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| Hoerijah, Adam (1936-1971) |
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| Born nine years before Indonesia’s independence, Hoerijah Adam epitomised the transitional figure of the Indonesian postcolonial dancer. Despite her short life, Adam changed the course of modern dance in Indonesia by formulating a new style derived from her origins – the Minangkabau culture of West Sumatra.  In contrast to the Javanese influence seen elsewhere in Indonesia’s modern dance – whose classical dances rooted in the Hindu-Buddhist syncretism developed within its court traditions after the arrival of Islam in the fourteenth century – Minangkabau is distinct for its *pencak-silat*, a vernacular martial arts form. Scholars describe Minangkabau a culture of paradox, referring to the fact that although its people are predominantly Muslim, their customs are based on matrilineal principles – an unlikely combination. |
| Summary  Born nine years before Indonesia’s independence, Hoerijah Adam epitomised the transitional figure of the Indonesian postcolonial dancer. Despite her short life, Adam changed the course of modern dance in Indonesia by formulating a new style derived from her origins – the Minangkabau culture of West Sumatra.  In contrast to the Javanese influence seen elsewhere in Indonesia’s modern dance – whose classical dances rooted in the Hindu-Buddhist syncretism developed within its court traditions after the arrival of Islam in the fourteenth century – Minangkabau is distinct for its *pencak-silat*, a vernacular martial arts form. Scholars describe Minangkabau a culture of paradox, referring to the fact that although its people are predominantly Muslim, their customs are based on matrilineal principles – an unlikely combination.  Adam was the first dancer who transliterated the idioms of *pencak-silat*-based Minangkabau dance into a new dance language. She further developed the form – known as her individual style – during a series of dance workshops organised by the newly founded Jakarta Arts Council and held between 1968 and 1971. Established by the visionary governor Ali Sadikin, the Council was designed to support the new Jakarta Arts Centre (known as Taman Ismail Marzuki Park or TIM Arts Centre) – a complex of modern theatres, galleries and rehearsal spaces. The opening of TIM Arts Centre in 1968 embodied a modernist project, envisioning the capital Jakarta as transformed from a postcolonial city into a cosmopolitan metropolis. During TIM Intercultural Workshop, Adam joined a group of Indonesia’s multicultural dancers of Javanese, Balinese, and Western classical ballet trainings. and in turn, their collective experimentation articulated a modernism that influenced the trajectory of Indonesian dance in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Training Hoerijah Adam was raised in a devout Muslim and yet uniquely artistic family. Two of her brothers won scholarships to study Western classical violin in Brussels in 1955. Her father, Syeikh Adam Balai Balai, was a *parewa*, a controversial figure in Minangkabau traditional social structure, knowledgeable in both Islamic teaching and Minangkabau pre-Islamic mysticism, but choosing to follow neither path. Parewa were feared as pencak-silat masters living careless lives but winning respect for their witty criticism of Minangkabau’s establishment, and were considered to be guardians of the local customs (‘adat’).  Like many prominent Minangkabau *parewas*, Balai Balai later ‘converted’ to be an *ulemma* (traditional Muslim cleric). In 1929, Balai Balai founded a progressive girls Muslim school whose curriculum combined Islamic teaching and Western-influenced education such as physical education, crafts, and Western music. Adam, however, studied in another school, although she was always welcome to take violin, painting and sculpting classes at her father’s school. She started to learn Melayu (or Malay) dance – a cultural import from neighbouring Malay (southern Sumatra and now Malaysia), which was then popular among the new elite/city dwellers. Melayu female dance is characterized by its feminine gestures of swaying arms and undulating steps. It is danced to a Melayu songs played on Western instruments such as the accordion, violin and piano.  From 1951, Adam studied pencak-silat-based folk dance with various gurus specially invited by her father. She spent the decade incorporating this pencak-silat-based dance technique into short dances – some commissioned by the nationalist-backed military force, which was appeasing the separatist movement shaking the new nation-state. Adam’s ‘new’ movement was broad, strong and occasionally abrupt, which was contrast to the Melayu female dance aesthetic. Determined to be an artist, in 1954 she enrolled at the first national academy of fine arts in Yogyakarta (Central Java). She returned a year later, deciding instead to teach at father’s school, although he had passed away the previous year. By early 1960s, Adam rose to be a well-known choreographer in Minangkabau for her progressive dance style, which featured women dancing pencak-silat steps, considered inappropriate among the purists.  In 1965, she met choreographer Sardono who later invited her to join a group of artists at the newly opened TIM Arts Centre in Jakarta, prompting her move to the capital. It was during these series of workshops that Adam experimented fully with her newfound technique on her body and on the bodies of other dancers with various training backgrounds. Out of a rich variety of local pencak-silat movement styles, she devised her distinct thirteen and eighteen codified movement systems. She soon taught these systems to the multicultural dancers with whom she also collaborated to create her four seminal choreographies. Her last choreographic work was a solo, *A Couple Flame Fall in Love*, an autobiographical metaphor accompanied by a Paganini concerto. From 1967, she started teaching her ‘new’ Minangkabau dance technique to the students of the new national arts academy in her hometown Padang Panjang (West Sumatra), and in 1970 taught her techniques to the students of the newly founded Jakarta Arts Institute. Major Contribution to the Field and to Modernism Adam was the first Indonesian female choreographer to transform a vernacular cultural idiom into a modern dance language. Not only did she modify a training technique out of it, but she lay the foundation for the so-called ‘Minang dance style,’ which became a great influence on future choreographers – first for those of Minangkabau origin, later for building a body of works that together constituted a particular style of Indonesian contemporary dance. Her student Gusmiati Suid furthered Adam’s influence on future choreographers. Indeed, Adam was not the only female dancer joining the TIM Intercultural Workshops, but her unique cultural background (Muslim of matrilineal Minangkabau) allowed her to add a different dance language to the movement of dance modernism in postcolonial Indonesia. List of Works: *Barabah* (circa early 1960s) – it refers to a small bird in Bahasa Minang (vernacular language).  *Heroes (1950s).*  *Freedom (1950s).*  *Working Together (‘Gotong Royong’) – in the 1950s.*  *Parasol Dance (1969 or 1970) – a duet.*  *Malin Kundang – a 30-minute dance-drama after a Minangkabau folklore (1971).*  *A Couple of Flame Fall in Love – a solo (1971)* |
| Further reading:  (Hadler)  (Minarti)  (Murgiyanto)  (Contemporary Indonesian Dance) |