

# Representation of the Indonesian Revolution in the Novel *Di Tepi Kali Bekasi* by Pramoedya Ananta Toer

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## Article history

Received : 2021-01-27

Accepted : 2021-08-07

Published : 2021-09-30

## Keywords

Di Tepi Kali Bekasi,  
Historical novels,  
Pramoedya Ananta  
Toer,  
Social Revolution.

**Abstract:** Writing a historical novel is one of an author's attempts to engage readers emotionally. Even though both novels and textbooks issue certain life of communities, historical novels may encourage their readers to see a phenomenon found in history from different perspectives than those of historians'. For example, a romance novel entitled "Bekasi River" was written based on Pramoedya Ananta Toer's experience of being isolated during the war against the British army. The problem discussed in this article is the representation of Indonesia's history during the war of independence in the novel *Di Tepi Kali Bekasi*. This study used a qualitative content analysis method to understand and present ideas and examine historical elements within the novel. This study used content analysis to describe the details and characteristics of historical narratives. The historical narratives were then compared with historians' study of the revolution in Bekasi. This comparison will show the relationship between the facts and the fiction found in the novel. There are five patterns of the relationship between those facts and fiction: first, the fictionalization of the characters is an imitation of the reality observed by the author. Second, the historians' description clarifies the novel's depiction of historical facts. Third, the historians' narration is depicted in much more detail in the novel; Fourth, the description of facts in the novel consists of historical facts that historians also revealed; Fifth, the novel brings emotional elements to life, which are difficult to find in historians' work.

**Abstrak:** Menulis novel sejarah adalah salah satu upaya penulis untuk melibatkan pembaca secara emosional. Sebuah sejarah yang ditulis dalam bentuk cerita bisa menjadi lebih menarik karena terdiri dari kata-kata yang disusun dengan indah yang dapat menggambarkan masa lalu dengan jelas. Sebagai contoh, sebuah novel roman berjudul *Di Tepi Kali Bekasi* ditulis berdasarkan pengalaman Pramoedya Ananta Toer yang diisolasi selama perang melawan tentara Inggris. Masalah yang dibahas dalam artikel ini adalah tentang representasi sejarah Indonesia pada masa perang kemerdekaan dalam novel *Di Tepi Kali Bekasi*. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode analisis isi kualitatif untuk memahami dan menyajikan gagasan serta mengkaji unsur-unsur sejarah dalam novel. Penelitian ini menggunakan analisis isi untuk mendeskripsikan detail dan karakteristik narasi sejarah. Narasi sejarah tersebut kemudian dibandingkan dengan studi sejarawan tentang revolusi di Bekasi. Perbandingan ini akan menunjukkan hubungan antara fakta dan fiksi yang ditemukan dalam novel. Ada lima pola hubungan antara fakta dan fiksi tersebut: pertama, fiktifikasi tokoh merupakan tiruan dari realitas yang diamati oleh pengarang. Kedua, deskripsi sejarawan memperjelas penggambaran novel tentang fakta sejarah. Ketiga, narasi sejarawan digambarkan lebih detail dalam novel; Keempat, deskripsi fakta dalam novel terdiri dari fakta sejarah yang juga diungkapkan sejarawan; Kelima, novel menghidupkan unsur-unsur emosional yang sulit ditemukan dalam karya sejarawan.

**Cite this article:** Gunawan, R., Bandarsyah, D., Fauzi, W.I., Rachmah, H. (2021). Representation of the Indonesian Revolution in the Novel *Di Tepi Kali Bekasi* by Pramoedya Ananta Toer. *Paramita: Historical Studies Journal*, 31(2), 215-226. <http://dx.doi.org/10.15294/paramita.v31i2.28748>



Available online at  
<http://journal.unnes.ac.id/nju/index.php/paramita>

## INTRODUCTION

A historical novel shows an author's attempt to emotionally engage readers compared to a regular historical text (Cotti & Johnson, 2012). Emotional feelings such as sadness, vengeance, enthusiasm, passion, and others are primarily found in historical novels but not in typical historical textbooks. Pramoedya Ananta Toer's story is one of the historical novels showing various emotional feelings through describing a revolution as a reason for the emergence of dehumanization ended in a war (Bangsawan, 2017). Novels have a little autonomy to be called history, but at least we have to admit that fiction has its own authority which is different from the discourse produced by historians (Chennells, 2012). Therefore, it cannot be neglected that the relationship between novelists and their historical texts is complicated (Polack, 2014). It is not surprising if the author of a historical novel also has a different approach with familiar historians in telling similar historical facts (Polack, 2014).

Up until now, some scholars and academicians argue that history textbooks as historians' works are more eligible to be used as references rather than a historical novel due to several reasons. Firstly, a novel can only be functioned as a supporting source, not as a primary reference for scientific research (Chennells, 2012). Written textbooks are considered to be more accurate in presenting data for historical learning and research sources. Secondly, historical facts and information found in a historical novel tend to be incomplete if used as a complementary source. Furthermore, in a historical novel, there are many questionable points because the values still need to be elaborated. In accordance, a novel consists of exaggerated romanticism elements such as romantic love and figurative language (Cotti & Johnson, 2012). Consequently, some facts recognized in the novel can be different from those in the textbooks. As an indicator, textbooks provide a holistic understanding even though the language does not flow as smoothly and able to stimulates readers' imagination as novels do.

On the other hand, a novel offers advantages that could not be obtained from textbooks. However, both share the same topics such as community life, stratification, and feudalism (Lindquist, 2008). A novel provides a more imaginative approach through narrative so that the readers could keep developing their imagination. The narrative also plays an essential role as a historical source that is easier to understand because it depicts personal and emotional elements of the historical events. Moreover, the storylines in the novel considered to be

more intriguing and emotionally touching than the ones identified in the textbook (Lindquist, 2008).

Therefore, the readers could enjoy their reading through an exploration of historical figures and events way easier by reading a novel than a textbook. Another advantage of a narrative is that it has a better language style than textbooks in drawing the atmosphere of specific times in the past. Furthermore, a novel provides a different perspective toward history than what is commonly presented in textbooks. As an example, in Pramoedya's novel, historical events are presented in a romance about his own love story that is well-elaborated, even manipulated and classified differently. That being said, readers who are primarily interested merely in factual events are recommended to read historical textbooks – not a novel (Teeuw, 2003).

Pramoedya's novels have been used as a research subject from various perspectives. In 1995, Teeuw investigated the novel entitled *Keluarga Geriliya*, and in 1997, he studied further about nationalism ideology through Pramoedya's work. Under a similar topic, Rangkuti (1963) and Aveling (1975) identified some influences of Pramoedya's youth on his novels. Meanwhile in recent studies, Niekerk (2017) and Dewi (2007) identified post-colonialism in *Gadis Pantai*. In a specific manner, Niekerk criticized the hierarchy structure in Indonesian society before the independence, while Dewi tended to focus on the post-colonialism phenomenon in Indonesia. In the meantime, Raybin (2009) found out that Pramoedya's novel has a thread with Chaucer's novel *Clerk's Tale*, which discusses marital relationships in a postcolonial patriarchal society. On the other side, Graf (2007) conducted a study about cyberspace's perceptions toward Pramoedya's works, while Herriman (2010) studied the novel entitled *Perburuan*.

In the following years, Tsao (2012) studied Buru Island tetralogy, namely *Bumi Manusia*, *Anak Semua Bangsa*, *Jejak Langkah*, dan *Rumah Kaca*. After that, Bostock (2017) focused on father and son relationship in some of Pramoedya's novels, such as *Bukan Pasar Malam*, *Cerita dari Blora*, dan *Bumi Manusia*. Tsao's (2012) and Bostock's (2017) studies show that Pramoedya's novels are closely related to his own life. Those researches are different from the other studies that mainly emphasize on the historical aspects of the novel.

Based on the explanations above, this study investigates the relationship between facts and fiction found in *Di Tepi Kali Bekasi* compared to what are told in historian books. Teeuw (2003) said that textbooks and novels are usually juxtaposed to

complete each other in the context of the novel "Tepi Kali Bekasi." It can be seen by comparing the shortcomings and advantages of the story with relevant textbooks. Pramoedya Ananta Toer was not a professional historian. He never aimed to write a history, as shown through the biography of Tirta Adhi Soerjo entitled *The Pioneer* in 1985. The writing indicates that Pramoedya carried out in-depth research on the subject under a historical topic to write a novel. Thus, historians and scientists interested in Indonesian history often use his books as references (Ratih, 1995).

Pramoedya Ananta Toer's work came from his direct experience during the revolutionary era in Cikampek, West Java. The area was used as a headquarter due to its strategic location that provided the ability to control the movement of troops be it from east, west, and south. This novel was chosen because, according to Pramoedya, the entire content of the novel is based on actual events, even though there are some differences since the Dutch have confiscated some notes. However, by the fact that historical novels are different from historical writing, it is obvious that some parts are not based on actual events (Gunawan, 2017: 523). The way novelists build historical imagination, according to Polack (2014: 524-526), is that they do not focus too much neither on the accuracy of historical facts nor having concerns in conventional historical writing; novelists always focus on stories, not historical data.

## METHOD

This study applied a qualitative approach starting from obtaining, analyzing, interpreting data, and making conclusions. This study used a qualitative approach to analyze the complex and holistic phenomenon of the Indonesian Revolution (1945-1949) in the novel *Di Tepi Kali Bekasi*. In detail, researchers chose historical method and literary study to examine the data. Historians commonly use this method to study history as an object (Hardjasaputra, 2013). The novel is the primary instrument that theoretically can be categorized as a historical record.

The qualitative content analysis aims to understand the author's ideas and his attitudes towards these ideas (Aminuddin, 2009). This study also applied a narrative analysis that describes both fiction (historical novels) and facts from the works of historians (Eriyanto, 2015). On the other hand, to describe the characteristics of histories in the story, content analysis was applied. Overall, the primary data of this study were obtained from Pramoedya's account in the form of sentences, dialogues,

and paragraph fragments showing specific historical figures and events. Based on the data analysis, the researchers found information in the form of verbal facts, including dialogues and fragments of paragraphs. The aspects analyzed in the novel include historical figures, historical events, historian narrations, also comparisons of novels and textbooks. After identifying the historical locations, events, characters, and places involved, the next step is to compare these four aspects with some historians' narratives in various relevant historical books and articles.

There are a lot of potential materials for the historical study found in the novel. Nevertheless, the researchers limit their concern into studying several historical aspects, namely locations, events, characters, and sites. There are several places mentioned, namely: Bekasi, Kali Bekasi, Kranji, Rawa Kembang Kranji, Kayu Tinggi, Kampung Baru, Kampung Kandang Sampi, Rawa Bambu, Swamp Copper, and Butcher Bridge.

In terms of the time aspect, materials discussed in the cover of the novel are: Dutch Colonial Era (p. 1), Marsose (p. 1), Japanese Occupation (p. 2), a few months after the proclamation of Indonesian independence (p. 4), the song "Bekasi di Waktu Malam" (p. 5, 150), Bekasi defeat from the British military (p. 5), The Tenth Month of 1945 (p. 7), the Age of the Independence Revolution (p. 11), the song "Darah Rakyat" (p. 21), the recognition of the Jakarta army as one regiment, December 1945 (p. 54), Song "Advancing War" (p. 59), etc.

On the other side, historical events were involved as the subject of this study which consists of: Tens of fighting between the people and the Dutch military (p. 1), between the people and Marsose (p. 1), the rebellion of the people of Bekasi (p. 2), the underground movement against Japan (2), a shootout between Giyugun and rebels (p. 2), At the beginning of independence a TKR captain and 12 soldiers destroyed a group (about 60 people) of Japanese troops who wanted to disrupt Bekasi area (pg. 4), Bekasi Combustion by United States troops (English) (p. 4, 72-73), Battle near Pasar Senen Station (p. 7), Pro-NICA Conflict and pro-Republican (p. 11), Battle of Kramat (p. 17, 54), Bandung battle (p. 26), Battle of Burma (p. 26), Salomon Battle (p. 26), Enforcement of the United army by TKR at Cikampek Station in November 1945 (pp. 39-44), fate of spies/traitors (pp. 45-48), etc.

Under the aspect of historical topics, several subjects from this novel are included, namely: Garong (p. 5, 68-69), PMI Girls (15), Red Cross (p. 161, 184, 187), Senen Siku Market People's Warri-

ors ( p. 20), Laskar Rakyat (pp. 98-99, 125, 126, 136, 184, 209), Barisan Srikandi (p. 22, 120), Banteng Taruna, Jakarta Raya (p. 26), Dutch Soldiers (p. 27), Heiho (p. 27), RAPWI Bandung (39), Gurkha Army (pp. 41-43, 136), Sikh Soldiers (pp. 48, 73-74, 204), NICA (passim), KRIS (pp. 68, 184-186), Hezbollah (70, 129, 171, 185), Cikampek Regiment (pp. 70, 73-74, 124, 183), Regiment of Purwakarta (pp. 70-71), Barisan Rakyat (p. 156), Pesindo, Indonesian Socialist Youth (p. 118, 120, 152), PTT - Postal Service, Telephone, Telegram (p. 166), and RRI (p. 174).

### SYNOPSIS OF THE NOVEL

Dealing with the history of Bekasi River, Pramoedy's historical novel tells a romance based on his own experience when he took part as a soldier in the war against the British army. He began to write in 1946 when he was in Cikampek; then, in 1947, he wrote a text entitled the falling of Kranji-Bekasi, which became the forerunner of the novel entitled *Di Tepi Kali Bekasi*. His passion and talent for writing were recognized by the Dutch, which required him to be a documenter of rebellion against the Dutch. At that time, the Dutch committed aggression in Indonesia and sending him to prison on Edam Island. From Edam Island, Pramoedy Ananta Toer was transferred to Bukit Duri prison until 1949. During this detention period, he wrote many books and short stories (Gunawan, 2017: 520).

The novel depicts Pramoedy's personal experience written in his notes in 1959, particularly his views about Indonesia from October 1945 until July 1946 (Teeuw, 1995: 10). The story's plot begins in October 1945, when Farid said goodbye to his father who did not allow him to participate in the army in fighting for independence. Farid's father used to be a Dutch soldier involved in the crackdown on-resistance of the Acehnese people. Although his father has an army background, he did not want his son to be an Indonesian soldier and attending a boot camp in Cikampek. The novel also tells a story of friendship of the three best friends, namely Farid, Surif, and Amir, in the Indonesian independence war starting from 1945 to 1947.

However, Farid still insisted to go to Cikampek to join the battle of Indonesia with allied forces in Jakarta. On his train trip to Jakarta, he met his best friends Surip and Amir. The three of them registered themselves to be soldiers. Amir, who already got military experience from the Japanese occupation period, was quickly delegated to the front line, which then caused him to be killed in a heroic fight. As a soldier, Farid was described as

active and loyal. In this book, his experiences at the front line of the places he was assigned, his association with fellow soldiers, his response to relations in the army and the people's behavior in the precarious early revolution are also elaborated using well-developed language style (Teeuw, 1995: 10).

### FACTS AND FICTION IN NOVELS

The relationship between history and fiction has long been recognized as close but problematic, and there are few places where this problematic relationship manifests itself more clearly than in the case of historical novels (Wake, 2016: 80). De Groot questioned the assumptions underlying fictional status as a guest and history as a host (Wake, 2016: 80). De Groot considered historical novels as a worthy servant to history while Helen Cam considered historical novels as an additional literary form for the study of history and Ernest Baker considered historical novels to give us something beyond the scope of historians' (Wake, 2016: 83)

Overall, this novel is based on actual events, characters' conversations, and overall situations, although the timing is a bit confusing since Nefis confiscated the authors' notes in 1947. However, there are also some fictionalized characters such as Farid, Surip, and Amir. Meanwhile some others are valid based on facts, such as Mas Darwis (Pramoedy, 1995: 217). In terms of storyline, fiction is found in the fabrication of plotline. Another fiction can also be found from several most fictitious characters. Nevertheless, fiction is used to add dramatization of an event. The form of it can be seen in how overly passionate a historical event be depicted. It can also be seen from the figurative languages used namely hyperbole, personification, and a very personal narration made by linking facts with personal experiences. This view is in line with Coetzee's opinion; each novel operates in terms of its procedures and problems and its conclusions develop its paradigm and myth (Chennells, 2012: 35).

In the novel *Di Tepi Kali Bekasi*, the figures like Farid, Surip, and Amir can be categorized as fiction. However, in Gunawan's analysis (2017), Farid and Surip represent Pramoedy Ananta Toer. Farid is depicted as a young Pramoedy Ananta Toer who only goes to Taman Siswa (enrolled upon his arrival in Jakarta after his mother died), while after he graduated from Taman Siswa, he is described as Surip. However, Farid is made to be the central character because later on Surip turned to be corrupted. The construction of social truth emerges from fiction because it follows its procedures and uses forms that lead to its conclusions,

and that these structures that make up its plot do not always depend on the details and chronology of historical records (Chennells, 2012: 35).

However, we have to understand that fiction is not entirely a lie. Carr (1961:78) wanted to explain that the criterion that distinguishes fiction from non-fiction is not that fiction mostly contains statements that are untrue. Despite, the statements put forward by the author of fiction are not meant to be accurate and are not to be taken as truth, and in fact, readers do not consider them to be true either. Assuming a character in a romance resembles a real character and is even depicted as doing things similarly as real characters do, we might say that the romance is "based on a true story" or can even be considered as a remarkable story if there really are many similarities in overall characteristics and timing. Thus, in Carr's opinion, Surip, Amir, and Farid are "imitations of reality" or at least inheriting the characters of the army during the revolution.

At that time, the three of them were sent to different places; Farid was placed in the street military, Surip was in the finance department, while Amir was immediately placed in the front line of the battlefield. In this novel, Amir is seen as an ideal character since he had many experiences on the battlefield until he passed away on a battle in Kampung Dua, Kranji (Bekasi). The sad news was then delivered by Farid to Nanny, a Dutch Indo girl who was close to Amir. She hurriedly went to Cikampek and came to the place where Amir was buried. While Farid was transferred to Cikarang, Nanny decided to stay in Cikampek together with Surip. This novel mainly consists of a romance between the woman and the three men. It is mentioned that Nanny tended to choose Amir rather than the other two. However, Amir's death made Nanny in a complicated and dilemmatic love triangle. In the end, Farid, who fell in love with his best friend's lover, found out that she had a mutual feeling.

In addition, Farid and Surip's career advanced further since Farid was appointed to be a corporal and placed in Bekasi while Surip worked in the army administration. Farid then tried to meet his father in Jakarta. However, he found something that is disappointing and unbelievable: that his father worked for the Dutch army (NICA). This fact turned Farid mad, and he did not want to meet his father for a while even though they finally met at Mrs. Saleh's house. After that, Farid decided to return to Bekasi. The story of Farid and his father represented one of the generational conflicts that occurred during the Indonesian revolution (1945-1949).

In the history, the name of the army group responsible for protecting people's security was changed from *Tentara Keamanan Rakyat* to *Tentara Keselamatan Rakyat* and so the headquarters of the battle was also moved from Bekasi to Kranji. At that time, Farid was indicated to have a special relationship with the daughter of a respected person in the community named Safiah. He also met Surip by then, who had joined the street military as a Lieutenant in which the position was higher than Farid. Surip told Farid about the current condition of Nanny, who was living in a difficult state since Surip left her. Such condition made Farid getting worried due to the fact that they are in love. Farid's anxiety was getting worse when Surip confirmed that Nanny truly loved him.

#### **TIME AND PLACE ANALYSIS ON THE NOVEL *DI TEPI KALI BEKASI***

The novel entitled *Di Tepi Kali Bekasi* is set in places such as the house of Pramoedya's father, Bekasi, Pasar Senen Station, Jakarta, Nangka Market, Kemayoran Station, Klender, Bojong Rangkong Station, Cikampek, Ciluwék Village, Bekasi Hospital, Cikarang, Ujung Menteng, Jatinegara, Pasar Baru, Cakung, Cikunir, Klari, Krawang, Netherlands Bunker, Kayu Tinggi, Rawa Bugel villages, and Karang Congok. Concerning this notion, many novels also explained the condition of Bekasi as a battleground. As a defense area of the Republic of Indonesia, Bekasi was considered to be the most vulnerable place for the invaders since the indigenous people of Bekasi had a very limited weapon to fight with (Ismawati, 2012). But then during the revolution, the area of Bekasi is also known as a scourge for both the British and the Dutch. Based on further analysis, Bekasi had militant human resources with typical individual characteristics along with the support of solid historical roots and adequate natural resources in economics, transportation, and geography (Suganda, 2009). In addition, Indonesian political policies also directed soldiers, including the locals of Bekasi, to fight colonialism and imperialism around the capital city.

In the meantime, Bekasi River was depicted as a place where a demarcation line between Indonesian and Dutch fighters met each other (Warliyah, 2003). Quite contrary on the Eastside, the condition was relatively safer while the Dutch used parts of Bekasi market and encouraged the Chinese to compete with Indonesian people in the trade market. Furthermore, the Chinese also became an additional, separate part of the Dutch military (Toer, 1995). According to Teeuw (1995), the

study presented through this novel was based on the author's personal experience compiled in 1959, mainly about what happened in October 1945 until July 1946. Therefore, the time and place setting, according to Teeuw's analysis (1995), were based on Pramoedya's personal experience.

### ANALYSIS OF HISTORICAL EVENTS IN NOVELS *DI TEPI KALI BEKASI*

This study demonstrates that the historical novel may present the past events in a more exciting and realistic way for the students than the original historical text. It also allows the students or readers to explore various social, political, and social change issues (Cotti & Johnson, 2012). During the Japanese occupation, Bekasi witnessed an infamous resistance against Japan until the revolution. After the proclamation, there was a battle against the allied forces and NICA (Toer, 1995). Besides, it was described that the condition of Bekasi during the revolutionary period was still swampy and its people became vulnerable to Malaria disease (Toer, 1995). The citizens were also described as having full of worries being under the pressure of NICA and British troops (Toer, 1995).

Through the introduction, Pramoedya explained the name of Bekasi as a symbol: "Bekasi is fully packed with stories, a place that gives everlasting marks (*membekasi*), could not be forgotten." And then: "Bekasi ... Bekasi, a place that scars the heart." (Toer, 1995; Sudaryat, 2009). Not just now, back in the revolution era, Bekasi played an essential role in history – ever since the Dutch period, various stories and incidents took place, including lots of suffering and struggling for the people. Moreover, in Pramoedya's statement, "Bekasi is the city that has got its independence," becomes kind of a refrain in the introduction. It was told that the area has its goddess and demon. The goddess named Dewi Bekasi, the goddess of independence, who was said to be taken away by a person (Toer, 1995).

In addition, the locals had particular individual characteristics and solid historical roots so that they had considerable courage to fight against colonialism and imperialism (Ismawati, 2011). Bekasi, which territory was adjacent to Cakung River, was considered a gateway to the republic. Not surprisingly, many troops and groups of youth made Bekasi fully filled with patriots. Furthermore, Pramoedya Ananta Toer described the Bekasi battle clearly to give the readers an accurate picture of Bekasi's destruction by Allied troops (Gunawan, 2017). The battle happened in some areas including

Cakung, Teluk Pucung, Cileungsi, Tambun, Bekasi and Penggarutan regions.

The history of Bekasi formation was not explained through this novel, particularly in terms of its administrative construction. From another source, it was identified that administratively Bekasi was still a part of Jatinegara under Jakarta Residency (Idris, 2001). Following the Renville agreement, a Federal District of Jakarta was established as a free city to be made as a capital city, so that Bekasi was split into two administrative parts under the Federal and Pasundan District (Schiller, 1955). Bekasi was a local area, not a part of the capital city, although most people in Bekasi resembles those in Jakarta in terms of lifestyle since dynamic changes in Jakarta affected Bekasi and its people (Idris, 2001).

In addition, the novel describes the atmosphere of the Kranji Battle, especially the intense atmosphere at the military base and that the surrounding population became frightened (Toer, 1995; Toer, 2003). The Kranji battle occurred in all areas and affected many sectors. However, the novel did not talk about significant events during the revolution, including historical events in Jakarta, Bekasi, and surrounding areas. Even the story did not illustrate the background of the allied forces arrival in Jakarta and Bekasi. Meanwhile, historical textbooks commonly talked about the experience and the purpose of the Allied forces arrival (AFNEI), including their landing in Jakarta (Suganda, 2009) as the main topic.

There are many facts of the revolution that are not discussed within the novel *Di Tepi Kali Bekasi* despite the facts that these events occurred in the same period and area that the novel involved; for example, the clashes between the army and the local forces (Imadudin, 2018; Lubis, 2011). The conflict between these "official forces" and "local troops" involved TRI (Army of the Republic of Indonesia) with the Greater Jakarta People's Militia. The soldiers moved to Karawang after the government had determined that Jakarta was to become an international city, and that fighters were not permitted to be in the city. The moving troops consisted of seven hundred people fully equipped with better weapons than the other troops (Lubis, 2011; Sukarman et al., 2006).

Furthermore, tensions arose due to the difference of opinions between TRI and the Troop of Greater Jakarta People's Militia. Moreover, tensions arose since there were different opinions between TRI and the Greater Jakarta People's Militia. The militia strongly opposed the Linggarjati Agree-

ment involving the Indonesian government (Lasmiyati et al., 2012; Lubis, 2011).

Both the Dutch and Indonesian revolutionaries regarded the Indonesian Revolution as an age that is a continuation from the past. For the Dutch government, the revolution aimed to destroy a country led by people who collaborated with Japan and to restore a colonial regime that they had built for hundreds of years according to their beliefs. On the other side, according to the leaders of the Indonesian Revolution, the aim was to complete the national unification and revival process that had begun four decades earlier. Both parties seemed confident that fate and truth were on their side. Both views had a basis of reality; however, they were also misleading (Ricklefs, 2008).

In the end, the allied forces carried out an attack on Bekasi both on the land and from the air. The attack was carried out by burning down Bekasi using bombs, cannons, and other modern tools. The war occurred during the revolution after the ceasefire, and the diplomacy did not satisfy either side. During the battle, many people had to endure severe suffering. The people suffered from hunger, lack of clothing and housing because all fields were controlled by the allied forces (Ismawati, 2012). Finally, the revolutionary period ended after going through several negotiation processes between the Republic and the Allies (the Netherlands), precisely after the Dutch's recognition toward the Republic of Indonesia in December 1949.

J. Rizal, in a historical seminar entitled "Bekasi in the Revolutionary Period of 1945-1949," explained that the vital role of the Bekasi people in the history of the Indonesian revolution has begun to be noticed in the national history and the history of West Java. However, some supporting documents such as photos and files could not be found. Bekasi was a missing figure from the West Java history album (Gunawan, 2017). From various narrations of some historians related to the fighting, the city that was illustrated in the novel *Di Tepi Kali Bekasi* could be considered as historical. However, the novel did not explain the army's command structure in Cikampek and Bekasi as parts of Siliwangi divisions, but it told the role and experience of the Siliwangi Army within three years started from 1946-1949. In Sudjono Dirdjosisworo's book (1994), *Siliwangi from time to time, Volume I* reviews the role and experience of the Siliwangi army in various events in West Java, such as the fighting in Bekasi, Cileungsi, Sumedang, Karawang, and Cikampek.

In contrast to the textbooks, the novel tells a

romantic story amidst the war. The romance appeared in the relationship between young men and women, particularly about the love triangle between Farid and Soerip with the girl named Nanny. Their friendship became complicated by the existence of Nanny, an Indo-girl who was an orphan who stood for the Republic. For Nanny, Soerip was an ideal young man, a patriotic hero who had stolen her heart and replaced Amir Alinarhum in her heart (Teeuw, 1995). In this novel, their pure love in a time of war was highlighted because following lust was considered to bring bad luck to the warriors.

In addition, the novel presented immoral behaviors among republican soldiers, such as corruption, conflicts over power, and destructive behaviors (Matanasi, 2012). Based on Farid's observation of the struggle for independence, this work can be categorized as a work with high moral values. An illustration of the national war was indeed epic; however, the way Farid's life portrayed in such fashion was far from being epic (Farid, 2008; Teeuw, 1995). Some contents in this novel (love, immoral behavior, and corruption) have been overlooked in textbooks written by historians so far. Therefore, it can be said that information in the books and novels complete each other.

Another advantage of using this novel is that readers may get some complete and detailed information about the state of the Indonesian army. The story tells readers about how the condition of the soldiers' clothing, their physical condition, weapons, and the conditions when they were on duty represented in the figure of Farid. It also describes how the soldiers spent every bullet of their guns (Toer, 1995). It is told that soldiers protested kitchen workers because of their unsatisfactory food and that the dishwashers did not clean the plates well enough (Toer, 1995). The novel explained the anxiety and the uproar caused by the name change of TKR. These dread and uproar occurred because of the impact of the change so that there was a mass demotion in army structure which reason was unclear. It clearly made some soldiers felt disappointed with the policy (Toer, 1995).

The novel and textbook both described the revolution as a social process that was truly chaotic. The process was considered as a very extraordinary one, very rough, and the most integrated social movement (Simandjuntak, 2005). According to Alexis de Tocqueville, the revolution is a relative discontinuity (disconnection from the past). Meanwhile, Samuel P. Huntington (Adisusilo, 2014) claimed that revolution is a reversal of values, myths, political institutions, social structures, lead-

ership, and the activities and policies of the dominant government in the society.

Based on the data analysis, both the novel and textbooks described *Kali Bekasi* incident in equal portion. Ali Anwar narrated the release of the people's anger that has been buried for a long time due to the atrocities of the Japanese army by disarming and even killing them. As a result, during a couple of incidents in Bekasi, some Japanese soldiers were killed and dumped in the Bekasi River. The incidents involved the murder of 90 Japanese soldiers that being thrown away to the river (Anwar, 2007). Whereas in the novel, the incident was related to the murder done by the residents and the troops toward the spies and *garong*. These two events further strengthen the myth of the Bekasi River bridge as a slaughterhouse.

There are many reviews found about Pesindo, but the novel does not elaborate on the complete actions of the party. According to Kahin (1995), the most powerful military among these armed non-permanent organizations was Pesindo (Indonesian Socialist Youth). This party was a combination of seven youth organizations formed at a conference held on 10 November 1945 in Yogyakarta. The conference aimed to unite all 22 Republican youth organizations, but only seven organizations agreed to be merged into Pesindo. At the same time, 15 organizations also formed a free organization, namely the Indonesian Youth Congress Board. However, the difference and internal conflict among group members had reduced the effectiveness of the federation, and only on a few occasions can they contribute something to the Indonesia revolution process.

#### **HISTORICAL SUBJECTS IN THE NOVEL *DI TEPI KALI BEKASI***

The work of historical fiction is still a work of fiction. Regardless of all the freedom that historical novelists must possess, the fictional characters created in the novel have to co-exist with the non-fictional characters. The problem is that sometimes the novelists consider some facts in the historical events tend to be exaggerated, too vivid, too loud, too fast, too explicit, and too omniscient (Goodman, 2005). However, it is beneficial for editors, marketers, and booksellers to refer to historical fiction works even if they are expensive (Goodman, 2005).

Although initially the characterization of Pramoedya Ananta Toer was portrayed through Farid, the appearance of Surip illustrated that the character was also Pramoedya Ananta Toer

(Gunawan, 2017). From the conversation between Farid and Surip, it was revealed that Surip had attended an Islamic University, which was the same event experienced by Pramoedya Ananta Toer. The clear detail that proves both Farid and Surip were Pramoedya Ananta Toer is written on page 26.

Farid took a pen and filled in a registration letter. He wrote Farid - seventeen years old - not married - seven years in folk school - two years in Taman Dewasa school ... then Surip take his turn writing - twenty-three years old - seven years in folk school - MULO - some courses- Islamic University - Experience: A clerk in Tanjung Priok ...

Referring to the quotation, Pramoedya Ananta Toer had indeed been a soldier serving in Cikampek as a liaison officer. Cikampek was a defense front for Indonesian fighters, while Bekasi became the front line bound by the Bekasi River, with the Eastern part controlled by the Indonesian army and the Western part by the Allied army. Pramoedya Ananta Toer had directly experienced the Cikampek event, even though it was not up until 1949 because he was disappointed with the corruption in his unit (Gunawan, 2017).

In the analysis of Ismawati (2011), the readers were directed to see that Pramoedya Ananta Toer was portrayed in Farid's character at the beginning of the story. On pages 1-6 (Toer, 1995), it was told how Farid's memories about Bekasi, "Bekasi... a city that makes an everlasting impression to the heart, Bekasi... the city that scars." For six pages, the sentence was continuously repeated. Meanwhile, in Teeuw's (1995) analysis of the novelty in the novel, Pramoedya's work was almost concrete: certain events he experienced, figures he had discovered, and the events he heard the news of (Teeuw, 1995). Most imaginary statistics discussed in this essay were directly or indirectly involved in the five-years of the Indonesian people's physical struggle to win the independence that had been proclaimed on August 17th, 1945 (Teeuw, 1995).

Thus, Pramoedya created several figures who represented the struggle, each of whom has participated in the revolution and struggled for the independence. Moreover, it is undoubtable that these figures, in their diversity, represented their creators (Teeuw, 1995). The events and experiences of Farid and his colleagues were given a much broader meaning while being generalized to the circumstances and experiences of the Indonesian people. The story of Farid became an epic of the Indonesian revolution (Teeuw, 1995). The readers usually took it for granted; that the author as well as the narrator



should know everything. They did not think about how the author is able to know and understand it (Teeuw, 1995). Supporting figures were not randomly selected from circus groups, but from the history of the national movement itself, they were the ideal types representing certain characteristics in their time (Ratih, 1995).

Many novels portrayed the revolutionary spirit of the youth in defending their nation and how society motivated fighters to keep having the fighting spirit (Toer, 1995). The youth rebellious nature appeared in some dialogues in the novel and also by the way they called their colleagues among warriors as “Bung” (Toer, 1995). Pram clearly explained the enthusiasm of the youth who strived to be warriors in very much details (Toer, 1995).

Foulcher and Toni (2008) show how some parts of the novel described youth ideology, particularly their revolution ideology (Teeuw, 1995). Farid represents the younger generation who are fighting for the independence of their homeland and also trying to defend the people in their suffering and sacrifices. Historian Robert Cribb (1990), through his book, also explains the condition of Indonesia in 1945 that there was a unique historical phenomenon when all people, including Indonesian students, were all gripped by overwhelming emotions to defend their independence. Consequently, the colonization attempt against an independent nation will be resisted by the people willing to die for their country and homeland. Thus, both novels and textbooks presented the revolutionary spirit of the Indonesian people, especially in Bekasi.

The political vision of Pramoedya’s early works was based more on the ideology of the “youth of revolution” in the form of ingrained morale among the young generation to fight for independence. At the same time, such morale got highly opposed by the older generation. The literature produced between 1945-1957 included several works such as “Ten NICA Heads, Kranji Bekasi Djatoeh, The Hunt, Not a Night Market, On the Banks of Bekasi River, Those Who Were Disabled, Wrestling in Djakarta, Midah the Cutie with Golden Teeth, Corruption, Stories from Djakarta, and A Collection of Situations and People Caricatures.” (Nobility, 2017).

Ricklefs (2008) calls the condition described by Pramoedya as the euphoria of revolution. The delight of the revolution struck this country immediately, especially to Indonesian youth, who responded to the excitement and challenge of independence. Japanese commanders in the regions often left urban areas and withdrew their troops to

the city outskirts to avoid any confrontation. Some parties allowed Indonesian youth to get weapons. Between the third and the eleventh of September, young people in Jakarta took over the authority of train stations, electric tram systems, and radio stations without any resistance from the Japanese. At the end of September, vital installations in Yogyakarta, Surakarta, Malang, and Bandung were also in the hands of Indonesian youth (Ricklefs, 2008).

Revolution was indeed a struggle between generations too. The novel gave much information about generation conflicts. The old forces were represented by Farid’s father, a former KNIL soldier who had previously fought along the Dutch against the Acehnese and still retained a colonial mentality (Teeuw, 1995). However, the novel did not explain the analysis around the intergenerational conflict. Instead, the emergence of intergenerational conflicts could be found in Ricklefs’ book, *Modern Indonesian History 1200-2004*. According to Ricklefs (2008), there was a sense of freedom for the Indonesian people that encouraged most of them to consider themselves as pro-Republic but without explicit knowledge about the consequences of this attitude.

#### **PATTERNS OF RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FACT AND FICTION IN NOVELS**

The first pattern of the relationship between fact and fiction in the novel *On the Banks of Bekasi River* is that the fiction in the characters is an imitation of the reality observed by the author. Characters are able to represent the author’s presence in the novel or represent the author’s idea about the characteristics of soldiers at that time. Indeed, the truth in fiction does not have to be the same and does not need to be equated (and interpreted) with the truth that applies in the real world (Nurgiyantoro, 2017). However, since *On the Banks of Bekasi River* is a historical fiction, its basis is not entirely imagination but also historical facts.

The second pattern of the relationship between facts and fiction is that the description in the novel made even clearer by the historians’ description. Pram’s novel illustrates a lot about the Senen Station in Jakarta. In the novel, it is stated that in the tenth month of 1945 a fighting broke out near the Senen Stadium (Jakarta), which had been a non-stop shootout since early in the morning (Toer, 1995). The Senen station was described as dangerous because of frequent clash and that there were many Dutch troops in the area. However, the novel does not explain in detail how dangerous the Senen area was during the 1945 revolution. The Australian

historian, Robert Cribb, in his work "The Heroes and Revolutionaries in Jakarta" explains the detail. Cribb explained that the Senen area was the battlefield between the 10th Battalion of the KNIL (the majority of Dutch soldiers were from Ambon) and the Laskar Djakarta Raya. Famous figures from the Djakarta Raya army are Pi'i, Amat Bey, Itjang, and Mas'ud. The peak of the battle occurred on November 19, 1945, triggered by the death of two Dutch officers. The fighting ended after PM Sutan Syahrir asked the Laskar for a ceasefire. Another example would be Pram's description of the one-eyed Dutch general who killed fifteen thousand Acehnese. Pram did not explain in detail who the general was. Although, the one-eyed general can be identified if we read the historian's description, which name was Snouck Hurgronje. During the Aceh War in 1874, the name of General Karel van der Heijden, alias Kareltje Eénoog (One-Eyed Karel) emerged, after he lost one eye in the war. His tactic was 'punishment as a lesson'; in other words, thousands of Acehnese were killed and hundreds of villages in Aceh were burned down yet the war victory was still not achieved.

The third pattern is that historians' narrations are depicted in much more details through the novel, it is even more vivid and realistic. The city, Bekasi, and the state of the Indonesian soldiers during the battle are illustrated in realistic details.

The fourth pattern is that the description of facts in the novel is a historical fact that historians also revealed. Pram's description of the Bekasi "butcher" bridge apparently is a fact because the bridge was the place where Indonesian soldiers used to execute 90 Japanese Kaigun soldiers (Anwar, 2007). Likewise, the burning of Bekasi city by the allied troops described in the novel is also a fact. The events of the Bekasi battle were preceded by the takedown of a British Dakota plane, bombed by Indonesian troops on November 29, 1945. This event was then retaliated by the Allied troops on December 13, 1945, by burning down Bekasi. In addition, all the places mentioned in the novel that were in Jakarta, Bekasi, Karawang, and Cikampek, still exist today.

The last pattern of the relationship lies in the emotional aspect. The emotional element arises because fiction is an intense appreciation and contemplation; contemplation toward the root of life and the life itself, a reflection carried out with full of awareness and responsibility yet dramatizes the relationships between humans (Nurgiyantoro, 2017). Historical novels are bound by facts collected through research from various sources. However,

they also provide spaces for fictionality; for example, by giving the thoughts and feelings of the characters through conversations (Nurgiyantoro, 2017). The novel brings the emotional elements that occurred during the Indonesian revolution of 1945-1949 to life. These emotional elements include the worries of parents over their children who are more concerned with revolution rather than taking care of themselves, the love story of Indonesian soldiers that is full of twists, and the frightening atmosphere the people were having in facing the war. These emotional elements can hardly be described in historians' narrations.

## CONCLUSION

The results of the study show that many historical facts in this novel need to be questioned because of several different facts found in the textbook. Moreover, even though both novels and textbooks discuss people's lives, historical novels may offer more exciting works due to the language styles and choices used to depict an event and construct an atmosphere of specific times (Chennells, 2012; Lindquist, 2008). Furthermore, the novel provides a different perspective on history from what is commonly stated in textbooks. In the novel "Di Tepi Kali Bekasi," there is a romance written based on Pramoedya's experience when he took part in the war against the British army. Pramoedya Ananta Toer described the revolution as a social process that is full of chaos, cruelty, oppression, civil disorder, rampant banditry and robbery, betrayal, espionage, generational conflicts, nationalism in young men and local champions, immorality among Indonesian fighters and corruption in the military (Artono, 2014).

Farid and his colleagues' experience were given a much broader meaning while generalized as the experience of the Indonesian people. As the incarnation of the author's ideas, Farid always moved by seeing people's misery in different conditions, such as war victims who had to leave their homes and suffered the loss of their husbands, wife, children, or even lovers. He knew exactly the main goal to keep struggling was to free people from fear and misery in such complicated situation. At the same time, Farid realized through his personal experience that participating in the revolution requires much thought of humanity, and so he is able to fight against the temptations of lust.

The finding in this study is that the novel is based on actual events and situations. Fiction is mainly found in the characters and the conversations between them. Fiction is used to add dramatization of an event. The novel describes many details

about the condition of Bekasi as a battlefield. Pramoedya Ananta Toer describes the Bekasi battle in detail to give the reader an accurate picture of how Bekasi being destroyed by the Allied forces during the Revolutionary Period (1945-1946), where the area of Bekasi became a defense line that was feared by the British and the Dutch.

However, many aspects of the revolution were not discussed throughout this novel. In contrast to the textbooks, this novel *Di Tepi Kali Bekasi* tells a lot about romance, particularly a romantic drama within the war. Furthermore, it presents immoral behaviors among soldiers of the republic such as corruption, conflicts over authorities, and obscene behaviors. In detail, it describes the condition of the soldier's clothing, their physical condition, their weapons, and their conditions when they were on duty. Some parts of the novel also extensively discuss banditry and robbery among Bekasi people in the past. In conclusion, both novels and textbooks explain the formation process of the Indonesian army, revolution as a chaotic social process, the incident at the particular times, also the people's anxiety upon the Allied Forces and NICA arrival.

In the end, there are five patterns of the relationship between facts and fiction found in the novel *On the Banks of Bekasi River* when compared with historians' analysis of the same theme, namely: first, the fiction in the characters is an imitation of the reality observed by the author. Second, the description in the novel is clarified by the historian's description. Third, the historians' narrations are much detailed in the novel, even the depiction is more vivid and realistic; Fourth, the description of facts in the novel are historical facts which also revealed by historians; and fifth, the novel brings emotional elements to life that are difficult to find in historians' works.

The limitation of this research is that it does not analyze all the historical facts revealed throughout this novel. The historical facts analyzed were carefully chosen to provide an overview of the revolution in Bekasi that the novel unveils. In addition, Pramoedya's views on the revolution in Indonesia were not fully disclosed because other novels that talk about the same matter were not discussed. The recommendation of this research is the massive need for historians to use literary works produced during the revolution to provide a complete picture of historical events at that time.

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