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SIJOBANG

Sung narrative poetry of West Sumatra

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PREFACE

This book is a study of *sijobang*, a form of oral literature performed in the highlands of West Sumatra, and is based on research done in that area in 1974–5. The book begins with an outline of the cultural and literary setting of *sijobang*, including other forms of the story of Anggun Nan Tungga (the hero whose adventures are sung in *sijobang*) and the background and training of the performers. The second chapter contains a short summary of the story (a fuller summary appears in Appendix 1), some remarks on its fragmented mode of existence and unstandardised form, and a survey of local attitudes to *sijobang*. There follow transcriptions of two performances, with English translations. These provide the basis for a discussion of the main linguistic and literary features of *sijobang*. In the final chapter the variability of performances, and how this may be connected with the degree of experience of the performer, is examined in some detail.

Earlier writers on the *kaba* (stories) of West Sumatra have not in general paid much attention to their character as oral performances, although van der Toorn did touch on the style of singing, variability and audience reactions in his editions of two stories (1885:267, n. 1, and 1891a:3–4). Topics such as these, which have become commonplace in the study of oral literature in other countries, and were first seriously investigated in Malay literature by Sweeney (1972, 1973, 1976), were introduced into the discussion of West Sumatran literature in the thesis on which this book is based (Phillips 1979). I hope that this study, despite its incomplete and tentative nature, will interest not only specialists in Malay and Indonesian literature but also students of oral literature in general.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am much obliged to the School of Oriental and African Studies for granting the research leave, and to the Central Research Fund of London University for the supplementary funds, which made my research in West Sumatra possible. I am indebted, too, to the Lembaga Ilmu Pengetahuan Indonesia (Indonesian Institute of Sciences) for its permission to do research in Indonesia, and for its efforts to facilitate my work while I was there. To the staff of the Lembaga Bahasa Nasional (National Language Institute) now the Pusat Pembinaan dan Pengembangan Bahasa (National Centre for Language Development) I also owe my thanks, especially to Dra Rujiatu Mulyadi, Drs Lukman Ali and Drs Julius Habib.

My research in West Sumatra was made easier by the helpful attitude of many government officials, especially those in the Governor’s Office in Padang, the offices of the Walikota, Bupati and Police in Payakumbuh, and offices of the Department of Education and Culture in various parts of West Sumatra, particularly in Payakumbuh, and I am most grateful to them.

Many people in different parts of West Sumatra, but especially in and around Payakumbuh, gave me various kinds of help for which I am very thankful. For reasons of space I can mention only a few of them here: Dr Yakub Isman, Drs Tamsin Medan, Drs Rizanur Gani, Dra Yusna Yusuf, Drs Boestanoel Arifin Adam and his staff at ASKI, Padang Panjang, R. M. Dt Rajo Panghulu, Dr Mochtar Naim and Ibu Asma, Sdr M. Arifin, Sdr A. Damhoeri, Dra Ellyza Noerhan, Sdr Naspi Rusli and his staff in the Kabin Kebudayaan, Payakumbuh, and the following tukang sijobang: As. Bakaruddin, Buyueng, Jasa, Juran, the late Minsah, Nurman, Rustam, Sabirin, Suahir, Sutan and Syaf. I owe an especially large debt of gratitude to Haji M. Sawi Z. A. and Haji Armaini Z. A. and their families for their generous hospitality; to Sdr Syamsuhir Burhan of the Payakumbuh office of the Department of Education and Culture, for his unflagging help in the work of recording and transcription; and to the tukang sijobang Munin, for his patience and kindness towards his outlandish pupil.

Outside West Sumatra I benefited much from advice and help of various kinds from Professor Stuart Simmonds (the Head of my Department), Amin Sweeney and Bill Watson. Ruth Finnegan took a helpful interest in the project at various stages, giving particularly valuable assistance in
Acknowledgements

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the revision of the thesis for publication. My thanks are especially due to the supervisor of my thesis, Russell Jones, for his constant encouragement and helpful criticisms; and to Khaidir Anwar, whose clear and careful guidance in matters of Minangkabau language and culture have been of the utmost value.

Finally, I thank my wife and children for patiently encouraging me, and apologise for criminally neglecting them, for the past several years.

London
1981

N. G. P.

Note:
Material from chapters 2 and 3 has appeared in Indonesia Circle, 19 (June 1979), and Archipel, 20 (1980), and I am grateful for permission to reproduce it here.
Map 2

Area Around Payakumbuh

Map 2