

## The Red Thread of the Relationship between Ben Anderson and Pramudya Ananta Toer: A Literary and Cultural Stare

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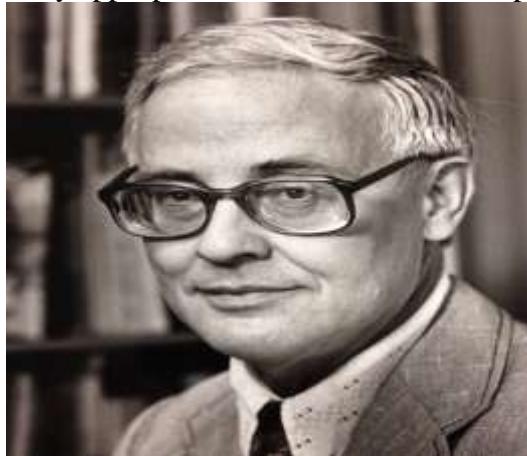
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**Abstract:** *This study is about the red thread of the relationship between Ben Anderson and Pramudya Ananta Toer: a literary and cultural stare. Ben Anderson expressed his appreciation for the principles and views of Pramudya Ananta Toer that the existence of social and political commitments in arts and literature in Indonesia in the era of movement was more a response to the conditions of the times. Ben Anderson sees Pram's awareness as a 'patterned' writer of socialist realism', has a strong humanitarian and popular vision, in which under Dutch colonialism, artists and writers feel a responsibility to participate in changing the fate of colonized communities. It can be concluded that they care and commit to the fate of the underprivileged, the oppressed, under-dog. In fact, from the conditions, language, real life and dialectics in the underworld, they discover the reality of humans and society as they are, authentic and inspiring. That is so. Social reality in their lives has shaped the commitment, color and character in working to rediscover humanity, justice and truth in their own way. In the end, it seems that we are restless, disappointed, hurt, angry and looking for humans. In this case, Ben, and Pram God willing, it is not alone!*

**Keywords:** red thread; Ben Anderson; Pramudya Ananta Toer; literary and cultural stare

### I. Introduction

What is the common thread of the (inner) relationship between Benedict Anderson, Pramudya Ananta Toer and Eka Kurniawan in this essay? Ben Anderson was born in Kunming, China, (August 26, 1936), Pram was born in Blora, the Dutch East Indies (February 6, 1925). In the past, I knew, met and had a dialogue with the three intellectuals, each of whom had a work that was very appropriate to be discussed in the public sphere.



Prof. Benedict Anderson (special)



Life can give everything to whoever tries to understand and is willing to receive new knowledge.

— *Pramoedya Ananta Toer* —

AZ QUOTES

Pramudya Ananta Toer

Benedict Richard O'Gorman Anderson or Benedict Anderson himself died in Batu, Malang, East Java, Saturday (12/12/2015) at 11:30 WIB. His body was buried in Surabaya. "Pak Ben Anderson invited us to Cornell 1994, we are very grateful for his kindness and sincerity. We are very sad and we pray that he will be accepted on His best side. We lose, and we write and work with a critical attitude as a commitment to continue the message to our nation so that the ideals of our nation's Proclamation can be realized, Mr. Ben is egalitarian, does not like formalities and is helpful," said Herdi Sahrasad, a lecturer at Paramadina University in memory of Benedict Anderson, who made Indonesia his second homeland.

The news of Anderson's death originating from the official Twitter account and Facebook publisher Marjin Kiri which will launch Anderson's book in Indonesia titled "Under the Three Flags". Benedict Anderson's arrival in Indonesia in order to fulfill the book launch. On his Facebook account, the Margin Kiri publisher said that, Anderson "died early this morning at a hotel in the Batu area, Malang, while resting after ... walking around." Ben Anderson's adopted son, Wahyu Yudistira said, Anderson did not have a special disease when he died.

During his lifetime, Anderson was the most prominent Southeast Asian reviewer in the world. His book, "Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism" is a classic work in social science and political science. Anderson's other works include Java in Time of Revolution, Debating World Literature, and Language and Power: Exploring Political Cultures in Indonesia. Ben Anderson was long banned from entering Indonesia by the Soeharto regime during the New Order, banned Ben from entering Indonesia from 1973 to 1999 by Suharto's New Order regime, and he was only allowed to return to Indonesia in 1999. He was banned from entering long enough Indonesia by Suharto because of his writing called the "Cornell Paper" about the Indonesian Communist Party Movement in 1965. He only visited Indonesia again in 1999 when the Soeharto government fell.

Ben Anderson is a leading scientist in the study of Indonesia. Many of his works are classic works must be read by Indonesian academics. He worked and began writing studies on Indonesia since the beginning of 1960. Benedict R. O'Gorman Anderson was born in Yunnan

Province, China. He served as Professor Aaron L. Binenkorb in international studies, professor in the field of government and Asian studies and still served as director at Cornell Modern Indonesia Project. Benedict Richard O'Gorman Anderson or Ben Anderson, Indonesian expert from Cornell University, United States, closed his eyes at the age of 79 years. A person born in Kunming, China, this is one of the scholars whose thoughts also influence theories about Indonesia. His critical thinking had made him banned from setting foot in Indonesia during the era of President Suharto.

Magazine Tempo on August 15, 1981, recounted Ben Anderson's experience being denied entry to Indonesia by immigration officials. The reason is simple: he is considered too often criticizing the Indonesian government, especially about East Timor. On August 2, when he set foot at Halim Perdanakusuma, Anderson was asked to fly back to Indonesia. According to the Head of Immigration Public Relations at the time, Subagio, he was flown back because he was too hard to criticize the Indonesian government. Where Anderson had obtained a visa permit from the government. However, because he was still considered to be 'bad-mouthing' Indonesia, he was again barred from entering. A high-ranking officer interviewed by Tempo at the time also considered Anderson more worthy of being called a politician than a scientist.

As Anderson described in his alluring article on how he dealt with officials of the Suharto dictatorship and the US embassy, "Scholarship on Indonesia and Raison d'Etat," he was allowed to visit Indonesia in 1967 and 1968, but was later deported after arriving in 1972. Painful for him expelled from the country with which he had a romantic closeness. When he was banned from entering the Jakarta airport in 1981, after he had been granted a visa to attend an academic conference, he experienced a kind of neurological disorder during his return flight. As he told journalist Scott Sherman, "I suddenly felt excruciating pain throughout my body. The pain was so severe that during most of the flight time, I had to lie on the cabin floor which surprised the passengers and flight attendants. "

Ben Anderson was very critical of the political culture and the reform era elite. In Ben Anderson's view, political culture is now still like the New Order era, where the formation of Indonesian people in the era of Soeharto's New Order was neo-liberalism, corruption, and cruel ... The people in the DPR / MPR are now generally the result of the New Order era. His political mentality is exactly the same. So this change takes time

This era of reformation, the formation is still the same as the Soeharto era, namely neofeudalism, corruption, and cruelty. The form is a dictator with an oligarchic system. Sharing 'land' between elites, there must be no opposition, and so on. They know, as long as the land and all are invited in, the oligarchy is safe. No part of the oligarchy has dared to go out and do something. This situation might change if there is an economic crisis again. In the view of Ben Anderson, Indonesian politicians are now also seen preparing families and children to continue leadership. They are nothing but the names of fathers and husbands. The politics of the crown princes are a reflection of feudalism and the will of insanely leaders like in North Korea. The country is communist but its leaders have been passed down for generations. Instead of sharing power with others, it's better to share it with your own children even though it's chicken brains.

Ben Anderson also argued in many cases, Indonesian tycoons are far from the perspective of fishermen, farmers, babu, and so on. Their daily enemies are not foreigners, but local people like the police and mafia. The elite say that all problems are due to Jews and

Americans, so that they do not hate them. So, this politics shifts people's anger to outside targets to cover up the failure of the domestic economy.

Ben Anderson diligently observes the issue of identity and identity politics in Indonesia " What I remember most from the first meeting with Ben Anderson (San Francisco, 1982) was his strategy of understanding my identity and background. He did not ask where I came from in Indonesia, especially my religion or ethnicity. Asked: What at home do I speak? For him, this information explains a lot about one's identity. I have never met anyone else who used a type of strategy as an introductory technique, " wrote Ariel Heryanto, Professor at the Australian National University, Canberra.

## **II. Review of Literature**

Ben Anderson began school in Denver before moving to Ireland. After his father died, Ben moved to London. He was admitted to the elite English school, Eton College. Then he studied classical literature at the University of Cambridge. In 1957, Ben continued his post-graduate studies at Cornell University, Ithaca, New York. There he learned from one of the scholars who became a pioneer in studying Indonesia, namely George McT. Kahin.

His political awareness began accidentally. One afternoon in November 1956, while still attending school in Cambridge, he accidentally approached a group of students who seemed to be from Pakistan or India. These students were surrounding a person who spoke against British intervention on the Suez Canal. Just when that came another larger group, which he said was the 'colonials' from the upper classes of England, who immediately attacked this small group of protesters. Seeing that, he tried to prevent it. But what power, they attacked him until his glasses bounced off his face. That was his first experience dealing with politics.

To the writer, Ben said Sukarno as the first President of the Republic of Indonesia turned out to be very friendly and close to the people. " I watched puppets with the people and Bung Karno in the palace in the 1960s, there were journalists, soldiers, youth and students, besides myself, who could have a dialogue and talk relaxed with President Sukarno. "He is not afraid that someone will harm him or shoot him, he is egalitarian and mingles with people happily," Ben told us at a discussion at his home, near the Cornell University campus, Ithaca, USA in autumn, October 1994.

Ben Anderson began his research in Indonesia in 1961. He said that was the most pleasant moment. Indonesia is indeed in an emergency with a rebellion that is still raging in Sumatra and Sulawesi. However, he was impressed with how egalitarian Indonesian society was when it was compared to people in Britain, Ireland or America. He was also impressed with Sukarno, the then Indonesian president, who was very easily found in the state palace. He could enjoy an all-night leather puppet show in the palace where the president, ministers and government officials and ordinary people all watched. Ben remains a prominent critic of the New Order. He gave testimony several times at hearings at the Congress (DPR and Senate) in America.

Undoubtedly, Ben Anderson showed sympathy and his defense of Timor Leste, which was invaded by Indonesia in 1975 and colonized by Indonesia for approximately 24 years. Timor Leste, he said, was "a brave small country." The country with a population of about 0.5 percent of the population of Indonesia was against the Indonesian occupation army which was

strong and heavily armed bravely. Again, Ben Anderson showed his partiality and defense of the under-dog.

Throughout his life, Ben Anderson has written more than 400 publications that have been translated into more than 20 languages. His book also discussed a lot about political developments in Indonesia. Just say to the author, Ben said Sukarno as the first President of the Republic of Indonesia turned out to be very friendly and close to the people. "I watched puppets with the people and Bung Karno in the palace in the 1960s, there were journalists, soldiers, youth and students, besides myself, who could have a dialogue and talk relaxed with President Sukarno. "He is not afraid that someone will harm him or shoot him, he is egalitarian and mingles with people happily," Ben told us at a discussion at his home, near the Cornell University campus, Ithaca, USA in autumn, October 1994.

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Ben Anderson is a keen person in following the development of government in Indonesia. In a book originally from his PhD dissertation, the Youth Revolution of 1944-1966, he touched on President Sukarno's management of conflict. According to him, Sukarno emerged as a figure who was increasingly strong in his political position. This is because Sukarno was able to manage conflicting interests.

In a conversation with the author of October 1994 in Ithaca, Ben Anderson said, Pramudya's literary work revealed the story of the national movement and revived the voices of the times and the history of our nation, giving a more real and important meaning to Indonesia and making the world community understand the importance of the resistance of the people and oppressed in the archipelago to reclaim freedom, human dignity and independence lost due to colonialism, feudalism and the establishment of a tradition that shackles. And here the articulation of the oppressed and the repressed left, is silenced, getting a representation of Pram's work while maintaining aesthetics. Ben Anderson admitted that he was deeply hurt by Pram's detention, where the military officers also confiscated his home, burned a collection of

books and a number of unpublished manuscripts. Together with thousands of others, Pramoedya was sent to Buru Island and imprisoned for 14 years. No court process. Ben assessed that Pram's work had received a Nobel prize, but that did not come true. There are various speculations as to why Nobel did not stop by Pram. One of them, translation into bad English. This makes the quality of literature decline.

Meanwhile Eka Tempo Magazine (Monday, December 21, 2015) revealed that one of the many Indonesians admired by Benedict Richard O'Gorman Anderson or Ben Anderson was writer Pramoedya Ananta Toer. Amrih Widodo, Ben Anderson's friend describes Ben and Pramoedya as having a similar, hard-working nature. Uniquely, Ben and Pramoedya formed friendships through writing, correspondence, without meeting face to face.

Amrih said the first meeting only took place several years after the 1998 reforms when Pramoedya visited the United States. "Their friendship feels warm and loving," Amrih Widodo told Tempo, Friday, December 18, 2015. Amrih Widodo is a lecturer in cultural anthropology at the Australian National University. Amrih first met Ben in 1981 at a party held by John Wolff, a lecturer at Cornell University. John employed Amrih as a teacher of Indonesian Language and Javanese Language at Cornell University since the fall of 1981.

### **III. Discussion**

Ben Anderson expressed his appreciation for the principles and views of Pramudya Ananta Toer that the existence of social and political commitments in arts and literature in Indonesia in the era of movement was more a response to the conditions of the times. Ben Anderson sees Pram's awareness as a 'patterned' writer of socialist realism ', has a strong humanitarian and popular vision, in which under Dutch colonialism, artists and writers feel a responsibility to participate in changing the fate of colonized communities. Not surprisingly, in the 20th century the development of socialist realism in Indonesia at an early stage began to grow, although it had subsided in the mid-1920s. Some of the factors underlying the ebb and flow of socialist realism in the mid-1920s were the PKI rebellion of 1926-1927 and the Balai Pustaka hegemony which were getting stronger in Indonesian literature at that time.

US writer. Dharta in his essay in the *Zaman Baru* (New Age), No.4, 1956, with the title "Penilaian adalah Hasil dari Suatu Sikap Hidup (Assessment is the Result of a Life Attitude)", explains that, 'realism is born of the mind of an artist in accordance with his worldview. If the life view of a writer is socialist, then his work is certain and naturally is socialist realism.'

Whereas in the following period, what appeared to be a literary debate in the 1930s which tended to focus on the conflict between east and west and was known as a "cultural polemic". It was only during the Japanese period and during the revolutionary period of independence that political nuances reappeared even though according to Pram it was still insufficient to rival the development of early stage socialist realism in the decades 1910-1920an (Pramoedya, 2003: 84).

In this regard, Bakrie Siregar's essay entitled "Records of Socialist Realism" was published three times by the Motivator on May 18, 1956, June 1, 1956, and June 9, 1956. The contents of Bakrie's writing are almost similar to Dharta's view of socialist realism as a commitment born of certain world views, 'realism which is primarily a way of life, which emanates from the artist's worldview ... socialist realism in the work of artists is determined solely by the attitude and basis of the expressed worldview '.

In the next stage, the formation of Lekra on August 17, 1950 was an important part of the existence of socialist realism in Indonesia. The establishment of Lekra was driven by the existence of a group of socialist realisms which saw the literary decadence at that time carried out by the 45th group.

The birth of Lekra, according to Pramudya, is a reaction to the worrying reality of cultural politics, that the pronunciation of culture and literature in particular must be based on developing reality, and especially those pronunciations must be politically accountable.

Realism plus the title "socialist" is because its realism and development must be viewed from the direction of scientific socialism. This means that the development in him contains the direction of a socialist in accordance with the philosophy of Materialism, Dialectics, Humanism, must be able to lead the direction of this development for the victory of socialism.

The assumption that the development of socialist realism in Indonesia was a strong influence of communist ideology was legitimized by the historical politics carried out by the New Order for 32 years. Under the New Order regime everything that smells or is close to the elements of communism will be considered as an enemy of the state and is not permitted to be studied or studied as widely as possible. In addition, propaganda was also carried out by opponents of the Lekra cultural organization, the Cultural Manifesto, one of them through a book entitled Cultural Tempest: The Offensive Flashback of Lekra / PKI et al written by Taufik Ismail and D.S. Mulyanto. Political policies in the New Order era and propaganda from groups opposite Lekra, the Cultural Manifesto, made the historical exposure of socialist realism in Indonesia only have a single interpretation (Supartono, 2000: 6).

More explicitly, Pram cited the 1959 Lekra Cultural Report explaining that, "Lekra was established to help prevent further deterioration of the revolutionary line, because we are aware that this task is not only the duty of politicians but also the duty of cultural workers." (Pramoedya , 2003: 94). Socialist realism in Lekra's body hints at a number of things, namely the belief in 'art contains' and the rejection of the notion of 'art for art', people's favor (and people's elements) as the creator of culture, and 'politics as commander'.

Socialist realism as the theoretical basis for Lekra's cultural work is the fruit of Njoto's efforts. Through his implicit confession, it is revealed that the only national art form that underlies the people's element in Lekra is realism. According to Foulcher, Njoto appeared to be clearly affected by Maxim Gorky's theoretical conception of socialist realism, when he suggested combining a great tradition of critical realism with romanticism as art that not only showed the social reality of today but also explained the process of revolutionary progressive change. Socialist realism by the founders of Lekra is considered appropriate as a theoretical foundation for its cultural work.

In the 1950s, the deepening of the discourse of socialist realism in Indonesia was carried out by translating writings from the Soviet Union, China, and other Eastern European regions. Foulcher notes the writings of Pavel Reiman, a Czech writer, as the first translation of socialist realism.

As Savitri described, in the 1950s literary criticism was dominated by "formalist" critics affiliated with the Gelanggang group (Free Artists' Arena, founded in 1947). Authors whose writing style and ideology are not in accordance with the standards of the critics' assessment, namely, especially those close to Lekra, are in a relatively difficult position and lack recognition.

According to Savitri's analysis, this was partly due to the fact that "reliable critics of Lekra whose education was equivalent to the spokespersons of the Arena" were basically only one person, namely Bakri Siregar (p. 42). Thus, "[in the first half of the 50s, critics of the Arena group have achieved unmatched authority [...]. They dictate what measures are appropriate for modern Indonesian literature "(p. 38). The measure meant is the orientation of "universal humanism", in the sense of adopting the style and theme "which was prevalent in Western Europe at the time" (ibid.): "The works they praise are those that evoke a sense of 'cosmopolitanism', revolving around the themes of 'pseudo-existentialism' and 'nihilism'.

Zhao, entitled Socialist Realism - the Way of Progress for Chinese Literature which affirms the ideology of nationalism and anti-imperialism in Lekra (literature) art.

In addition, Foulcher notes U.S. writings. Dharta and Bakrie Siregar in 1956 who almost looked at socialist realism born out of a life attitude and worldview. In 1957, the People's Daily (Harian Rakyat) printed a translation from Ralph Parker that explained the characteristics of socialist realism adopted by Lekra, namely "realism developing socialist, creative, enriched with new content and with new understandings that reveal the content.

The Maxim Gorky Ibunda novel translated by Pram is the most important translation and really influences the adoption of a form of socialist realism in Indonesian literature. Gorky's novel became an exalted model for Indonesian literature, as a novel that can inspire the working class in Indonesia. [Xv] The great impact of the translation of Gorky's Mother's novel was able to give form to literary works like what accurately depicts socialist realism. In addition, the influence of the translation on socialist realism from China, more clearly affects Lekra in terms of content or substance of the government. The concept of 'Politics as Commander in Chief', 'Down to Down', and the principle of 'Widespread and Increasing' were all adopted by Lekra from the cultural formula of Mao Zedong and included in the 1-5-1 Lekra principle.

What is Pramoedya's involvement in literary polemics and literary criticism? Pramoedya's writing, which we generally know is the works of prose (short stories and novels) that he produced, among others, in those years. But from Savitri's search we will find out how it turns out besides that, Pramoedya also wrote very many essays, with topics that were quite diverse. These writings became the venue for him to express his views around the role of literature (wan), defining measures and standards of assessment which he considered appropriate to use, discussing works which he considered important (eg Malay Lingua Franca works that were rarely noticed by other people at that time) and expresses his criticism and disappointment with various trends in the literary world and literary criticism.

The tendency that disappointed him quite a lot, and it greatly influenced his subsequent decisions in choosing who he worked with, and from whom he moved away in the world of literature. One of the things he has complained about since the beginning is the dominance of formalism in literary criticism, namely the focus on the form of a literary work, not on its contents. In 1952, Pramoedya wrote: "Justice, humanity, culture and idealism are more important to humans than beauty." (Quoted on page 47)

Q2110-Pramoedya Ananta Toer often mentions the books he wrote were his spiritual children. From the explanation above, it appears that the four novels which are often called the Buru Tetralogy, are the most interesting works. Various tragedies blend with disgust and anger at arbitrary rulers, we can only find out when reading their novels. Read Pram's literary works, especially those published decades ago. It's different from reading a light pop novel. It takes

perseverance and it shouldn't be easy to give up. Indeed, not without reason the name Pramoedya Ananta Toer was called many times as a candidate for the Nobel Prize for Literature. Through reading Bumi Manusia, it looks awful at the pros. Pram wrote this book when he was in custody on the island of Buru around 1975, but it was only published in 1980 and received tremendous response from readers at home and abroad, to the point that in the period of one year (1980-1981) as many as 10 times. But by the Attorney General, this book was also banned from being circulated and withdrawn from circulation because it was considered to have voiced the notion of Marxism-Leninism and Communism. In 2005, the Buru Tetralogy was reprinted by Lentera Dipantara and until now it has been translated into 33 languages and spread throughout the world as an Indonesian Contribution to the World.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

Ben and Pram's writings voiced many people's views and attitudes, groans and hopes, wounds and resistance of the common people and oppressed people. They side with the weak and take a clear stance. Their access to the world of ordinary people and under-dogs, not just elites, allows them to capture nuances that are far more complex, and far more interesting than those represented through the texts, discourses and ideas of the elite. They care and commit to the fate of the underprivileged, the oppressed, under-dog. In fact, from the conditions, language, real life and dialectics in the underworld, they discover the reality of humans and society as they are, authentic and inspiring. That is so. Social reality in their lives has shaped the commitment, color and character in working to rediscover humanity, justice and truth in their own way. In the end, it seems that we are restless, disappointed, hurt, angry and looking for humans. In this case, Ben, and Pram God willing, it is not alone!

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