

PRAMOEDYA'S TRUTH: CONSTRUCTING INDONESIA AS A NATION IN FOOTSTEPS

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Abstract

How does Pramoedya Ananta Toer construct Indonesia as a nation through the patching of dramatic and verifiable truths in his novel, *Footsteps*? In his novel, Pramoedya organized a selection of historical facts and filled the gaps with stories to construct a sense of nation inside his characters. Linking the subjective experience of a man and the objective history of a nation, this historical novel reflects the condition of early twentieth century colonial Indonesia during the conception of nation and the start of national awakening period. The author coded the novel based on the character's idea of nation and connected it with the concept of truths in order to answer the research question. This paper concludes that Pramoedya created an idea of nation through experiences of the character. It also became apparent that *Footsteps*' conception of nation stresses the use of Malay as a national language, Islam as a uniting identity, and anti-colonialism.

Keywords: Buru Quartet, nationalism, anti-colonialism, dramatic truth, verifiable truth

INTRODUCTION

Pramoedya was born in Blora, 6 February 1925 (Toer, 2009). The Suharto regime captured and jailed him without trial and clear accusations¹ in 1965, after the alleged failed coup of the Indonesian Communist Party. Then, he was sent to exile in 1969 until 1979. During the fourteen years of his imprisonment and exile, he created six rough drafts of novels and one memoir, including the Buru Quartet². After his release, he created a publishing house called Hasta Mitra. And in 1980 the first novel of Buru Quartet, *This Earth of Mankind* was published. Within twelve

days 10.000 copies were sold. The High Court banned it in 1981³ together with *Child of All Nations*, the second book of the quartet (Farid, 2008).

Footsteps, the third book in Pramoedya Ananta Toer's Buru Quartet⁴, is a novel about a revolutionary young man named Minke who tried to change his nation. It is set in the Dutch-East Indies (colonial Indonesia) during the early 20th century, which was the early modernization period⁵. As one of the few European-educated Javanese, Minke wants to liberate his own people from colonialism. After intense discussions with his peers, he created an organization

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¹ For the arrest and imprisonment, see Pramoedya Ananta Toer, *The mute's soliloquy* (London: Penguin Books, 2000) pp. xiii - xxii.

² These works are: *This Earth of Mankind*, *Child of All Nations*, *Footsteps*, *House of Glass*, *The Mute's Soliloquy*, *Arus Balik*, and *Arok Dedes*.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Buru Quartet, is a series of novel written by Pramoedya during his imprisonment in Buru

Island. It revolves around Minke, a young revolutionary from Blora in East Java.

⁵ For the modernization period, new technologies, and new policies see Sartono Kartodirjo, *Sejarah nasional Indonesia [Indonesian national history]*. (Jakarta: Balai Pustaka, 1977) pp. 58-59.

called Sarekat Dagang Islam (Islamists Trade Union) and became the first native to publish a newspaper, called *Medan Priyayi*⁶. With these two, he fought against colonialism, not with guns, but through court battles, boycotts, and articles written in Malay⁷, the lingua franca of the Dutch-East Indies.

How does Pramoedya Ananta Toer construct Indonesia as a nation through the patching of dramatic and verifiable truths in his novel, *Footsteps*? Pramoedya wrote *Footsteps* using idea of nation as a prevalent concept for the whole novel. In *Footsteps* Minke wanted to create change in Dutch-East Indies, after he knew the condition of the natives. Further, Pramoedya created *Footsteps* through rigorous historical research on the objective narrative of history and subjective narrative of experience. There have been many researches on *Earth of Mankind* and *Child of All Nations*, but *Footsteps* deserves further attention, given the novel's vast use of historical events and its story of political movements. Thus, I intend to explain Pramoedya's use of dramatic truth and verifiable truth to construct Indonesia as a nation in the particular novel.

In order to answer the question, I analysed *Footsteps* through a three-step process. First, I 'color-coded' the novel characters' idea of nation. After that, I categorized it based on the various perspectives it is written from. I categorized it so as to understand how Pramoedya approaches the themes from differing perspectives (for example, how the nation is constructed in a certain character's perspective and why). Thereafter I analysed the coded data in connection with the concept of truths, to understand how Pramoedya used dramatic truth to construct the idea of nation. In connecting the two concepts, I looked into *This Earth of Mankind* and *Child of All Nations* to know Minke's experiences that shaped his idea of nation. Additionally, I used Slotkin's theory in

writing fiction for the purposes of history. I employed his argument on historical fiction as a thought experiment of historical actions and human experiences. Finally, after I combined all the data I could understand how Pramoedya fictionalize history and the idea of nation using the concept of truths.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Nation

The concept of nation is thought to be a man-made construct, and there have been many attempts to define it. Gellner's (2006) definition tends to emphasize cultural factors and the recognition of each other as the same nation, whereas Smith's (1991) leans towards ethnicity and ethnic identities. Anderson (2006, p. 6), wrote that nation is "an imagined political community — and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign". Furthermore, as Mišćević (2001) wrote, there is no limit to factors that can underlie national identification.

Studies on Asian and post-colonial forms of nation have debated whether Asia has its own national forms—different from Europe, or not. Tønnesson and Antlov (1991, p. 2) asserted, "each Asian nation...has its own individual character that is not exactly identical to any other but which may still be fruitfully compared". Chatterjee (2010) wrote critically about Anderson's definition, saying it insisted too much on political movements. Instead, based on his analysis of India's colonial history, he believes nation stressed more on the role of spiritual domain, which contained 'cultural identity'. However, Burrett (2016, p. 9) said that attempts to differentiate Asian nationalism to the West and the rest have failed, as "within Asia there exists a rich typology of nationalisms, with varying aims and origins".

Nationalism has can be seen as an "ideological movement for attaining or maintaining a nation-state" (Tønnesson & Antlöv, 1991, p. 2). Others see it "as a set of beliefs about the nation" (Grosby, 2005, p. 5). Many have tried to trace its emergence: from the industrialization period (Gellner, 2006), mass printing technology and the spread of a language (Anderson, 2006), the evolution of civil society (Nairn, 1997) and from ethnic identities (Smith, 1991). However, it is not my aim to debate on the definition of nation or the origins of nationalism. Rather, I want to point out that its definition is still contested, since there is no

⁶Priyayi, "is a class not well defined, although it is commonly used to refer to natives working as administrative officials of the colonial government" (Toer, 2006, p. 293).

⁷For more information on the history of Malay and Bahasa Indonesia, see The Indonesian language chapter in *The learner's dictionary of today's Indonesian* (2001) by George Quinn.

single definition where all scholars can find a consensus.

Historical Fiction, Dramatic Truth and Verifiable Truth

In many art forms, there exist two kinds of truths: dramatic and verifiable truth. Verifiable truth is that which is supported by specific evidence. Meanwhile, dramatic truth is that which is missing from the verifiable truth. But it is also arguably true, because it can be verified internally (O'Toole, 2004). Readers can understand them through focusing on materials such as feelings, personalities or emotions. Sometimes, it is also called emotional truth, the truth that could "inspire intellectual considerations" through emotional expression (Wilson, 1999). It could be said that both of these truths complete each other. The main difference between verifiable and dramatic truth are the accounts of which the stories were based upon. This will affect a certain truth's point of view, whether it is subjective or objective.

In a historical novel, Slotkin (2005, p. 225) argues the purpose of dramatic truth is "poetic rather than historiographical: it sacrifices fidelity to non-essential facts in order to create in the reader a vivid sense of what it may have been like to live among such facts". Thus, it is more important for the authors of historical fiction to make readers understand history, rather than proving the historical accuracy of the novel. Lukács (1983) wrote that the purpose of historical novel is to write about the poetic awakening of the characters that lived through a particular time, and how we could re-experience the "social and human motives which led men to think". Meanwhile Balzac, in his 1840 review of Latouche's novel *Leo*, wrote (Lukács, 1983),

The characters of the novel are forced to be more rational rather than historical characters. The former must be roused to life, the latter have already lived. The existence of the latter requires no proof, however bizarre their actions may have been, while the existence of the former requires general agreement. (p. 42)

What he means is in order for the characters to live inside the novel, the author must write the causes that drives the motions of the characters, hence the use of dramatic truth.

Although it is necessary to define and differentiate dramatic and verifiable truths, separating it in an artwork leads to nothing. As Slotkin (2005, p. 227), wrote "The value of Cooper's novel (historical fiction) as an interpretation of history does not rest on the accuracy of detail, but on the quality of his explanatory fiction". Therefore, it is not my aim here to separate them; instead I want to point out how the interplay of two truths builds an artwork and completes each other.

Ideas of Nation

Before delving into Pramoedya's use of dramatic and verifiable truth, I will discuss how he wrote different perspectives regarding the idea of nation. In *Footsteps* there are four main perspectives that Pramoedya offered: Dutch colonizers perspective, modern native perspectives, traditional native perspective, and Indo perspective. Furthermore, there are also implied facts from the narrator's story. Here I will analyse each perspective's characteristic and the implied facts.

Dutch Colonizers Perspective

From the perspective of the colonizers, the idea of Dutch-East Indies as a separate nation from its motherland, Netherlands, is doubtful. Because they think the only people who can unite the archipelago is the colonial government.

One of the passages depicting this doubt is when the member of *Vrijzinning Demokratische Partij*⁸ and *Tweede Kamer*⁹, Ir. H. van Kolllewijn read Minke's short story. In the event of his visit to Java, Ir. H. van Kolllewijn created a conference. Only Europeans were invited, but Minke came because his journalist friend, Ter Haar, invited him. Minke was the only colonized man in a room full of colonizers. During the conference, van Kolllewijn started talking about the

⁸*Vrijzinning Demokratische Partij*, A progressive-liberal party in Netherlands, which existed from 1901 until 1946.

⁹*Tweede Kamer*, House of Representatives in Netherlands.

“educated Inlander¹⁰”, and how Netherlands needs to prepare the natives for a new modern age, because “the greatest machines and new factories built here, will be useless if Inlanders cannot use it” (Toer, 2006, p. 39). He then introduced Minke to the audience as a native who writes. And then he said, “The most humble story written represents a personality or even a whole nation” (Toer, 2006, p. 41). But he also posed a question to the audience, “Has it been possible that an educated Inlander, modern Inlander, give birth to a personality?” (Toer, 2006, p. 41).

Ir. H. van Kollewijn questions Minke's basic trait: to have a personality. Just because Minke is a native, he is doubtful about Minke's ability to have a personality. This also implies that Minke, as his nation's representative, needs to be moulded to fit Vrijzinning Demokratische Partij's campaign ideology. The idea later turned into the Ethical Policy¹¹, with the motto ‘emigration, irrigation and education’. Thus in the context of the story, Minke and people like him should be subject to a form of cooperation, in order to maintain the colony.

The general that van Kollewijn is referring to is General van Heutsz, the Governor General of Dutch-East Indies in 1904, the person that ended Aceh war¹². Supporting van Kollewijn's statement, in the later part of the novel he said to Minke (Toer, 2006),

The age has changed, mister, the colonial perspective has changed, too. Now, the colonial is obliged to benefit the Inlander. And that benefit, mister, is the rights of the *landschap*¹³, which has been oppressed

and blinded by their own rulers. Once Majapahit¹⁴ unite the Dutch-East Indies. But chaos followed after that. The current Gubermen¹⁵ has the ability to unite it again. It has been prove to be more feasible, even bigger than Majapahit. We promise the protection of Inlander's safety and their riches under one law. (p. 344)

Van Heutsz clearly stated only the colonial government, with him as the head, has the ability to gain control over Dutch-East Indies. War will be waged on lands seen as the “source of chaos” (Toer, 2006, p. 50) as said by van Heutsz during the conference with van Kollewijn. They are aiming to expand the territory of Dutch-East Indies by conquering those free lands, which has their own government. In conclusion, they believe without the Netherlands, Dutch-East Indies will be full of chaos.

Modern Native Perspectives

The term modern native used in *Footsteps* refers to the educated native. There are two perspectives taken by the modern native, holistic and Java-centric. The holistic stance, here represented by Minke, sees Dutch-East Indies as a whole. The Java-centric stance, represented by Raden Tomo, aimed to develop the Javanese youth.

The Java-centric Stance

Raden Tomo is Minke's old friend in STOVIA. He came to Minke's house when Minke tried to discuss with STOVIA students on the need of a modern organization in Dutch-East Indies (Toer, 2006, pp. 257-263). After Minke failed with his first organization, Sarikat Priyayi (Priyayi Union), Raden Tomo came to Minke's house again. This time, he asked for Minke's help later when he needs it. Several months after that, his representative came to Minke's house, and asked for Boedi Oetomo, his new organization, to be advertised in Minke's newspaper. According to his representative, Boedi Oetomo is a Javanese-exclusive organization. Minke was

¹⁰*Inlander*, is a term coined by the Dutch-East Indies government to describe the natives. I used this term because it is mentioned as so in the novel.

¹¹For more information on Ethical Policy, see C. L. M. Penders. (1977). *Indonesia: Selected documents on colonialism and nationalism 1830-1942*. pp. 61-65 Queensland: University of Queensland Press.

¹² For more information on van Heutsz, see Dutch Docu Channel. (2012, September 4). J.B. van Heutsz – “The pacifier of Aceh” 1851-1924[Video file]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fXcBjZO4kqo>

¹³*Landschap*, “free nations governed by kings or customs” (Toer, 2006, p. 322).

¹⁴*Majapahit*, was an empire based in Java in the 11th century until the 14th century, with territories spanning until present-day Philippines.

¹⁵*Gubermen* means the colonial government.

surprised and asked the reason behind this. His representative said, "Because we are Javanese, we know each other's language and culture, we are from one origin and have the same ancestors, inside one civilization and have one feeling" (Toer, 2006, p. 383). In Raden Tomo's letter to Minke, he also clarified that they "started with same-culture members first. I think it is fitting to the reality, rather than a multinational organization" (Toer, 2006, p. 385). These statements clearly showed Raden Tomo's Java-centric stance on national idea, as he thought a multinational organization is impossible and unfitting to the reality in Dutch-East Indies.

However, Raden Tomo's and Boedi Oetomo's definition of Javanese is unclear. Java contains more than the Javanese people; there are Sundanese¹⁶ and Maduranese¹⁷ people too. Thus during the first conference of Boedi Oetomo, the participants debated on this Javanese-exclusivity. Minke narrated the flow of the conference as (Toer, 2006),

Is Sunda and Madura included in Java? Yes. Then Javanese language cannot be used as the organizational language. No firm decision...What about people who only have one Javanese parent? Like the Indo? No answer. What about the Chinese people who already became Javanese like those who were living around the palace? No answer. (p. 422)

This is a problem, because in defining nation, its members need to have a clear geographical and demographical boundary of what constitutes their nation. If we apply it to Anderson's (2006) definition of nation, Boedi Oetomo does not fit, since they do not have a clear limitation of Javanese-ness.

The Holistic Stance

Minke, looking both inwards and outwards, learns from them and in the end despises them both. This results into an anti-colonialist and anti-Javanist ideology. Javanism is a term that Pramoedya created, meaning "(the) blind obedience and loyalty to

superiors, and no respect for the rest of the people" (Vltchek & Indira, 2006, p. 85). The significance of this perspective is, instead of choosing sides between the colonizers and his ancestors Minke sought and created his own side. During the conference with Ir. H. van Kolllewijn, as Minke was listening to van Heutsz saying about how he wants to unite Dutch-East Indies under the Netherlands Empire, he thought, "It is clear that colonial war will continue. The killer in front of me is still thirsty for blood, native's blood, my own brothers" (Toer, 2006, p. 51). Here, we can see how Minke despises the colonizers because they are waging a war towards the natives of Dutch-East Indies.

Minke despised Javanese-ness because of two reasons: its inherent feudalism, and their chauvinistic ideas. For a start, Minke does not see the importance to be a Javanese, even though he is one. He then went to ask his mother, "Is it that important to be a Javanese, Mom?" (Toer, 2006, p. 74). When he asked the Serang¹⁸ Regent to join his organization, Minke needs to take off his shoes, fix his crumpled shirt and cap, and crawl to where the Regent sat. Minke thought, "I cannot accept this ludicrous custom" (Toer, 2006, p. 274). Thus, when Raden Tomo sent another representative to invite Minke to join Boedi Oetomo, he thought (Toer, 2006),

It is easy to understand why Boedi Oetomo rejected a multinational organization. Maybe cultural and language chauvinism made them feel a lot higher than other nations in Dutch-East Indies. Other governed nations outside Java have their own chauvinism too...So, what will all this be? ..Boedi Oetomo separated themselves from other governed nations in Dutch-East Indies, they have narrowed their own lives. Dutch-East Indies is not Java. Dutch-East Indies is multinational, thus a multinational organization is fitting. (pp. 390-391)

He rejected the foundational idea of Boedi Oetomo, because of the organization's Javanese-exclusivity. Instead he sees Dutch-East Indies from a holistic point of view, which consists of nations in different islands. He also felt solidarity for the other nations of

¹⁶Sundanese, are an ethnic group, living in West Java.

¹⁷Maduranese, are an ethnic group living in Madura, a small island near Java.

¹⁸Serang, is the capital of Banten Province, located next to Jakarta and West Java.

Dutch-East Indies, hence his sense of responsibility to liberate them from colonialism.

In creating his own side, Minke developed Malay as the uniting language and Islam as the uniting identity. He used Malay because Dutch is the language of the colonizers, and Javanese is, as he said, "Unpractical. The inherent existence of classes is a pretext to declare subordination, Malay is more simple" (Toer, 2006, p. 582). And the most important reason is, Malay was widely used as the lingua franca of Dutch-East Indies, especially for trading, hence the term 'Bazaar Malay'¹⁹.

Meanwhile, Minke used Islam as a uniting identity, because "Traditionally they have fought against colonialism since the first time Europe came to Dutch-East Indies, and will always fight as long as the colonists hold power" (Toer, 2006, p. 528). Moslem people fought against the Dutch because the Dutch came to Dutch-East Indies with the mission to spread Christianity. Thus, the natives of Dutch-East Indies have used it as a form of rebellion.

Traditional Native Perspective

Looking at the traditional native's perspective, represented by Minke's mother, it can be said that they only know how to obey commands, how to work, and have a strong collectivistic sense. In her conversation with Minke, Minke's mother said (Toer, 2006),

Commands come from Gods, and kings. After finishing an order, a person feels happy to be himself until another one comes again. Thus, he is grateful, he knows how to be thankful. He is not hunted down by rakshasha²⁰ inside himself. (p. 84)

In contrast with Minke, his mother wants to be commanded. Her sense of identity does not exist without those superior to her. She also said, "A long time ago, your ancestors always taught that nothing is

simpler than life: to be born, to eat, to grow up, to have kids, and do good" (Toer, 2006, p. 85). However, Minke wants to change Dutch-East Indies and protect its natives. Thus his mother sees him as an outcast. She said (Toer, 2006),

Punishment, my son, is a part of anyone who cannot put himself in the system of life. If he is a star he is a crooked star, if he is a forest he is a forbidden forest, if he is a stone he is a kidney stone. (p. 86)

We can see a strong collectivistic sense in this dialogue. This dialogue could be interpreted as a warning to Minke, to not stand out and be different. This portrayal of the traditional native eventually influences Minke to take an anti-Javanist stance.

Indo Perspective

Indo is a term used during the colonial times in Dutch-East Indies to describe European-descents. In *Footsteps*, Douwager, a journalist who travelled to South Africa and England, represents Indo's thoughts on the idea of nation. With Wardi, Minke's friend who helped him build *Medan Priyayi*, Douwager explained to Minke about his ideas. He said (Toer, 2006),

Dutch-East Indies is not multinational. Dutch-East Indies' nation is the Indisch²¹ nation. According to this foundational thought too, every Indisch person, every Dutch-East Indies citizen is a part of the Dutch-East Indies nation, no matter what their nation is: Arabs, Javanese, Kelings²², Dutch, Chinese, Malay, Buginese²³, Acehnese, Balinese, Indos, even European foreigner too, as long as they live and die in Dutch-East Indies and loyal to it, they are a Dutch-East Indies national, part of the Indisch nation. (p. 466)

This dialogue implies the clear limitation for a person to be a part of Indisch nation, and that is to be a citizen of Dutch-East Indies and be loyal to it. These

¹⁹For more information on Bazaar Malay, see B. Zhiming & K. K. Aye (2010). Bazaar Malay topics. *Journal of Pidgin and Creole Languages*, 25(1), 155-171. doi 10.1075/jpcl.25.1.06bao

²⁰*Rakshasha*, is a mythical giant-like creature in Javanese folklore.

²¹*Indisch*, "pertaining to Dutch-East Indies-ness" (Toer, 2006, p. 465).

²²*Keling*, a term used to describe Indian-descent people.

²³*Buginese*, are an ethnic group living in Southern Sulawesi.

two values, as Douwager said, pertain to Dutch-East Indies-ness. The concept of Dutch-East Indies-ness is a broad one, and I think Douwager deliberately proposed it for the purpose of including every nation in it. Finally, because of the concept of Dutch-East Indies as one nation, Douwager is able to propose Dutch-East Indies' nationalism.

Implied Facts

From narrating the story Minke stated several facts regarding Dutch-East Indies. During his stay in Batavia, Minke finds it weird that a Chinese woman who lives in Dutch-East Indies cannot speak Malay. Thus he thought, "Masya'allah! How long has she lived in Dutch-East Indies, but cannot speak Malay?" (Toer, 2006, p. 94). This implies Malay is used as a lingua franca in the country, used to connect different ethnicity that speaks different languages. Dutch-East Indies uses multiple languages, such as Mandarin, English, Dutch, Sundanese and Javanese²⁴. Hence, Minke used it in *Medan Priyayi* to obtain a large scope of readership. Furthermore, *Footsteps*' narration is in Indonesian, while throughout the book itself many characters use different languages. Usually, Pramoedya wrote a dialogue ending with "He said in (...) language". He never writes the dialogue in the language it is spoken. It implies the usage of Indonesian, stemmed from Malay, as a lingua franca to unite all kinds of people speaking different languages.

Creating the Nation

Benedict Anderson said in a seminar that Pramoedya had an advice to the young people in Indonesia and Thailand, that "Great writers have to be brave; they have to work very hard; they have to abandon official history textbook for the real study of their country's past in old newspapers, popular memories, archives and so on" (Anderson, 2008, para. 5). This shows the way Pramoedya researched and analysed historical evidences through documents containing dramatic truth. This explains why Pramoedya had used

dramatic truth to fill in the historically verifiable truth in *Footsteps*.

Pramoedya wrote thousands of pages of letters and thoughts during his exile in Buru Island. In the preface of the compilation of that writing, he wrote, "Whatever and however physical and spiritual experience from oneself, moreover if written, it will be a part of a nation's or whole mankind's experience" (Toer, 2000, p. xii). This quote explains the connection between Minke's personal developments and his nation's development. Minke is inside history, creating his story.

Tirtoadisuryo and Minke

In *This Earth of Mankind* and *Child of All Nations*, readers do not have a clue whether Minke is a fictional character from Pramoedya's imagination, or is based on a historical character. Because in those two books, Minke only tell his personal experiences, without any connection to historical actions. In *Footsteps* however, readers know, that Minke is based on Raden Mas Tirtoadisuryo²⁵, the father of Indonesian journalism. How so? Minke created Priyayi Union in 1906 (which later failed), first published *Medan Priyayi* in 1907, and created Islamists Trade Union in 1909 (Toer, 2006). This is what Tirtoadisuryo did during his life. These historical actions were recorded in many scholarly works (Toer, 1985) (Elson, 2008) (Mulyadi, 2011) (Nobuto, 2014).

Tirtoadisuryo was a man well ahead of his time; he published *Medan Priyayi* with purposes, such as "to give information, to be an instructor of justice, to assist in law-related issues...to wake and develop his nation, and strengthen his nation with trade" (Toer, 1985, p. 46). According to Mulyadi (2011, p. 49), "*Medan Priyayi* writhed as a propaganda tool that spread the concept of "nation"...which Tirto explained using simple words to differentiate between a nation that "ruled" and the "ruled" nation". Meanwhile, Islamists Trade Union is an organization that was established by Tirtoadisuryo in 1909,

²⁴ For the use of multiple languages in Dutch-East Indies, see Sartono Kartodirjo, *Sejarah nasional Indonesia* (Jakarta: Balai Pustaka, 1977).

²⁵ For a biography of Tirtoadisuryo, see Pramoedya Ananta Toer, *Sang pemula* (Jakarta: Hasta Mitra, 1985).

“intended to buttress the activities of Muslim traders in the face of Chinese and European commercial competition. . .(it) employed Islam as the denominator of a ‘national’, indigenous, ‘native’ solidarity..., and it drew on all elements of indigenous society” (Elson, 2008, p. 12).

Through Tirtoadisuryo’s writings, we can see similarities in Minke’s idea of nation. In 1909, he wrote in *Medan Priyayi* an op-ed titled “A Politic in Banyumas²⁶” (Toer, 1985, p. 217). Tirtoadisuryo revealed in this op-ed how the colonial government could replace regents in Dutch-East Indies (in this case Banyumas), even though they have not done anything wrong. He wrote, “in this instances, is the government not stepping on the citizens of the kingdom, not for justice, but only for money?” (Toer, 1985, p. 218). Also in 1909, he reported the injustices done by a village headman in Banten, named Nada, in a writing titled “Cruelness in Banten” (Toer, 1985, p. 223). He wrote 19 cases of stolen money, stolen livestock, and frauds, all done by Nada. Many of his writings share the same spirit of anti-colonialism. Through these writings, originally in Malay, he spread news about colonial injustice.

Readers know from who was Minke’s character and ideas based on in *Footsteps*. Of course, the narrative in the novels flowed linearly, in *This Earth of Mankind* Minke was still a high school student, in *Child of All Nations* he is about to enter the medical school, and in *Footsteps* he is already a student in the medical school. And through the experiences in the first and second book, the readers could understand Minke’s idea of nation. Because Pramoedya wrote the novel from rigorous research, he was able to form a concrete imagination of how Tirtoadisuryo’s idea of nation was shaped from his experiences. From this research, Pramoedya was able to write *Footsteps*’s narrative by patching historically verifiable truths and dramatic truths. These patching of truths became the foundation of the novel and plot driver.

But in order to write the novels, Pramoedya’s understanding needs to be backwards. First, he needs to understand Tirtoadisuryo’s idea of nation. Second, as Slotkin said in a general observation of his experience in writing a historical fiction himself,

Pramoedya “needed to be able to imagine how he (in this case, Tirtoadisuryo) got to be that man” (Slotkin, 2005, p. 232). Which is why in *This Earth of Mankind* and *Child of All Nations*, Pramoedya wrote a story about Tirtoadisuryo’s experiences. While in *Footsteps*, Tirtoadisuryo’s idea of nation is already shaped from his past experiences, and turned into historical actions. This concludes Pramoedya’s patching of dramatic and verifiable truths. According to Slotkin, when the author writes a historical fiction and create dramatic truth, “The guiding principle behind such inventions was always to dramatize the play of persons, ideas and forces that shaped Lincoln’s (in Pramoedya’s case, Tirtoadisuryo’s) character as I understand it” (Slotkin, 2005, p. 232).

Shaping the Nation through Experiences

In this sub-section, I will explain the kinds of dramatic truth Pramoedya used to create Minke’s national idea in *Footsteps*. To explain it, I will use evidences from *This Earth of Mankind* and *Child of All Nations* narratives. Also, I will use Slotkin’s theory on writing fiction for the purposes of history. Slotkin wrote down his experience in writing a historical novel, and sees the implications behind historical novel. He wrote (Slotkin, 2005),

It (historical novel) can create a simulacrum or model of the historical world, miniaturized and compressed in scale and time; a model which embodies a theory of historical causation. The hypothesis can be tested by a kind of thought-experiment: assume that events are driven by the conditions and forces you believe to be most significant—what sort of history, what kind of human experience, then results? For the thought-experiment to work, the fiction writer must treat a theory which *may* be true as if it was *certainly* true..., and credibly represent a material world in which that theory appears to *work*. (pp. 226-227)

If this theory is right, then Pramoedya used subjective human experience to explain historical action. If we put it in the concept of truths, human experience counts as dramatic truth (it cannot be verified by scholarly means), and historical action counts as verifiable truth. Thus, I will analyse what kind of human experience Pramoedya wrote to then connect it with historical actions.

²⁶Banyumas, a regency in Central Java.

Anti-Colonialism

Minke first tasted the injustice of colonialism in *This Earth of Mankind* (Toer, 2008) when his wife, Annelies Mellema died. A Chinese man who owned a brothel, Ah Tjong, has killed Herman Mellema, Annelies' father. Her half-brother from the first marriage of her father, Ir. Maurits Mellema, took all of her father's possession legally after he died, including his ranches, houses, money and her. Annelies's brother, Robert Mellema, ran away after contracting syphilis in Ah Tjong's brothel. Meanwhile, Annelies' mom, Nyai²⁷ Ontosoroh is her father's concubine, which means their relationship is not acknowledge by the colonial law. Even though Nyai Ontosoroh gave birth to Annelies, raised her, and feed her, she is not her daughter, only Herman Mellema's. And when Herman Mellema died, Maurits came to take his inheritance. That is when he took Annelies to Netherlands, as the legal caretaker of her.

The humiliating litigation, where Nyai Ontosoroh was forbidden to speak Dutch, Minke and Annelies' privacy was breached, and racial discrimination, made Minke and Nyai Ontosoroh responded with helpless anger towards the colonists. Finally, the verdict is read. Annelies will be escorted to Netherlands in five days time after the final verdict. When the police came to escort Annelies, Minke thought, "A native is this weak in front of Europeans? Europe! You, my teacher, and you're doing this kind of thing?" (Toer, 2008, p. 534).

Minke is not considered as Annelies' legal caretaker, because the court said their marriage is illegal. It was conducted in accordance to the Islamic custom, which colonial law do not acknowledge. Thus, his half-brother is the only one responsible for Annelies. She died when she arrived in Netherlands after several weeks. Her health condition deteriorated from the shock of separation, ever since she got into the ship to Netherland. It happened because she has a mental illness, as Doctor Martinet said (Toer, 2008). Minke concluded then, albeit indirectly, Maurits Mellema has killed his wife.

This human experience, then leads Minke to explore the colonist's injustice towards natives of Dutch-East Indies. He wants to know more about his nation. And the second time he tasted the injustice is when he stayed in Tulangan²⁸, where a high tension between sugar factory and farmers occurred. Minke interviewed Trunodongso, a farmer whose land was leased forcefully by the factory. Trunodongso said (Toer, 2006),

I have leased three-fifths of my land. I did not lease it from my own will, but forced. ...Leased for eighteen months. Eighteen months! In reality its two years. I have to wait until the entire sugarcane weevil is uprooted. Unless I sign a contract with them for the next season. What is the meaning of contract money? I counted and counted, the money is never fully paid. (p. 238)

Minke then knew that the factory staffs were cheating. He then stayed in Trunodongso's house to better understand his nation's suffering. He concluded, "I cannot live longer in conditions and ways like this" (Toer, 2006, p. 258). It was through this experience he understood the meaning behind French Revolution; that all men are equal. Even though he came from a noble family, he admitted that "I am not higher, nor nobler than Trunodongso" (Toer, 2006, p. 279).

Both of these experiences drove Minke to hate the colonists because of their injustice and discrimination towards the natives. Nyai Ontosoroh even said to him, "Did you forgot son, the colonial is always evil. No colonists think about the interest of your nation" (Toer, 2006, p. 127). Thus, his idea of Dutch-East Indies as nation is one without colonialism.

Islam

Minke was born a Muslim. He naturally spoke Islamic phrases such as "Masya'allah" (My God) (Toer, 2006, p. 94), "Alhamdulillah" (Thank God) (Toer, 2006, p. 52), "Ya Allah" (Oh God) (Toer, 2008, p. 392). Thus, when he marries Annelies, it is natural for him to follow Islamic custom. But, the colonial law did not recognize it. When the final verdict was read, Nyai Ontosoroh said, "Your

²⁷Nyai, is a title used to call women who did not marry but lives with a man.

²⁸Tulangan, a district in Sidoarjo, East Java.

marriage is in accordance to Islamic Law. To say it is invalid is to mock Islamic Law, to defile conditions venerated by Moslems" (Toer, 2008, p. 501). Minke fought for his marriage to be recognized, he published opinions in newspapers, talked with Moslem leaders, and even protested with them. All leads to no result. This experience later connected when Minke looked for ideas to create a new organization, and he said, "The prophet has united his people. The majority of nations in Dutch-East Indies are Moslems. In this era of progress like this, while non-Christian nations in the world lose to Europe? Just because they are lacking in progress?" (Toer, 2006, p. 395). Which much later, turned into an organization called Islamists Trade Union, to unite the people with Islam as a uniting identity.

Anti-Javanism

Minke hates his father, depicted as the epitome of Javanism. When he was persecuted during the trial of Herman Mellema's murder, his father was furious to him. He knew it from his brother's letter. But he did not care. He then thought (Toer, 2008),

And I did not reply my brother's letter. Let father be free with his own anger and action. Besides, I did not know much about Father. Since little, I was with grandmother, so more often than not, Father is just name. Every time I faced him, he always asked for his authority as a father. (p. 411)

He hates the patriarchy ingrained in Javanese culture. Before his father was formally appointed as a regent, Minke was called to face him. And to face him, he needs to crawl and pay homage to him. He said to himself, "Ya Allah, my forefathers, you, why did you created a custom that humiliate your own descendant's dignity like this?" (Toer, 2008, p. 181). Because he believes that all men are equal, he hated Javanese culture, which stresses on hierarchical class structure.

Moreover, there are two forms of speech in Javanese, Ngoko and Kromo²⁹. Ngoko is used to address people in higher class, while Kromo is the opposite. Minke

did not like it because when someone he thinks in lower classes than him (e.g. farmers), but talks in Kromo, he feels offended. This happened when he first met Trunodongso. And it is not in accordance with his guide, French Revolution. He thought, "Through Javanese language you are actually taking part in enslaving your own nation" (Toer, 2008, p. 277). Through his bad experiences with Javanese culture and language, he learned equality. Equality among people is his idea of nation, and to do that, he needs to dispose of Javanism's hierarchical class structure.

Malay

Minke started realizing the hidden values behind Malay language after Nyai Ontosoroh, Jean Marais, a french painter, and Kommer, an Indo journalist, pushed him to write in Malay. Minke used to write in Dutch, and send his writing to Dutch-owned newspapers. Nyai Ontosoroh once read his writing and said, "Now you write in Malay, son. Of course Malay newspapers are more well read (than Dutch newspapers)" (Toer, 2008, p. 500). Minke brushed it off by saying he cannot write in Malay.

It is not until Jean Marais, Minke's best friend, confronted Minke about his choice of language that Minke thought seriously about it. Jean asked Minke, "Why do you write only in Dutch? Why do you speak only to the Dutch and only them who could understand?" (Toer, 2006, p. 71). Minke is offended. He was angry. But what Jean meant was, "You are an educated native! Those natives are uneducated, and you need educate them. You need, need, need, need, need to talk to them, in the language they understand" (Toer, 2006, pp. 72-73). They debated and screamed at each other's throat. Until Jean said, "You don't know your own nation!" (Toer, 2006, p. 73). And Minke left Jean's house. It ended with a cold war for several weeks. They did not talk or visit each other's house anymore.

Then, came Kommer, an Indo journalist who writes in Malay, in a Malay newspaper. He said to Minke, "It is not the natives who feels obliged to give news in Malay and Javanese to other natives" (Toer, 2006, p. 153). Minke then realised the reality in front of him. Kommer then went on to say, "Malay is understood and read in every big and small city

²⁹For more of these speech levels, see Poedjosoedarmo, S. (1968). Javanese speech levels, *Indonesia*, (6), 54-81.

across Dutch-East Indies. Dutch is not” (Toer, 2006, p. 154).

These advices from his friends, prompted Minke to go and observe, to understand his own nation. He wants to prove that he knows his own nation. He wants to talk with his people. Then, he met with Trunodongso. There, he understood the inherent inequality in Javanese language. Furthermore, since Malay is the lingua franca of Dutch-East Indies, he used it as a uniting language.

CONCLUSION

In *Footsteps* there are four perspectives on the idea of nation: Dutch colonizers perspective, modern native perspectives, traditional native perspective and Indo perspective. Minke’s perspective is based on Tirtoadisuryo’s ideas of nation, namely Islam as a uniting identity, Malay as a common language, anti-colonialism, and anti-Javanism. To explain Minke’s idea of nation, Pramoedya wrote Minke’s experiences in *This Earth of Mankind* and *Child of All Nations*. Minke’s experiences on the colonial injustice, discrimination and observing the natives condition, ultimately shaped his idea of nation.

In order to write the historical novel, Pramoedyamust imagine what Tirtoadisuryo would experience to have such ideas of nation, what are the causes to his motions, and put it into his novels. He was able to know what kind of social forces and conditions that could drive an event to be, and fictionalize it. Thus, it can be said that Pramoedya wrote *Footsteps* by patching the dramatic truth of subjective experience and historically verifiable truth.

This article has deconstructed *Footsteps* in the way Pramoedya writes using verifiable and dramatic truth to create ideas of nation. Future studies should address what does patching the truths imply in the context of Indonesian history.

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