

= Langit Makin Mendung =

" Langit Makin Mendung " (" The Sky is Increasingly Cloudy ") is a controversial Indonesian short story . Published in Sastra magazine under the pen name Kipandjikusmin in August 1968 , it tells the story of Muhammad descending to Earth with the angel Gabriel to investigate the decreasing number of Muslims entering heaven , only to find that Muslims in Indonesia have begun fornicating , drinking alcohol , waging war on Muslims , and otherwise going against the tenets of Islam because of nasakom , a government policy during Sukarno 's administration that combined nationalism , religion , and communism . Unable to do anything to stop the rampant sinning , Muhammad and Gabriel watch the political maneuvering , crime , and famine in Jakarta in the form of eagles .

Upon publication , " Langit Makin Mendung " drew heavy criticism for its depictions of Allah , Muhammad , and Gabriel . Sastra was banned in North Sumatra , and the magazine 's offices in Jakarta were attacked . Despite published apologies from the writer and publisher , the head editor of Sastra , HB Jassin , was tried for blasphemy ; he was later sentenced to a one @-@ year suspended sentence . Critical views of the story vary ; the story has been compared to Dante 's Divine Comedy for its depiction of a man on a spiritual quest with a spiritual companion , yet criticized for depicting Allah , Muhammad , and Gabriel in a negative light . The legal case itself has been subject to debate , with both sides arguing freedom of expression and the scope of imagination .

= = Background = =

Indonesia is the world 's largest majority @-@ Muslim country . This has had a large influence on the development of Indonesia , both in its national revolution and in modern times . However , it has been used to justify and promote political positions . The Dutch colonial government minimized the role of the religious leaders , the kyai and ulama , in an attempt to prevent them using their influence to lead resistance . Modern rulers have used it to " maintain the status quo " , while those pushing for change use Islam as a means for justice or other political ends . This has led to a general fragmentation .

During the early 1960s then @-@ President Sukarno declared a new state ideology of Nasakom , which stood for Nasionalisme , Agama , dan Komunisme (Nationalism , Religion , and Communism) , which would complement the existing policy of Pancasila . This declaration , viewed as proof of increasing Indonesian Communist Party (Partai Komunis Indonesia , or PKI) power , led to conflict between the PKI and the military . In the midst of an escalating confrontation with Malaysia (1963 ? 1966) , Sukarno demoted General Abdul Haris Nasution , Commander of the Army , and promoted Ahmad Yani , while the PKI spread rumours that a CIA @-@ sponsored board of generals (Dewan Jenderal) were plotting against the government , using the Gilchrist Document as proof . Eventually , a coup on 30 September 1965 , thought to have been sponsored by the PKI , killed six generals , leading to the massacre of suspected communists and the fall of Sukarno 's government over the next two years .

= = Plot = =

Muhammad and the other prophets of Islam , bored of living in jannah (heaven) and weary of singing the praises of Allah , request permission to return to Earth . Disappointed by the prophets ' request , Allah calls on Muhammad to explain why he wishes to return , as Allah had already granted him many things . Muhammad replies that he wishes to conduct research , to discover why so few Muslims are coming to heaven . Allah , after removing his glasses , responds that the people had been poisoned by Sukarno 's policy of Nasakom and grants Muhammad permission to investigate further .

After much fanfare , Muhammad departs jannah 's airport , riding a buraq , or winged horse . The Archangel Gabriel accompanies him . On the way , they encounter a Soviet spacecraft . Hearing that they are infidels , Muhammad approaches to investigate , only to crash into the spacecraft ,

obliterating it and the buraq and killing the three cosmonauts ; Muhammad and Gabriel are able to catch a cloud . Later , they pass Jakarta , which Gabriel describes as the most sinful place on Earth . Angered by Gabriel 's statement that less than a million of Indonesia 's 90 million Muslims are true believers , as well as the fact that it is the birthplace of Nasakom , Muhammad declares that Islam will never die and waits on the cloud .

Meanwhile , in Jakarta , an epidemic of the flu is underway . Among those who fall ill is President Sukarno , who writes to Chairman Mao Zedong to request some doctors . Mao sends doctors , who give Sukarno poison to paralyze him and aid the 30 September Movement in overthrowing the government . The slow acting poison causes Sukarno to faint after he and his ministers have a large party with haraam events , including the consumption of pork and frog and zina (sex outside of marriage) .

Muhammad and Gabriel , having transformed into eagles to observe Jakarta , see prostitution , adultery , theft , and drinking . Muhammad is shocked that zina and theft continue unabated , calling for Gabriel to help him stone the adulterers and cut the hands off the thieves . Gabriel replies that there are not enough stones for the adulterers , and the swords have been replaced by guns bought by the " infidel " Soviets and Americans who " worship dollars " . They later see a minister , referred to only as Togog , attempting to use the Gilchrist Document to overthrow Sukarno . Muhammad gives up on Indonesia , planning to install television in jannah .

Eventually , Sukarno recovers from the poison and is told about the Gilchrist Document , also being told that the Chinese are reneging on their agreement to supply nuclear weapons for Indonesia 's confrontation with Malaysia . Sukarno uses the Gilchrist Document to spread rumours and distrust among the populace , demoting his commander of the military , while the Chinese ambassador is sent home .

= = Writing and influences = =

" Langit Makin Mendung " was written under the pen name Kipandjikusmin . HB Jassin , head editor of Sastra , said that Kipandjikusmin had been born to a Muslim family but educated in a Catholic junior school prior to being sent to a naval academy ; Jassin noted that this Catholic education , with literature which personifies God and angels , may have influenced his writing style . Another influence was Javanese wayang , or shadow puppets , with stories which traditionally have a hierarchy of anthropomorphic deities . Jassin also notes influences from the culture of the Guided Democracy era , evidenced from terms like sputnik and the social commentary , with strong condemnation of prostitution in Indonesia and Sukarno 's Nasakom .

Kipandjikusmin later wrote to Ekspres magazine that his goal in writing the short story was to expose the corruption in Sukarno 's government , focusing on the religious leaders who had agreed with Nasakom when it was politically expedient to do so , yet turned against the PKI when the party was hunted and its members killed . He also admitted the influences proposed by Jassin , writing that he had often thought of the Catholic heaven as being similar to the Javanese Kahyangan , with God being similar to Batara Guru . His depictions of Muhammad and Gabriel transforming into eagles were influenced by images of Christ as the Lamb of God . It was originally meant to be a serial , and Jassin had already received the second instalment by the time the controversy began .

= = Style = =

" Langit Makin Mendung " has been described as being written with crude and offensive expressions . Jassin argues that the style , though direct and at times discourteous , indicates a sense of irony , humor , sarcasm , and cynicism .

= = Release and reception = =

" Langit Makin Mendung " was published in the literary magazine Sastra , headed by HB Jassin , in August 1968 , under the pen name Kipandjikusmin . It became instantly controversial , with

Indonesian Muslims considering it blasphemous and an insult to Islam . Among the points of contention were the anthropomorphic personification of Allah , as well as the " less than respectful " treatment of Muhammad and other Islamic figures . It was banned in North Sumatra on 12 October and groups of young Muslims attacked Sastra 's headquarters in Jakarta . After threats of prosecution , Jassin and his co @-@ editor Rachman issued a public apology ; despite this , the magazine was banned . On 22 or 25 October 1968 , Kipandjikusmin followed suit , with a statement submitted to Kami .

In April 1969 or February 1970 , the High Prosecutor 's office in Medan filed charges against Jassin , charging him with blasphemy after he was unwilling to divulge Kipandjikusmin 's true name . At trial , Jassin argued that , as the story was a product of the author 's imagination , it should not be considered an insult to Islam ; he also cited physical descriptions of Allah from the Quran and Sufi literature , as well as the writer 's Christian influences . A witness for the prosecution , noted ulama and writer Haji Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah (Hamka) , testified that a depiction of Allah wearing glasses implied that Allah was imperfect , as opposed to the personifications cited by Jassin , which were based on man 's love for Allah . Hamka later stated that nobody had been able to incite hatred against Muhammad like Kipandjikusmin since the Crusades . Jassin was sentenced to a one @-@ year suspended sentence .

= = Polemics = =

= = = Literary = = =

Jassin writes that " Langit Makin Mendung " , as a result of its author 's imagination , is not dogma , history , ethics , or an objective reality , but a work within its own world . As a result , Allah , Muhammad , and other religious figures are fictional characters and not representative of their counterparts . He further argues that " Langit Makin Mendung " is not written as an insult , but social criticism on perceived mistakes and corruption during the Sukarno period . He draws on parallels between " Langit Makin Mendung " , Dante 's Divine Comedy , and Allama Muhammad Iqbal 's Javid Nama , focusing on the journey of a person and a guide , with objections being raised due to readers identifying imagination with religion .

Another critic , Bahrum Rangkuti , wrote that " Langit Makin Mendung " had to be judged based on Kipandjikusmin 's intentions , which he interpreted as ridding Islam of Nasakom , which he saw as not being compatible . He noted that the Muslims criticized in the story are those who act in ways that are not permitted in Islam , such as drinking and committing zina , while other targets include inept leadership and corruption . Like Jassin , Rangkuti notes numerous instances of Allah being personified in the Quran and hadiths ; he views the personification of Allah in " Langit Makin Mendung " as an attempt to draw Muslims closer to Allah .

Sukarsono argues that " Langit Makin Mendung " would have been a " monumental " critique , with a good description of degeneration and immorality in the early 1960s , if written during Sukarno 's regime , like Machiavelli 's The Prince was for its time , but as it was released in the New Order it lost some of its impact . He notes that in most cases the personification of Allah as being compatible with Islamic views of Allah . However , Allah 's donning of gold spectacles is seen as being in contradiction to the tenets of Islam .

An opposing view , offered by Indonesian literary critic M. Jusuf Lubis , is that " Langit Makin Mendung " , as it is based on actual events and dogma , including Muhammad 's night journey . He rejects the view that the controversy arose from a misunderstanding of the story , writing that Indonesian Muslims reacted because they will not accept works that they see as denying the existence of Allah or comparing Pancasila to Nasakom . He notes that Jassin is inconsistent in his defense , calling the representations of Allah , Muhammad , and Gabriel figments of the author 's imagination , but citing Sukarno and Nasakom as influences .

= = = Legal = = =

Many studies have been made pertaining to the legal aspects of the " Langit Makin Mendung " case . One opinion is that the prosecution office had no legal basis for acting as both judge and literary critic in the case , with the blasphemy laws used in prosecution not being at least government or parliamentary level . The banning of Sastra is criticized for having no legal basis , as laws pertaining to the banning of print media at the time only applied to foreign publications ; per the then @-@ applicable Press Laws , any banning of a magazine would require approval of the Press Board . The need for freedom of speech is also mentioned .

Another view is that the prosecution 's actions were justified , pointing to the obscurity of the press laws , as well as the intent to publish , indicated by the story 's prominent placement in the magazine . In response to arguments that the banning of Sastra was a violation of the right to freedom of speech , Sju 'bah Asa argues that the public and prosecutors have the same right , which can exercised through protests or legal action . Poet Taufiq Ismail notes that most protests against the prosecution 's actions were for their motion to ban Sastra , a reputable and respected publication , which does not indicate that " Langit Makin Mendung " was being supported .