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In memoriam, Edi Sedyawati

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Obituary

In memoriam, Edi Sedyawati
Malang, 28 October 1938 – Jakarta, 11 November 2022

A scholar who was able to transcend disciplinary boundaries



Edi Sedyawati, January 2018.
(Collection of her son, Bimo Sinung Widagdo).

Edi developed a passion for astronomy and archeology, and after graduating from high school, she studied archaeology at the University of Indonesia. She completed her undergraduate studies in 1961 and her graduate studies in 1963 with a thesis entitled “Artja-artja Wisnu dari Tjibuaja”.

Edi’s teaching career at the University of Indonesia began as an assistant to Prof. Dr. Sutjipto Wirjosuparto giving courses in Indian cultural history and Sanskrit. Her strong interest in Indonesian archaeology of the Hindu-Buddhist period led her to develop her own courses, namely Hindu and Buddhist Iconography, the Repertory of Classical Javanese Literature, and Philosophy of Hindu Art. Her main interest in iconography and art was reflected in her dissertation, in which she chose the statue of Ganesa as her research topic. She earned her doctorate in 1985 and was awarded *magna cum laude*. She received the title of Professor of Archaeology in 1992. Her inaugural lecture was entitled *Sistem kesenian nasional Indonesia; Sebuah renungan*.

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Edi Sedyawati was a Professor of Archaeology with a great interest in iconography and art history. She was born in Malang in 1938. As the daughter of a respected Javanese family, she was educated with a strong Javanese tradition as well as a Dutch-style education. Her father was a politician who had served as Mayor of Semarang city then Secretary General of the Ministry of Social Affairs in Jakarta. After growing up in the middle of the Indonesian War of Independence, Edi moved to Jakarta in 1950 and attended junior and senior high school there. From an early age

In the early 2000s, Edi pioneered a series of courses on cultural resource management. Cultural heritage management efforts in Indonesia had in fact long been a concern of the government, but the subject had not been developed as a curriculum in universities. It was not until the 2000s that the importance of developing an applied curriculum became a pressing issue and this led in particular to the establishment of a Master's degree program.

While teaching at the Faculty of Literary Studies (now the Faculty of Humanities), Edi was head of the Department of Archaeology (1971-1974) and head of the Department of Regional Literature (1987-1993). At the same time, she was head of the Research Centre for Social and Cultural Affairs, Research Institute at the University of Indonesia (1989-1993). All these positions were later relinquished when she was appointed Director General of Culture at the Ministry of Education and Culture (1993-1999).

Besides archaeology, Edi had other interests that she had pursued from childhood, especially as a classical Javanese dancer. This interest was developed through education outside her alma mater, namely the Jakarta Arts Education Institute (LPKJ)/Jakarta Institute of the Arts (IKJ). She became a teacher and developed courses related to dance. At this institution, she also served as Chair of the Department of Dance (1971-1977), Associate Dean I of the Faculty of Arts of the IKJ (1978-1980), and Vice Rector I of the IKJ (1986-1989). In the field of arts, Edi also received additional training in ethnomusicology at the East-West Center, Hawaii USA in 1974-1975.

Her extensive interest in the arts enabled Edi to hold various positions in different organizations. Among others, she was a member of the Terminology Commission at the Institute of Language and Literature (1964-1969) and Chair of the Department of Choreography at the Institute of Musicology and Choreography of the Directorate General of Culture (1969-1974). Other positions included: Chair of the Dance Committee at the Jakarta Arts Council (1971-1974) and member of the Arts Consortium, which became the Arts Discipline Commission of the Directorate General of Higher Education (from 1990). She was also a long-time advisor to the Indonesian Society for Performing Arts from 1990.

Edi was thus not only an expert in archaeology, but was also recognized for her expertise in history, language, and art. This recognition enabled her to hold important positions in various professional organizations. She served two terms as Chair of the Association of Indonesian Archeologists (1993-2002), Chair of the Society of Indonesian Historians, Jakarta Branch (1986-1990), then Chair I of the Society of Indonesian Historians (1990-1993), Chair of the Association of Indonesian Literary Scholars (HISKI), Commissariat of the University of Indonesia (1991-1993). Edi was also a member of international organizations, namely the Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde; the Society for Ethnomusicology; and the Committee on Research in Dance.

Her extensive interest in and great concern for Indonesian culture and her strong organisational capability were put to good use in developing various cultural sectors when she served as Director General of Culture. Under her leadership, an art exhibition of non-aligned countries was organized, which led

to the establishment of the National Gallery, which had already been initiated during the time of President Soekarno. In the field of music, a documentation of Indonesian traditional music was carried out with the help of Prof. Dr. Sri Hastanto, chairman of the Indonesian School of Arts (STSI) Surakarta.

After completing her tenure as Director General of Culture, she was appointed by the Indonesian government as Governor for Indonesia at the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF, 1999-2001). Edi retired in 2003, but continued to teach at her alma mater for a time. Edi taught as a guest lecturer at Paramadina University and was an adjunct lecturer at the Indonesian Hindu University in Bali and there gave a lecture on one of her specialties, Shiva-Buddha Tattwa. In 2008, Edi, together with Abu Rizal Bakrie, Taufik Abdullah, Azyumardi Azra, Putu Wijaya, Sapto Rahardjo, and Sugihartatmo, founded the Indonesian Cultural Community and became its chairperson. Within the framework of this community, seminars are held on national issues, two of these are topics entitled *Laut dan Kebudayaan* (Sea and Culture), and *Hutan dan Kebudayaan* (Forest and Culture).

As an academic and researcher, Edi was one of the most prolific writers of her generation. During her tenure as Director General alone, four volumes of books were published (1995-1998), containing no less than 115 articles. Other writings in the form of books, scientific articles, essays, book reviews, art performance reviews, and popular essays were published in various media. A partial list of her writings can be found in the appendix to the text of her retirement address entitled "Warisan budaya intangible yang 'tersisa' dalam yang tangible" (Depok: Fakultas Ilmu Pengetahuan Budaya UI, 2003). We are fortunate that most of her hundreds of scholarly writings have been compiled in various publications that are available to the public. Below are some of Edi's works in the form of published books (monographs and collections of writings):

- 1981. *Pertumbuhan seni pertunjukan*. Jakarta: Sinar Harapan.
- 1994. *Pengarcaan Ganesa masa Kadiri dan Singhasari; Sebuah tinjauan sejarah kesenian*. Jakarta: EFEO, LIPI, and Universiteit Leiden. English edition: *Ganesa statuary of the Kadiri and Singhasari periods. A study of art history*. Leiden: KITLV. [Verhandelingen, Koninklijk Intituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde No. 160.]
- 2006. *Budaya Indonesia; Kajian arkeologi, seni, dan sejarah*. Jakarta: Raja Grafindo Perkasa.
- 2007. *Keindonesiaan dalam budaya (Buku 1); Kebutuhan membangun bangsa yang kuat*. Jakarta: Wedatama Widya Sastra.
- 2008. *Keindonesiaan dalam budaya (Buku 2); Dialog budaya: nasional dan etnik, peranan industri budaya dan media massa, warisan budaya dan pelestarian dinamis*. Jakarta: Wedatama Widya Sastra.
- 2008. *Saiwa dan Bauddha di masa Jawa Kuno*. Denpasar: Widya Dharma.
- 2014. *Kebudayaan di Nusantara: dari keris, Tor-tor, sampai industri budaya*. Depok: Komunitas Bambu.

These writings reflect the breadth of Edi's interest in various cultural topics covering various fields, including archaeology, puppet theatre, museums, language, cosmology, literature, history, martial arts, fine arts, performing arts, and sculpture. A number of articles link cultural issues to contemporary topics, such as culture and population, anthropology and development, culture and education, culture and economics, culture and mass media, cultural industries, intellectual property rights, cultural tourism, cultural resilience, the role of women, and multiculturalism. These writings are a testament to her ability and flexibility to connect cultural issues across different perspectives and transcend formal academic boundaries.

She received several awards for her extensive work in education, research, and cultural promotion. Among them, from Universitas Indonesia for the best research in the field of humanities and culture (1986, 1991). From the Indonesian government, she received the Bintang Jasa Utama RI (1995)¹, the Satyalencana Karya Satya 30 years (1997)², and the Bintang Mahaputera Utama (1998)³. She was also made a "Chevalier dans l'Ordres des Arts et des Lettres"⁴ by the Government of the French Republic (1997). She was also a recipient of the Habibie Award for Philosophy and Culture from Yayasan SDM Iptek, founded by Habibie (2001).

God gave her a long life; 84 years and it was only physical weakness which prevented her from continuing to work. After several days of treatment at Cipto Mangunkusumo Hospital, Edi passed away at 11:40 pm on Friday, November 11, 2022. She was married to martial art expert, the late Muhammad Hadimulyo, who gave her two sons and five grandchildren. We have lost an inspiring personality who was dedicated to studying and fighting for the advancement of Indonesian culture.

¹ A mark to honour a person for his/her services and struggles.

² A mark of honour given to civil servants who have carried out their duties by showing loyalty, devotion, skills, honesty, discipline, and have worked continuously for a certain period of time.

³ This award is given to those who exceptionally maintain the integrity, continuity, and glory of the Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia.

⁴ Knight in the Orders of Arts and Letters.