



Lontar Newsletter

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Greetings from the ED

The long-awaited new government of President Prabowo Subianto is finally in place and to say it was a surprise may be the understatement of the year! Few people expected the cabinet to expand to more than 100 ministries, institutes and councils. New departments were formed or renamed, and a few old ones were divided. One particular ministry of interest is the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology, which was split into three distinct entities. The first will be in charge of elementary and secondary education; the second on higher education, science, and technology; and the third on “culture,” in the broad sense of the term.

If the objective of this new formation of ministries is to ensure a sharper and better focus on the three fields for which they are in charge, this makes sense. The challenge will be to put in place the administration and the operating systems to make them truly functional. This could take some time. Nonetheless, it is encouraging that the government’s priority in the next five years is education, second only to food security. The President has set the budget for the education sector in 2025 at Rp722.6 trillion, the highest figure in the nation’s modern history.

The government is well-aware of the declining scores in literacy and numeracy of Indonesian students, as evidenced by findings in the latest PISA (Program for International Student Assessment) report. In fact, the President himself declared that teaching mathematics should be taught from kindergarten.

Ruminations

The Bench

Glynnspring, my family’s farm, is more than a hop-skip-jump away from my own dwelling in Jakarta but I try to visit annually. Recently, I was there and, when walking the grounds, I looked at the trees family members had planted there in memory of loved ones. I am from a large family with a rapidly-increasing age average. In recognition of that fact, my family decided to stop planting trees and to install a memorial bench for all passed loved ones instead. Located below the family home, the bench offers a splendid view of the valley beyond.

Anna Marie McGlynn was a good person forced to live the later years of her life in hell, held prisoner there by Progressive Supranuclear Palsy (PSP), an incurable brain disorder. In the course of her final decade, she lost the ability to walk, feed herself, speak, and, finally, breathe. Worse yet—and unlike Alzheimer’s whose victims lose awareness of their physical deterioration—she was fully cognizant of what was happening but could do nothing about it. She died in May 2002. Her children, I included, had expected our father to outlive her but he did not. John A. McGlynn, Jr., died suddenly in January 1999.

Between the two of them, John had always been the “speaker,” the couple’s voice. I guessed that had he had a presentiment of his death, he would have prepared, in long hand, final words for his loved ones—but he did not. Thus, after his passing, I took it upon myself to put down my mother’s final words. But, as she was unable to write at that time,



Seated on the bench with a view of the valley beyond.

The big question will be whether the game-changing Merdeka Belajar (Freedom to Learn) curriculum that has been operational for the past three years and deemed to be moderately successful in introducing a more innovative approach to teaching and learning, will survive the changes. Educators hope the curriculum will continue, even though some changes are foreseen, to adapt to new policies and programs.

One development we at Lontar are looking forward to is engaging with the new Ministry of Cultural Affairs, whose budget will be independent from that of the education sector. We hope to see more books published, more libraries built, and more museums, art galleries, and theaters established. We encourage the Ministry to reestablish the National Book Committee or something very similar. The Committee, disbanded in 2019, had, through its work in the previous five years—most notably, its Translation Funding Program, participation in international book fairs, and a writers' residency program—increased the number of rights sales to Indonesia titles from a paltry few per year to more than 1,500 during that period. Huge progress had been made towards shining the spotlight on Indonesian authors and, more generally, Indonesian culture on the global stage. Indonesia had begun to be seen as the place to go to for “content” in the larger Asian region.

Books are the true key to cultural diplomacy. We encourage the new Minister of Culture to put the promotion of Indonesian books at the top of his “to-do” list.

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and barely able to talk, I would write what I thought she might say about a particular loved one, read the passage to her, and wait for some kind of acknowledgment of approval—a nod of the head or a grunt of delight.

On my recent visit home, I came across a binder containing “Words for my Loved Ones,” the testimony I had penned for Mother. I took it and then went to the memorial bench to reread “her” final words, which open as follows: “The most important things in a person’s life are faith, family, friends, and community. This is what I believe and they, along with the Ten Commandments, have been my guiding principles, the rule of thumb I’ve tried to teach my children. Some people might think this is a simple way of looking at things but I know, from my own life, happiness can be found in the smallest of things: in knowing God is watching over you, in the smile on your child’s face, in a colander of ripe tomatoes from a neighbor, or in a square dance at the Old Town Hall. Now John—Big John, that is—was a wanderer, always footloose and wanting to explore new and different places. Well, I liked to see new sights too but, no matter what, at the end of the day, I always felt the most beautiful place in the world was the one I could see through the windows of our home. When washing the dishes in the kitchen, I could look out the windows above the sink to see lilacs and bridal-wreath bloom in Spring, and kids rolling down the hill in summertime. Through the windows of the back porch to my left, I could watch the green leaves on the two big maples outside turn to yellow and red. And if I turned around to look through the windows in the dining room, I could see the whole of the valley which, on a winter’s day, looked like a little piece of heaven to me.”

Thereafter, in my hand, Mother went on to tell about the family’s love for gab and story-telling. (“How do you start a conversation with a McGlynn?” the joke in our family began. “Give her a doorknob!”) “The kids are sprawled on chairs, couches, and the floor, trading new stories or retelling older ones. And there’s John, in ‘Daddy’s chair’, with a bottle of beer on the floor, a pipe in his hand, and his head buried in a book. But every once in a while, when hearing something, he looks over his glasses at whichever kid is telling their version of family lore. He’s the umpire, you see, coming in every once in a while to correct some piece of information or to further confuse the kids by telling yet another variation of a particular tale.

“For my part, I liked to listen. I had my stories, too, but what with all those socks I had to darn and missing buttons to sew on shirts before the kids went back to school the next day, it was more fun for me to listen to the rest of them.”

One oft-repeated story, which Mother recounted, was about Kathleen, daughter number three, and her “big escape” from home. “One day, Kathleen, who was not much more than a toddler, decided to go off by herself. Maybe she wanted to play in the creek or go down to the end

IN MEMORIAM



Titik in 2015

TITIK PUDJIASTUTI (1/23/1956–10/21/2024) was a noted scholar of Javanese manuscripts and literature. With a masters degree from Leiden University (1990), she then obtained her PhD from the University of Indonesia where, upon her graduation in 2010, was appointed Professor of Literature. Among Titik's many important publications are *Serat Yusup: Peran, Fungsi dan Manfaatnya*, an edition of the Javanese story of the prophet Joseph; *Sajarah Banten*, a translation of "The History of Banten"; *Babad Arung Bondhan*, a Javanese historiography; and *Perang, Dagang, Persahabatan*, an edition of royal letters from Banten written in Arabic, Malay and Javanese.

Titik edited or contributed to many more books, but a list of titles does not do justice to the legacy of this inspiring scholar. Standing out for her leadership, among her greatest contributions to the field were her enthusiasm and passion, always tinged with humour and kindness, through which she galvanised, inspired and trained many cohorts of young scholars. Titik led missions to catalogue and digitize manuscripts all over the archipelago. Never flagging, she was on a field trip to document manuscripts in West Java when she was taken ill and, shortly after, passed away. She leaves behind ad daughter, Tisya, and grandson, Gaga.

Thanks to Annabel Gallop for both the text and photo in this obituary.

of the drive to watch cars go by but, anyway, I was out working in the garden and didn't see her go. After a time, though, when I came back to the house and asked the older girls, Maureen and Eileen, where their sister had gotten to, all they could do was shake their heads.

"At first I'm not worried because the kids are always playing hide-and-seek but, after a while, when Kathleen doesn't come out from wherever she's hiding, I really start to look for her. And I set Maureen and Eileen to look for



Kathleen at the head of the driveway in 1949 (not on the day of her escape).

her too. We scour the house and then start looking around the yard and in the barn but she's nowhere to be found."

What had happened? Kathleen had gone down the drive and then started walking along the road. A neighbor, Mrs. Wastlick, who was driving past on her way to Cazenovia, spotted the tyke and stopped to picked her up. Strangely, instead of taking her straightway back up the drive to her worried mother, she took Kathleen with her to Cazenovia and only later dropped her off.

Meanwhile, Mother is going frantic, "with all kinds of terrible thoughts going through my head." In the end, however, she writes, "everything was alright because Mrs. Wastlick returned Kathleen to the house and the little scamp was happier than could be. After all, she'd just had a great adventure and had gotten an ice-cream cone besides! Even so.... Even after Kathleen was safe back home and in my arms I was left there standing with this great big empty feeling inside me. For all the time that she was gone—and it felt to me like days—I couldn't imagine what I would do if Kathleen really went missing. That's how I felt about all my kids."

On the bench, where I am seated, my eyes fall on the plaque affixed to its back: "In memory of all whose lives were linked to this land." And then I read Mother's very final words about her children: "Every one of them was special, more valuable than anything else in the world. And that's how you got to treat your children, 'cause if there's any hope for the world at all, it's in your kids' hands."

John McGlynn (john_mcglynn@lontar.org)



The University of Michigan in Ann Arbor is one of the original centers for the study of Indonesia in the United States. It is also one of the top target destinations for Indonesian scholars.

On Saturday, October 12, Lontar was honored to host a delegation from the university who came to Indonesia for the purpose of strengthening the relationship between U.M. and Indonesia. While in Indonesia, they participated in EducationUSA fairs and forums in Jakarta, Surabaya, and Bali.

One target of their visit was to increase the number of Indonesian students obtaining PhDs at the university as a means of strengthening Indonesia's educational system.

At Lontar, discussion focused on the important role that cross-cultural knowledge plays in global peace and understanding.



Back row (left to right): Bin Zhao, Senior Director, International Giving and Engagement; David Sept, Associate Dean for Academic Programs and Initiatives, Rackham Graduate School; Amy Carey, Assistant Vice Provost for International Engagement; Emily Swafford, Assistant Dean, Rackham Graduate School; Andries Coetzee, Director of International Partnerships, College of Literature, Science and the Arts. Front row: JHM, Alan Feinstein (Director, AMINEF).

Surat dari Pejompongan

BAHASA

Kawan Moer,

Orang Indonesia merayakan Oktober sebagai “Bulan Bahasa”. Sebabnya, kau pasti tahulah, bahwa pada 28 Oktober 1928, melalui kerapatan sejumlah organisasi kaum muda yang hasilnya dikenal sebagai “Sumpah Pemuda”, bahasa Indonesia diakui secara aklamasi dan dijunjung tinggi sebagai bahasa persatuan. Maka, sejak itu penyebutan “Bahasa Melayu” perlahan-lahan ditinggalkan. Sebagai ekspresi kawula yang kelak merdeka, orang-orang pergerakan menggunakan label “Bahasa Indonesia”.

Apakah penggunaan bahasa pengantar dalam komunikasi dan persuratkabaran di Hindia Belanda—Indonesia saat itu belum ada—berubah? Tentu saja tidak. Secara revolusioner tidak, perlahan-lahan, iya. Yang digunakan saat itu masihlah bahasa Melayu, yang tentu saja mengalami modernisasi oleh para penuturnya yang pada umumnya adalah kaum intelektual. Terlebih-lebih lagi kaum sastrawan.

Penerbitan majalah *Poedjangga Baroe* oleh Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana dan kawan-kawan pada Juli 1933 bisa disebut sebagai upaya modernisasi bahasa Melayu—sori, bahasa Indonesia—yang penting. Melalui majalah itu Takdir dan kawan-kawan menyiarkan tulisan-tulisan yang menggunakan bahasa Indonesia yang tengah bertumbuh sebagai ekspresi utama. Memang, masih cukup banyak kosakata Belanda dan tata kalimat yang dipengaruhi oleh bahasa Belanda, tetapi itu adalah risiko yang tidak bisa diabaikan oleh sebuah bahasa nasional yang tumbuh di tengah penjajahan Belanda.

Modernisasi bahasa Indonesia justru baru benar-benar terjadi ketika masa pendudukan Jepang. Pada masa itu, tentu saja, penggunaan bahasa Belanda sebagai bahasa pengantar administrasi pemerintahan dan komunikasi massa, dilarang. Sementara, menggantinya dengan bahasa Jepang yang kesulitannya dua tingkat, jelas tidak mungkin. Maka, pemerintah pendudukan, tidak punya upaya lain, kecuali memaksimalkan penggunaan bahasa Indonesia sebagai persatuan di Indonesia—saat itu sebutan “Hindia Belanda” mulai ditinggalkan, “Batavia” telah menjadi “Jakarta” sejak Desember 1942.

Jepang mendorong modernisasi bahasa Indonesia dengan berbagai cara. Salah satunya adalah membuka peluang penerbitan kamus bahasa Indonesia sebagai ganti kamus bahasa Melayu yang telah digubah oleh sejumlah linguis Belanda di era sebelumnya. Salah satu kamus yang muncul masa itu adalah *Kamus Indonesia* oleh E. St. Harahap. Takdir Alisjahbana mulai menyusun *Tata Bahasa Baru Bahasa Indonesia* di zaman itu, meski buku itu baru terbit pada 1948.

Semacam lembaga yang menjadi cikal bakal Badan Bahasa hari ini—jika tidak salah, lembaga itu dipimpin oleh Takdir Alisjahbana—juga

With assistance from LPDP (Indonesia Endowment Fund for Education), Lontar is able to make available to a certain number of public libraries copies of books whose publication was made possible through funding from DanaIndonesiana. Lontar invites public libraries who qualify to send their contact information, including postal address, website link, e-mail address, name of contact person, and contact person's cell phone number. Send your contact information to tuti_zairati@lontar.org Below are images from two libraries that were gifted recent publications.



mulai mengerjakan Kamus Istilah, dengan menerjemahkan sejumlah istilah bidang keilmuan yang umumnya ditulis dalam bahasa Belanda dan Inggris ke dalam bahasa Indonesia. Dan seterusnya, dan sebagainya.

Tentu saja, perkembangan bahasa Indonesia yang kemudian sudah jauh lebih maju jika dibandingkan dengan masa-masa modernisasi pertama pada masa pendudukan Jepang itu. Bahasa Indonesia makin banyak menyerap bahasa Inggris, seraya menyandang sisa-sisa ucap Belanda dalam cukup banyak kosakata. Juga, kosakata yang diserap dari bangsa dan bahasa lain yang pernah bersinggungan dan saling bertarung pengaruh di Nusantara: Cina, Portugis, Persia, Arab tentu saja. Belum lagi bahasa-bahasa daerah yang cukup banyak memberi rupa-bentuk bahasa Indonesia hari ini.

Bahasa Indonesia hari ini adalah sebuah orkestrasi dari bahasa-bahasa dunia dengan tulang punggung utama bahasa Melayu. Meski bahasa Indonesia berangkat dari bahasa yang sama, ternyata cukup banyak bedanya dengan bahasa Melayu yang menjadi bahasa nasional di Malaysia hari ini. Perbedaan itu mungkin juga dipengaruhi oleh situasi kolonial di masa lalu, antara Inggris di Semenanjung Malaya dan Belanda di Indonesia.

Bahasa Indonesia pada akhirnya adalah senjata mutakhir untuk mengatakan dunia pikiran manusia Indonesia—sebelum akhirnya semua itu digerogeti perlahan-lahan oleh bahasa Inggris karena globalisasi. Bahasa Indonesia hari ini adalah alat ucap perasaan dan pikiran manusia Indonesia yang tengah berubah. Antara menjangkau dunia yang begitu luasnya, dengan berujar lagi secara rela hati warisan kata-kata warisan nenek moyang mereka. Itulah kenapa ada puisi modern yang mendaku kembali kepada mantra sebagai asal-muasal kata.

Tetapi, ah, jauh lagi itu.

Terkait ini, Bung, aku kadang-kadang kepingin juga dengar kau ngomong Jawa di kotamu hari ini—sembari menyesap wine, bukan kopi tubruk. Asyik juga ya **Zen Hae** (zenhae@lontar.org)

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