

## **Dorothea SCHAEFTER (SOAS)**

The Return of Indonesian Exile Writing: Writing in Exile during the New Order (1965-1998) and its Return after 1998

In the course of the history of modern Indonesian literature, the issue of censorship and the banning of published books, articles and poems has been common throughout the decades. The practise has been limiting literary activity ever since the emergence of an Indonesian literature. Under Dutch colonial rule and since the beginning of the 20th century, writers and certain works were banned. As a consequence, writers went to live abroad or they published their works through other channels than official publishing avenues in Indonesia.

My research centres on the works of those Indonesian writers who lived in exile from 1965 to 1998 after the events of September 1965 and during the presidency of Suharto. I concentrate on their works written and published from 1965 to 1998 in exile. With the development of a new political climate since 1998, exile writers have been able to publish their works again in their home country. Consequently, the “return” of their writing after the end of Suharto’s rule will be considered.

In my analysis, I focus on the place and nature of Indonesian exile writing within 20th century Indonesian literature at large. Until now, exile literature has not been studied by scholars of Indonesian literature, even though some well-known authors of the first two decades of independent Indonesia belong to this group of exile writers. In this presentation, I will give a brief introduction to the topic, and provide some background information.

### **Literary activity from independence until the beginning of the New Order**

- Concerns of artists and writers after independence
- Split into Gelanggang and Lekra
- Dominance of Lekra in the years up to 1965
- The events of 1965

### **Cultural policy and literary life under Suharto’s presidency (1965-1998) and today**

- Economic development, politics, national culture and literary activity
- Ban of books by Lekra and other writers in 1966
- Two phases of cultural life in New Order Indonesia
  - Growth in the first decade, relative freedom of expression with the exception of former Lekra writers
  - Increasing censorship in reaction to political unrest, release of political prisoners
- Change in political climate after 1998, lifting of ban, former Lekra writers re-appear on the scene

### **Exile writing and exile writers: 1965 to 1998 and beyond**

- “Left-wing” Indonesian writers happened to be in in the People’s Republic of China, Russia or Vietnam in 1965 along with other intellectuals.
  - Altogether, 19 or so writers settled there or in the Soviet Union or Western Europe – a special group within the Indonesian expatriate community.

- Exile writers continued to write in Indonesian but published their works in their country of residence.
- Return of exile writers to Indonesia after 1998.
- Publication of works by exile writers in Indonesia is possible. Authors seek to publish alongside their Indonesian contemporaries