoe. Dan dari pehak lain, boekoe disamboet dengan gempar menjatakan setoedjoe. Doea aliran jang bertentangan ini, pada hakekatnja tidaklah soeatoe hal jang loear biasa.*

surau, even the *surau* of modernized schools. (*Sinar Sumatra*, 26 February 1940)⁴¹



FIGURE 2 Cover of *Disamping keroeboehannja Kota Bondjol* by D. Umri. Courtesy of KITLV, Leiden.

In his newspaper editorial, Balis wrote that the roman had an important value for society. The theme and the story present a crucial problem which ‘should be very urgently discussed in public, because it relates to questions of common interest, society and religion, which all belong to the public realm and must be investigated publicly’ (*Sinar Sumatra*, 14 March 1940).⁴²

Martha’s work was ferociously attacked by the Association for Islamic Education (Persatuan Tarbiyah Islamiah or PERTI). When PERTI held its second conference in Limbanang from 25 to 29 August 1940, it included a special meeting to discuss RP in general and in particular Martha’s *Oestaz A Ma’sjoek* and Hamka’s *Angkatan Baroe*. Martha’s story features *suluk*, ritual Sufism practiced by certain Islamic groups, but focuses on episodes in which some *suluk* leaders have affairs with female *suluk* followers. As PERTI considered the contents of the roman to be

As PERTI considered the contents of the roman to be

⁴¹ ... setelah mendengar titel tjerita jang akan diterbitkan itoe sama2 tidak sabar menanti hari terbitnja, sebab kabarnja Martha akan menggambarkan soeatoe peristiwa jang memang kedjadian. Dengan tidak menjatakan pikiran sendiri tentang terdjadi atau tidaknja tjerita itoe, peladjaran apa jang kita peroleh setelah membatja tjerita tersebut? Tidak lain hanjalah gambaran jang koerang baik dalam pergaoelan hidoep di soerau soerau meskipoen soerau itoe meroepakan soeatoe sekolah jang dipermodern sekalipoen.

⁴² ...sangat pentingnja dibitjarakan dihadapan oemoem, karena ia mengenai soal oemoem, soal masjarakat dan soal agama, sedangkan kedoeanja adalah kepoenjaan orang ramai jang mesti dikoeapas dihadapan ramai.

criticising PERTI's practice of *suluk*, this session in the conference was meant to confront the roman, the author and the publisher. In its press release (*Sinar Sumatra*, 24 August 1940) the organization stated:

In a closed meeting, besides discussing internal organizational matters, invited participants will also discuss the affront of Mr. Hamka (H. Abd. Malik Karim Amroellah, the chief editor of *Pedoman Masyarakat* Medan) towards *suluk* teachers, who, in the introduction to the book *Oestaz A Ma'sjoek* published in Bukittinggi, are accused of conducting nocturnal affairs with their students, and also that those old ulama only teach their female students how to massage their feet and eat their scraps. This question will certainly be interesting, as the *suluk* community and their leaders feel libelled and insulted by Hamka's writing.⁴³

PERTI leaders from all over were invited to attend the discussion:

It is necessary to announce that starting from Sunday afternoon 26-27 [August 1940] there will be held a meeting located in the conference hall inviting all *suluk* teachers, Naqsabandi leaders, who feel they have been libeled by the writing of Mr. Hamka (h. A. M. Karim Amroellah) in his introduction to the roman *Oestaz A Ma'sjoek*, recounting that they have had nocturnal affairs with female students. All the Naqsabandi leaders will be invited and the invitation is so earnest that we ask everyone to attend even though they must walk or come by car and pay with pawned or borrowed money, in order to cleanse the stain placed by Hamka upon the heads of Naqsabandi leaders. (*Sinar Sumatra*, 26 August 1940)⁴⁴

⁴³ [D]alam rapat tertotoep, selain dari oeroesan roemah tangga perserikatan akan toeroet djoega dibitjarakan dengan orang2 oendangan, hinaan t. Hamka (H. Abd. Malik Karim Amroellah Hoofredacteur *Pedoman Masyarakat* Medan), pada chalifah2 soeloek, jang dikatakannja memboeat pekerdjaan mesoem dengan moeridnja tengah malam dan oelama2 toea itoe hanja mengadjarkan mengoeroet kaki dan makan sisa pada moerid2nja jang gadis2, dalam pendahoeloean boekoe roman *Oestaz A. Ma'sjoek* jang terbit di Boekit Tinggi. Tentoelah soal ini akan meriah poela, karena orang soeloek dan chalifah chalifahnja merasa terhina dan terfitnah oleh toelisan Hamka itoe.

⁴⁴ Dan jang perloe rasanja dima'loemkan bahwa petang Senin ddo 26-27 akan diadakan Vergadering metal genoogdigen, bertempat di Gebouw Conferentie dengan mengoendang sekalian Sjech2 Soeloek, sjech Naqsabandi, jang telah difitnah oleh t. Hamka (h. A.M Karim Amroellah) dalam moekaddimah boekoe roman *Oestaz A. Ma'sjoek*, bahwa beliau2 itoe memboeat mesoem dengan moeridja tengah malam. Sekalian sjech2 Naqsabandi akan dioendang dan oendangan itoe kelihatannja bersemangat benar sehingga dimintak semoanja hadir walaupoen dengan berdjalan kaki, berauto merangkak dengan oelang

In the opinion of PERTI leaders, Hamka's introduction and the story of *Oestaz A Ma'sjoek* criticised the dignity and prestige of *ulama* and *suluk* teachers. The participants of the conference also stated that Hamka 'has written in the introduction to his book *Oestaz A. Ma'sjoek*, a roman published by the Penjiaran Ilmoe Bookshop in Bukittinggi, with great scorn towards the *suluk* leaders' (*Sinar Sumatra*, 30 August 1940).⁴⁵ Hamka therefore had discredited teachers in general:

[Hamka] has trampled upon the turbans of Naqsabandi leaders, spat in their faces, and scribbled upon their brows with coal and impurities which will never disappear, if we do not eliminate it/him together. He has scorned religious teachers in general, scorned organizational leaders, and scorned teachers at Islamic school in general. We are seen as garbage without value, having no brains and thoughts, as if he is the only person who is clever, he is the only person who knows the Quran and Hadith, and we are just shadows who cannot defend ourselves. (*Sinar Sumatra*, 30 August 1940)⁴⁶

As a result of this conference PERTI issued three recommendations in reference to both the literary works and their authors: (1) to burn books written by Hamka and Martha, (2) to pray for one month in order to accuse and execute the writers and publisher, and (3) to make a report to the Resident in Padang demanding a ban of the books (Tamar Djaja 1955: 208, see also Sudarmoko 2008). As a symbol of the earnestness of these recommendations, PERTI leader Siradjoeddin Abbas burned a copy of the book before a thousand PERTI members and conference participants.

Tamar Djaja responded to PERTI's recommendations in *Sinar Sumatra* (5 September 1940). He carefully answered each item of the rec-

jang dipindjam dengan menggadai karena akan menghilangkan noda dan nadjis jang telah ditjorengkan Hamka pada kening sjeich2 Naqsabandi.

⁴⁵... telah menoeelis dalam moekaddimah boekoe "Oestaz A. Ma'sjoek", jaitoe roman, jang diterbitkan oleh Boekhandel Penjiaran Ilmoe Boekit Tinggi, penghinaan terhadap sjeich dan Chalifah Soeloek.

⁴⁶ [Hamka] telah mengindjak sorban2 besar Chalifah Naqsabandi, telah meloedah moekanja, telah mentjorengkan arang dan nadjis pada kening Sjeich2 Naqsabandi, jang tidak akan hilang selama2nja, kalau kita tidak bersama membrantasnja. Ia telah menghinakan goeroe2 agama seloeroehnja, ia telah menghinakan leider2 perkoempoelan, ia telah menghinakan goeroe2 sekolah agama seloeroehnja. Kita ini dipandangnja sebagai sampah jang tidak berharga, tidak berotak dan tidak berfikiran, seolah2 dia sadja jang pandai, ia sadja tahoe quran dan hadits, dan kita ini bajang2 jang tak pandai mempertahankan dirinja.

ommendation, and his response is impressive for its defence of the books he published as well as the authors. As a response to the controversy and reactions from readers, writers and publishers in Medan had earlier held their own conference to determine the future of the novel. The conference confirmed the publishers' conviction that not only did people still need reading materials such as roman, but that in fact they needed more of them and that they would therefore continue to publish such materials.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ The complete statement: "Roman Conference": After visiting places in the area of Tapanuli and the Batak lands, we arrived in Medan. As we could not stay long in Medan and had to return to Fort de Kock early on the morning of Monday 18 December, a conference of journalists, publishers and writers of roman was hastily convened in the K.I.S. building on Sunday afternoon, 17 December. All in all about 40 people attended, under the leadership of Mr Adi Negoro. The topic of discussion was roman, the subject of a lively degree of controversy at the moment over whether it is useful for society or not. After statements by the following speakers, Matu Mona, Tamar Djaja, Joesoef Sou'yb, Adi Negoro, M. Yunan Nasution, Hasanoel Arifin, Hamka, Si Oema, Loetan Gani, Joesoef Hoesin, A. Damhoeri, M. A Hanafiah Lb. A W. Rata, Noerdin Soelan, M. Dien Jatim, Mr Indo, as well as others present, the meeting concluded that the publication of romans should not only not be obstructed, but actually increased. Romans are of value in refining language use and encouraging the habit of reading. They contain information and inspire critical thinking. So the types of romans that are appearing in large numbers at the present time are of great value to Indonesian society in its present formative stage. Finally, the call 'Long Live the Indonesian Roman' rang out. The Abad XX press photography unit made sure it recorded the conference session. For more information, read the extended report in the press. 'The first time a Roman Conference has been held in Indonesia,' said Mr Adi Negoro, closing the conference at 12 midnight. When we arrived back in Fort de Kock, "Roman Pergaoelan" will undergo a thorough reorganization. RP is set to delight you!

"Roman Komperensi" Sesoadah mengoendjoengi tempat2 di daerah Tapanoeli, Bataklanden sekitarnja, maka sampailah kita di Medan. Karena kita tak dapat lama2 di Medan dan mesti berangkat kembali ke Fort de Kock pagi2 hari Senin 18 Dec, dengan tjara tergesa-gesa pada petang Ahad 17 Dec. dengan bertempat digedoeng K.I.S diadakan KOMPERENSI dari para wartawan, penerbit dan pengarang-pengarang ROMAN selengkapnja kira2 40 orang joemlahnja, dengan pimpinan t. ADI NEGORO. Dibitjarakan tentang ROMAN jg sekarang sedang ramai menjadi soal, apakah ia berfaedah oentoek masjarakat atawa tidak.

*Sesoadah mendengar keterangan2 dari para pemitjara jang terdiri dari tt. Matu Mona, Tamar Djaja, Joesoef Sou'yb, Adi Negoro, M. Yunan Nasution, Hasanoel Arifin, Hamka, Si Oema, Loetan Gani, Joesoef Hoesin, A. Damhoeri, M. A. Hanafiah Lb., A. W. Rata, Noerdin Soelan, M. Dien Jatim, Mr. Indo, dan para jang hadir, didapatlah kesimpoolan bahasa penerbitan roman INDONESIA, tidak mestinja dihalangi tetapi haroes ditambah. Roman, berfaedah oentoek **memperhaloes bahasa menagihkan oerang membatja**, dan tendenz (isi)nja senantiasa bersifat PROPAGANDA, MEANNDJOERKAN, DAN MENGKERITIK. Maka roman sematjam jang banjak terbit sekarang, besar faedahnja bagi masjarakat Indonesia jang masih dalam fase permoelaan ini. Achirnja diseroekan HIDEOPLAH ROMAN INDONESIA. Perspoto Abad XX tak loepa mengambil gambar sidang komperensi terseboet. Lebih landjoet batjalah perslah pandjang dalam pers Roman komperensi jang baroe pertama kali diadakan di Indonesia kata t. Adi Negoro menoetoep rapat itoe djam 12 malam. Sekembali kita ke Fort de Kock, "ROMAN PERGAOELAN" diorganisier benar2. Samboetlah R. P. dengan girang. (In front pages of Hs. Bakry, 1939. Mr. X.).*

Similar controversy was aroused by Hamka's *Angkatan Baroe*, to which the publishing house replied:

The conclusion is as follows: we and the press who agree are defending Islam. H. Abdoellah and his colleagues are defending Islamic teachers. Which one of these two stands is correct is up to the public to decide. Thus it is with the book *Angkatan Baroe* written by Mr. Hamka which has become the topic of wide discussion. Penjiaran Ilmoe as the publisher of the book is very happy because its every step is watched by the people. We gladly accept criticism and advice and even attack in any form and from any parties. We accept what is good, and what we believe to be bad we discard. This attitude is something in which we have always believed. If RP this time has received a great attack in this way, with the accusation of disturbing unity, and many other accusations like it, these actions will not make us cease criticizing society and corrupt social life. We will work and work continuously. Praised or blamed, seen as good or bad, all of it depends on who is looking. We will not give up in displaying ROMAN (color-form or picture) PERGAOELAN to society in this changing age. (D. Umri, 1940: 75-76)⁴⁸

Despite these strong words, Penjiaran Ilmoe appeared to prepare for the consequences of its controversial publications. The editor decided to form a new publishing company, Bintang Kedjora, as an alternative if, for some reason, Penjiaran Ilmoe had to be closed. The person leading this new publishing company was announced to be Soetan Rais Alamsjah,

⁴⁸ *Kesimpoelannja begini:*

Kita dan pers jang setoedjoe, MEMPERTAHANKAN AGAMA ISLAM.

H. Abdoellah dan pengikoetnja, MEMPERTAHANKAN GOEROE2 AGAMA.

Mana jang betoel diantara kedoea pendirian itoe, baiklah kita serahkan pada oemoem.

Demikian poela dengan boekoe "ANGKATAN BAROE" jang ditoelis t. Hamka, toeroet djoega mendjadi atjara perbintjangan ramai.

Penjiaran Ilmoe sebagai penerbit boekoe2 terseboet, bergirang hati karena tiap langkahnja diperhatikan masjarakat. Kita sedia menerima keritik dan nasehat tapi djoega serangan walau bagaimanapoen matjamnja dari segala pehak. Mana jang baik kita terima, dan jang kita anggap tidak baik, kita boeang. Pendirian ini, selamanja mendjadi pendirian jang kita anggap baik.

Kalau Roman Pergaoelan sekali ini mendapat serangan hebat demikian roepa, dengan toedoehan mengatjau persatoean, dan lain2 sebagainja, tidaklah jang demikian itoe akan menjebakkan kita berhenti dari mengkeritik masjarakat, dan social jang roesak. Kita akan bekerdja dan bekerdja teroes. Dipoe dji atau ditjela dipandang baik atau dipandang boeroek, itoe terserah kepada orang jang memandangnja sendiri. Tidaklah kita akan berpatah hati memperlihatkan ROMAN (warna-bentoek atau gambaran) PERGAOELAN kepada masjarakat, dalam zaman pantjaroba ini.

which was the *adat* title of Tamar Djaja, the leader and chief editor of *Penjiaran Ilmoe* and *RP*. The series *Perjoeangan Hidoep* was prepared to replace the *RP* series:

“Perdjoeangan Hidoep” was born after roman stories received rampant criticism and attack from our press and intellectuals. Therefore, it will not publish ghost stories, zombie stories, stories by charlatans and many others which have long been forbidden by Islam. Instead it will publish selected stories that have been carefully filtered in the forms of: Epics, History, Knowledge, and Politics, that are useful for society, activating the spirit of struggle in life. (Thaib, 1940: 61)⁴⁹

Perdjoeangan Hidoep was published monthly starting from 1 April 1940 with Mohd. Kasim’s *Pengalaman Seorang Nihilist* (The Experience of A Nihilist) as the first roman it published. The second was Thaher Samad’s *Lady Marion Curtis*, followed by Tamar Djaja’s *Dari Desa ke Kota* (From Village to City) (Umri, 1940: 82).

Soon, however, the Dutch government too gave heed to the controversy over Martha’s book and in February 1941 banned the roman and withdrew it from readers, libraries and booksellers. *Sinar Sumatra* (18 February 1941) reported that ‘the famous book *Oestaz A Ma’sjoek* or *Goeroe Tjaboel* (Obscene Teacher) by Martha, which has created havoc and became a topic of discussion at the PERTI conference, has been revoked in some libraries here by the Sawah Lunto secret police. This revocation was also conducted in Pariaman.’⁵⁰ Martha’s *Leider Mr. Semangat* (Mr. Semangat the Leader) was also banned by the Dutch government because it was judged to be politically subversive. Martha was arrested when he was in Kalimantan. The editor of *RP* briefly summarised the case for his

⁴⁹ “**Perjoeangan Hidoep**”

“*Perjoeangan Hidoep*” lahir sesoedah tjerita-tjerita roman poeas menerima keritik dan serangan dari pers dan para Intellectuelen kita. Karena itoe, ia tidak akan mengeloearkan tjerita2 hantoe, tjerita majat hidoep, tjerita palasik dan lain-lain, jang telah diberantas oleh agama Islam bertahoen-tahoen jang laloe.

Tapi ia akan mengeloearkan tjerita pilihan jang telah disaring betoel-betoel, jaitoe beroepa: **Hikajat, Sedjarah, Wetenschap, Politiek,** Jang bergoena bagi masjarakat, menghidoepkan semangat berdjoeang dalam penghidoepan.

⁵⁰ ...oleh PID Sawah Loento boekoe jang terkenal jaitoe *Ostaz A. Ma’sjoek* atau *Goeroe Tjaboel* karangan Martha jang menggemparkan dan mendjadi pembitjaraan dalam kongres Perti telah dibeslag pada beberapa bibliotheek disini. Pembeslaghan ini, djoega terdjadi di Pariaman.

readers:

In connection with the restriction of the book *Leider Mr. Semangat*, we received a telegram from Borneo informing us that Mr. Martha was arrested in Kandangan; after 3 nights' incarceration there, on 29 November he was sent to Banjarmasin and on to Fort de Kock. (Front page of roman *Mawar Poetih* by Suara Sutji, 1940)⁵¹

Information on the revocation of the roman throughout West Sumatra can be found in *Sinar Sumatra*. On 25 November 1940 it informed its readers: 'Last Saturday 23 November 1940, the chief of secret police and the head of the market office at Payakumbuh raided bookshops in order to find the roman *Leider Mr. Semangat*, a roman published by RP Bukittinggi. According to information received, they succeeded in finding 3 copies of the book.'⁵² The search of the roman was conducted in many places in West Sumatra. The whole stock of the roman at Penjiaran Ilmoe was taken by the Dutch secret police (*Sinar Sumatra*, 26 November 1940), while in Padangpanjang, the secret police raided libraries and booksellers to find the roman on Friday, 22 November 1940 (*Sinar Sumatra*, 29 November 1940).

Martha's case was brought to court in Fort de Kock. After the trial, he was sentenced to one and a half years in prison. He was then sent to Sukamiskin, West Java, to undergo his incarceration. Tamar Djaja gave a short account of the case:

Maisir Thaib 1 year and 6 months. Last Wednesday 12 March 1941 the court at Bukittinggi led by Mr Dr Knottenbelt arbitrated upon the case of Maisir Thaib (Martha) regarding the book *Leider Mr. Semangat* which was accused of contravening Article 153 bis, resulting in the punishment mentioned above. The book is an RP story published on 5 July 1940 seized in our office on 22 November 1940 and then throughout agencies and from consumers across Indonesia.

⁵¹*Berhoeboeng dengan pembeslahan atas boekoe "LEIDER MR. SEMANGAT", maka kita terima telegram dari Borneo menerangkan sdr. Martha di tahan di Kandangan, setelah 3 malam ditahan disana, maka pada 29 Nov. dikirim ke Bandjarmasin dan diteroeskan ke Fort de Kock.*

⁵²*Pada hari Saptoe 23 Nov. 1940 jl, menteri politie PID dan passarhoofd Pajakoemboeh telah melakukan penggeledahan pada boekhandel2 disana oentoe mentjari satoe boekoe roman: Leider Mr. Semangat. Satoe roman jang diterbitkan oleh Roman Pergaoelan Boekittinggi. Kabarnja telah didapat 3 boekoe tersebut.*

Maisir Thaib was arrested on 26 November in Rantau (Borneo) and then incarcerated in Kandangan, and subsequently sent to Bukittinggi. We send our friend Maisir Thaib from us with uproar in our hearts and we will welcome his return with joy. On Tuesday 18 March, Martha departs to Bandung to undergo his sentence in Sukamiskin prison. With this, Penjiaran Ilmoe and RP lose an active assistant, and a very sympathetic young man. The process of the trial was running well. Go, friend! Go, and return to us...! Tamar Djaja. (Romanita, 1941: 73)⁵³

Penjiaran Ilmoe was not the only private publishing house to experience crackdowns from the authorities. A similar incident occurred with Roman Indonesia,⁵⁴ a private publishing house based in Padang. A roman written by D'niar entitled *Tetesan Darah Orang Pergerakan* (The Drop-lets Blood of Movement People) was banned by the secret police, and the 2000 copies of the roman were hunted out across the Padang area. Police succeeded in finding 500 copies in Berita bookshop (*Sinar Sumatra*, 10 July 1940). Another investigation was performed in Sawahlunto on Tuesday 9 July 1940, led by chief of secret police B.St. Mantjaja and the local *penghulu dagang* (chief of trade). From raiding Kita bookshop, owned by B. Syaraf, the police sized 20 copies which had just arrived the day before (*Sinar Sumatra*, 11 July 1940). On the same day, the police also inspected bookshops in Pariaman, where they found 20 copies of the roman in Ippa bookstore (*Sinar Sumatra*, 15 July 1940).

⁵³ **Maisir Thaib 1 Tahoen 6 Boelan**

Hari Arbaa 12 Maart 1941 landstraat Boekit Tinggi jang dipimpin oleh t. Mr. Dr. Knottenbelt telah mengadili perkara sdr. Maisir Thaib (Martha) tentang delict boekoe "Leider Mr. Semangat" jang ditodoeh melanggar artikel 153 bis berachir seperti disebutkan di atas.

Boekoe tsb, ialah satoe tjerita roman Pergaoelan jang terbit 5 Juli 1940 dibeslag dikantoor kita pada 22 November 1940 kemudian disegenap agent dan abonne seloeroeh Indonesia.

Maisir Thaib ditangkap 26 November di Rantau (Borneo) dan kemoedian ditahan di Kandangan, dan teroes dikirim ke Boekit Tinggi.

Kita lepas saudara Maisir Thaib dengan hati terharoe dan kita samboet kedatangannya kelak dengan girang.

Hari Selasa 18 Maart, sdr. Martha berangkat ke Bandoeng mendjalani hoekoemannja di boei Soekamiskin.

Dengan ini "Peil" [penjiaran Ilmoe] dan "Erpe" [Roman Pergaoelan] kehilangan pembantu jang actief, pemoeda jang begitoe sympatik. Djalan pemeriksaan menjenangkan.

Pergilah saudara! Pergi, dan kembali lagi...!

Tamar Djaja.

⁵⁴ On the early exploration on Roman Indonesia see Suryadi's essay in *Padang Ekspres*, 3 January 2010.

Exploration of Examples of RP

The Roman Pergaoelan's mission in the literary field in West Sumatra can be viewed from the content or themes of the published works. The RP's editors had made a selection of which works were suitable to be published according to their mission. This is not only based on the types or qualities of the works, but also the works' relevance with the need of the problems within the society. The selection of the published works indicates the function of the publishing house to provide suitable readings for readers. With the view of the literary infrastructure operation, the selection of the themes made by the RP's editors shows the correlation between the publishing house with its environment. Therefore, in order to provide a more detailed picture of the literary works published in Penjiaran Ilmoe's *Roman Pergaoelan*, three RP publications are summarised and briefly discussed below: Hamka's *Angkatan Baroe* (The New Generation), Merayu Sukma's *Joerni-Joesri* and Surapati's *Rahsia Pembongkaran* (The Secret of Demolition).⁵⁵ These three RP demonstrate the significant themes that run throughout the RP series, and illustrate three different categories in the genre: social commentary, political commentary and the detective story.

1. Roman *Angkatan Baroe* by Hamka

In Hamka's introduction to his roman, he states that he is aware that it may trigger a range of reactions from readers. He also writes that the story was based upon real social phenomena.

By this present story "Angkatan Baroe" some of my friends will probably feel disturbed or criticised. Let them be penitent, because the problem has to be presented. This is all about conscience, the conscience of all Minangkabau society in this changing age, conscience which asks for attention from educators, organisational leaders, and more importantly, from the rulers of *adat* themselves. "Ensure the proper direction of our daughters' education".⁵⁶

⁵⁵ These summaries are derived from my book *Roman Pergaoelan* (2008).

⁵⁶ *Maka hikajat jang sekali ini, "Angkatan Baroe" agaknja aka nada teman-teman saja jang akan merasa tersinggoeng atau terkeritik. Biarlah dia merasa menjesal, karena hal ini mesti diterangkan. Hal ini adalah soeara hati, soeara hatinja seloeroeh masjarakat di Minangkabau dalam zaman pantjaroba ini. Soeara hati, jang meminta perhatian dari pendidik-pendidik, dari pengandjoer perkoempoelan, bahkan dari ninik mamak didalam adat sendiri. "Tentoeklanlah arah dari pendidikan anak-anak perempoean kita".*

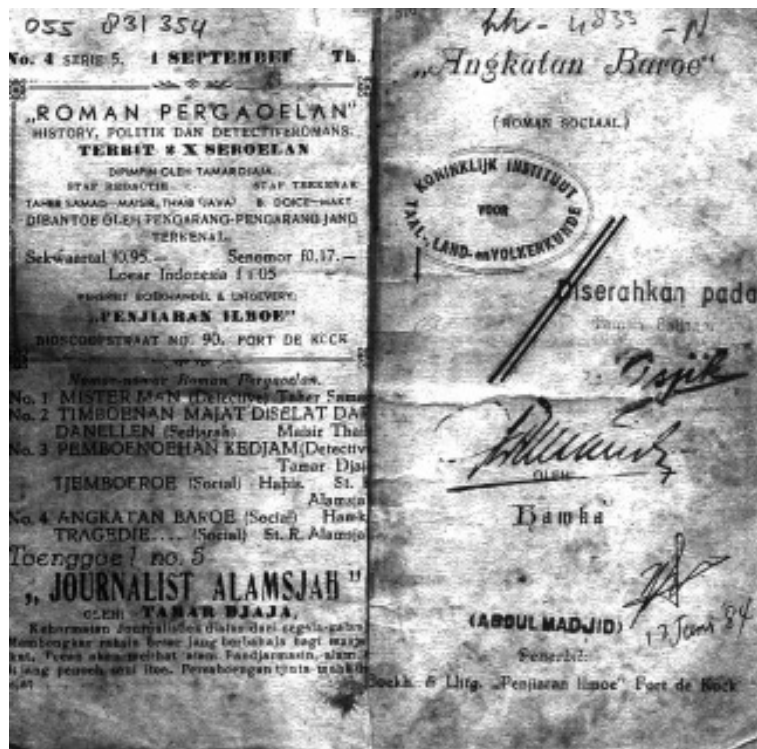


FIGURE 3 Title page of Hamka's Angkatan baroe (right). The information on previous and forthcoming Roman Pergaelian issues (left). Courtesy of KITLV, Leiden.

The story concerns two educated young people, Sjamsiar and Hasan. Sjamsiar returns to her village after finishing her four-year studies at an Islamic school in Padang. Sjamsiar does not know what to do with her life because in school she was not taught how to live in society. She lost contact with village life while she was a student. Nevertheless, the villagers respect her because of her education and her family provides her with whatever she needs. After a year in her village, she is unemployed, having refused an offer to become a teacher because of the low salary. She also rejects the numerous proposals of marriage she receives, because none of her suitors are well educated. Sjamsiar merely spends her time in her bedroom reading books, especially roman. Hamka briefly discusses the role of roman among young people. He states that young people like Sjamsiar use quotations about love from roman they read in order to attract men. In Hamka's opinion, there are some romans, especially those with themes of love affairs, which have a bad influence upon readers because readers try to practice the contents of the roman in their everyday lives.

Meanwhile, in another village, Hasan has a similar problem. Two years earlier, he graduated from Thawalib, an Islamic school in Padangpanjang. After graduating, Hasan taught at several schools in northern Sumatra and Aceh, but was disappointed by the low salary. His ambitions during his years of study are in sharp contrast with real life – there is an enormous gap between the salary he receives and the salary he hoped for. But Hasan has plans to develop a new curriculum for the educational system, and he decides to return to his village to found a new Islamic school in his village. At the school, he teaches his students a life skills course as an additional subject. He asks his students to work on a farm to earn extra money to help improve the school and also to help the students themselves prepare for their future. The school develops and he becomes a popular teacher and *da'i* (Islamic preacher) in his village and the neighbouring villages. Later, his family asks him to become engaged to Sjamsiar.

After their marriage, Sjamsiar tries to be an ideal wife as she understands it, wearing makeup and generally behaving in the way she has read about married life in works of fiction. However, she refuses to carry out household tasks such as cooking and cleaning, leaving them to her mother and sisters. Meanwhile, Hasan is distracted from his management of his school and students by the amount of attention he must devote to his household. He is also worried that he and his wife are dependent upon Sjamsiar's parents, with whom they have been living for a year. He hopes to find a solution to the problem by asking his wife to move to their own house; separate from her parents, so that Sjamsiar can learn how to be a proper wife and they can live as an independent couple, free from their families' influence. But Sjamsiar rejects his idea, appealing to their educational background. In her opinion, people like herself and Hasan who are well educated should live in a higher condition than that of other villagers. She believes that they should stay at her parents' house, where all their daily needs are met.

In time, Sjamsiar becomes embroiled in a scandal with her old friend, Sjamsoeddin, who lives in Batoeraja. Sjamsoeddin fell in love with Sjamsiar when they were at school together, as Sjamsiar knows. Sjamsoeddin responds to a letter from Sjamsair but Hasan discovers their communication. Hasan writes to Sjamsoeddin, telling him that Sjamsiar is his wife and that Hasan ought not to form a relationship with a married woman. Sjamsoeddin apologises to Hasan for his letters, saying that he had not known that Sjamsiar was Hasan's wife and promising to stay away from her.

Hasan, however, cannot hide his anger toward Sjamsiar and reports the illicit exchange of letters to his family, who are equally enraged. He divorces Sjamsiar without giving her a reason. She once again tries to contact Sjamsoeddin, but he too rejects her. Then Sjamsiar's family marries her to an old merchant and she moves with him to Deli, in North Sumatra. The roman ends with the narrator stating that while walking around Deli he meets Sjamsiar by chance. The narrator invites Sjamsiar to share a meal. He also meets Sjamsiar's husband and sees that she now lives happily because she patiently confronts life's trials. She has learnt from her previous experiences how to live and how to become an ideal wife.

2. Roman *Joerni-Joesri* by Merayu Sukma

This roman tells the story of the potentially incestuous marriage between Joerni and Joesri. Joesri is a Dayak boy, orphaned after an *orang utan* attack on his village, and subsequently adopted by a merchant, Hadji Thamrin Navis. Having no recollection of his real parents, Joesri believes the merchant is his father. Hadji Thamrin is an ex-activist, a follower of Soekarno and Hatta, who was banned from south and east Borneo because of his activities. While in Surabaya he joins Muhammadiyah and then moves on to the Partai Islam Indonesia.

Hadji Thamrin takes Joesri to Surabaya, teaches him about business and enrolls him in a trade school (*sekolah dagang*, Handelsschool). After finishing his schooling, Joesri is sent to Padang to open a new branch of his father's jewellery shop. One day, while riding his bicycle on a Padang street, he is involved in a collision with another cyclist, a beautiful girl. They fall in love instantly, but do not meet again for a while. One day, Joesri is invited by Hadji Salman, a man from Banjar who used to live in Padang, to meet Salman's brother's family, Hadji Ishaq and Hadji Saidah. At the time, only Hadji Saidah is at home because Ishaq has gone to Siam (Thailand) to sell jewellery. At the house, Joesri again meets the beautiful cyclist who turns out to be Joerni, the daughter of Hadji Ishaq. She is also Haji Salman's niece and an activist in Aisyah, the women's wing of Partai Moeslim Indonesia (PERMI). Another member of Hadji Ishaq's family is Joerni's brother, Abdoel Gaffar. He is a PERMI activist, for which he was imprisoned in Sukabumi because of his involvement in this organisation. Later, Abdoel Gaffar becomes Joesri's best friend.

At Joerni's parents' house, Joerni and Joesri discuss many matters,

getting to know each other's visions for the future. When Abdoel Gaffar returns from prison, however, he is possessive and over-protective of his sister, and has changed his attitude towards Joesri. In light of this, Joesri decides to marry Joerni as soon as possible and sends a letter informing his adoptive father in Surabaya of his decision. A week before the wedding party is to be held, Joesri receives a telegram informing him that Hadji Thamrin is seriously ill. Hadji Salman's family suggests Joesri go to Surabaya and the wedding will take place without him. In some cases, wedding parties were held without the presence of the bridegroom, who was represented by the bridegroom's father or a male relative (such as a brother or uncle) or replaced by a symbol such as a *keris*, or even held via telephone. In fact, the wedding does not really take place, although Joesri believes that Joerni is his wife as they are already engaged.

Joesri meets his father and learns from his father's last wishes (*wasiat*) that he is adopted, but that as Hadji Thamrin's only son he is his sole heir. Hadji Thamrin asks not to change the love that Joesri has for his adopted father but also to look for his father's former wife. Joesri hires a private detective, Rooslan Louthfie, to trace his father's former wife. While preparing to return to Padang, he receives a telegram informing him that his wife and Gaffar have left Padang. Joerni's family assume that she is going to Batavia. He asks Rooslan Louthfie to find the whereabouts of Joesri and Gaffar. At the same time, Joesri hears that in Medan people are discussing a new roman written by an ex-activist. Curious, he buys the book but finds only the author's pseudonym. Nevertheless, from the book's contents, Joesri realizes that the author is Gaffar, and goes to the publisher in Medan to trace Gaffar.

Eventually, Joesri finds Gaffar in a small village in Binjai. Gaffar initially refuses to disclose Joerni's location, but relents at last. When Joerni and Joesri meet, Joerni does not give a clear reason why she cannot accept Joesri as her husband. A day later, she writes to tell him that she has decided to separate from him, because she is in fact the daughter of Hadji Thamrin Navis's former wife. This of course means that Joerni and Joesri are brother and sister. Joerni had learned of her true parentage through the message her mother left when she placed Joerni in the care of Hadji Ishaq's family. As her mother had stipulated, the message was given to Joerni only when she turned 20.

Finally, Joesri discovers that he was not the real son of Hadji Thamrin

Navis but had been adopted from a village in Borneo. Joesri and Gaffar go to Java in order to find Joerni and tell her the truth. She is seriously ill with malaria and although Joesri and Gaffar take her to Hadji Thamrin's villa in Batu Malang, she dies ten days later. After her death, Joesri and Gaffar dedicate themselves to political activities

3. Roman *Rahsia Pembongkaran* by Surapati

This roman is a detective story about the theft of money from the offices of a man named Sabihi. Sabihi has a biological son, Moeram, a student of law in Batavia, and an adopted son, Moenar, the leader of Pemoeda Indonesia Baroe, a youth movement. Sabihi loans company money to his family, but when this cannot be repaid he finds himself in difficulties. In addition, he cannot pay Moeram's tuition fees.

One morning, Sabihi finds his safe empty. He is deeply afraid and later is fired by the firm because of the missing money. The police investigating the case pursue Moenar because he ran away on the day the money was stolen. Moeljati, Moenar's girlfriend and a comrade in the youth organisation, believes he is innocent but cannot convince the police or anyone else. To escape her parents' plan to find her a husband, Moeljati moves to Ra'jat village, where she teaches in a small school, fulfilling her dreams of educating the public. In the meantime, Moeram continues his law studies in Batavia.

When Moeram returns to his village, he becomes a judge in the local court. Once again a theft occurs. Moenar reappears in the village, where he is captured and brought before the court. Moeram recuses himself as judge in the case because he has fallen in love with Moeljati. Moenar is sentenced to two years in prison.

In the end, however, Moeram confesses to his father that he was responsible for the theft because he was jealous of Moenar's career and his relationship with Moeljati. Moenar had not tried to prove his innocence because he wanted to help his father. Having heard the truth, Moeljati resolves to marry Moenar once he has served his sentence.

Ideological Views from *Roman Pergaoelan*

The ideological views reflected in works published by *Roman Pergaoelan* and, by extension, the views of Penjajaran Ilmoe, can be grasped from examining a selection of themes from these roman, as well as from

the polemical statements issued by the publisher. The three RP described above tell us about social change experienced by both male and female characters. The main problems that the main characters face are representative of the time: colonial oppression and the restrictions of *adat*. We can understand that the publishing house's selection of themes of the published works was resulted or influenced by the social and political dynamic in the region. It was a response toward the problems that the publishing house had to face. The literary infrastructure work is not driven by a single component, but supported by a complex component involving the literary life's aspects.



FIGURE 4 Cover of *Rahsia Pembongkaran* by Surapati. Courtesy of KITLV, Leiden.

The first common theme that deserves further exploration is the role of young people. Many of the main characters are socially progressive young people working for Indonesian independence and/or the improvement of society, either in political parties or Islamic organizations. In Surapati's *Rahsia Pembongkaran*, the main character, Moenar, leads the group Pemuda Indonesia Baru (New Indonesian Youth) which promotes Indonesian independence. Hasan, the hero of *Angkatan Baroe*, attempts

to build a new education system based on his realisation of the limitations of the system in which he himself was educated. In Merayu Sukma's roman, the main character, Joesri, explicitly engages in political activity, notably after the death of Joerni when he and Gaffar dedicate the rest of their lives to advancing the cause of independence in Indonesia. Gaffar is even imprisoned due to his political activities. These characters are presented as taking great pride in themselves as political activists, in a way that suggests the authors were trying hard to propagate such characteristics among their readers:

‘Yes, I understand, Joes, for you a wealthy life without the girl you love is the same as life in poverty and destitution. But you will feel secure in this world, even without the girl you love, if you devote the rest of your life to serving the public good. The wealth you now regard as meaningless will be meaningful to you if you make use of it to support our movement, especially the Islamic movement.’

‘Yes, Far, the movement is the only thing that can give life to me, in this loneliness I feel at the loss of my wife.’ (Merayu Sukma 1940: 96-97)⁵⁷

The author continually stresses how Joesri and Gaffar struggle for independence and work towards constructing a better society. By presenting such protagonists, the writers of RP are implicitly trying to relate to the majority of their readers, who are seen as coming from the younger generation, and who may also be engaged in social and political activities. Series like RP may have been intended to stimulate and support their spirit.

Both male and female characters in the *roman* are portrayed as ideal role models for youth: as organizational leaders and young graduates of good schools. For example, the character of Soeriaty (Hs. Bakri, *Soeriaty*, 1941) has the idea to form a women's organization in order to eliminate illiteracy among women by publishing a magazine, opening a library, and teaching

⁵⁷ ‘Ja, akoe poen mengerti Joes, bagimoe hidoep dengan kekajaan tetapi ditinggalkan oleh kekasih itoe, sama dengan hidoep didalam kemiskinan dan kemelaratan. Tetapi engkau akan merasa aman djoega ditinggalkan oleh kekasihmoe didoenia ini, djika selama oesiamoe engkau pergoenakan goena kebaikan oemoem. Harta kekajaanmoe jang engkau anggap tidak berarti itoe akan monfa'at djoega bagimoe kelak, djika akan engkau pergoenakan oentoek menjokong pergerakan kita teroetama pergerakan Islam.’
‘Ja, Far, hanja pergerakanlah satoe-satoenja lagi bagikoe jang akan dapat meramaikan kehidoepankoe jang kini koerasa sangat soenji senjap sepeninggal istrikoem.’

women to read. Although she herself does not finish school, she wishes to contribute her skills to help society.

As a matter of fact, Soerianti could only sit through the second grade of Mulo, and then asked to drop out of school. After that, she just stayed at home. Her activities were writing and writing....

But from one day to the next, she felt lonely with such work and wanted to improve the world of her acquaintance. Then a dream arose in her heart of building a women's organization. Her ambition lay dormant for a long time, until she made the decision to realise it.

She moved to Padang in order to realize her dream, because in Padang she had many colleagues who would be interested in working with her. Although she contradicted the wishes of her father and mother, she had so many reasons [to leave] that rather than prohibiting her they felt it would be better to support her. She was a strong-willed girl.

In the beginning, she felt that the work was very hard to do. Finally, as a result of all her hard work and activity, she managed to form a women's organization in order to eliminate illiteracy and develop libraries. She herself became the chair of the organization. The number of members involved was quite considerable, consisting of more than twenty women. (Hs Bakri 1941: 9)⁵⁸

The actions of these characters reflect the optimism of the RP authors towards the future of Indonesia. They believed that Indonesia would

⁵⁸ *Sebenarnja Soerianti hanja baroe dapat mendoedoeki bangkoe kelas doea Mulo, dan lantast minta berhenti. Soedah itoe dia tinggal diroemah sadja lagi. Kerjanja sehari-hari mengarang dan mengarang....*

Tetapi dari sehari kesehari diapoen berasa soenji dengan pekerdjaannja itoe dan dia ingin memperhaloes doenia pergaoelannja. Maka ketika itoe timboellah didalam hatinja akan membentoeok satoe organisatie poeteri. Tjita-tjitanja itoe lama terpendam, sehingga achirnja dia mendapat ketetapan bahwa perloe dilaksanakannja.

Keberangkatannja ke Padang adalah akan melaksanakan tjita-tjitanja itoe, karena di Padang banjak teman sedjawatnja jang akan maoe bekerdja bersama-sama dengan dia. Walaupoen bertentangan dengan kemaoean ajah boendanja, alasan-alasannja amat banjak. Dari pada menegah baik menjoeroeh. Dia gadis jang berkemaoean.

Pekerdjaan itoe moela-moela amat soelit dia melaksanakan. Akan tetapi berkat oesaha dan kegiatannja bekerdja, achirnja dapat djoea dia membentoeok satoe organisatie poeteri jang beroedjoed oentoeok membenteras boeta hoeroef dan mengembangkan perpoestakaan. Dia sendiri jang mendjadi ketoea organisatie itoe. Anggotanja banjak djoea, lebih dari doea poeloeh orang.

soon achieve its independence, and predicted a country and state which would enjoy a diversity of cultures and religions, an abundance of educated young people, and greater happiness than during its colonial past.

A second significant common theme in the RP is the importance of education. According to Hamka's *Angkatan Baroe*, education not only provides a better standard of living but also changes established opinions held by society about society. The conventional belief about education was that it provided graduates with good jobs, ideally as official employees (*ambtenaar*) in government offices. In contrast, the character of Hasan prefers to return to his own village to educate children after realising that his salary as a government teacher is insufficient:

Hasan regrets what has become of himself, and sometimes regrets the result of the learning he has acquired from his former teachers. But this regret has given rise to awareness. He realises that in this way he cannot hope to rise. It would be better to return to his village to attend to the children of his own village and to give them the necessary knowledge, in order to contribute to his village. That is the reason he returns.

When he returns to the village, although his uncle asks him to get into selling and trading, he refuses the offer. He wants to stay in his village to teach children based on the theory that has arisen from his experiences and suffering. He manages about 20 students; he teaches them farming during the day, and reading and writing in the evening, and to some students who are clever enough he gives religious courses as well. He believes that if the students manage to finish their studies, if they become intellectuals, they should be intellectuals who are able to find their own food. In the beginning, his efforts are laughed at by his friends who are attending religious schools, who rarely go back to their villages, but he just ignores them. In time, the villagers come to love him and the number of his students increases. He uses the *pondok* system [of Islamic boarding schools] but he modernises it by teaching the students to live modestly, because he had once been wrongly improvident. How lucky the young man is who becomes quickly aware. (Hamka 1939: 17-18)⁵⁹

⁵⁹ *Hasan menjesali dirinja, kadang-kadang disesalinja djoega pengadjaran jang diberikan goeroenja kepadanya. Tetapi penjesalan itoe telah menimboelkan keinsafan. Dia insaf*

Hamka clearly stresses the importance of developing a better educational system through his depiction of Hasan as the main character, whose ideals are contrasted against his wife Sjamsiar's blasé attitudes. According to Hamka, education was a method of preparing people for the future of Indonesia. The spirit of nationalism could be spread through reading materials, and only knowledgeable people could support political movements. People needed to be reminded that education was an important means to a better life, with which they could get access to information, knowledge, and even a good job. Education was also useful in promoting the economy.

Several of the RPs suggest that the amount of education a character has is not as important as what they do with it. In Surapati's *Rahsia Pembongkaran*, the most educated person, Moeram, is portrayed as having a bad attitude which renders him useless to society, while the character Moenar has limited education but is appreciated for being concerned for social conditions.

A third common theme in the RP is the positive portrayal of female education. A significant characteristic of the main female characters in these three RP discussed is that they are all educated, and are either graduates or students. Sjamsiar in *Angkatan Baroe* is a female graduate of a religious school in Padang. Joerni in Merayu Sukma's roman is an educated activist in the Aisyah organisation. Moeljati in *Rahsia Pembongkaran* is also a social and political activist who finished her studies

bahwa dengan tjara jang begini, tidak ada baginja harapan akan naik. Lebih baik dia kembali kekampoeng, disoesoennja anak doesoennja sendiri dan diadjarkannja ilmoe pengetahoean sekadarnja, soepaja djasa kepada kampoeng halaman ada poela. Itoelah sebab dia poelang.

Sampai dikampoeng, meskipoen mamaknja mengadjaknja lebih baik menoeroetkan dia pergi menggalas dan berniaga, dia tidak maoe lagi. Dia tetap hendak dikampoeng sadja mendidik anak-anak kampoengnja menoeroet theorie jang timboel menoeroet pengalamannja dan penderitaannja. Disoesoennja anak-anak itoe kira-kira 20 orang, siang diadjarnja bersawah dan berladang, malam diadjarnja menoelis dan membatja, mana jang otaknja agak tjerdas, diberinja poela pengadjaran agama. Dia berkejakinan, kalau anak-anak itoe lepas dari didikannja kelak, kalau dia djadi orang alim, hendaklah alim jang sanggoep mentjari sesoeap nasi dengan tangan sendiri. Moela-moela pekerdjaannja itoe mendjadi tertawaan dari kawan-kawannja jang bersekolah agama, jang poelang sekali-sekali kekampoeng, tetapi tidak diperdoelikannja. Tetapi lama-lama orang kampoeng poen sajang kepadanja, anak-anak itoe poen bertambah-tambah djoega banjarknja. Dia mehidoepkan system "pondok", tetapi dipermoderenkannja; Diadjarnja anak-anak itoe hidoep sederhana, karena dahoeloe dia telah salah dengan kerojalannja. Beroentoenglah anak moeda jang lekas insaf itoe.

at the Sekolah Ra'jat (People's School). Sjamsiar, however, is a target of criticism, through whom the author Hamka condemns the current educational system and the villagers' opinion of educated people. Educated people, as portrayed in the story, are no different from anyone else, and therefore should not be held in higher regard than others. Hamka criticizes how many formal schools alienate students from the daily life of ordinary people. As they prepare students to be official employees, they forget that the foundation of education is to provide students with life skills, social relationships, and religious or moral values.

In the other two roman, educated women are portrayed as ideal leaders. Joerni is an activist of PERMI and later, after the organization is banned, she becomes a secretary of Aisyah. She is involved with political and religious organizations, through which she wants to help people. She feels that people such as herself, her brother, and Joesri bear the responsibility for enlightening the public. A similar role is played in Surapati's roman by Moeljati, who is an activist of the New Indonesian Youth movement, the organization led by Moenar. She also graduates from a good school and later becomes a teacher in a nearby village.

In these three RP, as in many others, there is a clear suggestion that educated women have more opportunities to realize their dreams. They are involved in social and political movements, may teach in schools, and even secure concrete income resources within their capabilities, in no way differently from the male characters in the roman. In *Sebabnja Saja Bahagia*, (Tamar Djaja, 1940) for example, the female character and narrator, Matoen, has greater self-confidence and spirit than her husband Imran. She has ideas of how to keep their household together and even to initiate a small household business. She is wiser than her husband, and has more experience of how to face reality and how to cope with the social attitudes that influence their household. In one passage, Matoen tells the story of how she and her husband propagated their political ideas to people across Indonesia:

Then we departed to another city. We were continuously assailed by the sufferings of life, but luckily we still stored in our hearts the only invaluable crown of life, which is "Joy". Yes, as activists we experienced society's salt throughout our Nusantara, but we also carried out our responsibility towards nation and state in each place we visited. Wherever our party had a branch, we would go and distribute propaganda to the

public. In 1928, we departed for Borneo. In the beginning, we stayed in Banjarmasin for two months, but after we had no clear idea of how to live there, we continued our journey into the eastern part, Samarinda. (Tamar Djaja 1940: 70)⁶⁰

The final important theme in the RP is the creation of an ideal Indonesian family and society. In *Joerni-Joesri*, Merayu Sukma does not define the specific geographical location of his story, but lets it range across North Sumatra and Surabaya in East Java, which proves to be an effective method to suggest that the effort for national independence is universal throughout Indonesian soil. In this and other RP, the issue of what constitutes an ideal Indonesian and the practice of Indonesianness is discussed in some detail. The Indonesian people, according to these roman, should live in harmonious families, a process which begins with the wise selection of an appropriate partner. The goal of human relationships is to create and maintain a good family, underlining the significance of marriage as the basis of relationships under Islamic teaching, an undeniable influence upon people in West Sumatra. The Indonesian people should also prepare for national independence by cultivating good personal qualities, having a good education and a job deemed good from both social and religious points of view, helping each other, and being concerned for society. They should strive to reform their educational and economic systems, and develop positive mindsets and attitudes towards society.

Publicising this ideal representation of Indonesian people is one of the main purposes of the RP writers. This line of thought was considered at the time to be alternative, but in the chaotic social and political situation surrounding the struggle for national independence, the RP authors united with political movements to encourage people to prepare for independence by taking the necessary steps.

⁶⁰ *Kemoedian kamipoen berangkat poela kelain kota. Begitoelah teroes meneroes kami dilanggar kesoelitan hidoep, tapi beroentoenglah satoe2nja mahkota kehidoepan jang sangat berharga, masih tetap menjelinap didalam djiwa kami jaitoe "Kegembiraan". Ja sebagai orang pergerakan jg memahamkan banjak sedikit garam masjarakat dinoesantara kita kamipoen disetiap tempat jg ditempoeh senantiasa mengerdjakan kewadjiban oentoek bangsa dan noesa. Dimana2 tempat jg ada tjabang partai kami, kami senantiasa ikoet dan kepada rajat kami selaloe memberikan propaganda. Pada tahoen 1928, kamipoen bertolak ke Borneo. Moela2 kamipoen menetap dikota Bandjermasin doea boelan, kemoedian setelah tiada lantasi angan kami hidoep disana, kamipoen meneroeskan perdjalanannya kearah Timoer jaitoe Samarinda.*

The style used by RP writers creates a sense of intimacy and familiarity between writers and readers, which is produced by the narration by common characters, the frequent use of dialogue, and the setting of the action in existing locations. Readers of RP did not expect experimental writing styles from their writers, who mostly followed established conventions with only minor additions. The same pattern is evident in other popular novels published in different parts of the country. Some RP, however, such as Merayu Sukma's *Joerni-Joesri*, have more complex story lines and characters, and may be considered serious literary works.

The importance of the RP series, however, does not depend upon its literary quality. Although the authors relied upon established literary conventions, the key themes of their works, as discussed above, are significant in themselves. However, the editors of the RP series were also interested in publishing quality literature, a commitment demonstrated by the competition for new works that they conducted in 1939. The literary publishing related activities from the selection of works, the shaping of readers, to the aim to educate people through the published readings for instances, imply the operation of literary infrastructure played by Penjiaran Ilmoe as a publishing house.

Conclusion

This chapter has described how a private publishing house located in West Sumatra operated during the period that preceded Indonesian independence. From an examination of its published material, it can be safely concluded that Penjiaran Ilmoe played a significant role in the Indonesian independence movement. While it is challenging to investigate the history of Indonesian literature, despite its relative recentness, it would be worthwhile to explore the roles and functions of other publishing houses in other parts of the country during the same period. Our historical consciousness should bear in mind the contributions that such publishing houses have made to the development of the intellectual and literary life of Indonesia.

The above discussion shows how the publishing house, Penjiaran Ilmoe, has played roles in developing literature in West Sumatra. The similar roles are carried out by other publishing houses. It had opened a possibility to print and distribute printed literary works into readers, not only in West Sumatra but also in other places in Indonesia and neighbouring countries. From its publishing activities, Penjiaran Ilmoe shows how the publisher produced literary works during the colonial pe-

riod. The publisher also operated in attracting writers to write and published their works, distributing the published works through the book stores and distributors; providing a selection processes to have suitable readings for people, and to fulfil the need for reading materials that were limited at that times.

In the next chapter, I will discuss the publishing activities in West Sumatra after the Indonesian independence, with a focus on the republishing of folktales. These two discussions on the publishing house in West Sumatra show that the publishing house with its various activities have been a part of literary infrastructure that assists the literary life in West Sumatra. □

