Greetings from the Executive Director

In early October, Lontar was invited to attend a literary festival organized by the Singapore Minangkabau Association, which featured two Minang-born writers whose books have been published by Lontar: Heru Joni Putra, author of *The Mystical Path of Badrun Mustafa*, and Gus Tf, author of *Night's Disappearance*. Multi-ethnic Singapore singles out October as the month to commemorate the Malay language, one of the country’s official languages (along with English, Mandarin and Tamil). The venue provided a great opportunity for Lontar to showcase titles by other West Sumatran authors as well, including the recently-released *To the Contrary* by A.A. Navis; *If Fortune Does Not Favor* by Selasih; *Siti Nurbaya* by Marah Rusli; *Never the Twain* by Abdul Moeis; and *Oh, Oh, Oh!* by Idrus.

Held in the beautiful surroundings of Singapore’s National Library, the seminar was attended by Minang-expatriates and other Singaporean book lovers. Much like other literary festivals, the event was enlivened by traditional dances and regional cuisine—in this instance, Padang food. But what I found surprising was the enthusiasm and passion the audience showed for the stories and poetry of their original homeland, despite being loyal citizens of their adopted nation. This led me to wonder whether such longing existed among Indonesian diaspora in other countries. After all, the United Nations lists some eight million Indonesian expatriates worldwide, stretching from countries like South Africa, Suriname, and the Netherlands to newer migrant destination such as the United States and Australia.

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Ruminations by John McGlynn:

**Pak Dipo or Memories of September 30**

In Indonesia, when September 30 comes around, it's not difficult to guess what comes to most people’s minds. For those 60+ years of age it’s the blood-filled period of Indonesian history which began on the night of that day with the abduction and murder of six army generals. For this “September 30 Movement” (or the more nefarious-sounding “Gestapu,” an acronym for “Gerakan Tigapuluh September”), the military placed the blame on the Indonesian Communist Party and in the months that followed a million or more Party members and alleged sympathizers were killed.

For Indonesians between the ages of 36 and 60, September 30 brings to mind a film with the unwieldy title of “Penumpasan Pengkhianatan G30S/PKI” (Eradication of the Treachery of the September 30 Movement by the Indonesian Communist Party). This 4.5 hour film, with its cast of 200 actors and more than 10,000 extras, took two years to produce and was the most costly Indonesian film ever made up to that time. A masterpiece of dark propaganda artfully directed by Arifin C. Noer, this film became the most-watched film in 1984-1985, with close to 700,000 viewers, and, thereafter, up to 1993, was compulsory viewing for schoolchildren on the morning of September 30.

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The sentiment of “longing for the homeland,” which often manifests itself in books, music, and other art forms, varies among Indonesian communities from one country to another. In Suriname, Javanese culture remains very strong among the descendants of indentured laborers who were transported to that place by the colonial Dutch government hundreds of years ago. Wayang and gamelan music, for instance, are still popular among the Javanese who comprise 15 percent of Suriname’s population and an old version of the Javanese language is still spoken by many there.

Then there are the Cape Malays of South Africa, descendants of mostly Bugis people from South Sulawesi, who were also transported by the Dutch, either as indentured laborers or as political exiles. However, those who reside mostly in Cape Town no longer speak their original dialects, or even Malay, although the food and even the languages spoken among South Africans clearly bear some influence from faraway Indonesia.

All this compels us at Lontar to look more towards the literary interests of the Indonesian diaspora around the world. Indeed, it looms as a promising destination for Lontar publications, even in the new world. In Australia, the Sydney-based IndoLit group, comprising locals and Indonesian expats who meet regularly to discuss Indonesian books, is one good example and provides us with the incentive to explore places and people Lontar books can reach out to.

From Jakarta, salam sejahtera to all friends and supporters of Lontar. As it was our anniversary on October 28, please don’t forget to donate!

Yuli Ismartono
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But neither the purge nor the film is what September 30 means to me. The date is for me a reminder of the man who produced that film: Gufran Dwipayana or “Pak Dipo” as he was better known. Because Pak Dipo was a career military officer who worked his way up in the ranks from a member of the Student Army (Tentara Pelajar) in the Indonesian Revolution to the rank of Brigadier General—serving along the way as head of the army’s documentation center; editor-in-chief of Sapta Marga and Berita Indonesia, two army-funded newspapers; Director of PPFN (Pusat Produksi Film Negara), the state-owned film-production house; AND personal assistant to President Soeharto—one might assume that he was a man with a rigid mindset, a dyed-in-the-wool believer of the Soeharto government and all that it stood for…. And, perhaps, he was but that is not the man I knew. My Pak Dipo (1932–1990) was a self-effacing man who lived a simple life in his small family home on Jalan Gandaria IV, regularly eating a meal of corn mixed with rice to remind himself of the hardship his family endured during the Revolution and rising each morning at 5 AM to run 10 K around Senayan Stadium before setting off for work. He was also a man who loved the arts, fostered creativity in others, and freely gave from his own pocket financial assistance to numerous good causes.

Following my study of advanced Indonesian at the Indonesian Teacher’s College (IKIP) Malang in the summer of 1976 and then travel in Sumatra and Singapore in the later months of that year, in January 1977 I enrolled in the Faculty of Letters at the University of Indonesia with the intent of pursuing a Masters degree. To my dismay, however, I learned that if I wanted to obtain an M.A. from U.I. I would first need to complete several semesters’ worth of P-4 courses. These courses on “P-4,” an acronym for “Pedoman Penghayatan dan Pengamalan Pancasila” (Guidelines for Instilling and Understanding Pancasila)—were a tool developed by the New Order government to mold (or brainwash?) the minds of the country’s younger generation. Few will argue about the loftiness of the five principles (panca sila) of Indonesia’s national ideology, which include belief in God; humanitarianism, national unity, democracy, and social justice. The courses, however, were not just notoriously boring but were used to weed out independent-minded thinkers from employment in the government, the military, and any State-funded organizations, including schools. No way, I said to myself, and as a result of this requirement, instead of pursuing an M.A. at U.I., I changed my status to non-credit student and studied at the university just one semester.

After this short-lived academic foray, I made a living as a teaching assistant for a while but by late 1977, I was nearly broke and living in a gloomy hovel off of Jalan Matraman in Central Jakarta. My diet was meager—consisting mostly of fried rice from street-side vendors—but then, by good fortune, Buddy Prasadja, an Indonesian student friend at the
University of Wisconsin who had recently returned to Indonesia introduced me to his sister, Budi, the editor of *Indonesia*, a now-defunct travel magazine. Seeing that my language skills might be of some use to her, she introduced me to Gufran Dwipayana, the underwriter of that venture, who immediately invited me to stay free-of-charge in the small two-room pavilion that adjoined his house on Jalan Gandaria in exchange for my editorial services. A life saver!

Over the course of the following year and through Pak Dipo, in his various positions as film producer, presidential assistant, and arts lover, I came to meet numerous luminaries: filmmakers Arifin C. Noer, Misbach Yusa Bihran, Teguh Karya; politicians Ali Moertopo, Joop Ave, and Nugroho NotoSosanto; and fashion designers Iwan Tirta, Prayudi, and Harry Dharsono. But more importantly for my eventual career as a translator, he secured for me my first paid translation jobs, initially at *Indonesia*, but then with several government offices and, later, in the 1980s, with PPFN for which I subtitled all Indonesian feature films that were being sent abroad. With his guiding hand, Pak Dipo showed me that “translation” was a viable career opportunity.

In the Indonesian film world, Pak Dipo will likely be remembered as the producer of his “September 30” film, that masterpiece of propaganda, but I personally feel a more accurate reflection of his character would be the “Si Unyil” television series, which he also produced. Over the years, starting in 1981, 603 episodes of that series aired on TVRI. No, Pak Dipo was not Unyil’s creator—that credit goes to Suyadi, more popularly known as Pak Raden—but it was Pak Dipo who recognized the need for educational material for children and made the money available for that much-loved televised puppet show.

Every Sunday morning, the *Si Unyil* show told stories in the life of the eponymous main character who, much like Pak Dipo himself, grew up in a rural area where both hardship and joy went hand in hand. Although the show was meant to entertain, it also contained underlying messages of patriotism, nationalism, health, environment, armed forces, family planning, art and culture. It is there, in those benign and enlightened messages, much more than in the grim horror of the September 30 film, I see Pak Dipo and what he meant to me.

John McGlynn
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October Activities

Minangkabau Views: A Literary Seminar
On October 5, at the National Library of Singapore, one of Lontar’s author, Gus tf Sakai, joined a literary seminar: Views from Minangkabau.

Frankfurt Book Fair 2019
Represented by John McGlynn and Wikan Satria, Lontar participated at the Frankfurt Book Fair 2009 on Oct 16 to 20 as one of the Indonesian publishers and met up with fellow publishers from other countries, among them Bill Swainson, Consultant Editor at MacLehose Press, a member of ITBM, Institute for Translation and Books Malaysia.

University of Hamburg
On October 23, at the Institute of Asian and African Studies at the University of Hamburg in Germany, John McGlynn spoke to students and faculty members on the subject of “Working with Words: Translation, Publication, and the Market for Indonesian Books.”

Book Launching “Spaces”

Upcoming Activities
Lontar will take part at the Borobudur Writers and Cultural Festival on November 21-23 in Magelang, during which Lontar books will be on display. For further information: https://festival.borobudurwriters.id/

Reading “Badrul Mustafa” in London
Heru Joni Putra, a BTW series writer read his latest collection of poems “Badrul Mustafa” at the Atticus Bookshop in London, on Oct 30.

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