

The Impact of Early Modern Textbooks on Sundanese Writing in the Nineteenth Century

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ABSTRACT: *Modern textbooks are only one line towards modernisation in Sundanese writing. There were other lines, namely the Islamic institutions, the development of Malay, colonial efforts to standardise the Sundanese language, and the establishment of schools. Modern Sundanese writing was the knot that tied them together. This article tries to elaborate the impact of early modern textbooks on Sundanese writing. One of the most interesting examples of how a traditional writing changed is the “dangding”, a type of poetry. A long narrative composed in “dangding” is called “wawacan”, a genre loved by the people in the 19th century. “Dangding” was admired in Sundanese aristocratic circles and pervaded the elite community. The Dutch saw “dangding” as the most original and valuable kind of Sundanese writing and thought it the best way to convey modern information and enlighten the people. Sundanese themselves were to think that prose was more transparent and clear and even more pleasant to read than “dangding”, as textbooks were made in the new form of writing.*

KEY WORDS: *Modern textbooks, Sundanese writing, “dangding”, “wawacan”, and social changes.*

INTRODUCTION

Since the arrival of Dutch merchants in the early 17th century, only a handful of European scholars and officials had studied local peoples and cultures, including their languages and literatures. In the early 19th century, the Europeans “discovered” that *Sundanese* was a distinct language and concurrently assumed that there must be a distinct Sundanese culture (Moriyama, 1996).

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Towards the late 19th century, the Dutch colonial administration, in close cooperation with Dutch scholarship, had divided the Archipelago into distinct cultural units – Sundanese, Javanese, Malay, Bataks, Minangkabaus etc. – each with their own language. In the process, the local population began to gain consciousness of linguistic and cultural differences in terms of the administrative borders the Dutch constructed. Sundanese speakers, for example, seem to have become more clearly aware of the differences between their own culture¹ and that of the neighbouring Javanese. Once the colonial masters had pointed out the differentia among ethnicity, local elites tried to recognise their own language and culture as different.

Dutch colonial policy in the field of culture was somewhat paradoxical: the introduction of colonial tools to modernise the Indies led to the emergence of new literary genres – textbooks, newspapers, stories-in-translation. At the same time, efforts were made to understand and “freeze” the existing indigenous traditions so as to be able to make use of them. This is what happened in the Sundanese language communities too; in the process, the existing Sundanese writing tradition changed. One of the most interesting examples of how a traditional writing changed is the *dangding*, a type of poetry.²

Dangding is the generic name of a type of verse forms, which was always chanted and often sung loudly. A long narrative composed in *dangding* is called *wawacan*, a genre loved by the people in the 19th century. Tradition has it that aristocrats and Islamic teachers in the Sundanese-speaking area borrowed it from the Javanese literary tradition when the Javanese kingdom of Mataram ruled West Java. *Dangding* was admired in Sundanese aristocratic circles and pervaded the elite community. The Dutch saw *dangding* as the most original and valuable kind of Sundanese writing and thought it the best way to convey modern information and enlighten the people. There were other visions of how local culture could serve colonial ends though. The missionary S. Coolsma, for one, argued that

¹Sundanese is generally used in the province of West Java, but Javanese is spoken in the northern part of the Banten region and in the north coast, i.e. the northern area of the Karawang, Subang, and Indramayu districts. Since more recent times, Indonesian is spoken in the vicinity of Jakarta within the province of West Java, e.g. in Bekasi and Tangerang. The total population of the province of West Java is 39.2 million according to the 1995 census of the *Biro Pusat Statistik* (Central Bureau of Statistics). According to be estimated by Edi S. Ekadjati, 75% of the population of the province of West Java is Sundanese (Ekadjati, 1995:29-50). The province of West Java was divided into two provinces (West Java and Banten) in the year 2001.

²This article was written on the basis of the paper presented to the 3rd International Convention of Asia Scholars, in the panel of Early Modern Textbooks in the Malay World, on August 2003, in Singapore.

prose should be developed among the people, even though he was aware of the Sundanese preference for poetry. S. Coolsma believed that *dangding* was too traditional to embody the novelties of modernity; and hoped that prose would lead to “a new spirit” (*een nieuwe geest*), paving the way to new and strong forms of writing (Coolsma, 1881:145). On the other hand, Sundanese themselves were to think that prose was more transparent and clear and even more pleasant to read than *dangding*, as textbooks were made in the new form of writing.

The conception of writing and reading began to change. Schools and textbooks created a new type of reader and writer: they formed a new audience alongside the semi-illiterate one that was closely linked to the oral traditions which would remain predominant in West Java for a long time to come. Increasing numbers of Sundanese children started to read and write in Sundanese. The new type of education produced modern readers by way of modern textbooks in Roman script.

THE MODERN TEXTBOOKS IN SUNDANESE

For the Dutch colonial government in Batavia in the 19th century, the Priangan regencies were particularly important for economic reasons, especially for coffee production.³ Local officials were needed for the reasons as intermediaries to make the administration work. To this end, formal education was introduced, primarily for the local aristocracy and modern textbooks were made.

The first modern textbook in Sundanese, *Kitab Pangadjaran Basa Soenda* (the Sundanese Language Textbook), was designed and printed in Holland in 1849 or 1850. As many as 1,490 copies of this 24-pages book were sent to the Dutch East Indies, together with Javanese and Malay textbooks.⁴ Meanwhile in the Indies, the involvement of Karel Frederik Holle (1829-1896),⁵ a tea planter in Priangan regencies and the most influential

³For the importance of the Priangan regencies for the Dutch, see C. Fasseur (1978); and Gerrit Knaap (1996).

⁴A Javanese reading book adapted by C.F. Winter, a Malay spelling book with reader, and a Javanese spelling book with reader were sent to Batavia. The books numbered 3,990 copies collectively (AVSS, 1853:320-321).

⁵K.F. Holle went to the Indies in 1843 and started to study Sundanese language and culture from the time he was appointed a government clerk in 1846. He came to love Sundanese culture, and when he retired from government service and started a tea plantation in Cikajang (in the present-day Garut district) in 1856, he became deeply involved in its study and decided to devote himself to the “enlightenment” of the Sundanese. Van den Berge’s research on K.F. Holle was presented in a biography (Berge, 1998). See also Tom van den Berge (1993) for an account of K.F. Holle’s career, especially pp.11-30.

Dutchman in the Sunda region, in the education of the Sundanese started with his reading book, *Tjarita Koera-koera djeung Monjet* (the Story of the Turtle and the Ape),⁶ co-authored with his brother, Adriaan Walraven Holle. It was produced in 1851 by a private publisher, Lange en Co. in Batavia, and was to be the start of a series of textbooks in West Java.

Concerning Sundanese, while releasing Mr. Wilkens from this part of the task entrusted to him, the offer of Mr. K.F. Holle and Mr. A.W. Holle has been accepted to prepare books in that language. Indigenous specialists in the Priangan regencies have stated that the Sundanese fable which they published in Batavia shows (a certain) knowledge of the common language of the peasant class. In October 1852, they submitted a Sundanese reader. Capable and civilised indigenous people in Priangan were again consulted and they expressed the feeling that the book would provide the Sundanese with good reading materials (AVSS, 1853:369).

Of the textbooks used in schools in West Java, only three were in Sundanese: the one shipped from Holland, a spelling guide, and an arithmetic book. The other books used in the 1850s were in Malay, such as *Kitab akan di Batja Anak-anak di Skola Djawa* (Reader for Children at Schools in Java), *Kitab Ilmoe Boemi* (Book of Geography), and *Soerat Oekoem Oendang-oendang atas Tanah Nederlandsch Indië* (Law Book of the Dutch East Indies). This was a result of the government policy as designed by J.A. Wilkens (1813-1888), a governmental educationalist for the Javanese language in Surakarta, who had propagated the use of Malay with Roman script in the schools: Malay was important in the Archipelago, it was “*de lingua franca in deze gewesten*” or the lingua franca in these regions (AVSS, 1853:368).

In the *Javasche Courant* of 21 July 1855, the government announced that it was to award a prize of 1,000 Dutch Guilders to the person who wrote a reader in Javanese, and three years later a similar award was announced for a book in Malay. As for Sundanese textbooks, a different arrangement was made. In 1861, a sum of 1,200 Dutch Guilders was granted to K.F. Holle for the preparation of Sundanese readers and textbooks (AVSS, 1861:208). In those days, 1,200 Guilders was a considerable sum of money: it was the monthly salary of the Resident of the Priangan regencies (Doel, 1994:55).⁷

⁶According to E.M. Uhlenbeck, this 22-pages book was published in Batavia in 1851. E.M. Uhlenbeck says, “A Dutch adaptation of this fable by K.F. Holle was published in 1885; in the same year a Malay translation made by A.F. von Dewall appeared” (Uhlenbeck, 1964:28). This Sundanese book was deposited in the library of Leiden University but, according to the late J. Noorduyt, it disappeared soon after.

⁷The post of Resident was for Dutch officials in the colonial administration. The highest post for the indigenous officials was Regent, which had same rank as Dutch Resident.

K.F. Holle's good friend, Radhen Moehamad Moesa (1822-1886), *Hoofd-Panghulu* (Islamic leader) in Limbangan, Garut, was invited to assist him.

Also the *Hoofd-Panghulu* of Limbangan, Radhen Moehamad Moesa, was told that the government would be very happy indeed if he assisted Mr. K.F. Holle with the compilation of Sundanese readers, given his knowledge of language and poetry (AVSS, 1861:208).

K.F. Holle was given a monopoly on Sundanese textbooks and no doubt the government's commission was partly inspired by the report K.F. Holle had submitted shortly before, in which he had made a summary of the Sundanese textbooks that should be made available to the students in the newly established schools (AVSS, 1861:208-216). K.F. Holle had recommended no less than 16 textbooks (table 1).

Table 1
The Recommended Textbooks of K.F. Holle

Number	Textbooks
1	Moralistic stories and poetry of which the theme is good and evil
2	A compilation of indigenous or adapted European proverbs
3	A Sundanese ABC and spelling book
4	A book of examples of Sundanese calligraphy
5	A Sundanese conversation book
6	A Sundanese error book
7	A traditional reader, in <i>tembang</i> form
8	A guide to letter-writing
9	An arithmetic book
10	An astronomy text
11	A book on agriculture
12	A book on practical surveying and levelling
13	A book for civil engineering and construction
14	A book of drawing examples
15	A book about technical arts and crafts
16	Texts that present indigenous <i>tjaritas</i> , <i>dongengs</i> , <i>pantoens</i> and especially <i>tembangs</i>

Sources: AVSS (1861:212-216).

K.F. Holle's report, it seems, became the main guideline for government policy in the Sundanese-speaking area. In the above list of recommended textbooks a form of writing, *tembang* is suggested in the number of 7 and 16. We will discuss this verse form later.

The books that were used in the elementary school in Bandung in 1863 are clear echoes of the proposal of K.F. Holle (table 2).

Table 2
 Textbooks Used at Elementary Schools in Bandung in 1863

Number	Sundanese Books
1	<i>Tjaritana Ibrahim</i> (the Story of Ibrahim), Anonymous.
2	<i>Ijeu Wawatjan Tjarita Ibrahim</i> (this <i>Wawacan</i> is the Story of Ibrahim), Anonymous.
3	<i>Ijeu Wawatjan Tjarita Noeroelkamar</i> (this <i>Wawacan</i> is the Story of Nurulkamar), Anonymous.
4	<i>Katrangan tina Prakawis Mijara Laoek Tjai</i> (Guide for Raising Freshwater Fish), Mohamad Oemar.
5	<i>Wawatjan Djaka Miskin</i> (<i>Wawacan</i> of Jaka Miskin), Wira Tanoe Baija.
6	<i>Kitab Tjonto-tjonto Soerat pikeun Moerangkalih anoe Ngasakola</i> (the Book of Examples of Letter-Writing for School Children), K.F. Holle.
7	<i>Wawatjan Woelang Poetra</i> (<i>Wawacan</i> Teaching Lessons for Children), Adi Widjaja.
8	<i>Wawatjan Woelang Krama</i> (<i>Wawacan</i> Teaching Good Manners), Moehamad Moesa.
9	<i>Wawatjan Woelang Tani</i> (<i>Wawacan</i> Teaching Lessons for the Farmer), Moehamad Moesa.
10	<i>Wawatjan Radja Darma</i> (<i>Wawacan</i> of King Darma), Danoe Koesoema.
11	<i>Wawatjan Radja Soedibja</i> (<i>Wawacan</i> of King Soedibja), Moehamad Moesa.
12	<i>Kitab pikeun Moerangkalih anoe Mimiti Adjar Matja Soenda</i> (Book for Children Beginning to Read Sundanese), Anonymous.
13	<i>Kitab Tjatjarakan Soenda</i> (Guidebook of Sundanese Spelling), K.F. Holle.
14	<i>Kitab Ilmoe Itoengan</i> (Book of Arithmetic), Anonymous.
Number	Malay Books
1	<i>Bagei-bagei Tjeritera</i> (A variety of stories), J.R.P.F. Gonggrijp.
2	<i>Bahwa inilah Kitab Pemoela-an Pengataoe-an dan Ilmoe-ilmoe, jang Terkarang akan di Batja oleh Kanak-kanak di Sekola Djawa dan Malajoe adanja</i> (this is an Introductory Book of General Knowledge, Composed to be Read by Children at Schools in Jawa and Malay), Anonymous.
3	<i>Kitab akan Mengadjar Permoelaän dari Ilmoe Boemi</i> (Book Teaching an Introduction to Geography), J.A. Wilkens.

Sources: VIO (1865:30).

After the government decision of 1861, K.F. Holle set about his task, achieving impressive results in a short period. The number of Sundanese books increased remarkably, replacing Malay textbooks. What is obvious in the list is that all of the books on reading and writing were in Sundanese. They were printed in both Roman and Javanese scripts. Meanwhile, “common knowledge” and geography were taught with Malay books that were used elsewhere in Java and Madura too. Noteworthy too is that most

books on reading were *wawacan*, a narrative poetry in *dangding*. This was the result of the government policy, which will be seen later.

Many of the available readers had been written by Moehamad Moesa, K.F. Holle's close friend who had the power to select the "appropriate" draft manuscripts and send them to the government publisher in Batavia to be printed. The authors of the other books came from K.F. Holle's circle, most of whom lived near his residence in Limbangan regency, about 50 kilometres southeast from Bandung. Next to Moehamad Moesa, they were Adi Widjaja, the *Patih* of the Limbangan regency in Priangan; and Bratawidjaja, the former *Patih* of Galuh in Sukapura regency, all of them high-ranking local officials and members of the aristocracy. K.F. Holle's monopoly on the production of books continued at least through the 1880s; the last book he supervised was *Pagoeneman Soenda djeung Walanda* (Sundanese-Dutch Conversation Book, 1883) and the last book he edited was *Mitra noe Tani* (Friend of the Farmer, 1895).

The Dutch considered the indigenous people rather uncivilised and immoral, and believed they had to "educate" and "enlighten" them in the name of culture, for the sake of control and management for their colony. For instance, a spelling book compiled by K.F. Holle, *Kitab Tjatjarakan Soenda* (Sundanese Spelling Book) reads as follows:

Tjarita 12:

Aja koenjoek hidji asoep kana imah anoe beunghar, tapi koret katjida, tara bae mere ka noe mararat. Anoe koret eukeur teu aja di imah [...].

Tegesna ijeu dongeng: Djalma lamoen hajang salamet, doewitna koedoe hade metakeunana (Holle, 1862:8).

Story 12:

A monkey broke into the house of a rich man, who was a stingy fellow who never helped the poor. When the stingy fellow was not at his house [...].

Lesson of this story: If people want to be blessed, money should be properly managed.

The reader will undoubtedly be reminded here of Aesop's and other European fables. In the above list (table 2), there are three books with the title *woelang* (teaching, lessons); they were collections of tales with a strongly didactic tenor in that each protagonist plainly represented right or wrong. K.F. Holle drafted curricula and textbooks for the Sundanese in a way he himself thought appropriate. Through the spread of these textbooks, the ideas of the colonial government, especially of K.F. Holle in the case of the Priangan regencies, were disseminated among the people. Colonial education and textbooks were preparing the ground for new forms of Sundanese writing.

The students were native children, some belonging to the elite, some to the lower classes. K.F. Holle thought that education should be given in Sundanese because, in his view, “original” Sundanese culture should be strengthened. Language is the most important medium for culture. Part of the lessons was in Sundanese and about Sundanese, but another part was in Malay, considered indispensable for the colonial administration, the growing communication among various *volken* (peoples), and for the acquisition of practical knowledge (Putten, 1997:719). There was another reason to distribute and use textbooks in Malay: they could be used in all schools in the Archipelago, and thus the costs of production could remain low. Noteworthy too is the higher the level of education, the more Malay and the less Sundanese books were used. For instance, at the Teachers’ Training School in Bandung in 1866/1867, half of the curriculum’s reading and writing books were in Malay (Commissie voor de Volkslectuur ed., 1941).

Apart from the first reader that had been published in Holland, textbooks were printed in Batavia, mostly by the government printing house, *Landsdrukkerij*, in Weltevreden. Table 3 shows the variety of languages used in the textbooks (VIO, 1867:31-37).

Table 3
Total Number of Textbooks in Java by 1865

Textbooks	Javanese 19	Sundanese 20	Malay 23
Reading	11	18	18
Arithmetic	4	1	2
Geography	1	0	2
Land Surveying	2	0	1
Language Knowledge	1	1	0

By 1865, the total number of textbooks amounted to 62 titles; altogether some 180,000 copies were available for Java. The Inspector of Native Education, J.A. van der Chijs, remarked that there was *veel kaf onder het koren* (much dead wood) among these textbooks: compared to Javanese and Malay books, he claimed that Sundanese textbooks had better content – an implicit word of praise of K.F. Holle’s endeavours. Javanese readers were mostly translations of European stories by prominent official translators like C.F. Winter, Palmer van den Broek, and Tjondro Negoro (VIO, 1867:4). According to Van der Chijs’s evaluation, the stories in the Malay readers were alien to the indigenous people as they contained many Christian elements; Gonggrijp’s *Bagej-bagej Hikajat Dhoeloe Kala* (Various Tales of Old Times) was just one example. On the other hand, Sundanese readers

were more appropriate with a variety of stories suited to local tastes (VIO, 1867:32). The number of printed copies of these books was between 2,000 and 4,000 for the first impression (VIO, 1866:275-277), with the exception of K.F. Holle's books: 10,000 copies were printed of his *Modellen van Verschillende Brieven* (Models of Various Letters) and 20,000 copies of his *Soendaasch Spelboekje* (Sundanese Spelling Book).⁸

The books were distributed to the Sundanese-speaking regencies of Banten, Batavia, Buitenzorg, Karawang, Priangan, and Cirebon.⁹ For example, Moehamad Moesa's *Wawatjan Woelang Krama* (Wawacan Teaching Courtesy), published in 1862 in Javanese script, was distributed to each regency in the following quantities: Banten, 200 copies; Batavia, 259 copies; Buitenzorg, 200 copies; Karawang, 200 copies; Priangan, 450 copies; and Cirebon, 200 copies. They were presumably used at Elementary Schools and at the Teachers' Training School in Bandung. Apparently, more and more printed textbooks found their way to Sundanese communities, even though the number of students remained limited and the books were not necessarily widely read: distribution was poor and students could not always afford them (Chijs, 1867:4). Sometimes, a student possessed only a spelling book; to learn to read, students often borrowed books from their well-to-do friends (Chijs, 1867:12).

Some indications on the sales of such books can be found in the response of Regents to a 1864 questionnaire.¹⁰ The Regent of Bandung received 602 textbooks and readers of 10 different titles; 302 books were sold. The Regent of Sumedang received 190 books, of which 174 were sold. The Regent of Sukapura received 671 books of which 559 were sold. However, sometimes textbooks were lying idle at the storehouse in a Regent's residence. For example, the Regent of Ciamis bought 1,000 copies for 50 Dutch Guilders to curry favour with the Governor-General, but then most of them remained in the storehouse of the regency (Berge, 1993:25).

Some of the authors were outside the "Holle clan"; they were mostly Dutch schoolteachers.¹¹ After 1890, new reading and arithmetic textbooks

⁸Koorders criticised Holle in Parliament in Den Haag in 1868. Considering the population size in the Sundanese-speaking area, too many copies of his book were printed, he argued. That was a waste of the government budget (Berge, 1993:23-27).

⁹It is worth noticing that every Sundanese book was distributed to Batavia. Moreover, the number of copies was the second largest after the Priangan regencies. It can be assumed that a sizeable number of the Sundanese population lived in Batavia.

¹⁰See "K.F. Holle to General Governor, 25 May 1864" in *Verbaal* 1 February 1866, No.27, Algemeen Rijksarchief.

¹¹W. van Gelder, H.A. Nooij, C.J. van Haastert, and Ch. Hekker were among those teaching at the Teachers' Training School in Bandung.

began to replace the old ones – in other words, K.F. Holle’s textbooks. A good example was the fate of K.F. Holle’s spelling book, which was gradually replaced by a spelling book by C.J. van Haastert who was to become the Director of the Teachers’ Training School in Bandung. K.F. Holle taught students Javanese script first and then Roman script, whereas C.J. van Haastert started with the Roman script on the very first page, working from the assumption that Javanese script was too difficult for Sundanese students and not very practical at that (Haastert, 1894:iii). C.J. van Haastert’s book was based on the idea that students should learn to read by way of complete words that consist of syllables, whereas K.F. Holle had worked from letters. In the last part of C.J. van Haastert’s book, series of these words constituted sentences. For instance, lesson 23 reads as follows:

23
sa-ko-la ka-ka-ra di-boe-ka a-jeu-na lo-ba
noe ka-da-ri-toe.
a-ri ka sa-ko-la koe-doe ma-wa boe-koe (Haastert, 1894:15).

as soon as school opens, many
go there
when (you) go to school, (you) must bring (your) book.

C.J. van Haastert’s spelling book was to be used up until the end of colonial rule. Other books, such as Van Gelder’s compilation of European stories in Sundanese, *Mangle*, was reprinted at least 6 times and used in many schools. However, it is important to realise that in the second half of the 19th century, Sundanese language policy was dominated by a small group of people with a distinct view of language, morality, and ethnicity. Only after the establishment of the *Commissie voor de Inlandsche School- en Volkslectuur* (Committee for Indigenous Schoolbooks and Popular Reading Books) in 1908 did their role begin to diminish. Nonetheless, they were the ones who introduced a new world to Sundanese readers, who were greatly influential albeit limited in numbers.

Missionary schools were few in the Sundanese-speaking area compared with other regions of Java, because missionary activities were restricted so as to avoid conflicts with local Muslims. School education in the region, in other words, was mainly implemented by the colonial government; missionaries did not make a substantial contribution, whereas the Islamic schools still played an important role in the communities. Islamic schools were numerous, and students were learning to read and write Arabic in manuscript form. Roughly speaking, the Arabic reading stratum of the

communities was synonymous with so-called chirographically-based literacy, while the Roman reading stratum was synonymous with print literacy which was created in the modern textbooks. Conflicts and tensions between these two strata were to remain an important element in the cultural life of West Java; the modernity and modernisation which came with the printed materials, mainly textbooks for schools, in Roman script had counterparts whose authority should not be underestimated.

The next is to see how the impact of modern textbooks on the existing Sundanese writing was while focusing on a verse form, *dangding* and its consequences in the literary practice in the Sundanese-speaking community.

THE PROMOTION OF *DANGDING*, A VERSE FORM

By the middle of 19th century, the Dutch had concluded that *dangding* was the most dominant and favourite form of writing among the Sundanese-speaking communities. Hence, they considered it the most effective means for the education of Sundanese children. *Dangding* is a generic term designating poetry in 17 verse forms known as *pupuh*. Each *pupuh* has its own name, such as *dangdanggula*, *kinanti*, *asmarandana*, *sinom*, and so forth, with its own rules of composition, melody, and number of lines.¹² This poetry was usually written and originally a verse form imported from Javanese literary tradition. Hence, it was called *tembang* by the Dutch until the beginning of the 20th century.

The above-mentioned, Inspector van der Chijs wrote that only *dangding* would be effective in the education of the Sundanese (Chijs, 1867:6-11). His idea originated with K.F. Holle, who had written an important report on native education, especially on the creation of Sundanese textbooks as we have seen above. The following should be included in the teaching of Sundanese:

Sundanese legends as readers, a reader about local customs and good manners, [and] Sundanese poetry (*tembang*). Learning the various melodies, in which the poetry has to be read or preferably sung, is not superfluous and certainly interesting for the Sundanese; knowledge of it is considered a sign of civilization and good education (AVSS, 1861:214).

On the basis of K.F. Holle's suggestions, the government began printing Sundanese textbooks in the 1860s, most of them in *dangding*. An evaluation

¹²Etymologically, the word *dangding* derives from the sound of the voice when the text is sung: "*dang-ding-dung, dang-ding-dung*". The song is a free-rhythm song called *tembang* or *mamaos*.

of the printed books was conducted by Dutch scholars/administrators soon afterwards. Van der Chijs and others approved them as suitable materials for education, but not everyone did. For instance, D. Koorders, a government official who was ordered to study Sundanese and to establish a Teachers' Training School. He considered *dangding* inappropriate for textbooks in his 1863 report to the Director of the General Secretary of the Dutch East Indies government in Batavia. He gave three reasons:

Firstly, they [*tembang* verses] spoil the purity of the language. [...] Secondly, *tembang* violates the external form of words and the rules of sentence structure in every possible way. [...] Thirdly, the nature of *tembang* is unsuitable to give a strong impetus to development and civilisation [...] (Koorders in Meinsma, 1869:261-264).

It is noteworthy that D. Koorders mentions the purity of Sundanese, as if he knew what Sundanese was and the Sundanese themselves did not. As to *dangding*, D. Koorders had noticed the prominent position of *dangding* like most Dutch, but he had difficulties judging it as poem because of his conception of literature. The following statement demonstrates his confusion:

It is inaccurate to translate the word [*tembang*] as *poem*. They have nothing in common with our poems. Perhaps they could be called *songs*. However, only because of the lack of a proper Dutch word, we say that *tembangs* are *sung*, not *read*. Only the English word *chanting*, as far as I know, conveys a correct and complete understanding of the word (Koorders in Meinsma, 1869:260-261).

D. Koorders would not translate *dangding* simply as "poem", because Sundanese verse lay beyond the concept of poetry (*gedicht*) that was held among the Dutch. Sundanese poetry was always chanted or sung loudly. This view was consonant with the belief of Dutch scholars and administrators that the Sundanese did not have a "literature". Hence, D. Koorders called *dangding* "songs".

The manner in which *dangding* was read is also important here, as D. Koorders noticed that. Somehow, J.A. van der Chijs was aware of the intriguing reading habits of the local people:

The indigenous man has two ways of reading: the first is our way, be it with the difference that he rarely understands the purport of recitation; the second is reading while singing (*nembang*, *matja*). He only uses the first when the second is impossible, because for him the latter is by far the most favoured and actually the true way (Chijs, 1867:7).

From J.A. van der Chijs' remarks, it can be concluded that in the second half of the 19th century, "reading" still implied "reciting" for Dutch scholars; for him, the difference between "us" and the locals was not silent reading versus recitation, but reading aloud versus singing on a melody.¹³ The first way of reading was thus reading aloud, and the second way was singing. He saw singing as the true way of reading for the Sundanese, but that opinion may have been the result of yet another confusion on the part of the Dutch. They clearly did not understand the difference between *nembang* and *matja*; *nembang* (the nasalized form of *tembang*) referring to reading *dangding*, while *matja* (from *batja*) to reading in general.¹⁴ Equally interesting in van der Chijs' remarks is his assumption that the indigenous people barely understood what they were reading unless they sang it. This cannot but remind us of the recitations of Koran: children allegedly learned to recite the Koran without understanding the meaning. J.A. van der Chijs called this "mechanical reading" (Chijs, 1867:12).

The Dutch colonial government could not promote its language policy without taking *dangding* into account. Somehow, the topic was made important enough to become an issue in parliamentary discussions in the motherland in 1867, where D. Koorders, the representative for Haarlem, protested that the textbooks in *dangding* were "bungled and were no more than waste-paper" and that publication with government budgets should be suspended immediately (Berge, 1993:22-23). D. Koorders' biting critique sounded like a personal attack on K.F. Holle, but did not have the result he must have hoped for: the government did not take immediate action to stop publication and distribution of these textbooks. However, in the 1870s the publication of Sundanese *dangding* books shows a clear decrease, by different reasons which we will see below.

In the 1870s, another Dutchman, G.J. Grashuis¹⁵ acknowledged the significance of *dangding* and attempted to understand it, but failed to find it "poetic".

It is poetry in form, yet so little of a poetic nature did I find among the thousands of Sundanese lines of poetry I had (unfortunately!) to struggle my way through, that I did not come across a single grain of poetry, even a poetic simile. Nothing but words with a certain measure, very often words and idioms, spoilt because of that very rhythm, made longer or shorter, whenever necessary (Grashuis, 1874:i).

¹³Interestingly, the Dutch were also accustomed to read aloud.

¹⁴Very bluntly, in the same article J.A. van der Chijs claims that "the indigenous people do not know silent reading" (Chijs, 1867:7).

¹⁵G.J. Grashuis was a missionary of the Netherlands Missionary Union and later the first lecturer in Sundanese at Leiden University.

What G.J. Grashuis expected to find in Sundanese poems abounded in European poetry: elegance, emotion, and lyric. In the introduction to his first book on Sundanese language and literature, *Soendaneesch Leesboek* (Sundanese Reader), published in 1874, he said that Sundanese verse lacked every poetic quality. Dutch scholars would hardly ever come to develop some kind of literary appreciation for Sundanese writing, it seems. Perhaps more noteworthy is that this expert on Sundanese language and literature expressed his preference of prose over poetry:

Furthermore, those writings reveal that the Sundanese, if left completely to themselves, can write prose which is not without errors but is tolerable. That prose favourably distinguishes itself from the language and style of *wawatjan* (poetry) by its purity and regularity. The Sundanese prose writer usually says in his simple manner what he thinks, and stays away from the artificial style of poems which often no longer express any substantial thought, but only place concepts next to one another (Grashuis, 1874:xi).

His preference for prose was not in line with the official government policy that tried to promote *dangding* as the most adequate means of enlightening the indigenous population.

K.F. Holle criticised missionaries like G.J. Grashuis for their ignorance, sometimes rightly so. However, some missionaries had a good knowledge of Sundanese language and writing, and here particular mention should be made of Sierk Coolsma, who was sent to the Sundanese-speaking area in 1865 by the Netherlands Missionary Union (NZV). Sierk Coolsma's knowledge is best illustrated by his scathing commentary on 30 Sundanese textbooks, about 2,000 pages published by the government: "*the language is often artificial, not natural, and mixed with other writings, and the contents are of little value, with a few exceptions*" (Coolsma, 1881:143 note). His advice was that the government should stop publishing these textbooks.

Sierk Coolsma had a sharper insight and a vaster knowledge of Sundanese language and writing than any other missionary (or any other official for that matter), but we have to conclude that even his thorough knowledge was not a guarantee for success as a missionary: very few Sundanese were ever convinced of the superiority of Christianity. According to Sierk Coolsma, *Dangding* is not poetry but "a writing in verse form", and he showed more appreciation than any of his colleagues, acknowledging that some *dangding* were elegant, but not ones in the government subsidised textbooks. His was a voice in the desert, though, as nobody seemed to take him seriously. This may have been due to his status as a missionary, which gave him a peripheral position in the European community and

made it impossible to develop warm friendships with the local Sundanese aristocrats who often refused to receive him (End, 1991:176). Moreover, missionary activities were restricted by the government so as to avoid possible Muslim opposition.

He did not have an optimistic view of Sundanese writing: "The situation of literature is unfavourable, and the people's perception of it is even more unfavourable".

What suits the taste of the people is verse sung in the evenings or at night by someone who can read. And thus knowledge reaches many people who are always willing to listen. Prose, however, is rarely read and much will have to change before pen and press obtain some power among the Sundanese. At first a new spirit must emerge and they should abandon their indifference. They should learn and develop an interest in themselves and in their surroundings (Coolsma, 1881:145).

Sierk Coolsma hoped that prose would develop among the people for a reason different than G.J. Grashuis': "a new spirit" had to emerge. He was aware of the fact that the Sundanese had a strong preference for *dangding*, and was familiar with their "reading" habits. He wanted to spread the gospel, and decided that prose was to be the most appropriate manner. The state of mind of the people had to be changed. Even though he knew *dangding* was the most effective way to convey knowledge to the people, Sierk Coolsma did not translate the Bible into *dangding*. He and other missionaries usually translated its books into prose, because they thought that the new spirit would come together with new writing. *Dangding* was thought too traditional to convey new ideas. Moreover, it would be difficult to translate the New and Old Testaments into *dangding*.¹⁶

Sierk Coolsma also noticed that the people read Arabic script instead of Javanese and Roman scripts even though the government had been trying to spread knowledge of the Roman script by way of textbooks. In the 19th century, being literate meant primarily being able to read Arabic script; only a small elite could read Javanese and Roman scripts.¹⁷ Hence, Sierk Coolsma published the *Book of St. John* and the *Acts of the Apostles* in Arabic script, though printing in Arabic script was much more expensive than

¹⁶A Sundanese convert to Christianity, N. Titus of the Netherlands Missionary Union, was an unusual exception. He had a talent for language and could compose *dangding* by himself. He translated two missionary books into *dangding* namely *Tjarios Joesoep Beunang Nembangkeun* (Tale of Yusuf Composed in *Tembang*) published in 1894, and a gospel translation *Tjarios Radja Sael djeung Radja Dawoed beunang Nembangkeun* (Tale of King Saul and King David Composed in *Tembang*), published in 1906.

¹⁷In private tutorials young aristocrats were taught reading and writing in Javanese script.

Roman script. However, both Javanese and Arabic scripts were gradually not to be printed in any publications, especially textbooks, after the turning of the 20th century.

THE EMERGENCE OF MODERN WRITING

The Sundanese had considered *dangding* a highly artistic or artful form of composition since the time of intensified Javanese cultural influence. This fact has been noticed not only by the Dutch, but also by the Sundanese themselves. Writing about the period when the Sundanese-speaking area was under the influence of the Javanese Mataram kingdom, one of the most prominent present-day Sundanese critics, Ajip Rosidi, recently formulated it as follows: "In general, what was considered beautiful, that is writing which had literary merit, had to be written in *dangding*" (Rosidi, 1995:4).

In the second half of the 19th century, the above-mentioned Moehamad Moesa was one of the most productive Sundanese authors of textbooks; he was regarded as the best writer in terms of command of the Sundanese literary language (*Encyclopaedie*, Vol.3, 1921:22-23). When he wrote and translated, he was conscious of the differences among the forms of writing. He explained why he did not employ *dangding* in the preface to one of his frequently reprinted books, *Dongeng-dongeng Pieunteungeun* (Model Stories), published in 1867.

Eta dongeng anoe raja,
teu dianggit make dangding,
ngan make pada kalimah.
Lain soesah njijeun dangding,
ngan eta leuwih hasil,
tara kasedek koe lagoe.
Tjarita bisa kebat,
tara katarik koe dangding,
didangoena ngeunah,
gampang kahartina
(Moesa, 1867:5).

Most of the stories are
not composed in *dangding*,
but in prose.
Not that it is difficult to make *dangding*,
but [prose] will be more effective,
[they will] never be disturbed by songs.
Stories can progress fast,
never unperturbed by *dangding*,
pleasant to listen to and
easy to understand.

It is interesting that he offered his readers an apologetic explanation about the form of writing. It suggests that *dangding* was the writing norm – in fact, even letters between aristocrats were usually composed in *dangding*, seen as an indication that the writer was a cultivated person and, at the same time, respected the addressee. In short, for Sundanese people, to write meant to compose in *dangding*, and therefore Moehamad Moesa had to explain why he composed the stories in *kalimah*, a term that Moehamad Moesa seems to have invented to refer to prose.

Moehamad Moesa explains why prose should be preferred to poetry (*dangding*): stories in *kalimah* can progress faster than in poetry, where the course of a story is often slowed down by ornamentations. Besides, prose is more transparent and clear. Thus in the wake of modern textbooks, Sundanese writing was to follow a new path on which legibility and easy understanding were to become more important than artfulness. Of course, there is irony in the fact that Moehamad Moesa feels compelled to defend the expedience of prose by way of a poem before starting his prose narrative – it reads like a symbolic moment of transition. In due course the voice, still so self-evident for Moehamad Moesa, was to be silenced and poetry would lose its superior position in the configuration of Sundanese writing.

A similar symbolic moment can be found in the work of the son of Moehamad Moesa, Kartawinata, who was not only conscious of the differences between *kalimah* and *dangding* but also tried to make prose an artistic form equivalent to poetry. In the preface to *Tjarita Kapitan Bonteku* (The story of Captain Bonteku), he explained why he did not compose in *dangding* to attract the reader's attention, and he too used *dangding* to explain the superiority of prose:

Tapi teu didjieun dangding,
lain sabab soesah ngarang,
nja eta dihadja bae.
Ngan diatoer kalimahna,
make pada omongan.
Diwatjana koedoe njemoe,
ninggang kana wirahmana.

But [this is] not composed in *dangding*,
not because it is difficult to compose,
but it is done intentionally.
Prose is arranged
by means of *omongan*.
When reading it one should follow
the right rhythm.

Moen kitoe ngeunah teh teuing,
tetela ti batan tembang.
Matjana oelah digorol,
hanteu poegoeh ngarandegna.
Da ieu basa Soenda,
koedoe njemoe tjara pantoen,
ngan montong make aleuan
(Kartawinata, 1874:3).

If you do so, it will be very pleasant,
[it will be] clearer than sung poetry.
The reading may not be rattled off,
it will be incoherent and faltering.
Because this is Sundanese,
you have to follow the way of *pantun*,
as long as you do not stretch your voice.

Here, the key word is no longer *kalimah* but *omongan*, something that is spoken (Coolsma, 1913:424). To make sure that his prosaic tale would not lead to too much confusion among his readers, Kartawinata still saw to it that it could be read aloud as if it were a *pantun*, another verse form used by Sundanese storytellers. *Omongan*, he seems to claim, is a new artful form of writing, closely related to the artful forms of performing tales. *Tjarita Kapitan Bonteku* was clearer and more pleasant to read (or even to recite)

than *dangding* could ever be, with the “stretching voice” it requires.

Tjarita Kapitan Bonteku was not the only book written in *omongan* in the late 19th century. Kartawinata himself had translated *Tjarijos Tuwan Kapitan Marion* in prose two years earlier, and in the following years his sisters translated other European stories into a form of prose. These writings shows one of the changes on the existing Sundanese writing, which was caused by the modern textbooks.

Kartawinata’s younger sister, Lenggang Kantjana, also made some intriguing remarks on prose and reading as the impact of the introduction of the new writing:

Ijeu koe koela disalin,
dipindahkeun kana Soenda,
tapi diomongkeun bae,
hanteu dikarang koe tembang.
Saperkara soesahna,
neangan omongan roentoet,
parele bener dangdingna.

This is translated by me,
it is changed into Sundanese,
but uttered just in prose,
not composed in *tembang*.
Firstly it is difficult,
to search for *omongan* in harmony
with the coherence of *dangding*.

Sanadjan teu salah dangding,
ari teu beres omongan,
tangtoe henteu djadi sae.
Kaoela remen manggihan,
noe ngarang basa Soenda,
ngan ngoeroes bae dangdingdoeng,
basana pabeulit pisan.

Though *dangding* is not wrong,
if *omongan* is in disorder,
certainly it will not become good.
I often come across,
people composing Sundanese,
but only taking care of formal aspects of
dangding, so the wording is very confusing.

Kadoea anoe dipambrih,
noe matak henteu koe tembang,
baris aoseun diilo,
njalira di pagoelingan,
djeung dina korsi gojang.
Eta kitoe noe dimaksoed,
noeroetan oerang Eropa
(Lenggang Kantjana, 1887:1-2).

Secondly, what is meant here,
the reason writing is not composed in
tembang is that it is to be read silently,
when you are alone in your bed,
or in a rocking chair.
That is what I mean by
following Europeans.

In the preface to her compilation of translated stories, Lenggang Kantjana used the word *omongan* to mean artful, *pantun*-like prose much like her brother did. She gave it an additional nuance: *omongan* stood for “harmonious phrasing”. The echoes of *dangding* were still heard indeed.

At the time Kartawinata was writing about *omongan*, reading aloud was still common; it was even advocated by Kartawinata. Reading was usually voiced, done intoning or reciting the way a *pantun* was performed. Lenggang Kantjana may have been the first to express in writing that

reading could be done by oneself, for oneself, perhaps even in silence. Tales were *baris aoseun diilo*, “something to be read for oneself”, she suggests, *diilo* referring to reading alone or with a soft voice and skimming over (Coolsma, 1913:240).¹⁸ Reading a book could be a personal, silent activity that Sundanese readers could do lying on a bed or sitting in a rocking chair, just as the Europeans did. *Kalimah, omongan, diilo*: these are terms that indicate the emergence of a new way of reading, a new way of writing that was to lead to the emergence of the novel, a genre that changed the configuration of Sundanese writing as a whole.¹⁹

Lenggang Kantjana tells her readers that she reads Dutch stories to dispel boredom (*kesel*), yet another phenomenon that may have detected the emergence of modern reader.

Tina rasa kesel pikir,
waktoe taja pagawejan,
tamba hees sore-sore,
heug matja boekoe Walanda.
Tjarita warna-warna,
reja noe matak kajoengjoen,
kaoela datang pikiran.

Because one is feeling bored,
when there is no work,
as a remedy for sleeping in the late afternoon,
one may read Dutch books.
There are various stories,
most of which are interesting,
so I had an idea.

Bowa hade moen disalin,
soegan aja manpaättna,
baris ngabeberah hate.
Malaure ngomong ngatjomang,
anoë taja pedahna,
atawa tjitjing ngadjentoel,
mikiran noe lalamoenan
(Lenggang Kantjana, 1887:4).

How nice it would be if they were translated,
probably they would be useful,
and would be entertaining.
It is better than talking and chatting,
which has no use,
or sitting and pondering
and daydreaming.

A new type of reader was being born, one who reads silently and to alleviate boredom (Maier, 1993:147-150). In the end, the introduction of modern textbooks changed the conception of writing and reading.

CONCLUSIVE REMARKS

No more than 200 titles of Sundanese books were printed in the second half of the 19th century. It is hard to say if this was a large number or not, but

¹⁸The word *diilo* is still used in the meaning of “read by heart” or *maca ku hate* (Satjadibrata, 1954:156). Meanwhile, F.S. Eringa repeats S. Coolsma’s interpretation, “read by oneself” or *voor zichzelf lezen* (Eringa, 1984:309).

¹⁹The first Sundanese novel, *Baruang ka nu Ngarora* (Poison for the Youth), was published in 1914.

in retrospect it is clear that these printed books, mostly textbooks, changed Sundanese writing and hence the cultural life of West Java. Local printing houses were established, new forms of writing – journals, newspapers and stories-in-translation – were developed, and a group of people emerged that had progressive ideas. Modern textbooks are only one line towards modernisation in Sundanese writing. There were other lines: the Islamic institutions, the development of Malay, colonial efforts to standardise the “Sundanese language”, the establishment of schools. “Modern Sundanese writing” was the knot that tied them together.

When textbooks were introduced into Sundanese writing in the middle of the 19th century, *dangding* was so much loved by the Sundanese that Dutch scholars concluded that it was the “most traditional” and the “most prestigious” form of Sundanese writing and the most favourable means for education. As a result, *dangding* was given a prominent place in the educational materials that were produced by the colonial authorities. However, *dangding* gradually lost its predominant position: it was a paradoxical phenomenon. Its poetic form and its conventions of storytelling suited neither print publication nor the demands of modernity.

More prose was produced in modern textbooks. The form of writing, of course, interacted with and altered reading habits. Gradually people shared less often stories in the traditional, more or less ritualised way, and intoning or reciting was no longer the sole manner of “reading a book” as we have seen. Prose writing in print was read by individuals, silently in the end.

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