

## HANS BAGUE JASSIN

HANS BAGUE JASSIN was born in 1917 in the small port city of Gorontalo on the northeastern coast of Sulawesi (Celebes), in what was then the Netherlands East Indies. Sulawesi's population consisted primarily of farmers and fishermen. JASSIN's family was an exception.

Bague Mantu Jassin, JASSIN's father, was a Gorontaloese of modern leanings. Having taught himself Dutch, he had obtained a position as customs clerk with the local Dutch colonial administration. However, at the time his son HAMZAH (later changed to HANS) was born, he was unemployed. For this reason he left his wife, Habibah, the following year and went to Borneo to work for Bataviaasch Petroleum Maatschappij (BPM), the large Dutch oil conglomerate. Young JASSIN was thus entrusted to the care of his gentle mother.

Mother and son lived with her parents and extended family in her parents' home. Her father was a teacher in Malay schools and Habibah was educated, probably through secondary school. She spoke Malay, which is the basis of, and almost interchangeable with, Indonesian, and Gorontaloese, the local language spoken in her home. JASSIN's fondest memories of his childhood are of his mother's bedtime folktales and lullabies. She also spoke to him often of his father who would one day come for them.

Bague Jassin came home in 1924 after six years of absence. JASSIN remembers well the appearance one day of a fine gentleman in white who came up to him as he played in the village. "I ran away but he caught me," he relates, "and we went together to the house of my mother." Reunited, the family moved to Balikpapan, a company town on the coast of East Borneo, and settled into new lodgings in the BPM compound. Here, as he began his schooling, JASSIN was exposed to his father's strict discipline and high expectations. Not for him the idle play of other boys. JASSIN says of his father: "He was a man who wanted his child to be always busy with reading and learning."

Papa Jassin hired the wife of a clerk at BPM to tutor his son in Dutch. By the time the boy entered the local Hollandse Inlandse School (HIS), a Dutch-language school for indigenous children, he was proficient

enough to be placed in second grade. Attending HIS was a privilege offered only a small minority of pupils. JASSIN's classmates were the children of BPM staff, native officials and the locally well-to-do; some were Eurasian. The Dutch children attended a separate school. JASSIN remembers that in his geography class the map of Holland was very large, while that of the Indies was small, emphasizing their political relationship.

Bague Jassin supplemented his son's lessons at school with practice at home, compelling him to read Dutch newspapers out loud during the lunch hour and correcting his pronunciation. He had a cabinet full of Dutch books, and encouraged the boy to read such European novels as Jules Verne's *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*, and books on geography and travel. JASSIN always feared his father, but it was his father who spurred him to success in school and skill in languages.

It was also through the nationalist newspapers to which his father subscribed (surreptitiously, for officials of BPM were expected to be loyal to the government) that JASSIN learned of the nationalist movement then spreading throughout the Indies. Bague Jassin occasionally wrote for these newspapers. In later years, under a pseudonym, he even wrote a critical response to an article by his son.

In 1929 the family returned to Gorontalo. By this time JASSIN had a younger brother, Arief, and a sister, Marjam. Another sister, Bino Rabiah, was born after their return. Of Bague and Habibah's six children, only three—JASSIN, Arief and Bino—survived to adulthood. Two died in infancy and Marjam died in 1931, just a year before the death of JASSIN's beloved mother.

During the depression years of the 1930s Papa Jassin—laid off by BPM—made a living selling Singer sewing machines from town to town, meanwhile enrolling his son in the local HIS.

The principal of this HIS, M.A. Duisterhof, was a progressive young Dutchman who openly praised the exiled Indonesian nationalist leader Sukarno. Duisterhof also read his pupils powerful passages from *Max Havelaar*, a 19th century novel by Multatuli (Eduard Douwes Dekker) attacking Dutch colonial policies. Among the selections he chose was a tragic story of star-crossed lovers, "Saidjah and Adinda." JASSIN was moved by these stories and Duisterhof's dramatic rendition of them. It was only later that he realized these stories were "literature."

Having graduated from the HIS in 1932 JASSIN entered a MULO school (Meer Uitgebreid Lager Onderwijs—Extended Elementary Edu-

cation) in Tondano, a town at the northern tip of Sulawesi.

JASSIN had completed only a few months of studies in Tondano when he had to leave, his father having been rehired by BPM and sent to Pangkalan Brandan, a town on the northeastern coast of Sumatra.

Since there was no appropriate school in Pangkalan Brandan, Bague enrolled his son in the MULO school in Medan—a town 100 kilometers to the south—and lodged him in a boarding house run by a pious Muslim couple named Pak and Mak Ganda; the youth was to live with this couple until 1939. Medan was a bustling plantation town, the capital of East Sumatra, and a city of vibrant intellectual life and fervent Indonesian nationalism.

JASSIN soon qualified for the HBS (Hogere Burger School). In his class of twenty there were only four other Indonesians. Although European and native students studied side-by-side, outside the classroom they led wholly separate lives. The Indonesians associated with their peers from Medan's native schools, including those run by nationalist-minded reform organizations. JASSIN helped form a city-wide Indonesian students' society, the Inheemsche Jeugd Organisatie (Native Youth Organization) and became its secretary. He also joined an Islamic boy scout troop called *Al-Hilal*. These organizations were imbued with the spirit of national pride burgeoning among modern Indonesian youth. Their heroes were Sukarno and other outspoken nationalists.

During the 1930s Medan was the home of one of the liveliest Indonesian/Malay language presses in the Indies. Here the European educated Adinegoro—already legendary for fostering modern journalism in the Indonesian language—published his feisty daily *Pewartu Deli* (Deli News; Deli is the region of Medan), and a magazine called *Abad XX* (Twentieth Century). *Sinar Deli* (Radiance of Deli), *Pandji Islam* (Banner of Islam) and *Pedoman Masyarakat* (Society's Compass) were some of the other journals. These magazines and newspapers published news of the outside world and of the new social forces growing in strength in Indonesia. JASSIN read these periodicals at the Gandas' boarding house and discussed their contents eagerly with his companions.

His growing love for literature also made JASSIN alert to other currents in Indonesian writing. These he followed in the journal *Pujangga Baru* (New Literati), which was edited by the novelist Sutan Takdir Alisjabana and featured the best new poetry, short stories and essays in Indonesian. Only two copies of each issue reached Medan; JASSIN always anticipated their arrival at the bookstore so that he could buy one. It was

an issue of *Pujangga Baru* that he proudly showed his scornful Dutch literature instructor at the HBS, saying, "You see, Sir, we, too, have literature."

Another demonstration of nationalist sympathies provoked more than scorn. On a civics examination JASSIN impudently changed the term "Netherlands Indies" to "Indonesia." If he wanted to be political, said the principal, he should seek his schooling elsewhere! JASSIN was further forbidden to continue in *Al Hilal* and his scholarship was withdrawn until his father succeeded in having it restored. This incident brought the boy to the attention of the Political Intelligence Bureau. Its agents searched his quarters at the boarding house but found nothing incriminating.

JASSIN's diligent school work and his participation in youth organizations could not fully absorb his brimming energy. One day he knocked bravely on the door of Adinegoro and offered himself as an apprentice journalist. Accepted, he was soon spending his spare time and school holidays in the *Pewartu Deli* newsroom. Because of his superior language skills (as a student at HBS he had to qualify in Dutch, German, French and English) he was given the task of translating into good Indonesian the stories coming in over the Dutch wire services, improving copy written by local reporters, and translating advertisements from Dutch into Indonesian.

Occasionally he submitted small articles of his own. Most of all he enjoyed writing movie reviews. Films from Hollywood and Europe were popular in Medan, and reporters were invited to special previews. A high point for him occurred in 1938 when the magazine *Lukisan Dunia* (World Picture) published his essay, "Zaman Romantiek" (The Romantic Era). This was the first of many hundreds of writings on literary themes to appear under his byline, H.B. JASSIN.

JASSIN graduated from HBS in 1939, a year later than his classmates because he had stubbornly insisted on following the science and mathematics stream rather than the arts stream, his natural forte. While he was wrestling with the choice between furthering his education or working full-time, his father called him home to Gorontalo. Visiting Batavia, the capital, on his way, he arranged to meet Sutan Takdir Alisjabana whose literary journal he so admired. In their wide ranging conversation, Takdir persuaded JASSIN of the beauty of the Indonesian language; for all his nationalism, the young man had until this time preferred the Dutch language and European literature. It was Takdir, JASSIN says, who inspired him to dedicate himself specifically to advan-

cing literature written in Indonesian.

When he finally arrived at Gorontalo after visiting other parts of Java, he found a letter awaiting him from Takdir. Takdir had arranged for him to work in the editorial department of Balai Pustaka (Hall of Books), the government publishing house for native language books and journals. For JASSIN this was an opportunity almost too good to be true. Balai Pustaka published the best of the new wave of writers in Indonesian and other indigenous languages. But Papa Jassin, who had returned to Gorontalo a year earlier, had himself arranged a position for his son—very highly educated for the times—as *magang*, or volunteer assistant, in the office of the local Assistant Resident. Becoming a *magang* was the traditional path to the prestigious Native Civil Service.

JASSIN reluctantly obeyed his father's instruction to turn down the offer in Batavia and take up an apprenticeship in the local bureaucracy. His new chores introduced him to the complex workings of a government district office and, more consequentially, to the techniques of meticulous documentation, preparing him for what was to be his life's work.

As a volunteer he received no pay. Although this was the system, JASSIN felt insulted to work so hard for no monetary return. After five months he poured his frustrations into a composition entitled *Nasib Volontair* (Volunteer's Fate)—a critique of the *magang* system—which was later published in *Pujangga Baru*, and announced to his father that he intended to move to Batavia where he hoped the position in the government press was still open. This time there were no objections, and JASSIN embarked for the capital. On February 1, 1940, dressed smartly in jacket and tie, he reported for work at Balai Pustaka.

The senior positions at Balai Pustaka—an agency of the colonial government—were held by Dutchmen, some of whom were quite distinguished in the field of Indonesian languages. But the next level, the editorial staff, included some of the finest indigenous writers. JASSIN now found himself daily in the company of novelists and poets such as Armijn Pane, Sanusi Pane, Nur Sutan Iskandar, and Aman Datuk Madjoindo; Sutan Takdir Alisjabana himself was a senior writer. He also routinely met those whose work Balai Pustaka was publishing, including the poet Chairil Anwar and the journalist and intellectual Rosihan Anwar.

JASSIN worked under Armijn Pane's tutelage, learning to evaluate and edit manuscripts submitted for publication (he already had experience in this work in Medan) and to translate and review books for

newspapers and magazines. He also helped compile Balai Pustaka's annual *Volksalmanak* (People's Almanac). His probation lasted six months, after which he received a hefty raise and was appointed Assistant General Editor.

Besides placing him at the very center of Indonesia's literary life, working at Balai Pustaka also gave him access to the agency's fine library of world literature and to scholars. For example, Purwadarminta, a linguist who later compiled the most authoritative dictionary of Indonesian, worked in the Javanese section. He gave JASSIN a copy of William Henry Hudson's *An Introduction to the Study of Literature*, which JASSIN read repeatedly. And through Balai Pustaka he met the Dutch linguist A.A. Fokker who, to JASSIN's amazement and delight, used some of his sentences in a scholarly study of Indonesian grammar.

Along with other staff members JASSIN delivered radio talks about new books and literature. This was a heady experience because his broadcasts were heard throughout the Indies, wherever crowds of listeners could gather around the country's few radios. He received fan mail and comments from far flung towns and, upon returning home on holiday, learned he had been heard even in Gorontalo.

When the Japanese seized Indonesia from the Dutch in 1942, they were welcomed by most Indonesians. They promised an end to colonialism and a new age of dignity and independence for Asians. JASSIN shared his countrymen's euphoria. In the new spirit of Asianism he translated a study on Japanese drama from English into Indonesian. He and the others carried on the work of the publishing house where he was now Deputy Editor of the magazine *Panji Pustaka* (Book Banner).

In the past the Balai Pustaka editors had censored materials which bore a religious or political message; for this reason pre-war Indonesian novels published by Balai Pustaka bore little of the nationalistic fervor common to newspapers of the time. Under the Japanese censorship was more overt. *Panji Pustaka* was expected to recognize the new government's aims and programs. This meant that JASSIN and his fellow editors printed articles about gardening and survival measures, and an occasional propaganda-laden short story. At the same time they continued publishing good Indonesian writing—a condition made easier by the fact that no works could be published in Dutch. But they had to debate such matters of policy as whether Chairil Anwar's poem "Aku" (Me!) was too individualistic for the "all-for-one-and-one-for-all" message of Japanese propaganda. They published the poem under a different title and it passed the censor.

JASSIN's personal friendship with Chairil Anwar, about whom he would later write an influential study, began during the war. This provocative and disorderly poet would appear—always unannounced—at JASSIN's residence for wide ranging discussions about books and writing. Once, after a number of Anwar's poems had been rejected by *Panji Pustaka*, JASSIN carefully typed out six copies of each for the poet to show other publishers, keeping the originals, since that way at least one copy of the works would be saved. JASSIN was already building his archive. In fact, during the Japanese period his collection grew rapidly.

JASSIN's most powerful personal encounter with the contradictions between Japan's vaunted aims and its behavior as an occupying power occurred in 1944. Bicycling to the beach near the harbor of Tanjung Priok he was intercepted by sentries and sent to the military police, who took away his eyeglasses and beat him. He was released the next day when his Japanese boss at Balai Pustaka vouched for him, but he was so badly bruised he could not work for a week. This experience added a powerful new impetus to his nationalism. Thereafter, as he joined in obligatory wartime bamboo bayonet drills, he fantasized he was sticking a Japanese.

Wedded to this emotional reaction was an intellectual one. He vowed to translate Friedrich Nietzsche's *Thus Spake Zarathustra* into Indonesian to help arouse the spirit of his people. Uncharacteristically he never finished the translation. Although he was a great admirer of Nietzsche, the latter's atheism troubled him and, as his own faith grew deeper through study of the Koran, the translation project was gradually dropped.

After the Japanese occupation ended and the years of revolt against the returning Dutch began, JASSIN remained at Balai Pustaka. He and his colleagues continued to publish *Panji Pustaka*, which they now renamed *Panca Raya* (Big Five), which referred to the five major islands of the newly declared (August 17, 1945) "Republic of Indonesia."

Although the Dutch seized Balai Pustaka facilities during their "police action" in 1947, they encouraged the Indonesian editors to remain. Refusing to compromise themselves in this fashion, however, JASSIN and his colleagues left their jobs and abandoned their magazine, beginning a new one that was unmistakably pro-Republic. This was *Mimbar Indonesia* (Indonesia's Podium), which was staffed by prominent nationalist intellectuals including Adinegoro. JASSIN became editor of culture, art and literature.

*Mimbar Indonesia* published articles of all kinds by Indonesian

authors, but it was much more than a literary face for the revolution. In its pages members of the intelligentsia debated the complex issues of intellectual collaboration—for some prominent Indonesian writers were still publishing in the Dutch-sponsored media—and engaged actively in the Republic's propaganda war. As each new round of negotiations with the Dutch occurred, its editors circulated copies of *Mimbar Indonesia* well in advance to support the Republic's position.

Whereas the Republican government was based in Yogyakarta, in south Central Java, *Mimbar Indonesia* was published in the occupied city of Batavia, or Jakarta as the Republicans renamed it. Its offices therefore became a magnet, not only for poets, novelists and journalists, but also for emissaries from the Republican government (including its negotiating teams) and delegations from the outer islands—many of which had been recognized as separate states by the Dutch in an effort to divide and rule. In short, *Mimbar Indonesia* was an important link in the web of revolutionary communications. JASSIN was thus at the very center, not only of his country's emerging literary life but, in this period of tumultuous change, of the debates and discussions that shaped its national identity.

Yet JASSIN still found time for other literary projects. In 1946 he published *Pancaran Cita* (Flow of Aspirations) which contained what he considered the best writing in the Indonesian language during the Japanese period. In so doing he took upon himself the pivotal role of literary arbiter. It was JASSIN who decided which works would remain in public circulation and which would fall by the wayside—although never from his personal collection. In this role he had no competitors. He alone took the initiative. The few others who had the necessary intellect, lacked the nerve or energy.

In part it was his extraordinary productivity that led JASSIN, eventually, to dominate Indonesian letters. Two new anthologies followed in 1948. And in 1949 he published his Indonesian translation of Antoine Saint-Exupéry's *Vol de Nuit*, or *Night Flight*, a book he had enjoyed at school and whose hero exemplified the toughness of personality that JASSIN admired.

It was also during the revolutionary period that JASSIN established a settled domestic life. In 1946 he married Arsite, a young woman from the town of Bogor. The following year their first child was born. Befitting the times, JASSIN named him Hannibal after the brave and resolute Carthaginian general. To support his family JASSIN supplemented his small income from *Mimbar Indonesia* by dealing in books—buying in the



interior with Republican notes and selling in Jakarta for Dutch currency. The latter had a very favorable exchange rate. His second child, Mastinah, a daughter, was born in 1950, just as the new era of Indonesian nationhood began.

After Indonesian independence (August 17, 1950) JASSIN continued to edit *Mimbar Indonesia* and again served as an editor at Balai Pustaka. This kept him at the center of Indonesia's growing circle of writers and intellectuals, among whom he, as an influential editor and tireless promoter of talented newcomers, was a key figure. Numerous new magazines and journals blossomed in these early years of independence. JASSIN had a hand in several of them, serving on their editorial boards and contributing critical essays of his own. These he later compiled and published as a collection.

His first book-length work of literary criticism was published in 1951, *Angkatan 45*, which addressed the influence of occupation and revolution upon Indonesia's creative writers and gave a lasting name to that literary era: "The Generation of 1945."

In 1953 JASSIN was invited to teach modern Indonesian literature at the University of Indonesia as an adjunct lecturer. While conducting courses of his own, he enrolled in others, pursuing an AB in Asian Literature. The latter required studying Sanskrit, Javanese, and most importantly Arabic.

JASSIN had heard the sounds of Arabic all his life in chantings from the Koran. In grammar school he had been taught its alphabet so that he could read classical Malay. But it wasn't until these years at the university that he truly mastered the language.

By 1958 JASSIN had met the requirement for, and received the equivalent of, both a bachelor's and a master's degree. He then accepted an invitation to travel to the United States to study comparative literature at Yale.

At Yale he took courses in world literature and made an in-depth study of Leo Tolstoy. Although he had studied English at the HBS, JASSIN now seized the opportunity to master it. He was able to deliver his scholarly paper on Tolstoy in fluent English to the acclamation of his graduate seminar classmates. Aside from his studies, he assisted a professor of linguistics with research on Gorontaloese, and briefly taught Indonesian.

Homesick during his time abroad, on his way back to Jakarta at

year's end he stopped in Medan to visit the Gandas and to relive memories of his formative days in the Hogere Burger School.

For JASSIN the tumultuous decade of the 1960s began with a personal tragedy. In March 1962 his wife Arsiti died. Inspired by the daily readings from the Koran following Arsiti's burial, JASSIN vowed, in her memory, to render into Indonesian a translation of the Koran that would convey the beauty of the original Arabic. He labored lovingly over this task for many years and published it in 1978.

In the months of mourning JASSIN was comforted by the Willem family, relatives from Makassar who now lived in Jakarta. In frequent family visits he became reacquainted with one of the younger members of the family, Juliko, or Lily, whom he had known when she was a small girl. Lily was now 19 and she and JASSIN, who was 45, were married, with warm family blessings, in December. To his second marriage were born two more children, Firdaus in 1967, and Helena in 1970.

Upon returning from the United States JASSIN had rejoined *Mimbar Indonesia* and resumed teaching at the University of Indonesia. A government position, his teaching appointment provided a dependable but small salary which he supplemented with royalties from his writings. His life at the center of Indonesian letters went on as before. He wrote prolifically and participated prominently in debates over the nature of literature and its role in Indonesian national life. In the early 1960s these debates were hot.

The life of a critic is never without controversy. From the beginning of his career JASSIN had been buffeted by critics of his work, not excluding, of course, the bruised or "misunderstood" subjects of his influential critiques. ("There is no such thing as the Generation of 1945," protested some members of that generation.) As Marxist ideas gradually penetrated the Indonesian intelligentsia during the 1950s, however, debates about literature and the arts had taken on a wholly new dimension.

Marxist analysis and political organization were not new in Indonesia, but in the 1950s they gained ground powerfully under the Communist Party of Indonesia (PKI) and its affiliated organizations. The PKI was a legal party and one that increasingly won the patronage of Indonesia's charismatic but beleaguered president, Sukarno. It also attracted leading intellectuals. These included the novelist Pramoedya Ananta Toer, who, although he disclaimed membership in the party, became the leading light in its cultural arm known as Lekra, for Lembaga Kebudayaan Rakyat (Institute of People's Culture). Pramoedya

and his colleagues on the left were old friends of JASSIN and throughout the 1950s they carried on a sharp but civil dialogue over their conflicting ideas. JASSIN's philosophy of "universal humanism" viewed art as a transcendent human activity that could not be subordinated to political purposes. This clashed with Lekra's call for social realism in art that would move Indonesians toward revolution. To Lekra's members, JASSIN exhibited an anti-revolutionary, bourgeois mentality. But he was influential and they were eager to persuade him.

JASSIN recalls Pramoedya's final appeal—and accompanying threat. "Maybe you are not aware how strong your influence is in the field of literature. You are like a big octopus with hundreds of tentacles. What you write and say is heard and followed all over Indonesia . . . . But you must remember, you must be made aware, that this is the age of the masses. Whoever opposes the masses will be ground up by the revolution. So you must side with the masses, and you must abide by *their* standards."

JASSIN responded, asking: "Are you speaking of politics or literature? If we are speaking of literature . . . a thousand slogans of the masses notwithstanding, if a work is not of literary quality, I'm not going to call it literature."

Thus what had been a gentlemen's debate in the 1950s erupted into bitter public controversy in the early 1960s. Attacks against JASSIN and other non-Lekra intellectuals became strident and personal as the Communist Party attempted to discredit its ideological competitors. In one instance Lekra-controlled newspapers attacked a popular Muslim leader and ardent anti-communist, Hamka, making the explosive charge that one of his famous novels was plagiarized. In a carefully argued essay JASSIN put his own reputation on the line to show why Hamka's book was not plagiarism, even though it was quite similar to a French romance.

In this period of extreme national polarization, when writers and intellectuals were forced to take sides, JASSIN rallied like-minded colleagues to fight back. He began in 1962 with the magazine *Sastra* (Literature), conceived as a forum for those who rejected the Lekra slogan that "literature is a warrior." More importantly, the following year JASSIN led a group of intellectuals in promulgating the Manifesto Kebudayaan (Cultural Manifesto). Reflecting JASSIN's views on universal humanism, the Manifesto utterly rejected the concept of art in the service of a single political voice. Many rallied to the side of the signatories, including senior military officers. With their secret assistance the Manifesto group held a massive national conference of sympa-

thetic writers and artists.

But JASSIN and his friends were swimming against the tide. Sukarno banned the Manifesto in 1964, along with the newspapers and publications of its supporters. Soon thereafter JASSIN resigned from the university under duress.

JASSIN now had neither his government salary nor ready income from his writings, but friends came to his aid with translation jobs, and his loyal publisher, Masagung, continued to pay him royalties even after his books had been forced from the stores.

His exile from public life was brief. Following the attempted coup of 1965, Major General Soeharto and the army eliminated the Indonesian communists and other leftists. The Manifesto group returned to prominence.

In 1969 JASSIN brought back *Sastra* and, with Mochtar Lubis (1958 Ramon Magsaysay Journalism Awardee for “promotion of the public good through a free and courageous press”) and others, launched a new literary and cultural magazine called *Horison*. He fended off suggestions that he be appointed cultural attaché overseas, or any other position of high profile under the new government, saying, “just give me a table, a chair and a typewriter and I’ll go to work.” Although he again took up an adjunct appointment at the University of Indonesia, he also deflected proposals that he be made professor or head of the literature department. Instead he resumed his intensive interaction with Indonesian literary life. As he saw it, the political-military bloodbath had brought about a major redirection in Indonesian letters and he identified the new writers as *Angkatan 66* (The Generation of ’66).

A story JASSIN published in *Sastra* soon embroiled him in another controversy. In “Langit Makin Mendung” (The Heavens Darken) a writer calling himself Kipandjikusmin satirized the late Sukarno period by describing a visit to earth by the Prophet Mohammad. Aside from depicting Mohammad humorously—pensioned-off in heaven with the other prophets—he depicts God himself as an old man with gold spectacles. These irreverences outraged many Muslims, who clamored for the story’s withdrawal from circulation and called upon the government to prosecute its author under laws forbidding the defamation of religion.

As *Sastra*’s editor, JASSIN refused to reveal the author’s identity, and eventually he was called before the High Court. A devout believer himself, he nevertheless defended the publication of Kipandjikusmin’s

story, arguing powerfully that known facts and fervent beliefs notwithstanding, “the human imagination is free.” By condemning “Langit Makin Mendung,” he claimed, the state was doing no less than condemning imagination. JASSIN was nonetheless convicted and sentenced to a year in prison; the sentence was suspended.

The decade of the 70s were years of recognition. In 1970 JASSIN was invited to join the prestigious Akademi Jakarta, which includes Indonesia’s most distinguished literary figures. He toured the universities of Australia as guest of that government, and in 1973 was invited to the Netherlands to receive the Martinus Nijhoff Award for his translation into Indonesian of *Max Havelaar*. Duisterhof, who introduced him to the Dutch classic at school, attended the ceremonies on JASSIN’s invitation. While in Holland he worked intensively on his translation of the Koran.

Once home again JASSIN pursued his many activities. He was one of the founders of PT Gunung Agung, a well-known publishing house, and has served on boards of government organizations, such as the Balai Pustaka, and private institutions such as the Masagung and Idayu foundations. In 1975 his own university awarded him an honorary doctorate.

Now too, he made yearly trips to Malaysia to serve as external examiner in modern Indonesian/Malay literature at two Malaysian universities, and in 1984 he made the *haj* (pilgrimage to Mecca). However, reading, writing about, promoting and collecting Indonesian literature remained his primary activity.

JASSIN is a collector by nature. Even as a student he tidily filed away his school essays, and he kept clippings of his articles in school newspapers and, later, *Pewarta Deli* and other publications. He also saved other writers’ work, like his precious early copies of *Pujangga Baru*, Chairil Anwar’s early poems, and virtually every book he could afford. Over the years, as his circle of acquaintances widened to include all of Indonesia’s premier writers, JASSIN habitually begged them to give him their manuscripts, photographs, and correspondence. Everyday he clipped and filed.

JASSIN was always happiest in the midst of his library/archive—mining its rich materials for his own writings, and continuously adding to its wealth. He had opened his collection to his students in the 1950s and was soon making it available to journalists and scholars, both local and foreign. By the 1970s his collection had mushroomed beyond the

capacity of his home to hold it. Some of it he had long since loaned to the Lembaga Bahasa dan Budaya (Institute of Language and Culture) under the Ministry of Education, and some he stored in his brother's house.

JASSIN calls his collecting "literary documentation." It is an essential tool, he says, for "lengthening, deepening and broadening our memories," providing the sources which make intelligent literary criticism and accurate literary history possible. Yet it seems JASSIN alone recognized the special value of such meticulous hoarding; in all Indonesia there is no collection remotely equal to his.

By the late 1960s awareness of it began to reach a wider circle. This was due in part to the stirring public exhibitions on Chairil Anwar and the *Pujangga Baru* era that JASSIN mounted.

Recognizing the special value of the collection— and the expense of maintaining and expanding it, until then borne by JASSIN alone—the Arts Council of Jakarta began giving him a monthly subsidy in 1972. In 1976, at the suggestion of Governor of Jakarta Ali Sadikin (1971 Ramon Magsaysay Awardee for Government Service), JASSIN formed the H.B. Jassin Literary Documentation Foundation. Regularized as a foundation, his collection was then able to receive a government subsidy.

Recognizing JASSIN as chairman for life, Sadikin provided him a one-time personal grant of 10,000,000 rupiahs, and funds for a home (his rented residence was being reassumed by its owner) and for his first automobile. Even more importantly, he offered to house JASSIN's collection in a facility made expressly for it at the city's arts and culture complex, Taman Ismail Marzuki (TIM).

In early 1977, therefore, most of JASSIN's precious books, manuscripts and clippings were transferred from their various locales around Jakarta to a temporary site at TIM, pending construction of a new building, and on May 30 Governor Ali Sadikin inaugurated the H.B. Jassin Foundation and the Center for Literary Documentation. Five years later JASSIN, Sadikin and eminent Indonesian writers, including his early hero Takdir, gathered to celebrate the opening of the collection's permanent home on the top floor of the new H.B. Jassin Center for Literary Documentation.

The governor's original subsidy to the archives of 6.5 million rupiahs a year has grown to 27.5 million and is augmented by an additional 10 million annually from the Indonesian Ministry of Education. (In 1987 the rupiah was approximately 1640 to the US dollar.)

Aside from these funds which sustain the center's routine services and pay the salaries of a staff of 15, have been generous gifts from other organizations—primarily books, materials and equipment. Among the foundation's benefactors have been Indonesia's major newspaper and publishing houses; local and foreign foundations and embassies; and for three years the Unilever company.

JASSIN receives no salary for his tireless work at the center, relying upon the interest from the 10 million rupiah fund, his pension from the university and royalties from his 15 books, the most lucrative of which is his poetic translation of the Koran.

Some 15-20 people use the center daily, but when buses arrive full of students from outside Jakarta there may be as many as 150 visitors in the building at once. Most users are Indonesian high school and college students, but many are local journalists and writers. JASSIN's treasures have long been known to the international community of scholars, and increasing numbers of foreign graduate students and researchers find their way to the center. Thus the collections have provided raw material not only for JASSIN's prolific output, but for masters' theses, PhD dissertations and books written by Indonesians, Australians, Europeans and Americans.

Under JASSIN's supervision the professional staff now provides the full services of a modern archive, cataloguing new acquisitions, preserving the most vulnerable materials on microfilm, fumigating the collection every six months and providing photocopies of materials to students and researchers outside the capital. This is no mean accomplishment as the collection expands constantly in consequence of the post-1966 blossoming in Indonesian literary and cultural life, and in accordance with JASSIN's vision of the center as a repository for, not only Indonesian, but international, literature.

JASSIN sees Indonesian literature as simply part of "all the literature of the world," and his dream is a documentation center that reflects this interrelationship fully. If his dream were to be fulfilled, he notes wryly, the "H.B. Jassin Center for Literary Documentation would need a building . . . reaching high into the heavens."

September 1987  
Manila

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Rahman, Darsjaf. *Antara Imajinasi dan Hukum: Sebuah Roman Biografi H.B. Jassin*. Jakarta: Gunung Agung. 1986.

Interview with Hans Bague Jassin and visits to the H.B. Jassin Center for Literary Documentation. Interviews with and letters from persons acquainted with Jassin and his work.





A handwritten signature in black ink, written in a cursive style. The signature is highly stylized and difficult to decipher, but it appears to consist of several overlapping loops and a long horizontal stroke at the bottom.