

The Controversy of Pramoedya Ananta Toer: A Reception Study Toward Reconciliation

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ABSTRACT

The life journey of the writer Pramoedya Ananta Toer is filled with controversy. On one hand, he has been harshly criticized; on the other, he has been highly praised. Pramoedya and his works are scarcely mentioned in literature education in Indonesian schools. Strangely, abroad, this author from Bora, Central Java, enjoys great renown. This raises a fundamental question: what is Pramoedya's position in the landscape of Indonesian literature? This study applies the theory of diachronic reception by Robert Jauss and Wolfgang Iser. The research employs a descriptive qualitative method, drawing on data sources such as books, magazines, newspapers, journals, and reviews discussing Pramoedya. Additional sources include Pramoedya's tetralogy novels, *Bumi Manusia*, *Anak Semua Bangsa*, *Jejak langkah*, *Rumah Kaca* and as well as the film adaptation of *Bumi Manusia*. The findings reveal that the controversy surrounding Pramoedya's life is closely tied to the political landscape in Indonesia between 1950 and 1966. During this period, the Institute of People's Culture Lembaga Kebudayaan Rakyat (Lekra) emerged, ideologically opposed to the Cultural Manifesto movement (Manifest Kebudayaan). As a member of Lekra, Pramoedya sharply criticized Manifest Kebudayaan writers through his polemical writings. Several works by Manifest Kebudayaan affiliated authors were burned, and the writers imprisoned. Conversely, Pramoedya's own works were banned and withdrawn from circulation. He himself was detained in Jakarta and later imprisoned on Buru Island. Through the lens of diachronic reception theory, this study identifies elements that may open a path toward reconciliation.

KEYWORDS

controversy,
literature, politics,
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Introduction

Pramoedya Ananta Toer is the only Indonesian literary figure who was repeatedly nominated for the Nobel Prize. Two Dutch literary researchers, Boef and Snoek [4, p. 1], stated that Pram deserved the Nobel. However, on April 30, 2006, Pram passed away. The opportunity to win the prestigious international award in literature was lost, as the Nobel Prize is never awarded posthumously. With Pram's passing, Indonesia's hope of receiving the Nobel Prize was dashed. Until now, as Rosidi [17] stated, no Indonesian author has been deemed worthy of being nominated for this globally recognized award.

Pram was born in Blora, a border area between Central Java and East Java, on February 3, 1925. He once migrated to Jakarta and worked as a typist at the Domei news agency during the Japanese occupation. During the independence revolution, he was active as a press officer in the Siliwangi Division. In 1947, his writings began to appear in magazines such as *Panca Raya*, *Merdeka*, *Siasat*, and others. At that time, Pram had already succeeded in writing a novel (1947). However, during a raid, he was arrested by Dutch occupation forces. He ended up imprisoned at Bukit Duri prison in Jatinegara. His completed novel manuscript was confiscated and lost. Pram was only released from prison after the Dutch recognized Indonesian sovereignty (1950).

Between 1950 and 1965, various cultural institutions affiliated with political organizations began to emerge. On August 17, 1950, Lembaga Kebudayaan Rakyat (Lekra) was established, followed by Lembaga Kebudayaan Nasional (LKN), Lembaga Kebudayaan Muslim Indonesia (Lesbumi), and Manifes Kebudayaan (Manikebu). The first-mentioned institution (Lekra) often clashed with Manikebu due to differing ideological views. Lekra adhered to the principle of "art for politics" and believed that "politics is the commander," with a socialist realism orientation. This slogan was championed by the Partai Komunis Indonesia (PKI), while Manikebu promoted the concept of "art for the people" based on universal humanism. However, the political party backing Manikebu was unclear. The institution claimed to be neutral.

In choosing his ideological stance, Pram eventually decided to join Lekra along with other writers. He even became part of Lekra's central leadership, alongside Rivai Apin, Sitor Situmorang, and Utuy Tatang Sontani. Manikebu, which was initiated by the writer Wiratmo Sukito, later developed with members including literary figures such as Mochtar Lubis, HB Jassin, Bur Rasuanto, Taufik Ismail, WS Rendra, and others. These two cultural institutions frequently clashed in the mass media due to their differing views on cultural strategy. In this context, Pramoedya was known for his harsh criticism, denigration, and slander toward Manikebu members through his writings. These writings were published in the "Lentera" column of the *Bintang Timur* daily, which appeared regularly once a week.

According to Ismail [7], Pram systematically launched all-out attacks against artists and writers whose ideologies were opposed to those of Lekra/PKI. He engaged in character assassination, particularly targeting those who resisted through the Manikebu declaration. They were labeled as reactionary, counter-revolutionary, and not revolutionary enough, thus seen as not aligning with the government's programs at the time. Conversely, Manikebu writers viewed the art promoted by Lekra as merely political in nature intended to maintain power rather than to serve or represent the broader society.

These fundamental differences in principle gave rise to intense polemics. Pram's presence was filled with dynamics, generating both praise and criticism in society. Many foreign researchers praised him highly [2, 3, 24], while others especially from within Indonesia harbored resentment. This controversy extended beyond the 1950s-1960s era, continuing well into the 1970s. Pram's life remains a compelling subject of study, as debates about him continue to surface in the historiography of Indonesian literary history, touching on issues such as the banning of his books, his status as a political prisoner, his involvement with a banned political party, literary awards, and his inclusion in school literature curriculum.

To explore this issue given that the events occurred quite some time ago it will be analyzed using literary reception theory. This theory, as introduced by Hans Robert Jauss and Wolfgang Iser, allows readers to respond to literary works as well as the social context surrounding the works' emergence. The literary reception theory proposed by these two scholars represents a new development, as literary studies had previously focused more on the text itself and the author (Ratna, 2004). This theory emerged as a reaction to the closed-off nature of traditional literary history, which only discussed the text and its author. According to Sehandi [20, p. 157], this is what led Jauss to introduce the concept of *reception*. A literary work exists to be enjoyed, and in this context, it is the reader who enjoys or reads it.

Jauss viewed literary reception analysis as encompassing two aspects: synchronic and diachronic reception [5, 15, 21, 14]. Synchronic literary reception refers to analyzing readers' responses within a specific period or among contemporaries. In contrast, diachronic literary reception seeks to understand readers' responses across different periods, from the initial publication up to its current development. Of these two approaches, analysts often tend to choose the first synchronic reception. However, this also depends on the research object, especially if it has drawn attention in multiple historical periods, thus requiring a diachronic reception approach. In this case, studying Pramoedya and his works through the lens of reader responses is more relevant to diachronic reception, as Pram's life and writings have continued to attract readers' attention across generations.

This study is categorized as qualitative, as it aims to describe Pramoedya's life, which is filled with controversy. The data is obtained from literature-based sources, such as books, articles, reviews, reader responses published in various media, and Pram's novels. Given the nature of these sources, the study strongly supports the use of diachronic reception theory, as put forward by Atmazaki [2], Pradopo [14], and Junus (2004). These scholars argue that sources such as articles, reviews, books, and magazines are written by experts. Therefore, their opinions as both researchers and readers are highly significant. These experts are categorized as ideal readers [5, 14], making their perspectives worthy references for this analysis.



Figure 1. The Book of Pramoedya

Discussion

The Indonesian author who has received the most international attention is Pramoedya Ananta Toer, a controversial writer during the New Order era. This prominent Indonesian literary figure produced 53 books, which have been translated into 40 languages worldwide. Based on these figures, it can be said that Pramoedya's works have successfully penetrated global literature [23]. As a writer, Pram's name rose to prominence through his novels and translated works, such as *Keluarga Gerilya*, *Subuh, Percikan Revolusi*, *Tikus dan Manusia* (a translation of John Steinbeck's *of Mice and Men*), *Kembali kepada Cinta Kasihmu* (a translation of Leo Tolstoy's work), *Di Tepi Kali Bekasi*, *Bukan Pasar Malam*, *Mereka yang Dilumpuhkan*, and *Cerita dari Blora*.

From that fame, Pram was eventually recruited to join Lekra (*Lembaga Kebudayaan Rakyat* or Institute of People's Culture). At the time of its founding, the institution was mostly filled with political party activists and lacked members from the artistic and literary communities. According to Ismail [7], the recruitment tactics included offering financial assistance, translation commissions for literary works, and opportunities for overseas travel. All these offers seemed appealing to writers who were economically constrained. Three major literary figures Pram, Utuy Tatang Sontani, and Rivai Pain were drawn into this circle. Ideologically, these three writers did not initially fully understand Lekra's ideological foundations. However, party ideologues instilled the spirit of Marxism-Leninism through discussions and pamphlets. Furthermore, Ismail a writer from the 1966 Generation—stated that these three writers carried out their roles as mouthpieces of the party effectively [7].

2.1 Joining Lekra

After joining Lekra, Pram no longer had to worry about whether his kitchen would keep running, as his household needs were taken care of. He was assigned to manage the cultural section *Lentera* in the *Bintang Timur* daily newspaper, and for this role, Pram was provided with sufficient financial support [6]. Cultural figures and writers who were weak or hesitant, if they agreed to join Lekra, would quickly have their status elevated they would be popularized, praised, and celebrated. They were sent abroad, especially to communist countries. Their works were translated into the languages of those countries, or even if the work had not yet been evaluated, the honorarium was paid in advance (Hamka, in the preface to the first edition of *Alquran Bacaan Mulia*, translated by Jassin). This kind of preferential treatment was very enticing to writers and encouraged many to join Lekra.

On the other hand, Pram accused Hamka of plagiarism based on the findings of Abdullah Sait Patmadji. Patmadji argued that *Tenggelamnya Kapal Van der Wijck* was a plagiarized version of the novel *Al Majdulin* by Egyptian author Mustafa Luthfi Al-Manfaluthi [18]. According to Hutasuhtut [6], by accusing Hamka of plagiarism, the intention was also to undermine the dignity of the cleric in the eyes of the Muslim community. At that time, Hutasuhtut continues, Lekra/PKI actively used literature to campaign against religious figures, portraying the moral corruption of pilgrims and clerics, as was evident in plays written by Utuy Tatang Sontani, (a Lekra-affiliated author).

The chaos was deliberately orchestrated by Lekra, led by Pram. According to Mohtar Lubis, a Manikebu-affiliated writer, the language Pram used against non-communist writers and artists was extremely harsh and cruel, such as the term *total extermination*, which implied that those individuals had to be eliminated entirely and could no longer function as writers or artists at all (*Horison*, October 1995). The so-called “total extermination” referred to carrying out revolutionary actions without hesitation to eliminate anyone who disagreed with Lekra/PKI ideology.

Ismail adds that Lekra proposed book bans to the government, and this proposal was successfully implemented in 1965. They launched a character assassination campaign against non-Lekra literary figures such as Mohtar Lubis, Hamka, HB Jassin, Sutan Takdir Alisyahbana, Usmar Ismail, and Asrul Sani in a systematic manner, using abusive and chaotic language, consistently published in the *Lentera* cultural section of the *Bintang Timur* daily, which was led by Pramoedya. The *Bintang Timur* newspaper also reported that two million counterrevolutionary books had been burned. Throughout this repression of creative freedom, Lekra enforced the implementation of the socialist realism ideology. This ideology, which formed the philosophical foundation of Lekra, stood in stark contrast to the humanist universalism embraced by Manikebu.

According to Sumardjo [22, p. 179], Lekra developed socialist realism literature. This literary stream served merely as a tool of its political party, namely the PKI (Indonesian Communist Party). Lekra's literature was literature that served the political interests of the PKI. Its core concepts included: *Art for the People*, *Politics as Commander*, *Broadening and Elevating*, *Going to the Grassroots*, and *Organization*. These concepts led Lekra's adherents to develop a firm belief in the truth of their ideological path [22, p. 179-180].

Pram was highly persistent in banning the distribution of the translated novel *Doctor Zhivago* by Boris Pasternak, a work that had won the Nobel Prize. He urged the government to prohibit the circulation of the book translated by Trisno Sumardjo. Pram also harshly criticized and vilified American imperialist culture. As published in (*Horison*, 2006, p. 7), Pram wrote that American culture must be crushed, equating it to the devil. At the time, President Soekarno, who was in power, opposed the stance of the United States and its ally, the United Kingdom. The writer and journalist Mochtar Lubis was among those who disagreed with Lekra. He led the newspaper *Indonesia Raya* and frequently engaged in public polemics with Pram in the mass media. As a result, Lubis suffered the same fate as Hamka during the Old Order era when the PKI held power. Mochtar Lubis was accused of slandering the authorities and was sentenced to 10 years in prison, while Hamka received 2.5 years.

Five months before the G30S incident in 1965 erupted, Pram issued a call, declaring that 1965 would be the year of total annihilation (*Bintang Timur*, 9 May 1965, and *Horison*, 2006). Lekra/PKI increasingly used the phrase "ibu pertiwi hamil tua" This total annihilation of the enemies of the revolution was seen as clearing the path for the heavily pregnant motherland to safely give birth to the child she was carrying: a communist state to replace the Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia (NKRI).

On May 6, 1964, President Soekarno officially banned the Cultural Manifesto (Manifesto Kebudayaan). Books and writings by the signatories of the Cultural Manifesto were prohibited from being read. Furthermore, those individuals were banned from working in any government institution and were also forbidden from organizing any kind of activity. Any violations would be considered subversive acts [17, p. 70]. In this context, HB Jassin was prohibited from teaching at the Faculty of Letters, University of Indonesia, and Taufik Ismail was not allowed to continue his studies abroad. Both prominent literary figures were supporters of the Cultural Manifesto.

Pram's highly esteemed name suddenly fell to its lowest point following the failure of the G30S/PKI coup on October 1, 1965. He was arrested for being considered a supporter of the G30S movement. Pram was exiled to Buru Island along with other detainees such as Rivai Apin, Buyung Puradisastra, and film director Basuki. Lekra, as an organization under the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI), was affected, along with

other organizations affiliated with the PKI, all of which were banned. Pram, who had staunchly defended the party's ideology, ended up living on Buru Island for ten years, from 1969 to 1979. Pram's life alongside other detainees on Buru Island attracted international attention. The International Red Cross once visited the location and expressed deep concern, stating that the place was unfit for human habitation. "For years, they lived on a dark, desolate island under abnormal conditions. They had to forage for their own food whatever could be found on the island which led many detainees to die from starvation and various illnesses," said Pram to Sofyan (*Warta*, Vol. VI, No. 2, March-April 2005).

Pram further recounted, "We truly lived in a terrifying environment. We were exiled without being given any food or trial". Fortunately, not long after, a delegation from the International Red Cross came to visit the island. They shook their heads in disbelief at the inhumane treatment by the Indonesian government treating us like animals abandoned on an untouched island. The detainees were not provided with food. Only after the Red Cross delegation left Buru Island did food finally arrive for us the next day. Yet many high-ranking party members were never arrested, while many of us who weren't even members of that party were imprisoned. This is truly one of the greatest sins the New Order committed against its own people," said Pram, as quoted in *Warta*, Vol. VI, No. 2, March-April 2005.

Indonesia received harsh criticism from the international community for detaining political prisoners with communist affiliations for such a long time on Buru Island. In 1970, General Soemitro, the Commander of the Operational Command for the Restoration of Security and Order (Pangkopkamtib), visited the area to gather information about the conditions there, in order to formulate a new policy to handle the fate of political detainees. Pangkopkamtib brought along a group of journalists such as Mochtar Lubis, Sabam Siagian, Rosihan Anwar, as well as psychologist Fuad Hassan and sociologist Saparinah Sadli. In his article published in *Horison* (2006), Rosihan Anwar stated that he had the opportunity to meet and speak with Pram. To initiate a conversation with Pram, Anwar asked whether Pram had brought any religious books with him to Buru Island not just Islamic texts, but books on any religion. Pram's response seemed to evade the topic. His attitude toward Anwar at the time felt unfriendly rigid and stern. It was a different story with Mochtar Lubis, to whom Pram was noticeably more cordial. One result of that meeting was that General Soemitro provided Pram with a typewriter to use for his writing. In the midst of severe limitations, Pram had previously been writing on used cement paper and with makeshift writing tools. Even while living in detention on Buru Island, Pram managed to produce the novel *Bumi Manusia*. The novel was later translated into foreign languages and circulated widely around the world.

2.2 The Ramon Magsaysay Controversy

Pram's arduous struggle was acknowledged by the Magsaysay Foundation in the Philippines, which awarded him the Ramon Magsaysay Prize for literature and journalism. A number of writers and cultural figures reacted strongly, claiming that the Magsaysay Foundation in Manila was applying double standards. On one hand, the foundation had previously given the award to Mochtar Lubis and HB Jassin figures known for upholding democratic values. On the other hand, it awarded Pram, whose record clearly showed he did not adhere to democratic principles. Pram and his associates were involved in book burnings and in insulting and demeaning the writers of the Cultural Manifesto (Manifes Kebudayaan).

The controversy surrounding the award given to Pram sparked a new conflict. Several writers and cultural figures rejected the decision, arguing that Pram was not deserving of such an honor. Mochtar Lubis personally returned the award to the Magsaysay Foundation in Manila, along with the certificate and the Rp. 100 million in prize money. Other writers who disagreed organized a petition. Those who signed the statement included Mochtar Lubis, HB Jassin, Ali Hasjmy, Asrul Sani, Wiratmo Sukito, WS Rendra, Yunan Helmi Nasution, Bokor Hutasuhat, DS Moelyanto, Misbach Yusa Biran, S.M. Ardan, Lukman Ali, Taufiq Ismail, Sori Siregar, Leon Agusta, Syubah Asa, Rachmat Djoko Pradopo, Danarto, Abdoel Rahman Saleh, Amak Baljun, Chaerul Umam, Ikranegara, Budiman S. Hartoyo, Slamet Soekirnanto, and Mochat Pabotonggi.

Mochtar Lubis's response to the protest, as reported in *Horison* (1995) and *Gatra* (September 30, 1995), emphasized that a writer is inseparable from their works and their other actions. A literary figure may write poems, novels, or short stories championing human freedom and justice. However, at the same time, that same writer may violate the human rights of others and attempt to suppress the creative freedom of writers who are not politically aligned with them. By doing so, they reveal themselves as a false human being, and their literary works seem to serve merely as a mask to cover their crimes against humanity and the creative freedom of fellow writers and artists.

Mochtar Loebis's opinion was based on Pram's attitude during the Old Order era. The written evidence can be seen in the "Lentera" pages, led by Pram and published in the *Bintang Timur* daily. The Magsaysay award was given not only for Pram's works, but also for his fierce attacks against non-communist writers and artists. "If we do not raise our voices, we would be committing a sin against the young generation of the Indonesian people today and in the future. Because this will lead to a misunderstanding of history among the younger generation of our nation, now and in the future. And there is a possibility that this dark history will repeat itself because today's generation shows no

signs that what Pram did to non-Lekra writers and artists was extremely wrong and a violation of human rights."

Mochtar Loebis considered that the Magsaysay Foundation had made a serious mistake. He refused to correct that mistake. The foundation completely failed to understand that it, too, should feel responsible for ensuring that the historical facts of a nation are not distorted by its actions. Returning the award, according to Loebis, was a very difficult decision because Loebis knew President Magsaysay (the late) personally since he launched his presidential campaign. Loebis respected the political, economic, and social ideals of the Filipino people and their strong spirit of democracy. "Because I respect and love him, I am returning the Magsaysay award," said Loebis (Gatra, 30 September 1995).

The reception or response from writer Asrul Sani regarding the award echoed that of Mochtar Loebis. He regretted that the Magsaysay Foundation granted the award to Pram, who during the Old Order era had used his artistic talent and skills to suppress the freedom of fellow artists. Pramodya had committed acts of terror against his fellow artists in the past. The only person who does not acknowledge that fact is Pram himself, said Sani in an article published in *Gatra* magazine, 26 August 1995. Considering the importance of that statement, the editorial board of *Majalah Horison* republished the article in its October 1995 edition.

In the closing of the article, Sani emphasized, "We are not demanding an apology from Pram. In fact, this is not our business. It is a matter between Pram and his own conscience. Pram is neither the first nor the last person to use his talent to promote intolerant and repressive attitudes. We will always remember and remind others," said Sani, who is also known as the director of the TVRI drama series *Sitti Nurbaya*.

The controversy widened through responses from various literary figures, written in articles by individuals such as Bu Rasuanto, Wiratmo Soekito, Bokor Hutasuhut, Arief Budiman, W.S. Rendra, Taufik Ismail, Mochtar Pabotinggi, Ikranegara, and Fadli Zon. The last name mentioned had once served as an editor for *Horison* and is now the Minister of Culture in the Merah Putih Cabinet. These literary figures were among those who signed a letter of statement addressed to the Ramon Magsaysay Foundation in Manila, Philippines, urging the foundation to reconsider the award.

In the statement, it was said: "The decision of the Magsaysay Foundation to grant the Literary Award to Pramodya Ananta Toer astonished us in Indonesia. We suspect that the Magsaysay Award Foundation is not fully aware of Pramodya's dishonorable role during a dark era for creativity under Guided Democracy. He led the suppression of fellow artists who disagreed with him. Whatever literary assessment criteria may have been used, it appears that the foundation did not take into account Pramodya's activities during the time when communism was rampant in Indonesia. He led the

suppression of creativity among writers, playwrights, filmmakers, painters, and musicians who were non-communist, disrespected freedom of expression, welcomed the banning of books and records, and praised the mass book burnings in Jakarta and Surabaya. He also carried out systematic smear campaigns and character assassination against non-Lekra/PKI artists, engaged in mental terror and intimidation, practiced the principle of 'the end justifies the means,' popularized the use of abusive language in Indonesia, and led campaigns to shut down independent publishers, including those still brave enough to publish the translation of *Dr. Zhivago* by Boris Pasternak, the 1958 Nobel Prize winner."

The statement letter also mentioned that it is deeply ironic that, due to this decision, Pramoedya would now be seated alongside previous Magsaysay laureates such as Mochtar Loebis and H.B. Jassin writers and journalists who have fought for freedom of expression and human rights for over 40 years until now and H.B. Jassin, a literary critic and documenter, who was one of the main targets of Pramoedya during the smear campaigns and mental terror (Horison, 1995).

The response from Bur Rasuanto was somewhat more moderate, as reflected in his article published in *Gatra* on 9 September 1995. Rasuanto considered that, in receiving the Magsaysay award, Pram first and foremost had to confront himself. The Magsaysay award was not a moment of reward, but rather a moment of judgment that Pramoedya must face. Mochtar Loebis and H.B. Jassin did not need to return the Magsaysay awards they had already received; it would be enough for them to voice a protest if they felt displeased. However, the protest and controversy that arose instead gave Pram a kind of shelter and made it easier for him to face this moment of reckoning.

Rasuanto further added that if Pram were to reject the award, it would mean he remained consistent and faithful to his past ideals and views. But if Pram were to accept it, he would no longer be consistent. He would have abandoned his old ideology and admitted that the campaigns he once led were mistaken. However, there was another possibility: that he was being hypocritical. Whichever the case, a moment like this was bound to come sooner or later, and it had to be faced. Precisely because Pram is a great writer. A politician is expected to be honest with the public, but an artist must first and foremost be honest with himself (Gatra, 9 September 1995 and Horison, 6-10/XXX, pp. 9-11).



Figure 2. Novel By Pramoedya

Fadli Zon, who is now the Minister of Culture in the Merah Putih Cabinet, viewed the Magsaysay Foundation's decision to give the award to Pramoedya as the peak of the controversy surrounding Pram's past activities. The controversy was not limited to Indonesia, but also reached the Philippines, where the Magsaysay award is presented. In Indonesia, the controversy was seen as a renewed struggle between supporters of Lekra, represented by Pram, and those within the *Manifes Kebudayaan* camp. Fadli Zon's conclusion in his article titled *Jejak Langkah Pramoedya* was that the debate and controversy surrounding Pram were debates and controversies of the past and cannot be separated from contemporary issues involving the actors of today's generation [26, p. 21].

2.3 Toward Reconciliation

Signs of national reconciliation had begun to emerge when Pram was still imprisoned as a detainee on Buru Island. Due to pressure from the International Red Cross, which visited the location, President Soeharto had sent a letter to Pram dated 10 November 1973. Pram responded to the letter on 17 November 1973. Upon reading President Soeharto's letter, Pram felt surprised and deeply moved, as he had never imagined that a political prisoner would receive such an honorable gesture. "My deepest gratitude and highest appreciation for the very valuable time and attention that Mr. President has extended to me," wrote Pram.

Considering the importance of this document, I will quote a portion of Pram's letter to the President as follows.

Honorable President of the Republic of Indonesia,

My parents—and perhaps this is true of most parents—raised me to always love truth, justice, beauty, knowledge, the nation, and the country. Because of their guidance, I entered the world and left behind footprints of experience that anyone may judge. Therefore, your letter, Mr. President, which speaks of honesty, truth, and the ability to rediscover the right and rightful path, felt like a call from my own parents, who increasingly prioritize those values as their final bequest—values of a magnanimous spirit that forgives mistakes and of a strong hand extended to those who are weak [22]. It is implied through the letter that Pram had not yet completely changed the direction of his thinking or the ideology he adhered to.

Pram's novel *Bumi Manusia*, which had once been banned from circulation, caught the attention of Vice President Adam Malik, who responded positively to the book [25, p. 48]. The Vice President also purchased a painting by Besuki Resobowo, a fellow member of Lekra who was residing in Moscow at the time [16]. On the orders of President Soeharto, the Commander of the Operational Command for the Restoration of Security and Order (Pangkopkamtib), General Soemitro, visited Buru Island in 1973 accompanied by a group of journalists. During that visit, Soemitro was impressed upon meeting Pram and asked, "Is there anything I can help you with?" Pram replied, "If possible, I would like a typewriter, carbon paper, paper and notebooks, also dictionaries and books in French."

General Soemitro fulfilled his promise. Pram received a typewriter along with the necessary supplies. From that point on, Pram was able to write, type, and read many books freely. Before that, even jotting down notes had to be done carefully to avoid detection by guards. Pram also became free to share stories with his fellow detainees. In addition to writing the *Bumi Manusia* tetralogy, during his time on Buru Island, Pram also wrote three other novels and one play: *Arok Dedes*, *Arus Balik*, *Mata Pusaran*, and *Mangir*, as well as a non-fiction work titled *Nyanyian Tunggal Seorang Bisu*. At the end of the novel *Bumi Manusia*, it is written that the story was told orally in 1973 and completed in written form in 1975.

According to Wahyudi [25, p. 33-34], Pram was not confident that his writings were truly safe. Although he was granted the freedom to read, tell stories, and write, this was merely a strategy by the New Order government to ease the pressure and criticism from abroad concerning the fate of political prisoners. In the end, Pram's manuscripts written on Buru Island survived. The person credited with saving those manuscripts was Lukas Tumiso, a young man from Surabaya and a fellow inmate on Buru Island.

According to Wahyudi's account in *Pramoedya Ananta Toer: Kisah di Balik Bumi Manusia* [25, p. 38], when Pram typed his works, he made five carbon copies. These five copies were distributed to his trusted friends: Tumiso Suprpto (a legal expert), Oey Hayu

Djoen (a former senior figure in Lekra), and two copies were stored in a church. The intent was to protect them from seizure by the authorities. It is likely that the five carbon copies referred to by Wahyudi were made possible thanks to the support of Pangkopkamtib General Soemitro, who had provided Pram with carbon paper.

In preparation for his daughter's wedding, Pram chose the Islamic scholar Hamka to guide the couple through the marriage process. He asked his daughter to personally visit Buya Hamka, a fellow literary figure with whom he had previously been in conflict. Buya Hamka had been one of Pram's main targets not only because he was a non-communist writer, but also because he was a prominent figure in Muhammadiyah and Masyumi, both of which stood in opposition to the PKI at the time.

The campaign led by Pram eventually contributed to Hamka's imprisonment for 2.5 years. He was accused of conspiracy and of plotting to assassinate President Soekarno and Minister of Religious Affairs Syaifudin Zuhri [7]. Hamka was also accused of plagiarism by Lekra-affiliated writers concerning his novel *Tenggelamnya Kapal van der Wijk*. However, both accusations were never proven and never brought to trial.

Choosing someone with whom he had once been in conflict to guide the bride and groom would seem strange to the general public. But Pram did it because, in his view, Hamka was a great Indonesian Islamic scholar with vast religious knowledge. At the time, Pram's eldest daughter, Astuti, was in a relationship with Daniel Setiawan. This relationship posed a problem for Pram, as Daniel was a non-Muslim of Chinese descent. Before their marriage, Pram instructed Astuti and Daniel to meet with Buya Hamka to learn about Islam.

In an interview conducted by Ismail with Astuti [7], it was revealed that the couple did not bring any letter of introduction from Pram. Astuti simply said they wanted to learn about Islam and introduced herself as Pramoedya's daughter. Upon hearing this, Hamka paused, then smiled and said, "Very well." Daniel then began studying Islam. Hamka truly proved himself to be a great religious leader he harbored not the slightest grudge against Pram, who had once insulted, slandered, and even contributed to his imprisonment. Likewise, Pram came to acknowledge and respect Hamka's greatness in the field of religion.

As the reform era unfolded, the works of Pramoedya Ananta Toer experienced a remarkable revival. His books, once banned and marginalized, were once again sought after, read, studied, and became the subject of academic research by scholars, students, and literary enthusiasts. These works were not only reprinted in Indonesia but also translated into at least 42 foreign languages, demonstrating international recognition of their literary and historical value.

A significant development was the screen adaptation of the novel *Bumi Manusia* into a film of the same title, directed by Hanung Bramantyo. The film was not only shown in cinemas but also aired on national television, reaching a broader audience. Furthermore, in the field of education, Pram's works began to be included in the school literature curriculum something unimaginable during the New Order era, when Pram and his works were never mentioned in school literature lessons due to being considered as promoting communist teachings. The desire for reconciliation was once discussed in a forum titled *Marxisme-Leninisme dalam Perspektif Budaya*, held at the auditorium of Fakultas Sastra, Universitas Indonesia, on June 9, 2000. Two key figures who had been involved in ideological controversy Pram and Taufik Ismail were present. Both were seen as representing the two opposing cultural ideology camps: Lekra (Lembaga Kebudayaan Rakyat) and Manifes Kebudayaan.

At the conclusion of the discussion, Taufik Ismail proposed, "Let us cut off the history of the past and begin a new history," as a call to let go of ideological grudges for the sake of the nation's future. Meanwhile, Pram emphasized the importance of honesty and sincerity in confronting the past and building true reconciliation (Horison, XXXV/9/2000).

Based on the reception from several prominent figures ranging from President Soeharto, Vice President Adam Malik, Pangkopkamtib General Soemitro, Buya Hamka, literary figure Taufik Ismail, to film director Hanung Bramantyo their attitudes and statements can be seen as steps toward reconciliation. This reconciliation (national peace) aims to untangle the differences in reception between the pro and contra sides of ideology in responding to the historiography of Indonesian culture. This effort is crucial and urgent to ensure that the younger generation of Indonesia is not left adrift in determining their stance as citizens of the nation.

Conclusion

The reception or response toward the literary figure Pram has been full of controversy. This is not solely due to the works he wrote, but also due to his ideological views, which were suspected of leaning toward communism. Ideologically, Pram was an administrator of Lekra, an organization affiliated with communism. Thus, those who were non-communist easily placed Pram within that ideological sphere. Pram was once imprisoned on Pulau Buru for ten years by the New Order regime that succeeded in toppling the Old Order.

From this place of imprisonment, Pram wrote with limited tools and produced the tetralogy novels *Bumi Manusia*, *Anak Semua Bangsa*, *Jejak Langkah*, and *Rumah Kaca*. These novels were once banned and withdrawn from circulation. The fall of the New Order succeeded in bringing *Bumi Manusia* back into publication, allowing it to be read,

studied, and become the subject of academic research both nationally and internationally.

It is time to put an end to the pros and cons surrounding Pram through the path of reconciliation. This effort must be made by recognizing Pram's contributions in elevating Indonesia's name to the global stage through literature. Likewise, his works rich in social, historical, political, and cultural context serve as invaluable cultural documents for both the Indonesian nation and the world.

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