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**Literary infrastructure in West Sumatra, Indonesia**  
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# CONCLUSION

THE EXISTENCE of literature in West Sumatra is supported by many institutions: the government, publishing houses, bookstores and literary communities, as well as private company and organization and individual patrons. The discussion in the preceding chapters has revealed how these elements of literary infrastructure function in the literary field in West Sumatra province. The thesis has demonstrated how each element of literary infrastructure contributes to the continuity and proliferation of literature. The literary infrastructure contributes to shape various forms such as the forming of readers through the republication of folktales activities, the literary activities by literary community to promote literature into wider public, the circulation of published books through the bookstores, and the support provided by the government, private organisation, and individuals to subsidy the publication of literary works and other literary activities.

The aim of the study was to explore the literary infrastructure in West Sumatra, by explaining the literary infrastructure components' roles, functions, influences, and how the literary life benefited from the literary infrastructure's operation. In this section, I will first review the key findings of each chapter and relate each other in a wider context of the literary infrastructure in West Sumatra. Secondly, I will formulate the essential findings from the whole discussion presented in this study, namely the *improvement* and *temporality*. These two terms become the basic as well as the operational characters of each literary infrastructure components, in the literary field in West Sumatra.

My study began with two case studies on the activities of publishing houses during the colonial period and after Indonesian independence period. The first study, Chapter 1, was focused on the literary publication called *Roman Pergaoelan* series, which operated during the colonial period by Penjajaran Ilmoe. The second study looked at the republication of folktales or traditional stories and the possible influence of the reader, writer, and Indonesian literature in general. The publisher was run by a group of people who actively engaged in social, intellectual, political and religious fields. The published literary works were written by authors

coming not only from within West Sumatra, but also those from other places such as Surakarta, Makassar, and Medan. The distribution was spread widely through the perantau networks across Indonesia and neighbouring countries in Singapore and Malaysia. The themes of the works published in Roman Pergaoelan included social change, politics, religion, detective stories and education. It also held writing competitions as a means to attract more works to be published. The establishment of Penjiaran Ilmoe and its Roman Pergaoelan series became an important step in West Sumatran literary history as it provided numerous literary works for local readers in addition to the reading materials published and distributed by Balai Pustaka, authoritative publishers founded by the Dutch government in the East Indies. It has also shown that the publishing house played important roles in the production and distribution of the published literary works.

The study was followed in Chapter 2 by an investigation on the folktales republication activity of a publishing house in Bukittinggi, Kristal Multimedia. The activity was started since the early 1960s by a family-owned printing and publishing company, with the focus to provide reading materials related to the Minangkabau's cultures, especially in the fields of folktales, history, and customary laws. Most of the stories are written by the company owner, Syamsuddin St. Rajo Endah, which are then reprinted by the present company by the son of the author of the stories. The republication activity, in which most of the stories are still in the form of oral performances and occasionally performed at ceremonies, has helped the transformation of the literature in passing through mediums such as benefiting from printing technology. The republication of folktales has influenced the shaping of reader profile, publishing activities, writers' adaptation of their works, and literary movement, especially among young people or students.

Although the written form does not simply replace the oral form, it supports the stories to reach a broader public. These kinds of readings are also introduced to young generations through the educational institutions. With the republication of folktales, the readers of these stories are familiar with the content of the readings and prepared themselves to further their interest in reading other literary works. However, the lack of new titles written by more recent authors is one of the challenges faced by the publishing houses in West Sumatra. Although the publishing house concentrates the publications on the traditional folktales, for example, stated

by Kristal Multimedia as its mission to provide Minangkabau's cultural related readings, it only received few titles to be published. Even though the potential readers who will buy and read published literary works are available in the market, the local publishing houses still limited their activities. Compared to the colonial and the early Indonesian independence years, the publishing houses in West Sumatra since the 1970s had less number of the literary works published locally.

These first two chapters confirmed the importance of the position of the publishing house. Its operation involves numerous parties, including writers, editorial staff, distributors, readers, as well as investors, other publishing houses, and religious and *adat* rulers. With these reasons, the publishing house is a component that plays important roles in the literary infrastructure.

The literary communities of West Sumatra have bridged private institutions, government agencies, individuals, writers, and public, to work together through the established literary activities, which I have explained in Chapter 3. The literary communities are mostly formed by writers or those coming from the actors of literature through the literary communities, which deeply involved in the literary activities such as literary publication, competition, or workshop. The initiatives in establishing literary clubs as an instrument to improve the literature coming from within the literature, such as those who are writers, readers, and critics, and therefore have more power and sustainability compared to those coming from the government. In the frame of the literary infrastructure, the literary community has partly contributes to empowering the writers as well as readers, and public in more widely context, by providing literature-related programmes.

An arts community called Young Indonesian Artists (SEMI, Seniman Muda Indonesia) which was established in 1947 in Bukittinggi had numerous activities including theatre, fine art, and literature. The publication of a bulletin titled SEMI was an example of its literary activity during the early years of Indonesian independence. This bulletin shows SEMI's mission to establish a strong foundation for literature in West Sumatra, or Central Sumatra at that time. The establishment of Krikil Tajam in the early of 1970s had a specific focus on discussing West Sumatran writers' works. It was aimed at improving the aesthetic quality especially for its members who were limited to those who have successfully published their works in major newspapers or magazines. There was a will to posi-

tion the West Sumatran writers at the same level as their counterparts from other places in Indonesia.

The following literary community I discussed was Yayasan Taraju, a literary club established in 1992. Its main activities were creative writing competitions and publications from emerging writers. The years of its existence was also in the rise of a movement in Indonesian literature called *revitalisasi sastra pedalaman* (revitalisation of hinterland literature), which tried to connect the literary communities in Indonesia to fight against the collusion and nepotism from major publications and literary institutions which mainly based in Jakarta. Whilst Komunitas Seni Intro, a literary community located in Payakumbuh, which was established in 1994 and still continues to function, has programmes to provide creative writing course/training for young people, theatre, and musical poetry performances (*musikalisasi puisi*), public library, and poetry reading competition. This literary club is managed by writers in Payakumbuh and supported by those who have art background who live in the same city.

I have shown that literary clubs can maintain their function with support from other sources of support, for examples from the government, government's owned company, and private companies. SEMI and Intro have a close relationship with the government to run their literary programmes. On the other hand, Krikil Tajam and Taraju tried to explore their capabilities and sources in their activities. Actually, other literary infrastructures can benefit and cooperate with literary clubs as the representation of the literary public. The government can create a partnership to socialise and disseminate their programmes in the field of literature. The publishing houses, as mentioned earlier, can accommodate the result of literary works to be published and promote their books in literary events conducted by literary clubs. In West Sumatra, the literary clubs' activities in the literature include literary events such as poetry reading competition, creative writing workshop, and literary discussion, establishing a library, and publishing activities. The literary clubs have also juxtaposed the literature with people. They become bridges that connect literature with various kinds of activities. The literary clubs also act as an association to gather writers' voices. The members of literary clubs are not only those whose professions as writers, but also those who want to become writers, such as secondary and higher education students, artists from different genres, and literary aficionados in general. Considering

their important position and function, the literary club is always present over periods, with various literary programmes and activities.

The circulation of published literary works by publishers, as the result of creative processes and other literary activities such as writing workshop or competition, is handled by bookstores. The role played by a bookstore in literary work distribution and also literacy-related activities is significant. My focus of study in Chapter 4 primarily laid on the exploration of a bookshop in West Sumatra to see the circulation of published literary works, reader, and the involvement of bookshop in the literacy and literary fields. Based on their business scales, I grouped them into four categories namely local independent bookshop (Sari Anggrek), external chain bookshop (represented by Gramedia), minor bookshop (small bookshop in districts and cities), and itinerant sellers (individual book traders using, private cars and motorbikes).

All of these bookshops provide literary works in various genres, published by national and local publishing houses. However, each bookstore has different priorities and preferences. Sari Anggrek is established by Azhar Muhammad in the early 1960s and aimed to provide reading materials and sources for local people primarily in the fields of Minangkabau's culture, and Islamic teaching. Sari Anggrek accommodates local writers and publishers to sell their books in the store. The owner designated the front shelves for Minangkabau related books, as a symbol to promote local books to the visitors. Gramedia, in contrast to Sari Anggrek, uses its own distribution system that is decided by the central office in Jakarta. With this system, the main books displayed in the store are those published by Gramedia and its group members. Other publishers' books have to fulfil the requirement (i.e. minimum copies of printed books, the number of published titles, and administrative matters) if they want to include their books in the Gramedia chain bookstores. In its Padang bookstore, Gramedia since its first establishment gave space for local writers and publishers to sell their books under an agreement with the manager. However, from 2012 the system was no longer used.

While both major bookstores are located in Padang, the capital city of the West Sumatra province, there are many minor bookshops in smaller towns and districts in West Sumatra. Some of the bookshops of this type are located in the traditional markets and other in permanent buildings nearby traditional markets or bus terminals where people come to shopping and traveling. Besides new books in these bookshops, there are also

used books and pirated books which are sold at cheaper prices. This also implies the profile of readers or consumers of the bookshops in correlation to the book trading geographically, whose consumers choose to buy the pirated books distributed by illegal distributors to avoid the regular line of distributions. The movable booksellers and *taman bacaan* complement the book circulation in West Sumatra. By using a modified car a bookseller in Bukittinggi and Padangpanjang comes to places where people gather such as in the areas of sports competitions, festivals, and street vendors. Another person uses a motorbike to offer books to schools and governmental offices. The *taman bacaan* also played an important role in providing reading materials, mainly popular novels, and comics, to young people. But nowadays most of the book lending collapse because most of the young people turn into the cafeteria and play game stations to spend their leisure time. The bookstores can be used as an indication to understand what kind of literary works is of interest to readers, how many readers and potential readers are available in the place, what literary and book-related events can be offered, and what the strategy is needed to strengthen the growth of the market. The government can also make a necessary policy, such as tax reduction, a regulation that supports the bookstores, literacy campaign, and support for local publishing activities.

In some cases, the literary activities (i.e. competition, workshop, publication, and seminar) are supported by the government through various offices (*dinas*) in provincial and city or town levels. In Chapter 5, I categorised three governmental institutions whose functions are in the fields of art and culture in the province of West Sumatra. The government's institutions working on the arts and cultures are clearly parts of the literary infrastructure, as they are established by the state to provide services through their programmes. The first are centralised government institutions represented by the Balai Bahasa Sumatera Barat and Balai Pelestarian Nilai Budaya. These two institutions are under the direct coordination of the Ministry of Education and Culture. The institutions' programmes are prepared regionally, but are then decided by its ministry in terms of the accepted programmes and financial support. The second category is that of provincial bodies which are represented by the Office of Culture and Tourism, the Office of Education and Culture, and its implementing bodies such as the Cultural Centre (Taman Budaya). These institutions work under the provincial coordination. Their programmes are based on the provincial needs and depend mostly on the provincial budget

to hold arts and cultural agendas. The third is the government-funded institution as shown by the West Sumatran Arts Council (DKSB) and the Centre for Islam and Minangkabau (PPIM). These organisations were established by artists and those who work in the field of culture, with the financial and policy support provided by the provincial government. Additionally, I included the support for literature provided by patrons and private companies and institutions.

The activity of the publishing house is shaped by various elements of literary infrastructure, in particular from the writers, bookstores or distributors and the government. The request for more manuscripts from the publishing house to writers should be responded by writers or literary communities. When the need of literary works is fulfilled, then the publishing house or distributor may distribute the published works to readers or bookstores. In the case of Kristal Multimedia which publishes mainly on the local themes, the role of the government, in particular, the Office of Education could support the publication by distributing the readings into schools or subsidises the price. The cooperation between the publishing houses with the other literary infrastructure such as the government which is also supporting literature can be in many ways. There are many publications conducted and produced by the government offices but in only limited number of copies. The government offices can actually work together with the private publishers to publish their books in more copies and result in strengthening the publishing activities in West Sumatra.

Similarly, the sustainability of publishing houses in West Sumatra depends on the production of manuscripts by local writers as well as from those outside the province. The experience of Kristal Multimedia in inviting local writers to publish their works, especially with local content, but resulting no significant number of manuscripts it receives, shows that it is still less of prestige for writers to publish in local publishers. This fact is supported by the coverage of the published works by major publishers located mostly in Java. The publication of literary communities can also be directed to support the local publishing houses growth. The elaboration on the operation of literary publishing also responded to my research question on the changing, especially in correlation to the decline of the number of publishing houses and literary works published by local publishers. The improvement of other places' literary life and the more attractive benefits from publishers in other places, for example, lead the West Sumatran writers to publish their works in other cities or regions.

The government-funded institutions such as PPIM and DKSB reflected the collaboration between the government and writers, and artists from other genres, in preparing and establishing literary programmes. This form of collaboration between the government and artists with essential job distribution is one of the best practices in literary or art and cultural institution management. Unfortunately, two institutions in this category stopped operating, caused by internal difficulties as shown by the West Sumatran Arts Council (ceased since 2009) and the government and legislative's decision such as what has been experienced by The Centre for Islam and Minangkabau (closed in 2007). As a result, arts and culture, of which literature is a part, have unstable positions under the government policy. In concern to this form of literary institution, there is a need to maintain the existence of institutions such as PPIM and DKSB by the issuance of legal standing by the government and legislative as the basis to a longer cultural policy in the province.

In the implementation, each institution discussed in this thesis has taken different portions and roles in correlation to their contribution to literature in West Sumatra. Meanwhile, there are also similarities in some parts in which they work in the same ways, such as the form of budget contribution provided by the government, businessmen, or individuals. Another example is on the literary events that have been held by various institutions such as the government agencies, literary communities, or private companies. The difference is caused by, among other reasons, the degree of their involvement or familiarity with literature or writers. The literary communities in West Sumatra, for instance, have more deeply involved in the literary field compare to the government and bookstores. This is because literary clubs are mostly initiated by those who have a literary background. In contrast, the government and bookstores are managed by those who have less concern into literary life even though they work, or part of their works is, in the field of literature. While other institutions' managers or leaders have less interaction or familiarity with the literature. On the other hand, literary communities have a limitation in terms of the fund to hold literary activities. In between, the arts and cultural institutions that were funded by the government and managed independently by artists and writers ideally combine the needs of literary programmes and also sufficient fund to make the programmes come into existence.

The centralised government institutions placed in provincial or inter-

provincial levels work differently from the local government's institutions. As their programmes are also decided by, and derived from, the national programmes, they often have less coordination with the related local government's offices. Therefore, most of the programmes are overlapping. While the local government, in provincial or district/city levels, have also implemented their programmes in the field of arts and cultures. I found limited general platform prepared and used by the government as tools and guidance in implementing the arts and cultural programmes by the local government. The main guidance used as the basis of the programmes is laid on the *adat basandi syarak, syarak basandi kitabullah* (customary is based on the religion and religion is based on the Koran). This means that all programmes are directed to the achievement in improving public cultural activities based on the *adat* (custom) and *syarak* (Islam).

The publishing houses have connected the literary works from the hand of writers to readers, or from the manuscript into printed and published works. Publishing activities are not only conducted by commercial and well-established publishers but also by literary communities as well as government and a part of programmes of literary events. The institutions which work in the literature related field, such as the government, including the government-funded organisations working in the arts and cultural fields, private organisations, and literary community take parts in the literary development. The establishment of the central and local government agencies, the allocation of the budget by the central and local government and House of Representative for the arts and cultural programmes, the construction of arts facilities, are some examples of the government roles in literature, and cultures in more general fields.

On the other hand, the government also has lack direction in doing its mission. The cease of the West Sumatra Arts Council and the Centre for Islam and Minangkabau which were parts of the government's funded bodies, unfair selection to choose delegation members to attend such festival or literary events, collusion in funding personal cost for certain authors based on personal approaches, or unknown criteria to fund or not to fund such literary events, are examples of the common practices of the government. The literary club empowers the potentials and resources for the literary field from the writers, government, and the public. It fills the gap of the lack support for literature, especially by the limited funding from the government. While the bookstore plays a role in providing the published literary works for the reader, and other literacy and literary

activities. All these components of literary infrastructure constitute the literary life in West Sumatra according to their functions and activities in the literary field. Each component is also interconnected with each other, even though has an essentially different portion of roles, in supporting literature.

In implementing the function in supporting literature, each institution actually connects and complements each other to the similar goals; to improve literature in the area. But, as this study suggested, there are some problems and weaknesses of each component caused by a different characteristic of each component. The continuation of the mentioned literary infrastructures is directed, or hoped, by writers, literary aficionados, government and related parties, to improve and develop the literary field. The improvement and development are commonly used by the government to measure and justify its planned programmes in all fields including culture. However, the grand design of the development programmes can be changed or terminated somewhere in the middle of the implementation. As a result, the temporality and discontinuation of the planned programmes present into being. Based on the study in this thesis, the improvement and temporality become two characteristics of the operation of literary infrastructures in West Sumatra.

The nature of improvement and development is used as the basis for such fields in Indonesia. The term is also spread in the governmental policy and programmes as well as society's initiatives. The improvement can be represented by the budget spending, the quantity of the projects, diversity, and expansion of the programmes. In term of the literary field, the improvement is indicated by the literary achievement (competition, award, prize, publication), the growth of literary communities or organisation, and literary events (seminar, workshop, poetry reading, creative writing competition). The improvement is associated with the comparison of the previous achievement to the following ones.

A key term called *improvement* has appeared throughout this thesis. I found that an urge towards improvement has led the literary activities and writers in West Sumatra to a certain purpose. The concept of improvement can be found in concrete things, such as the published works, the number of literary clubs and their programmes, the rise of the writers, the number of literary events, publishing houses, or readers. It can also be recognized as the achievement of aesthetic quality shown by the

prizes received by West Sumatran writers, the successes in publishing writers' works in prestigious newspapers, magazines, or publishers; or invitation to attend famous literary festivals. The improvement is commonly associated with the *development*. Most of the literary activities are directed to bring literary awareness into a better condition or position in the future. There is always opposition between the older and younger generation which also represents the opposition between the past and the present/future not only in the field of literature, but also in another form of arts and culture. The word development is not only meant as a betterment from the previous periods to the current time, in term of facilities, achievement, a number of new writers, programmes, and activities.

However, the literary development which is underlying the literary infrastructure operation has to deal with another characteristic grounding the infrastructure namely the *temporality*. The establishment of publishing house was only limited to a certain period as shown by Penjiaran Ilmoe or continued by different owners as reflected by Kristal Multimedia. The discontinuity of publishing house then affected change of literary production or publication, including the genre of published work as preferred by the publishers. Many literary communities are short lived. The main reason is that the managers or members of literary communities have to find their personal professions, moving to other places (*merantau*), and for their daily personal needs. There were new literary communities established with different goals, programmes, and strategies to achieve the goals, than previous communities. The number of bookstores decreased as well from time to time. The new means of book trading by using social media and online platform now become more popular. The book display and movement from one *taman bacaan* to another also make the books (literary works) temporarily available in one place and next in other places. The support (policy, programmes, and fund) from the government institutions, private organisations, and patrons, is available irregularly. The temporality is one of the characters of most components discussed in this thesis. It shows a unique character of the literary milieu in West Sumatra, and most probably in Indonesia and Southeast Asia in a wider context.

Each part of the literary infrastructure works independently based on its function but, at the same time, also collectively filling in the gaps in the literary field, and is involved in assisting the continuation of literature in West Sumatra and more widely in the context of modern Indonesian literature. □

