

Abstract

Libraries and archives in Indonesia display weak infrastructures, lamentable features and problems common in many other national libraries in Southeast Asia and the developing world. Yet, Indonesia also has an under-researched history of initiatives in building small, informal libraries and/or book rentals using self- or collectively-generated funds, resources and connections outside of the formal state structure. The fall of Suharto's tightly controlled New Order and its subsequent decentralization, along with the increasing availability of new media technology, have precipitated their proliferation in various, hybridized forms. Through case studies of alternative libraries in Bandung, Yogyakarta, Surabaya and Makassar, carried out through repeated site visits and interviews, I found that despite their heterogeneity, there is an overwhelmingly strong predisposition to still frame their functions solely as promoting basic literacy and *minat baca* (reading interest) among the Indonesian population at large, particularly children, separated and sterilised from political and economic practices. Using Bourdieu's cultural intermediaries as conceptual framework, I argue that alternative libraries sites of assembly and circulation of cultural products where the people behind them attempt to not only shape tastes and challenge the authority of established and widely distributed norms, but also pursue their own legitimacy and power into wider circuits of cultural and knowledge production.

Keywords: library, alternative media, cultural intermediaries

[T]here is no political power without control of the archive, if not memory. Effective democratization can always be measured by this essential criterion: the participation in and access to the archive, its constitution, and its interpretation.

Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (1995, 4).

But what if many peoples, on a long view, are not *preliterate*, but, to use Leo Alting von Geusau's term, *postliterate*? What if, as a consequence of flight, of changes in social structure and subsistence routines, they left texts and writing behind? And what if, to raise the most radical possibility, there was an active or strategic dimension to this abandonment of the world of texts and literacy?

James C. Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia* (2009, 220).

Buku memang menjadi bagian tak terpisahkan dalam hidup Ong sebagai seorang sarjana yang selalu haus pengetahuan. Tetapi mengumpulkan buku adalah kecintaan lain, sebuah hasrat tak henti akan keindahan dan minat pribadi, bukan cuma sebuah upaya mengisi pengetahuan. Kulit buku yang menarik terkadang menjadi satu alasan untuk membeli dan menyimpannya di perpustakaan. Dan mendapatkan buku langka, karena umur yang tua atau edisi yang langka, ibarat kemenangan seorang pemburu yang memanggul hasil buruannya.

Andi Achdian, "Tentang Buku, Membaca, dan Menulis" *Sang Guru dan Secangkir Kopi: Sejarawan Onghoham dan Sebuah Dunia Baru Bernama Indonesia* (2011, 23).