

**LETTER TO THE DELEGATES AND ARCHIVISTS
ATTENDING
THE SUBUD WORLD CONGRESS IN MEXICO 2014**

from

HARLINAH LONGCROFT

I have read some of the views expressed by some of those involved with Subud Archives, views that have been circulated to the delegates and others attending the Subud World Congress. I feel that these views, taken in total rather than individually, may give rise to a quite serious divergence from the advice given to me by Bapak, with regards to the future of Subud archives – their collection and their permanent locations. For this reason, even though I do not want to become involved with debate about this subject, I have written to you.

I know that many of you have had no way of hearing about some of the “old days” in Cilandak, things that happened long before Daniela arrived, so I have included some information about the loss of documents written by Bapak so that it becomes clear that our collections, even at Cilandak, are nowhere near complete even in respect of Bapak’s own documents.

I have also outlined how and when I received a lot of advice about archives from Bapak – advice which seems to me to be as relevant now as it was when it was given.

Let me explain.

I worked as a housekeeper with Marjam Kibble in Bapak’s house in Cilandak for most of 1970 through to November 1973. During that time we cleared out a storage facility used by Bapak’s family, located in the grounds of Wisma Subud. We found the remains of a very large number of Bapak’s letters to members. These had been eaten by termites and by vermin. One could see that they had been letters and other writings, but there was nothing there that could be saved. On another occasion something similar occurred when a store room in Bapak’s house was cleared out for cleaning purposes. Again nothing could be saved.

Some years after that, the Spiritual Sekretariat moved into the East room of the latihan hall at Wisma Subud, and racks of open wooden shelves were placed against the North wall of that room. Bapak’s correspondence in arch binders was placed on these shelves. On the other side of that wall was the men’s toilet. At some point there was a leak in a pipe located in the wall. The wall became damp. Termites (white ants) came up through the concrete. By the time the smell of termites and damp paper gave rise to an inspection, almost every document on the bottom half of those racks of shelves, was wet mush. Six or seven (I am not exaggerating) plastic rice containers, each about two meters tall, were filled with what remained of Bapak’s correspondence and then thrown away.

I am afraid the archives of Bapak's correspondence in Cilandak, are far short of complete. Some of the letters lost in the incidents I have mentioned, may still be in existence elsewhere in the world but it would take a serious effort to find them.

On three occasions in the late 1970s and early 1980s, I sorted all the documents in Bapak's office at Wisma Subud. Bapak asked me to do so while he was travelling overseas. After Bapak told me to write the History of Subud in 1983, he also invited me to go through everything in his office to take and copy anything that I might find useful. I know very well what was there, and, more importantly, what was *not* there. His records, and even his correspondence with ISC or other Subud bodies, was far from complete.

After Bapak passed away the time came for the Spiritual Sekretariat to be closed down. I was invited by Pak Brodjo and Pak Rusli to help them put all the documents into the large document safes given to us by Chub Lipps, whose CEO at that time was a member of Subud. They had been given to us because I had expressed considerable concern for the safety of Bapak's correspondence in the Sekretariat. I knew letters were being taken by junior staff, so that Bapak's signature could be cut off and used as a "raja" for those who were sick. In this way letters were, of course, being lost. Furthermore, when large meetings were being held in the latihan hall at Wisma Subud, for instance an Indonesian National Congress, or an SBIF meeting, the Sekretariat room was used by the organizing team. There were open rotan wastepaper baskets beside the racks of Bapak's correspondence, and those present flicked their cigarettes into these baskets. I had been very concerned that a fire would be started in this way, and we would lose Bapak's letters. By helping Pak Brodjo and Pak Rusli on the day the Sekretarian was closed down, I noticed that security had also not been an issue with which the Sekretariat had been seriously concerned. Sets of documents were quite clearly incomplete.

When Daniela came to Indonesia, she took over all this accumulated material, and she did a wonderful job in training her small staff to sort, to record and to preserve it in the best manner possible within the constraints of the accommodation and the financial support available. It is, of course, as you will see from the above, not in any way a complete collection of Bapak's correspondence, and in fact it is also not in any way a complete enterprise collection either, nor is it anywhere near a complete photographic collection. So long as that is clearly understood, it is, nevertheless, an excellent collection and should be properly conserved by the World Subud Association.

When I was working as a housekeeper in Bapak's house in the 1970s, Bapak stopped and talked to me about both the archives and also about the translation of his talks. He did this more than once, possibly because he had asked me to write about Wisma Subud for the international Subud media. Later, after Bapak appointed me the ISC Liaison Officer for Wisma Subud in 1979, Bapak again spoke to me about the archives, and, of course, about how he wanted the history of Subud to be written.

So what did Bapak see as the need or purpose of the Subud archives, and why, according to his explanations, was it necessary for them to be located in various countries around the world?

Bapak felt it was necessary to preserve his talks and his writings. Bapak also felt it was absolutely necessary that the history of Subud should be written. He told me it **MUST BE BASED ON DOCUMENTATION**. Documentation – archival material. So, here we have two very clear indications as to what archives should contain. **NOT** just Bapak's documents – but also documents that document Subud history. What is "Subud history?" It is the true account of how the latihan came into this world and spread to countries everywhere. As this was not something that man planned, the experience of individuals that lead to, or apparently gave rise to this spread, is all Subud history. So is the creation of Subud houses, and the Subud events that we all attend.

And where should these documents or archives be located? Bapak felt it was essential that Subud archives should be located in several places around the world and he said that they should be in the UK, USA, Japan and Australia . He did not say Indonesia.

In 1980 as the ISC Liaison Officer at Wisma Subud, I felt it would be good to microfilm Bapak's documents that were in his office and in the Sekretariat. I wrote to ISC, then located in the UK, to ask for funding. They replied that Bapak had made no mention of Indonesia – only the UK, USA, Australia and Japan. So they asked me to raise the matter with Bapak. So I asked Bapak. He looked at me as if I was a very young child, and replied quite simply, "They ARE in Indonesia!" In other words ISC did not have to **CREATE** an archive in Indonesia, because the documents were already collected in the Sekretariat and in his office.

In 1983 when Bapak told me to write the history of Subud, I quite clearly needed documentation. So where was it? Where were the often astonishing records of how it spread around the world? Where were the remarkable happenings in people's lives recorded? Did they all write to Bapak? No! And if they had done so, were all those letters still in existence in Cililandak? Very likely not! God works in mysterious ways, and at this time my family was prepared to pay for me to travel from Indonesia to England to see my Mother about three times a year. So I extended these travels around the world, and I visited existing national archives, and I collected, collected, and collected anything and everything that anyone would give me. I recorded as many interviews as I could fit in and when I returned home, I sorted and filed all this miscellaneous collection, and it is, of course, now here in Australia. And, after some ten years of doing this, I eventually had enough documentation to enable me to start to write about the very early days of Subud. Yes, Bapak!

By the time I started to write, Daniela was in Indonesia, and we were having weekly meetings. It was good, I think for both of us, to have somebody to talk to, and I learned a lot from her. We tried to get the archivists in England to collect documentation about the early days, and about the current happenings in Subud, and we tried to get people elsewhere to do so too – but there are those who love collecting, and then there is the rest of humanity...! Most people see no point in keeping old documents, or even old books and periodicals. So much wonderful material is already lost! Very little is being done. Thousands of anecdotes based on the personal experience of individual Subud members, or of their efforts to undertake Subud enterprises, or cultural events, are not collected – they are just not there – not available to help and support Subud members in days to come. Why not? Dare we say, "stupidity!" We need to try to get what is still out there. I collected as a priority

material for the early period of Subud up to and including the early 1960s. We need to go back to the beginning and collect, collect, collect!

Bapak never saw Subud as something purely Indonesian. He always saw Subud as international in character, and he always spread responsibility in Subud, as widely as possible. He did not want, after his death, for the headquarters of Subud to be located in any one place. He wanted it to be moved around the world. He created the International Dewans so that the responsibility for the spiritual support of members was shared, and so that many people all over the world gained the experience of working in this way in Subud. He gave responsibility for archives not just to one country, but he spread the responsibility – and although he gave the reason for this as the lack of security in any one part of the world, I believe it may have also been to share this sense of being responsible for the records of what has happened in Subud – showing our history the respect it deserves, preserving it for future generations.

Do you all realize that we not only have a responsibility to those who come after us to leave a complete record of this, the earliest period of Subud, but we are also responsible for the safety, good name and well being of Subud in this world. Where are the “protocols” for the preservation of our legal documents? International including wings, national, and local. Who is seeing that this is understood at national congresses? Who is seeing that this is all in order when one WSA Executive Committee hands over to the next, and who knows where the records of all previous ISCs are being kept, and if that place is truly secure and the location of each document well recorded in case it needs to be accessed? How does our international and national record keeping and archive compare with, say, the Red Cross, which has a similar structure to ours?

Bapak wanted professionalism. Who is responsible?

If you aim for material professionalism, and follow your latihan with humility and patience, then the latihan will come through your material activities – your work in this world. If you muddle up the spiritual and the material – trying to create a spiritual environment for what is material – you will end up with a lot of imagination, a lot of emotion, and endless muddle. Our job is to work in this world, and do the latihan. The latihan is more than able to create its own environment, but it can only achieve its potential in this world, if we use our brains as they are designed to be used, as tools – only tools. We do not need to think about the spiritual – it will “think us” if we are trying to do the material work we are qualified or able to do.

It seems to me that we are, perhaps, talking about things that do not need to be talked about, and we are involving Ibu Rahayu in a manner which is confusing to everyone including dear Ibu herself. Bapak’s advice is still absolutely relevant so what we need to do now is make it real. Work on the material level. Money is what makes the world go round! Where is the money for adequate archive facilities in those places Bapak indicated!

We are lucky enough to have two archive professionals, Daniela and Amalijah. Yes, professionals! Amalijah was put in charge of a major archive project in a highly respected university. In a university situation, whether or not she had a degree was not

the issue – her professionalism was what mattered and what got her that job. So I hardly think it sensible for us, in Subud, to be bothering our heads about this matter.

It seems to me that we should not be looking at grandiose schemes just yet. We need to get working on basics. We can and should use Bapak's guidance about the countries where Subud archives are to be located. And we need to get back to collecting – collecting – and collecting. Not just from 1986, but also from the earliest times all over the world. Letters from Bapak have been handed down – they should at least be discovered, copied and archived. Do you realize that Subud enterprises started long before Bank Susila Bakti and P.T.S. Wlidojo? Are you remembering about all those early social projects, especially in England? Subud Youth started in the 1960s. There is so much scattered around the world that we should be finding and securing for the future.

But there are also other archive jobs, technical in nature. They need to be undertaken and the facilities are needed in order for them to be undertaken properly. They should be located where the professionals are – and where technical support is easily available. We do not have thousands of people who can be used as employees so we need to use our heads and be practical if we aim for world's best practice. That is what Bapak wanted us to aim for – and that is for what we should find the money, use our available expertise, and DO!

Lastly, I have just moved house, and will soon be working again on *the History of Subud* Book 3 – which is more than half completed. Yes, like all those who can remember Coombe Springs, I am getting older – and that means being practical about what one wants to achieve. Mexico might be tempting, but I have work to do here writing books, so it feels more sensible to conserve my energy and get on with this job. I wish you well! May God guide you!