

READING PRAMOEDYA ANANTA TOER'S *SANG PEMULA* [THE PIONEER]*

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Sang Pemula, Pramoedya's fifth book since his return from exile in Buru and his fourth banned for circulation by the Indonesian government,¹ is on Raden Mas Tirta Adhi Soerjo, an archtypical *pergerakan* leader, who disappeared from the public scene in August 1912 when the Sarekat Islam was about to expand beyond its birthplace, the Residency of Surakarta, and the age of *pergerakan* was about to begin.² The book consists of two parts: Pramoedya's biography of Tirta Adhi Soerjo, and the writings of Tirta Adhi Soerjo--"non-fictional works [newspaper articles]" and stories originally published in a serialized form in the newspapers.³ As such, the book can be read either as Pramoedya's biography

* Jakarta: Hasta Mitra, 1985.

1. Since his return from exile in late 1979 Pramoedya has published seven books: *Bumi Manusia* (1980), *Anak Semua Bangsa* (1981), *Tempo Doeloe* (1982), *Jejak Langka* (1985), *Sang Pemula* (1985), *Gadis Pantai* (1987), and *Hikayat Siti Mariah* (1987), all by Hasta Mitra. The Indonesian government banned circulation of *Jejak Langka* and *Sang Pemula* in May 1986 for the reasons that they "are historical novels departing from the concept of social contradiction and class struggle based on 'Socialist Realism,' namely the type of literature followed by the communists" and that they "contain influences that may disturb the public order." (Republik Indonesia, Jaksa Agung, "Keputusan Jaksa Agung Republik Indonesia Nomor: KEP-036/J.A./5/1986 Tentang Larangan Beredar Buku Novel Sejarah Berjudul 'Jejak Langka' dan 'Sang Pemula' Karangan Pramoedya Ananta Toer, Terbitan P.T. Hasta Mitra Jakarta.") Nonsense! As far as *Sang Pemula* is concerned, the reasons given for the ban are factually wrong and anachronistic. Pramoedya's biography of Tirta Adhi Soerjo is not a novel but a solid historical study, while Tirta Adhi Soerjo's writings, both newspaper articles and novels, were originally published in the 1900s and early 1910s, well before the Russian revolution, the foundation of the ISDV/PKI, and the creation of "Socialist Realism." By banning circulation of *Sang Pemula*, the present Indonesian government demonstrated its "public security [*ketenteraman umum*]" consciousness in a more paranoiac way than the "rust en orde"-conscious Dutch Indies government that never banned Tirta's writings.

2. *Pergerakan* [movement] here means the whole phenomenon which, expressed in such forms as newspapers and journals, rallies and meetings, trade unions and strikes, associations and parties, novels, songs, and theaters, struck both the "natives" and the Dutch in the Indies as the "native awakening" in the first quarter of the twentieth century, especially after the rise of the Sarekat Islam in 1912.

3. Twelve newspaper articles included as Tirta Adhi Soerjo's nonfictional works are: "Gerakan Bangsa Cina di Surabaya Melawan Handelsvereniging Amsterdam [Chinese Movement in Surabaya against the Handelsvereniging Amsterdam]" (origi-

of Tirta Adhi Soerjo with many appendices,⁴ or as a collection of historical documents with an extensive introduction to place the documents in a proper historical context,⁵ though in fact it is both.

Since my discussion tends to focus on Pramoedya's biography of Tirta, it is important to put on record beforehand that the book is the first serious attempt to publish a collection of Batavian Malay writings by a first generation *pergerakan* leader. Dutch historians working on the publication of colonial documents have contributed a great deal to the study of Indonesian nationalism by making Dutch-language colonial documents readily available in the last twenty years.⁶ But this also has reinforced the tendency that had long been there for historians to rely heavily on Dutch-language colonial documents for the study of the Indies/Indonesia, with the inevitable result that the rise of Indonesian nationalism is read through Dutch eyes and works are produced which are, historiographically

nally published in *Soenda Berita* in 1904); "Gerakan Cina di Priangan [Chinese in Priangan]" (originally published in *Soenda Berita* in 1904); "Pelajaran buat Perempuan Bumiputera [Lessons for Native Women]" (originally published in *Soenda Berita* in 1904); "Suratnya Orang-Orang Desa Bapangan [The Letter from People of Bapangan Village]" (originally published in *Medan Prijaji* in 1909); "Persdelict: Umpatan--A. Simon Kontra R. M. Tirta Adhi Soerjo [Persdelict: Slander--A. Simon Kontra R. M. Tirta Adhi Soerjo]" (originally published in *Soeloeh Keadilan*, 1909); "Satu Politik di Banyumas [A Policy in Banyumas]" (originally published in *Medan Prijaji* in 1909); "Dreyfusiana di Madiun [Dreyfusiana Madiun]" (originally published as "Drijvusiana di Madiun" in *Medan Prijaji* in 1909); "Kekejaman di Banten [Cruelty in Banten]" (originally published in *Medan Prijaji* in 1909); "Omong-Omong di Hari Lebaran [Chats on the Day of Lebaran]" (originally published in *Medan Prijaji*, 1909); "Turki pada Masa Ini [Turkey in the Present Age]" (originally published in *Medan Prijaji* in 1910); "Apa yang Gubermen Kata dan Apa yang Gubermen Bikin [What the Government Says and What the Government Does]" (originally published in *Medan Prijaji* in 1910); "Oleh-oleh dari Tempat Pembuangan [Souvenirs from the Place of Exile]" (originally published in *Perniagaan* and then in *Medan Prijaji* in 1910). Tirta's stories included in the book are the following: "Cerita Nyai Ratna [The Story of Nyai Ratna]" (originally published in a serialized form in *Medan Prijaji* in 1909); "Mem beli Bini Orang [Buying Another Man's Wife]" (originally published in a serialized form in *Medan Prijaji* in 1909); "Busono" (originally published in Dutch in *De Maleische Pers* and then in Malay in *Medan Prijaji* in 1912).

4. As far as I can gather from W. F. Wertheim's "Een Vergeten Pionier van het Indonesisch Ontwaken: Naar Aanleiding Van: Pramoedya Ananta Toer, *Sang Pemula*, Jakarta 1985," *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 142, 4 [1986]: 467 n. 2, the Dutch translator of *Sang Pemula* seems to have read the text this way, because Wertheim says that most of Tirta Adhi Soerjo's writings are left out of the translation.

5. In this sense the book is comparable to the publications of De Commissie voor Bronnenpublicatie betreffende de Geschiedenis van Nederlandsch-Indie (1900-1942) van het Nederlands Historisch Genootschap, especially *Politiek-Politieoneele Overzichten van Nederlandsch-Indie Deel I 1927-28* and *Deel II 1929-30*, edited with introduction by Harry A. Poeze, Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1982 and 1983).

6. See the publications of De Commissie voor Bronnenpublicatie cited above.

speaking, heirs to Petrus Blumberger's now "classic" trilogy.⁷ Seen in this perspective, *Sang Pemula*, as well as Pramoedya's other works, above all *Tempo Doelo* and *Hikayat Siti Mariah*, can be interpreted as his honorable attempt to take back the study of Indonesian national history from the Dutch to the Indonesian language, and it should serve as a useful reminder that much more was going on in the Indies at the turn of the century than is reflected in the Dutch-language colonial documents.

Now, let me begin my discussion of *Sang Pemula* by briefly summarizing Pramoedya's richly detailed biography of Tirta Adhi Soerjo. Pramoedya's stated purpose in writing the biography is to rehabilitate Tirta not just as "Bapak Pers Nasional [Father of the National Press]" but as the first *pribumi* (native) editor/publisher, one of the first *pribumi* writers who wrote fiction in Batavian Malay (which Pramoedya calls Melayu lingua franca); the founder of modern voluntary associations (the Sarikat Prijaji and the Sarikat Dagang Islamiah); the first *pribumi* to establish a limited liability company [NV, Naamlooze Vennootschap]; the first *pribumi* aristocrat-turned-entrepreneur; the first who called for the emancipation of *pribumi* women, in short as a pioneer of the Indonesian national awakening. Pramoedya does this by reconstructing Tirta's footsteps, relying primarily on a close and penetrating reading of Tirta's publications (especially *Pemberita Betawi*, *Soenda Berita*, *Medan Prijaji*, *Soeloeh Keadilan*, and *Poetri Hindia*), as well as other scattered documents pertaining to him and his activities. He also uses Tirta's autobiographical novel, *Boesono*, as a guide and draws on his own immense knowledge about the Indies at the turn of the century.

Sang Pemula recounts how Tirta Adhi Soerjo was born in 1880 in Blora as a grandson of Bupati Bojonegoro R.M.T. Tirtonoto, was educated in European Elementary School in Bojonegoro, Madiun, and Rembang, and moved to Batavia to enter the STOVIA (School tot Opleiding van Inlandsche Artsen [Native Doctors Training School]) in 1893/94. Tirta never talked in his writings about his childhood, his parents, his school teachers, his schoolmates, and the world in which he grew up "as if he directly became an adult" (p. 9), perhaps because, Pramoedya conjectures, the families with whom he stayed "saw him not as a family member but as a boy who came to 'serve,' to do all the household chores, and did not leave him [time] for playing around" (p. 18).

Then in Batavia Tirta suddenly started to write. He entered the STOVIA at the age of 13 or 14. Liberated from all the ties and strict rules of a *ningrat-priyayi* family, he plunged into Batavian society and soon "absorbed" Batavian

7. J. Th. Petrus Blumberger, *De Communistische Beweging in Nederlandsch-Indie* (Haarlem: Tjeenk Willink, 1928), *De Nationalistische Beweging in Nederlandsch-Indie* (Haarlem: Tjeenk Willink, 1931), and *De Indo-Europeesche Beweging in Nederlandsch-Indie* (Haarlem: Tjeenk Willink, 1939). For a historiographical critique of Petrus Blumberger's works, see prologue of my "Islam and Communism" (Ph.D. dissertation, Cornell University, 1986). For the historiographical continuity of studies on the Indonesian nationalist movement, compare Petrus Blumberger's *De Nationalistische Beweging* with, for instance, John Ingleson, *Road to Exile: The Indonesian Nationalist Movement, 1927-1934*, Southeast Asia Publications Series No. 1 (Singapore: Heinemann Educational Books, 1979). Note that the credentials of both books rest on their access to Dutch language "secret" colonial documents. For a penetrating critique of Ingleson's work, see also Tsuchiya Kenji, "Shokuminchi Seifu Bunsho to Indonesia Minzokushugi Undo [Colonial Documents and the Indonesian Nationalist Movement]," *Tonan Ajia Kenkyu* 19, 4 (March 1982): 473-79.

Malay. In 1894-1895, at the age of 14 or 15, he was already sending his writings to Malay-language Batavian newspapers. He then became an assistant of *Chabar Hindia Olanda*, *Pembrita Betawi*, and *Pewartu Priangan*. At the age of 20, he dropped out of the STOVIA after studying there for six years, joined *Pembrita Betawi* as an editor, and the next year became its editor-in-chief. In his days at *Pembrita Betawi*, he learned the trade from Karel Wijbrands, the editor-in-chief of *Nieuws van den Dag voor Nederlandsch-Indie*, and law from Mr. P. P. Hoornweg. In 1902 he reported on the trip of R.M.Ng. Prodjo Sapotetro of Kasunan to Banten and exposed Resident of Madiun J. J. Donner's scandalous machinations to depose Bupati Madiun Brotoningrat. At the age of 21-22, Tirta was already a star reporter and in 1903 he started his own newspaper, *Soenda Brita*, with the financial help of Bupati Cianjur R.A.A. Prawiradiredja. It was the first newspaper financed, managed, edited, and published by *pribumi*.

Tirta's star rose higher under Governor General J. B. Van Heutsz (1904-1909). In 1904, while remaining as the editor-administrator of *Soenda Brita*, he became the editor of *Staatsblad Melajoe* (the Malay-language edition of the Dutch-language *Staatsblad*) and of *Oranje Nassau*. In 1905 he married Princess Fatimah, the daughter of Sultan Oesman Sjah of Bacan. In 1907, he started his new weekly, *Medan Prijaji* and *Soeloeh Keadilan*, with the financial help of Bupati Prawiradiredja and Sultan Bacan Pangeran Oesman Sjah (Tirta's brother-in-law).

Then in 1908 Tirta, together with Haji Mohammad Arsad and Pangeran Oesman, established NV Javasche Boekhandel en Drukkerij en Handel in Schrijfbehoeften "Medan Prijaji." Not only was this the first limited liability company established by *pribumi* but it also owned one of the first *pribumi* printing houses. Subscribers to *Medan Prijaji* were encouraged to buy the company's shares, and in order to attract shareholders, reduced subscription rates were offered, together with legal aid, and later, after Hotel Medan Prijaji was founded in Batavia, discounts for stays at the hotel. Aside from publishing *Medan Prijaji* and *Soeloeh Keadilan*, the company also engaged in a lucrative batik trade and dealt in stationary.

Of all the newspapers Tirta edited and published, the most important was *Medan Prijaji* (which was so named because it was originally conceived as the organ of the Sarekat Prijaji). Despite its name, however, it was not just for *priyayi* but was in fact "the voice for all the [native] rulers, aristocrats and intellectuals [*bangsawan asali dan fikiran*], *Priyayi*, Native merchants [*saudagar Boemipoetra*], and Officers as well as merchants of other subordinated peoples made equal [in status] with the Sons of the country [*saudagar-saudagar dari bangsa yang terprentah laenja yang dipersamakan dengan Anaknegri*] all over the Dutch Indies" (p. 47). On the masthead of each issue of *Medan Prijaji* was the picture of a man about to shoot with bow and arrow (p. 47). Tirta wrote in his letter to Van Kol (member of the Tweede Kamer 1897-1909) in 1908, that this signified that "Until I die I will shoot with bow and arrow [*memanah*] at the destroyers of the trust [*pengrusak-pengrusak kepercayaan*] of Sri Baginda Ratu" (p. 54).⁸ And as his newspaper articles show, he attacked injustice, tyranny, abuses, exploitation, and machinations committed by officials from a Dutch Resident down to a village chief, and in so doing created his own journalistic style which was inherited by *pergerakan* leaders of the 1910s.⁹

8. For more on how Tirta saw his task as a journalist, see his "Oleh-oleh dari Tempat Pembuangan," especially pp. 246-47.

9. Compare, for instance, Tirta's "Persdelict: Umpatan--A. Simon Kontra R. M.

The time was also opportune for Tirta. Governor General Van Heutsz encouraged Malay-language journalism, and the new press law promulgated in 1906 substituted post- for pre-censorship. Dutch ethici were deeply interested in the "native awakening." As M. J. A. Abendanon (Director of Education, Religion, and Industry, 1900-1905) and Van Kol personally went to Jepara to see and talk with R. A. Kartini, Tirta also made friends with Van Kol, J. Stigter (director of Koningin Wilhelmina School), and other ethici, and more importantly enjoyed direct personal access to Van Heutsz. This provided him with protection from bureaucratic harassment and with respectability among his educated countrymen, foreign orientals, Indos, and ethical-minded Dutch. In 1908 he became chairman of the West Java branch of the "Oost en West" Association. *Poetri Hindia* (started by Tirta in 1908) was given a cash prize by "Ibusuri" Emma, the mother of Queen Wilhelmina. At the same time, however, those whom Tirta shot at with bow and arrow and who felt their persons and careers tarnished by his investigative reporting never forgot what he had done to them. They were waiting for the time to take their revenge. With his exposé of scandals, Tirta's name and activities also entered Dutch Indies State documents, where they were to remain in the form of files and dossiers that could be used against him in the future.

In the meantime, Tirta expanded his activities beyond journalism. Learning from the educational movements of the Tiong Hwa Hwee Kuan (established in 1900) and Jamiat ul-Chair (established in 1905) (by reading in newspapers about their activities), he founded the Sarikat Prijaji in 1906, whose purpose was to promote, through establishment of a fellowship, the education of the sons of *priyayi* and native aristocrats. The idea that led to the formation of the Sarikat Prijaji was the same as that of the Boedi Oetomo. Though the BO attained its celebrated status as the first organizational expression of the "native awakening," the idea and the models for the educational movement were already there in newspapers. Both the Sarikat Prijaji and the BO were products of reading these newspapers. And the BO mainly owed its famed place to the blessing it received from Governor General Idenburg and to Douwes Dekker's enthusiastic Dutch language reporting in *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad*.

Tirta was also impressed by the Chinese success both in boycotting the HVA¹⁰ and in the protection of their interests by the Siang-hwee [Chinese Chamber of Commerce]. He then established the Sarikat Dagang Islamiah in Bogor in 1909 as an association of "Kaum Mardika," his translation into Malay of the Dutch "Vrije Burgers," that is those who earned their livelihood not from service to the government. As the name suggests, the Sarikat Dagang Islamiah was an association of Muslim traders [*saudagar-saudagar* Islam], as the Siang-hwee was an association of Chinese traders.

By 1910, then, Tirta was making numerous experiments based on the ideas and the models familiar to anyone who could read the Dutch- and Malay-language newspapers. He was the editor-publisher of *Medan Prijaji*, which became a daily in 1910 and surpassed in circulation the leading Dutch-language newspapers of the day. His journalistic activities were combined with the first native NV on

Tirta Adhi Soerjo" with Mas Marco Kartodikromo, "Marco: Pro Of Contra Dr. Rinkes," *Doenia Bergerak*, No. 1, 1914, pp. 3-8, reprinted in *Bintang Timur*, August 24, 1962. Note that the titles alone already clearly demonstrate a militant dueling style (Tirta vs. A. Simon, Marco vs. Dr. Rinkes) which must have excited their readers.

10. See his "Gerakan Bangsa Cina di Surabaya Melawan Handelsvereniging Amsterdam."

the one hand and with his "organizational" activities in the Sarikat Prijaji and the Sarikat Dagang Islamiah on the other. As such, his name and activities were well known to the reading public of Indies newspapers. He was a celebrity. Henri Chambert-Loir reports that Tirta's marriage with Princess Fatimah was made into a Jawi-script *syair* sometime in 1910-1912 and lent out at Ahmad Beramka's lending library in Batavia.¹¹

In 1909 Van Heutsz had left office and the new Governor General, A. W. F. Idenburg, came to the Indies. Idenburg was also a proponent of the ethical colonial policy. His "pet," however, was not Tirta but the BO (and, after the Sarekat Islam was born, R. M. Oemar Said Tjokroaminoto). Tirta had lost his most powerful patron. Within a few months he found himself serving a two-month exile in Lampong because of the old charge against him of "*persdelict* [transgression of the press law]." This was a clear sign that he was not in Idenburg's favor. Contributors to *Poetri Hindia* were scared away. European companies were no longer willing to place their advertisements in *Medan Prijaji*. And Dutch and *pribumi* officials who had once been attacked by Tirta in his newspapers finally saw the moment for their revenge.

Nevertheless, on his return from Lampong Tirta kept expanding his experiments. Having made *Medan Prijaji* a daily, he founded Hotel Medan Prijaji in Batavia for the shareholders of the NV "Medan Prijaji." He now styled himself a representative [*wakil*] of the *kaum mardika* [free people]--merchants, peasants, artisans, *orang particulier*,¹² and so on--as against *kaum yang berpangkat* [people with titles] and continued his propaganda for the SDI. In 1910, Tirta Adhi Soerjo claimed in *Medan Prijaji* that the membership of the SDI had almost reached 20,000 all over the Indies despite the Dutch accusation that it was "an expression [*uitingnya*] of Pan-Islamism" (p. 130). One of the SDI branches established was the Surakarta Sarekat Islam headed by Haji Samanhoei. The statutes of the Surakarta SI were those of the SDI. Tirta made a propaganda tour for the SI in early 1912, becoming its advisor, and the editor-in-chief of the SI organ, *Sarotomo*. But in August of that year, when the Surakarta SI was expanding vigorously in the Surakarta countryside, Tirta was taken into custody as security for a debt [*penyanderaan civil*]. At the same time, he was sentenced at the *raad van justitie* in Batavia to another six months exile on the charge of "*persdelict*." He was detained in custody until early 1913 when he went into exile on Ambon.

Pramoedya sees the man most responsible for Tirta's removal from the SI as Dr. D. A. Rinkes, then the deputy advisor for native affairs. Rinkes bet his career on taming the huge SI, for which purpose he had to eliminate Tirta from the organization. Yet in doing so Rinkes went beyond the limits allowed by the government and had to wipe away Tirta's footprints from the rise of the Surakarta SI. Rinkes' reports on the SI denied Tirta's role in it and also any relationship between the SDI and the SI. Tirta was made a "non-person." Once he was gone, a new development took place. The boycott, once used by Chinese traders to protect their interests against Dutch business, was now employed by the SI

11. Henri Chambert-Loir, "Malay Literature in the XIXth Century: The Fadli Connection," unpublished draft in my possession. I would like to thank Hendrik Maier for sending me this fascinating paper.

12. *Orang particulier* [private person] means people who, educated in Western-style schools, joined in Dutch private business as white-collar workers. They formed the native salaried middle class with government *priyayi* in the early twentieth century.

against the Chinese. Fighting flared between SI members and Chinese. The Indies government had succeeded in making the SI not an anticolonial political movement but an economic and anti-Chinese movement.

After serving his six months of exile in Ambon, Tirta returned to Java in early 1915, but not to the public scene. *Medan Prijaji* as well as NV "Medan Prijaji" were dead. He could not lead the SI and *Sarotomo*. Hotel Medan Prijaji had fallen into the hands of R. Goenawan, his former protégé and now the chairman of the Batavia SI. Rinkes noted in his report in 1915 that after Tirta returned to Java he went here and there but was finished as an "agitator, even [as] a behind-the-scenes figure." Tirta Adhi Soerjo died in 1918 in Hotel Samirana, the former Hotel Medan Prijaji, in Goenawan's custody, and was buried in Mangga Dua, Batavia.

As I hope the above summary shows, Pramoedya's well-documented and richly detailed biography of Tirta Adhi Soerjo clearly succeeds in rehabilitating Tirta as a pioneer of the Indonesian national awakening. The only points that are not fully convincing are Pramoedya's account of Tirta's role in the rise of the Surakarta SI and Rinkes' role in destroying Tirta. First, as to Tirta's role in the SI, it is perhaps misplaced to ask who was the founder of the Surakarta SI--Tirta or Samanhoedi. Tirta certainly drafted, signed, and submitted the statutes of the Surakarta SI to the local authorities for recognition in early 1912. He also did make a propaganda tour for the Surakarta SI. But the organization had been there for some time in the form of Kong Sing/Rekso Roemekso, a *ronda* organization, led by Haji Samanhoedi. What Tirta did was to baptize the Rekso Roemekso as the Sarekat Islam, a "modern" association with statutes.¹³ This double parenthood of the Surakarta SI also explains its nominal confusion: in statutory terms the Surakarta SI was a branch of the SDI of Bogor, but it called itself SI, not SDI, from the start.¹⁴

Second, Pramoedya's picture of Rinkes is, I think, larger than the real Rinkes, a deputy advisor for native affairs (or we may say, an intelligence officer before the full-fledged secret police had yet been formed) in the service of Governor General Idenburg. Certainly Rinkes was not a well-meaning idealist favoring the "native awakening." Rather, he bet his bureaucratic career on taming the SI, and in his reports denied Tirta's role in the rise of the Surakarta SI. To read his reports on the SI (and for that matter Hazeu's) as something scholarly and objective is naive to say the least. Yet we also have to keep in mind that when Rinkes was writing his first report on the Surakarta SI (dated August 24, 1912), he had been the deputy advisor for native affairs for only seven or eight months. He may well have been quite ignorant of Tirta and the SDI and, during his investigation into the SI in Solo (which took place between August 10 and 24, 1912), have been given false information by his informers. These were most likely the very people who were running the Surakarta SI. At that time they were in a state of shock because of the Resi-

13. For the initial phase of the Surakarta SI and the roles Tirta and Samanhoedi played in it, see chapter 2 ("The Birth of the Pergerakan") of my "Islam and Communism."

14. Though I have not yet come across solid evidence, H. Samanhoedi and Tirta may have planned to establish the Surakarta SDI along with the Surakarta SI as a NV, anticipating the purchase of a printing firm and the publication of *Sarotomo*. This is precisely what happened in Semarang, where the Semarang SI established NV Sarekat Dagang Islam Semarang which owned a printing firm and published *Sinar Jawa*.

dent's order to suspend all SI activities (August 10, 1912), and they were therefore probably more than eager to distance themselves from "unrespectable" Tirto who had just been prosecuted (July 27, 1912) and then sentenced (August 22, 1912) to a six-month exile.¹⁵ Rinkes may well have found out the truth later. But as a "good" bureaucrat and an expert on the SI, he stuck to his initial position. And once Tjokroaminoto emerged as the leader of the SI with his help, not only had he accomplished his task of taming the SI, but he had established himself as the undisputed "authority" on the SI and was soon appointed advisor for native affairs (on July 23, 1913, that is three weeks after the government granted legal recognition to the Centraal Sarekat Islam). His first report on the SI, dated August 24, 1912, was printed in *Bescheiden betref-fende de vereeniging "Sarekat Islam"* (Batavia, 1913) while Resident of Surakarta G. F. van Wijk's report on the SI dated August 11, 1912, which noted Tirto's role in the SDI and its link with the Surakarta SI, was not published. Rinkes' report was thus made the first "authoritative" document on the rise of the SI. Seen in the light of such "politics of documents," it is more likely to have been Rinkes' simple ignorance and his subsequent success as the case officer of the SI than his intentional fabrication that erased Tirto's footprints from the rise of the SI.

These points are, however, minor. The more important contributions made by Pramoedya in his biography of Tirto and his collection of Tirto's writings are that he has convincingly and richly portrayed the hitherto marginally known figure in center stage, and by so doing he requires that we rethink not only the significance of Tirto and his activities in the Indonesian national awakening but also the conventional understanding of the rise of Indonesian nationalism. It has long been commonsensical to think that the "natives" were awakened as a nation with the coming of the ethical era, the age of "progress." Kartini was seen in this light as the first individual native awakening, because she wrote in Dutch to her Dutch pen-friend, "I have so desired to make an acquaintance with a modern girl." Was Kartini then a product of the ethical era, though she lived most of her life in the nineteenth century, before the ethical era began? Hardly.¹⁶ The fact was that she was adopted by Abendanon as the signifier of the "native awakening" in the ethical era. This partly explains why Tirto, who was not adopted by any Dutch ethicist, was "forgotten." Yet the more important question is: how are we to understand Tirto's (and for that matter Kartini's) place in the "native" awakening? Comparing Kartini and Tirto, Pramoedya suggests that both of them were "linked [*ikatan*]" by "the same spirit of the time [*sema-ngat jaman yang sama*]" "aroused by readings, above all [of] newspapers [*dibang-kitkan oleh bacaan, terutama pers*]" (p. 96). How are we to understand this pregnant phrase?

To make the question less abstract, let me first quote a passage from Tirto's "Persdelict: Umpatan--A. Simon Kontra R. M. Tirto Adhi Soerjo" (originally published in *Soeloeh Keadilan* in 1909).

15. For Rinkes' report on the Surakarta SI dated August 24, 1912, see Van der Wal, ed., *De Opkomst van de Nationalistische Beweging in Nederlands-Indie: Een Bronnenpublikatie*, pp. 86-93. For the situation of the Surakarta SI in August 1912, see chapter 2 of my "Islam and Communism."

16. This question is raised in Kenji Tsuchiya's provocative yet convincing "Kartini Sairon: 19-seiki Jawa Bunka-ron he no Ichi Shikaku," *Oranda to Indonesia*, ed. Kurihara Fukuya and Akira Nagazumi (Tokyo: Yamakawa Shuppan, 1986), pp. 217-71. My following discussion on Tirto is inspired by this article as well as by Pramoedya's *Sang Pemula*, *Tempo Doeloe*, and *Hikayat Siti Mariah*.

Soerodimedjo [from Desa Bapangan, District Cangkrep, Purworejo, who though elected village chief, was not appointed to the position because of the machinations of Aspirant Controleur A. Simon and Wedana Cangkrep Mas Tjokrosentono, and was sentenced to 14 days of forced labor at the Politie Rol] came to us [*kita*] to ask for protection. We [*kita*] smiled and we then told him that he had the right [to ask for] protection to Sri Paduka Yang Dipertuan Besar Gouverneur Generaal, as far as it is the foremost duty of Sri Paduka to protect us Sons of the Country [*kami Anak Negeri*]. And we said to him:

- You [*kau*] know the palace behind my house [*rumahku*]? Welnu [well] there lives our guardian [*wali kita*], that is Sri Paduka Tuan Van Heutsz, the guardian who is just and loves you people [*kamu orang*]. If you [*kowe*] don't believe that, I [*aku*] will now send a letter to his Adjutant so that you [*kowe*] may have an audience [*menghadap*] with the guardian who is just, and later in the evening I'll certainly get the reply already and you [*kowe*] will be allowed an audience with Sri Paduka, that is your [*kau*] king, because he is the representative [*wakil*] of our [*kita*] King. Do you know who is the king of us Javanese [*kita orang Jawa*]?

- I do.

- Nu [now], who, dan [then]?

- Sunan [of] Solo.

- Welneen [well no], no, he is not obliged to know anything. Your king [*Rajamu*] is Sri Baginda, Wilhelmina, she is the King who is the wisest, the most loved and famous everywhere.

- People say, if a little man [*orang kecil*] wants to have an audience [he] must ask beforehand to the head of the state [*kepala negeri*].

- It may well be, but if you [*kau*] want to know the justness of your guardian [*adilnya walimu*], just see the reply to the letter, understand?

En [and], [this was] not wrong. In the evening we [*kita*] got the reply from the palace that Soerodimedjo may have an audience at a specific time on a specific day. (p. 209)

The passage explicitly makes two points: first that "our [*kita*] King" is not the Sunan of Solo but Queen Wilhelmina and that Governor General Van Heutsz is her representative; and second that the Governor General's foremost duty is to protect "us Sons of the Country [*kami Anak Negeri*]." Here we are seeing Tirto's essentially Batavia-centric "national" perspective, in which the Sunan of Solo "is not obliged to know anything" and "the Country" of *kami Anak Negeri* could only mean the Dutch Indies ruled by the Governor General. The tone of the dialogue clearly shows that "we [*kita*]" (Tirto and his readers) would be amused by Soerodimedjo's "ignorant" answer, "Sunan [of] Solo," and that Tirto took it for granted his readers shared the Batavia-centric "national" perspective with him. This is perhaps not that surprising. Tirto wrote the passage in the late 1900s, by which time the Dutch Indies "van Sabang tot Merauke" had been created for some time by Van Heutsz, and the map of the Dutch Indies/Indonesia now familiar to us had perhaps been hung on the wall of some government offices.¹⁷

17. See the picture of the office of an officer of justice in Padang, taken before 1905, and the map on the wall of the office in E. Breton de Nijs, *Tempo Doeloe: Fotografische documenten uit het oude Indie 1870-1914* (Amsterdam:

Yet it would be wrong to think that "we [*kita*]" were suddenly awakened to this new consciousness with the opening of the ethical era. Batavian Malay, the language in which Tirta wrote the passage, was long in the making by largely polyglot Batavia-based Indo, Chinese, and native journalists and had been shared by the readers of Malay-language newspapers since the late nineteenth century.¹⁸ The ways in which people experienced Java had also been changing since the 1870s when the railway gradually started to replace the Grote Postweg. (The process was completed with the establishment of the trans-Javanese railway in the middle of the 1890s).

The new Batavia-centric "national" conception of the Indies had been in the making since the last quarter of the nineteenth century. This will become clearer if we turn to the passage in "Cerita Nyai Ratna" that describes the fictional trip of Nyai Ratna and her lover (STOVIA student R. Sambodo) to "Java." It goes this way (p. 318):

By morning train the couple [*dua orang kekasih*] left for Sukabumi, seen off by a houseboy and a housemaid. There they rented a furnished house. A week later they went to Central Java. In Maos they stayed at a Chinese eating house [*rumah makan*]. In the register of the eating house their names were recorded as Raden Prawiro with Raden Ayu. After writing their names, Sambodo showed it to Ratna, who replied.

- I hope [it is] fulfilled.

The next day they continued their trip to Yogya. They went for a ride to see around the underground palace remains ([*bekas keraton bawah tanah*] called Tamansari, [and] saw a lion, a tiger and an elephant within the palace. From Yogya they went to Magelang to see Borobudur and Mendut and then returned to Yogya. In Solo Ratna bought the whole stock [*memborong*] of batik cloth. After [they were] satisfied to see around, they continued their trip to Surabaya, then to Tosari, then back to Semarang, to Cirebon, and then to Priangan. . . .

No extensive explanation would be necessary. Nyai Ratna and Mas Sambodo were tourists. They saw around "Java" as we still do. The readers of "Cerita Nyai Ratna" could follow their trip and themselves become tourists, because they knew from their reading, if not from their trips, what Tamansari, Solonese Batik, Tosari, and so on meant. This image of "Java" as tourist objects undoubtedly originated in Dutch and was translated into Malay. And with this image came the Batavia-centric "national" perspective in Dutch, which then filtered down into Batavian Malay through "fictional" and "nonfictional" stories.

If the "national" conception had long been gestating in Dutch and Batavian Malay, and Tirta was a product of the age of train and newspapers, what was Tirta's significance in the national awakening?

In seeking an answer, we may find a clue in the subtitles of two of Tirta's three novels reprinted in *Sang Pemula*: "The Story of Nyai Ratna: How a faithful

Querido, 1961), p. 118.

18. For Batavian Malay, see Claudine Salmon's fascinating article "A Note on the So-called Sino-Malay Language," in Claudine Salmon, *Literature in Malay by the Chinese of Indonesia: A Provisional Annotated Bibliography*, Etudes Insulin-diennes-Archipel, 3 (Paris: Editions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 1981), Appendix II, pp. 115-42.

wife became wicked, A story which really happened in West Java [Cerita Nyai Ratna: Betapa seorang isteri setia telah menjadi jahat, Satu cerita yang sungguh sudah terjadi di Jawa Kulon]" and "Buying Another Man's Wife: A Story That Really Happened in Periangon [Membeli Bini Orang: Sebuah Cerita Yang Sungguh Sudah Terjadi Di Periangon]." As Chambert-Loir rightly observes, these stories are "news literature," retelling in prose the news items already known to their readers from the newspapers.¹⁹ "News literature" had existed since the late nineteenth century, written by Indo, Chinese, and some native writers.²⁰ Tirta wrote the stories as they did, retelling the news already known to his readers.

What Tirta did in his "nonfictional" activities was essentially the same as in his "fictional" works. The ideas of, and the models for, his newspapers, his voluntary associations, his NV, his legal aid, his call for the emancipation of women, were all there in Dutch- and Malay-language newspapers and already known to their readers. What he did was to put the ideas into action, following the models already in existence and combining them to support his whole experiments. "We [kita], Anak Negeri" thus could see the familiar ideas in action in Tirta's *Medan Prijaji* and *Poetri Hindia*, combined with his NV, his Sarikat Prijaji and Sarikat Dagang Islamiah, his hotel business, and his legal aid. The ideas were no longer in the air but on the ground. Then others could and did follow him without perceiving his footprints. As Tirta was one of the last writers of *nyai* stories in which "*berahi* [sexual love]" as the motor of a story integrates Dutch, Indo, foreign oriental, and *pribumi* figures in a way wholly different from the racially neatly demarcated plural society, he belonged to the last generation of *pribumi* who knew the Indies before their "awakening."²¹ Those who followed him no longer wrote *nyai* stories but love [*cinta*] stories, in which the sweetness of love went shoulder to shoulder with the sense of liberation coming from the *pergerakan*.²² Tirta Adhi Soerjo was a pioneer of the "national" awakening in this special sense, together with Kartini, Douwes Dekker (who did what Tirta did, only in the Dutch language) and perhaps several others. By *Sang Pemula* Pramoedya has succeeded not only in rehabilitating Tirta Adhi Soerjo but, more importantly, in opening a new perspective on Indonesia's national awakening.

19. Chambert-Loir, "Malay Literature in the XIXth Century: The Fadli Connection."

20. See novels reprinted in Pramoedya's *Tempo Doeloe*.

21. For the way in which "*berahi*" integrates nineteenth-century Dutch, Indo, Chinese, and Javanese figures, see Haji Mukti's fascinating *Hikayat Siti Mariah*.

22. See for instance Semaoen's *Hikayat Kadiroen* and Soemantri's *Rasa Merdeka*.

