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Writing novels under the New Order: state censorship, complicity, and literary production in Indonesia, 1977-1986

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Chapter 1

Introduction

“If it was not me, then who?”

Ahmad Tohari

Statement of Problem

With legacies ranging from essays, poems, short stories, and novels, the Indonesian writer Ahmad Tohari (1948-), from Central Java, is an all-round literary darling in Indonesia and has been gracing the literary scene for almost five decades now. His works were well-received and have been translated into many languages and studied by scholars across the globe. Initial recognition for Tohari first came in 1975, when he won the *Sayembara Kincir Emas* from the Radio Nederland Werelomroep in Hilversum, the Netherlands.¹ But, it was his trilogy, *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk* (*The Dancer of Paruk Hamlet* — published by Gramedia in 1982, 1985, and 1986, respectively), that has brought him true fame and the reputation that he maintains until today, which is as ‘the author of the people’ for his courage in advocating for the poor and his resistance against the government for exercising arbitrary and oppressive power, and dehumanizing its own citizens.²

Tohari’s trilogy, which prior to being published as a novel ran as serial in *Kompas* daily in 1981, centers around the anti-communist purge of 1965-66 — a pogrom where hundreds of thousands to a million people died in the organized killings of suspected communist sympathizers, and tens of thousands others ‘were variously tortured and imprisoned without trial, some for over a decade, while countless others suffered exile, stigmatization, harassment, ostracism, and abrogation of civil rights that endure until the present.’³ According to the dominant narrative in Indonesian historiography, the communists were the only party to blame and that the military was not involved in the aftermath — suggesting that the killings were a violent manifestation of previous local, so-called ‘horizontal’, conflicts among different groups or spontaneous chaos that took place sporadically, in unsystematic and uncoordinated attacks. This narrative was (and still is) regarded by many in Indonesia as the true version of the history of that period — a constructed history that was taught and imposed in schools from elementary levels to high schools and universities. The government closed its doors to open discussion about the matter. For foreign authors with ample access to resources in libraries outside Indonesia, this period was always open to scrutiny. By contrast, in Indonesia, ever since the

¹ Chaired by A. Teeuw, the team of judges of the short story contest consisted of literary critics and authors from both the Netherlands and Indonesia, namely G. Termorshuizen, J.W. de Vries, H.B. Jassin, Umar Kayam, and Ajip Rosidi. See, Navis 1976, p. i.

² Krismantari 2011. Available at <https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2011/11/04/ahmad-tohari-the-return-people-s-writer.html>. [accessed on August 10, 2021].

³ Zurbuchen, 2002, p. 565.

government passed a Congressional Law that forbids the study and dissemination of any forms of Marxism-Leninism-Communism in 1966, in addition to the scarcity of sources and/or political implications that might arise from writing about the theme, hardly any account had ever been written. As a result, under the New Order period, no Indonesian academic studies were published unless they conformed to the state-sanctioned history.⁴

According to Foulcher, ‘throughout most of the 1970s, creative literature in Indonesia was almost totally silent on the background and meaning of the killings of 1965-66, the very specific topic or term that did not collocate with the values of the New Order regime (1966-1998).’⁵ The aftermath in the lives of individuals who witnessed this tragedy was also skipped over. The traumatic nature of the experience seemed to have been expunged from the memories of witnesses, and inhibits a wider group of people from talking. Furthermore, ‘remembered history seemed to have no place in the national literature as prominent writers turned inward to highly subjective explorations of personal experience,’⁶ since they understood that ‘the historical legacy of these events was a matter of grave contention within Indonesia.’⁷ Furthermore, censorship was so rampant that the state turned into an omnipresent ‘regime of prohibition’, characterized by a concentration of power and the obstruction of serious political competition or scrutiny of that power.⁸ The regime steered away from challenges while exercising widespread control over its citizens and ‘held the power to gather and use any evidence to harass and punish authors whenever the timing was appropriate.’⁹ However, against all odds, Tohari spoke up and openly addressed this theme in his aforementioned trilogy in which he recounted his trauma and expressed the anger and torment that originated from his experience witnessing the massacre of alleged communists in his village. Already 17 years old when the tragedy took place, Tohari’s personal traumatic experience was firmly recorded in his memory.

In a public talk at the Writers Unlimited Winternachten in The Hague with Dutch journalist Michel Maas, on January 19, 2013, and in a private conversation with me in December of the same year, Tohari recalled that when he was writing his

⁴ There are at least three standard works that were published and supported the state sanctioned line, namely: Nugroho Notosusanto and Ismail Saleh, *The Coup Attempt of the September 30 Movement in Indonesia* (Jakarta: Pembimbing Masa, 1967); Komando Operasi Pemulihan Keamanan dan Ketertiban, *Bahan-bahan Pokok G.30.S/PKI dan Penghantjurannya* (Jakarta: Komando Operasi Pemulihan Keamanan dan Ketertiban, 1968) Komando Operasi Pemulihan Keamanan dan Ketertiban, *Gerakan 30 September Partai Komunis Indonesia (G.30.S./PKI)* (Jakarta: Komando Operasi Pemulihan Keamanan dan Ketertiban, 1978); Sekretariat Negara Republik Indonesia, *Gerakan 30 September Pemberontakan Partai Komunis Indonesia: Latar Belakang, Aksi, dan Penumpasannya* (Jakarta: Sekretariat Negara Republik Indonesia, 1994).

⁵ Foulcher 1990, p. 101.

⁶ Foulcher 1990, p. 101.

⁷ Bodden 2006, p. 661.

⁸ See Farid (1997); Jaringan Kerja Budaya, (1999); Fauzan, (2003), and Yusuf,(2010).

⁹ Yamamoto 2011, p 13.

novels in 1981 he felt as if a gun was pointed at his head.¹⁰ He was brought back to the perilous political situation he had been in and reminded of the maximal risks of ever being discovered by the repressive government for bringing up the topic in a light that was different from what the state had outlined. He was well aware of the widespread state censorship and the potential repercussions that might follow, especially because he discussed in the novels some details about the communist cause, political violence, the killings, repression, random arrests, inhuman treatment, and even expressed criticism against the military, all of which had been brushed over or was omitted from the national history which was written by the New Order.

Interestingly, Tohari's novels were left untouched by state censorship.¹¹ While every other writer suffered from what Pramoedya Ananta Toer calls the 'theft of rights,' a condition in which authors suffered restrictions on their profession, restrictions on their right to state their personal opinions, restrictions on their right to vote, restrictions on their right to travel, and discrimination in the form of a special code placed on his official identity card that differentiates him from other citizens.¹² Tohari, however, was never robbed of his personal freedom. Moreover, he never suffered the repercussions he feared nor were his works ever banned or censored by the state, even though in his trilogy he makes clear that the killings resulted from the close cooperation between the army and paramilitary groups.¹³ In fact, the period in which he wrote the novels was the most productive period in his life, which was evident in respectable sales of his novels, reprints, and even adaptations to other artistic media, such as motion pictures.¹⁴ In addition, by both literary aficionados and national cultural institutes, the novels were praised almost universally.¹⁵

Ahmad Tohari was not the only one to have experienced such a fortunate condition. A small group of writers wrote their novels independently from each other about the same theme. Among them were two other literary authors, namely the journalist and novelist Yudhistira ANM Massardi (1954-), from West Java, with his

¹⁰ Interview with Ahmad Tohari on November 6, 2017 in Jatilawang, Banyumas. On both occasions, Tohari said that he could have been shot dead because of his writings while making a hand gesture: a finger gun to his head. Later in 2017, when I visited him in Wangon during my fieldwork, he repeated the same story, the same hand gesture — no more, no less, which indicates consistency in his memory and story.

¹¹ This is not to diminish the fear and pressure that Tohari felt when he was escorted by soldiers to the military base, but compared to the wholesale repression faced by Pramoedya, who became *persona non grata* for life, the pressure faced by Tohari was minimal.

¹² Pramoedya wrote an Op-Ed in the New York Times on Thursday, December 10, 1992, demanding state rulers to let go of the unworthy mentality that leads them to use violence. He was previously robbed of his personal freedom, profession, and livelihood, the right to defend himself from libel and accusations, the right to a fair trial, land ownership, a house and its contents, during the best, most productive and most creative periods in his life.

¹³ Hanafi 2016. Available at <https://www.thejakartapost.com/academia/2016/09/30/can-fiction-ever-be-an-alternative-to-history.html> [accessed on 3 October 2019].

¹⁴ Tohari's novel was first adapted into a film *Darah dan Mahkota Ronggeng* (*Blood and the Dancer's Crown*) in 1983. In 2011, a more ambitious project to make the story into a big screen experience resulted in another adaptation directed by Ifa Ifansyah with the title *Sang Penari* (*The Dancer*).

¹⁵ Riyanto 2006, pp.7-8, 21.

Mencoba Tidak Menyerah, (*Trying Not to Surrender 1979*) formerly *Aku Bukan Komunis* (*I Am Not a Communist*) and, likewise from West Java, the famous Sundanese poet and cultural entrepreneur, Ajip Rosidi (1938-2020) with his only novel *Anak Tanahair: Secercah Kisah* (*Son of the Fatherland: a Brief Story*, 1985). In these novels, they detail the mass killings of 1965-66 in a manner similar to the way Tohari recounts *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk*. *Mencoba Tidak Menyerah* portrays the systematic massacre and politics of fear through the eyes of a small boy who is searching for his father after he was made to disappear due to his affiliation with the communists,¹⁶ while *Anak Tanahair: Secercah Kisah* depicts the ‘unremitting conflict between the Islamic groups and the communists in Indonesia that leads to the killings.’¹⁷ And just like *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk*, they were also first serialized by the same newspaper, *Kompas*, except for Rosidi’s novel, and later published in novel form by the same publishing house.

In this regard, I find it remarkable that the above literary works slipped through the regime’s net of censorship and even enjoyed such literary reputation. This demands serious scrutiny. Existing scholarship that has examined these literary works mainly takes this phenomenon for granted as it focuses more on the role of literary works as ‘social documents’¹⁸ and reliable alternatives that ‘close the gap in the Indonesian history which was initially left open and unattended’¹⁹, or on the authors’ valor and resistance as they ‘reveal the coercion and violence exercised by the state over its citizens that have been neglected or denied in the writing of the nation’s history.’²⁰ These scholars, however, did not reflect on the question why amidst nationwide repression and pervasive censorship these literary works were not censored or banned — the very central question which this dissertation aims to answer.

Research Questions

This thesis explores how and why the abovementioned novels of Ahmad Tohari, Yudhistira ANM Massardi, and Ajip Rosidi, even though centralizing and describing what was traumatic and forbidden, escaped censorship. This inquiry is interesting on a higher level because not only can it give insight into the ways literary censorship functioned, but also more generally, into the culture and politics of publishing under authoritarian regime. In this regard, this thesis concentrates on the period from the late 1970s to the late 1980s in which the subjects of research, namely the novels written by the three authors, were produced. A key argument is that in this period every publication was subject to a well-organized system of state censorship, and anyone who challenged it by propagating non-state-sanctioned narratives would face dire consequences.

¹⁶ Hanafi 2016.

¹⁷ Hoadley 2005, p. 52.

¹⁸ Riyanto 2006, p. 29.

¹⁹ Hoadley 2001, p. 267.

²⁰ Hoadley 2005, p. 118; Hanafi 2016.

Within the framework of a larger debate on literary history and censorship studies, this research strives to delve deeper into the role of literature in narrating Indonesia's bleakest pages of history, namely the events of 1965-66 and the mass killings that followed. Keeping in mind that the 'historical legacy of the events was a matter of grave contention'²¹ within Indonesia and that to speak directly and write with honesty about them could become fraught with danger, the central question that this dissertation asks is: While hundreds or even thousands of books were banned and burned like those of Pramoedya Ananta Toer, why could books by Ahmad Tohari, Yudhistira ANM Massardi, and Ajip Rosidi get away with recounting the trauma of the mass killings and the violence that surrounded them as well as being sympathetic in portraying the victims in their works of fiction which were written and published when the New Order regime was at the height of its power and exerted maximum social and political control?²² While investigating these cases, I aim to address the broader question about what they tell us about the nature of censorship under the New Order.

In connection to the central question, the structure of this thesis is guided by the following interlinked questions:

1. Why and how did the writers take up the issues of the events of 1965 and recount the effects of their aftermath on those stigmatized by the New Order regime even though they knew that the degree of risks was maximal? Did the novels really pose resistance to the state narrative on the Indonesian mass killings 1965-66? What literary strategies did they use in this creative process and in their novels?
2. If their escape had anything to do with mechanisms of state censorship, how was the state censorship organized? Was there certain complicity between the censors and the publishers or authors?
3. What was the role of publishing companies and editors in this process?
4. Since authoritarian regimes are characterized, on the one hand, by censorship of all media, including literary writings, but on the other hand also harness the same media to propagate their own messages and objectives, how likely is it that the state saw the criticisms posed in the literary works but deliberately tolerated them?

The Study in Context of Existing Scholarship

In the context of the development of Indonesian contemporary literature and its connection with historical theme, this study builds on the work of pioneering literary

²¹ Bodden 2006, p. 661.

²² Excessive control may indicate that the regime is actually at its weakest points. It is unable to address issues or contestations that it resorts to banning this and that. However, according to Ricklefs, the New Order regime in that period was at its crest of power, marked by 'substantial new progress in health and education, rapid economic growth, and forcible fusion of political parties.' Ricklefs 2001, pp. 345, 366, 367.

scholars and historians who have previously discussed how '1965' is portrayed in Indonesian literature of the same period, namely Keith Foulcher (1990), Jakob Sumardjo (1991), Maman Mahayana and Oyon Sofyan (1997), Anna-Greta Nilsson Hoadley (2001 and 2005), Wijang J. Riyanto (2006), and Yoseph Yapi Taum (2014, 2015).

Foulcher discusses the portrayal of victims in contemporary Indonesian fiction that to some extent operated as a medium for making history, whereas Jakob Sumardjo, Maman Mahayana, and Oyon Sofyan highlight the idea of literature as a means for the authors to reflect their personal experiences as participants in the processes of social and historical changes. Hoadley, quoting Adorno, positions literary works as 'a negative to reality' that posits a challenging view against the accepted version of history and contradicting the regime's orthodoxy of the events of 1965-66 and their aftermath.²³ Riyanto focuses on Tohari's creative processes in the writing of fiction and argues that a well-researched literary product can capture historical realities and can be read as a social-cum-historical document.²⁴ Meanwhile, Taum elaborates on the relation of literature and politics from a Gramscian perspective and views literature in a network of power relations and as a means of humanistic resistance.²⁵

While in agreement with the findings of Foulcher, Sumardjo, Mahayana and Sofyan, and Riyanto, this thesis finds, however, that there is a vacuum left by Hoadley and Taum. As this thesis will show, the two studies overlook the tension and narrative complexities relating to censorship that the novels under scrutiny possess. I argue that it is not merely about Indonesian literature versus New Order orthodoxy as Hoadley argues, but more about the interplay and interconnectedness between the two. Contradicting state orthodoxy is not always present in the novels. As a matter of fact, it is generally overshadowed by the novels' conformation to the state's view. In their attempts to discuss the involvement of the state in the Indonesian killings, the novels often find themselves in compliance with the state's narrative about the killings and use them as the trajectory on which the story is told. In a similar vein, this thesis also offers a rebuttal to Taum, who argues that the literary works at the heart of this study pose direct and immediate resistance against the official state view of Indonesian mass killings.²⁶ They do, but at the same time they also surrender to the dominant narrative.

Besides scholarship on contemporary Indonesian literature, this thesis finds it important that studies on the New Order Indonesia in which the literary works were produced be examined. A discussion on the nature of the state that includes both its strengths and weaknesses will explain the complexity of the Indonesian cultural scene, particularly in regard to the fact that the widespread repression in the form of

²³ Hoadley 2005, p. 2-3.

²⁴ Riyanto 2006, p. 8-9.

²⁵ Taum 2015, p. 37-41, 264-269.

²⁶ Taum 2015.

control over cultural domains, i.e. censorship, was accompanied by simultaneous growth in literary production which resulted from the rise of the middle class.

In the context of censorship studies, this thesis attempts to gain a fuller understanding on the theories of censorship, especially in relation to exploring how censorship works. I engage with recent developments in censorship studies as they help to illuminate the ways that books were made, sold, and received in a repressive state. In contrast to the dominant view that censorship curbs literary growth, the increase of Indonesian literary writings was paradoxically, and partly, shaped by censorship. Recent developments in censorship studies, which I will elaborate on briefly below, provide the theoretical base for my inquiry. Literary scholars and historians, Jansen (1988), Burt (1994), Darnton (1995, 2014), Yamamoto (2011), and Bunn (2015), ‘demonstrate that censorship is rarely static, systematic, unilateral, stable, or always fruitful, but is often dynamic, circumstantial, and conducive to clashes of interest. It is marked by dispersal and displacement.’²⁷

New Order Indonesia: A Setting

The New Order was not an entirely new establishment even though from the very beginning it attempted to distance itself from the previous regime by formulating contrasting labels: New Order versus Old Order, which was formerly known as Sukarno’s Guided Democracy. In both regimes, the state had a prominent role in social, economic, political, and cultural changes.²⁸ During the New Order, however, the state had become so powerful and influential that it managed to successfully overcome political polarization and garnered greater societal loyalty.²⁹

Within only a few years under the New Order, state bureaucracy solidified and penetrated deeply into the society as the national development program started. This process was accompanied by the de-politicization of society, one approach of which was by means of reducing the number of political parties, and limiting the power outside the bureaucracy. Subsequently, the bureaucracy became very effective in neutralizing both existing and emerging contesting forces.³⁰ The backbone of the New Order was the military, especially the army. Once the New Order came into power, the army became the major power in running the state and its bureaucracy — the main vehicle for national development.

Controlling the bureaucratic institutions allowed the central powers of the state to direct national development policies and programs. The outcome of this

²⁷ Burt 1994, p. 17.

²⁸ There has been extensive scholarship that elaborates on the strength of the state. To name but a few: Mas’oed 1989, Robison 1982, 1986; Budiman 1991, Farchan Bulkin 1982; Mackie 1984; Santoso 1993, Mahfud M.D 1993.

²⁹ According to Ichlasul Amal, there are three determinant factors that diminish challenges, i.e. the Armed Forces, limitation of political parties, which lead to mass depolitization, which was further enhanced by state penetration into society while widening its patronage networks to maintain people’s loyalty. See Amal 1992. See also Hikam 1996, pp. 3-7.

³⁰ Amal 1992, pp. 131-138; Mas’oed 1989, pp 1-27, and pp. 197-217; Budiman 1991, pp.23, 47-72.

control was the establishment of a top-down decision-making process. The state also introduced the concept of dual function of the Armed Forces (*dwifungsi* ABRI), which allowed the military to expand its traditional defense role to become the sole arbiter of how transformation would be led and with whom to collaborate. High-ranking military officers were placed in strategic positions, serving in cabinet ministries, as governors, in the office of attorney generals, and the state secret police KOPKAMTIB (*Komando Operasi Pemulihan Keamanan dan Ketertiban*, Law and Order Restoration Command) — resulting in a consolidation of control over local government and society.

Sustained with strong bureaucracy and military, the state comes to monopolize the means and use of coercion as the instruments for control,³¹ over people, capital, and culture.³² In Chapter 2, I discuss the role of these strong bureaucratic and militaristic state bodies in the process of cultural and literary production.

National Development, Culture, and Language

The official objective of national development under the New Order state was actually human development. The guidelines of the state policies (GBHN, *Garis-Garis Besar Haluan Negara* – Broad Guidelines of State Policy), as formulated by the Decree of the People’s Consultative Assembly of the Republic of Indonesia No. II/MPR/1983, states that

‘National development is the development of the man and the whole Indonesian society in all aspects of life. This means development is not merely the pursuit of material gains such as food, clothing, housing, health, and so on, or spiritual satisfactions like education, the sense of security, responsible freedom of expression, the sense of justice, and so on, but also as a proper and harmonious balance of both. Development shall be spread evenly throughout the country that it is not just for the benefit of a certain group or part of the society but intended for the whole society and must be really enjoyed by the whole people as improvement of their standard of living containing social justice, which is the aim and ideal of our independence.’³³

In practice, however, the priority of development in Indonesia was economic growth by relying on industrialization and rural infrastructure as its driving forces to advance the ideals of justice and welfare for all Indonesian people.³⁴ Emphasis on economic growth encouraged the adoption of capitalistic development which also necessitated state involvement in the process of capital accumulation. Consequently, the state was

³¹ Urry 1981, p. 102.

³² Krasner 1984, pp. 223-246. See also Giddens 1985, p. 201.

³³ Decree of the People’s Consultative Assembly of the Republic of Indonesia No. II/MPR/1983 on the Guidelines of State Policy (the GBHN). Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat 1983.

³⁴ See Booth 1988.

assumed to have strong autonomy in order to be able to choose and implement its development strategy.

In this regard, Tod Jones, in his perusal of the New Order's cultural policy that was premised on increased state control, asserted that 'the justification for the cultural policy was culture's role in the national development, which became a key governmental discourse in 1969 and remained important across all portfolios of the New Order's duration.'³⁵ Within the framework of national development, the New Order period saw the rise of the new middle classes, which refer to a variety of groups between rich and poor with a shared dependent relationship with the state. They were employed by state institutions or companies close to the regime and were practically dependent on state projects, access to education, housing, etc. Accommodated, educated, and nurtured by the state, these middle classes were both the supporters and the driving force behind the enormous changes that Indonesians experienced under the New Order and became a major source of pressure for economic, social, and, most importantly in this regard, cultural change.

From a similar perspective, economic historian Hal Hill highlighted the spectacular economic recovery and expansion that Indonesia was capable of under Suharto's leadership. He noted how Indonesia had turned from a basket case in the 1960s into a fast-growing industrial economy.³⁶ Similarly, looking at the regime from a long historical perspective as an interventionist developmental state, Anne Booth concluded that under the New Order Indonesians, in general, fared 'considerably better than before, with a prolonged and broad-based improvement in living standards,' especially in terms of the betterment of infrastructure, control over population growth, the reduction of poverty, and the expansion of education, which consequently resulted in a dramatic increase in the percentage of people with higher education and, therefore, literacy.³⁷

This trend was also marked by the exponential growth of publishing industries and press empires, from which popular new middle-class forms of literature and art developed. No less than forty newspapers – in Jakarta and other cities — allotted a special space to poetry, short stories, and serials every week. Many women's and teenagers' magazines gave special attention to literature as did other popular magazines. Boen S. Oemarjati, author-cum-literary critic, wrote that after 1966, there was a change in the socio-cultural conditions of the country which allowed rapid growth in literary writing. Ironically, so it seems, in addition to the clear censorship mechanisms discussed in this thesis, the relatively stable socio-political and socio-economic conditions of the country also allowed governmental institutions to encourage creative writing by the award of funds or yearly literary prizes. Several publishing houses were given long term support in the publication of literary works which had been quite difficult to circulate widely.³⁸

³⁵ Jones 2013, p 130.

³⁶ Hill 2000, pp. 1-8.

³⁷ Booth 1999, p. 129. Also, Hefner 2000, pp. 17-18.

³⁸ Oemarjati 1979, pp. 134-141.

Depoliticization, which was of course a deeply political process, became, as Todd Jones argues, ‘an important tool of the regime that was enforced in conjunction with national development and the related conceptualization of the relationship between state and society. It severely limited the cultural practices of all groups, although some periods within the New Order era offered particular groups more room for cultural expression than others.’³⁹ Language played an important role here, as it had done under Sukarno’s ‘Old Order’. As Anderson (1966), Latif (1996), and Saraswati (1998) have shown, during the Sukarno period political indoctrination was carried out using a variety of strong and bombastic language that centered on the vocabulary of the revolution. In this period, Indonesia was being described as carrying out a major revolution to build a New World and overturn the current world. Therefore, revolution meant rapid change. From this came ‘mobilization,’ ‘retooling,’ ‘class,’ ‘new emerging forces,’ and ‘*Umwertung aller Werte*’ (the revaluation of values). The vocabulary was almost entirely from Sukarno, the *Pemimpin Besar Revolusi* (Great Leader of the Indonesian revolution) cum ‘the biggest contributor to the ‘Old Order’ dictionary,’ — formulating the direction of political discourse and devising its vocabulary.⁴⁰

Under the New Order, economic development substituted social revolution; and depoliticization and demobilization replaced political mobilization and polarization. The entire apparatus of state power had been focused to the maximum degree necessary to ensure a high level of political and social stability, for it was considered ‘the vital prerequisite to the economic development.’⁴¹ Economic development jargon such as ‘stability,’ ‘acceleration,’ ‘take-off,’ ‘growth,’ ‘technology,’ ‘modernization,’ ‘efficiency,’ and the political notions of anticipation’ and ‘demobilization’, began to occupy political, social, and cultural domains.⁴²

New Order language was ‘asserted more vigorously, particularly in the late 1970s and 1980s.’⁴³ The state encouraged the use of ‘good and correct’ language, and ‘recommended that the teaching of language and literature be upgraded through the formalization of language for education, partly through increased funding for printing and publishing books.’⁴⁴ By means of various instances and language standardization programs, the New Order established a Foucauldian ‘system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation, and functioning of official statements’⁴⁵ which were related in a circular fashion to the very systems of power which produced them. Under the New Order, linguistic agency became the monopoly of the regime when it came to the success of its

³⁹ Jones 2013, p. 130.

⁴⁰ *Pemimpin Besar* (Great Leader) was the appellation given to Sukarno as head of the Putera in 1943 (see Hatta, *The Putera Reports*, p. 54). Sukarno himself later resurrected the title as *Pemimpin Besar Revolusi* (Great Leader of the Revolution). See Tan Malaka 1991. Also, Saraswati 1998, p. 43.

⁴¹ Langenberg 1986, p. 14.

⁴² Dick 1985, p. 88; Saraswati 1998, p. 43.

⁴³ Jones 2013, p. 130.

⁴⁴ Jones 2013, p. 195.

⁴⁵ Foucault 1980, p. 133.

development policies, whereas violent aspects of the state were represented in passive terms as society was deprived of agency of its own. This will be further investigated in Chapter 2.

In his seminal article, Michael van Langenberg (1986) introduced a framework of language and ideology to examine the New Order state through its own basic lexicon of keywords to be drawn from the domestic political language of the state-formation which identifies the major facets of the state, both as apparatus and as system. He presents a lexicon of forty keywords that, in his view, can comprehensively articulate the totality of the Indonesian state-formation and through which the interaction of the major facets of the state can be analyzed. Keywords such as *monoloyalitas* (Monoloyalty, a singular, exclusive allegiance to Pancasila, or in effect to the state — ‘intended to prevent the bureaucracy from being an arena for competing interests and to guarantee the bureaucratic base of the New Order’),⁴⁶ ABRI (*Angkatan Bersenjata Republik Indonesia*, Indonesian Armed Forces), floating mass (a concept that refers to the separation of the populace from the political activity except during elections), *opsus* (*Operasi Khusus*, Special Operations, intelligence organization established within the Army Strategic Command), and *ketertiban umum* (public order) are among the lexicon that Langenberg examines and are fundamental in linking power, legitimacy of the state, accumulation, and culture within a total state system.

One keyword that is missing from Langenberg’s approach is ‘*antisipasi*’ (anticipation). Based on my reading of dossiers on censorship from 1968 to 1993 and on the publishing industry in Indonesia, as well as on fieldwork in several state bodies, especially at the attorney general office, ‘*antisipasi*’ was (and still is) frequently used to indicate a prior action that assesses dissenting political and intellectual opinions. Prior to a book ban, for example, the attorney general office prepared a lengthy content analysis or report on the to-be-banned book as an ‘*antisipasi*,’ to inhibit the development of ideas that it considered would threaten *ketertiban umum*. In different settings, the development of ideas was also inhibited by sources other than formal censors. Editors often cut out passages in order to avoid more dire censorship or even a flat-out ban. In doing so, the editors have ‘*melakukan antisipasi*’ (conducted *antisipasi*) as they excised sections of the work that depicted the Indonesian military in an unflattering light, as in the case of Tohari’s *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk*.⁴⁷

Censorship: a Preliminary Reading

Despite being rampant and having been practiced for a considerably long period of time, censorship in Indonesia remains understudied. There are only few scholars that extensively elaborate on the topic. The first to be written when the New Order was

⁴⁶ Kahin 2015, p. 278.

⁴⁷ McGlynn 2000, p. 41; Stewart and McGlynn 2000, p. 41.

still in power is an undergraduate thesis from the Faculty of Arts, Universitas Indonesia entitled *Pelarangan Buku di Indonesia*, written by Minanuddin in 1992. Wielding a library and information science lens and looking at censorship from a historical perspective, Minanuddin in his thesis gives an overview on aspects of book bans under the authoritarian New Order regime and examines the historical continuities of censorship in pre and post-independence Indonesia. Besides Minanuddin's thesis, a dissertation written by Zubaidah Isa in 1972, *Printing and Publishing in Indonesia*, is another valuable reference that elaborates on colonial traces in the development of printing and publishing, as well as the mechanism of book banning in Indonesia. Isa's erudition on the development of publishing activities in the archipelago also helps us understand how books were produced and censorship progressed from time to time. Ajip Rosidi, whose novel is also at the heart of my study, has also written on similar topics. His book *Ichtisar Sedjarah Sastra Indonesia* (Survey of Indonesian Literary History), which was published in 1969, discusses literary repression under the Sukarno regime and early bans at the inception of the New Order.

After the step down of Suharto during the reformasi period (since 1998), Jaringan Kerja Budaya (1999), Fauzan (2003), and Yusuf (2010) wrote three different books but all are alike in both contents and analyses — *Menentang Peradaban: Pelarangan Buku di Indonesia* (Challenging Civilization: Book Bans in Indonesia, 1999); *Mengubur Peradaban: Politik Pelarangan Buku di Indonesia* (Burying Civilization: The Politics of Book Bans in Indonesia, 2003); and *Pelarangan Buku di Indonesia: Sebuah Paradoks Demokrasi dan Kebebasan Berekspresi* (Book Bans in Indonesia: A Paradox for Democracy and Freedom of Expression, 2010), respectively. Following the liberal theorizing on censorship, these three books underline the repressive nature of censorship in Indonesia and denounce it as a type of power exercise based on a monopoly of knowledge interpretation. In this regard, they put censors as external 'authoritative actors who deploy coercive force to intervene in the exchange of ideas.'⁴⁸

As elaborated on in Jaringan Kerja Budaya (1999), restrictions to freedom of expression in Indonesia have also drawn responses from international human rights groups. Since the 1970s, Amnesty International has periodically published reports of people detained for their beliefs, as well as other human rights violations dealing with cases of restrictions on freedom of expression. Human Rights Watch Asia issued a number of reports on the state of human rights in Indonesia and almost always included a chapter on freedom of expression, including book bans. After the shutdown of three media in June 1994, human rights groups began to increase their attention. That November, the London-based organization Article 19 International Centre against Censorship issued a report entitled *The Press under Siege: Censorship in Indonesia* that gives a brief description on the background, sequence of events, and ending of the banning of the three media. At about the same time, the US-based

⁴⁸ Bunn 2015, p. 29.

PEN International published another report on the situation of freedom of expression in Indonesia with special attention given to Indonesia's former political prisoner-cum-author, Pramoedya Ananta Toer and Indonesia's most prominent poet, Rendra. The report, called *Censorship, Silence, and Shadowplay*, examines the effect of censorship on writers, editors, and critics, as well as students, educators, and readers but, again, without complicating the liberal theorizing on censorship. The Alliance of Independent Journalists (*Aliansi Jurnalis Independen*, AJI) published a similar report on the disbandment of three national media in its journal *Independen*, which soon also suffered a ban. From in-depth interviews with various groups, it appears that various barriers to freedom of expression ranging from text censorship to prison sentences create fear and self-censorship on the one hand, but also resistance on the other.

More detailed information on how censorship mechanisms work is in fact obtained from various records from or about victims of this kind of prohibition. For instance, HB Jassin gave useful details through a collection of letters *Surat-surat 1943-1983*, published in 1984, covering mechanisms of control in three different periods in Indonesia (colonial era, Sukarno regime, and Suharto's New Order). Similarly, a volume entitled *Muchtar Lubis Wartawan Jihad*, edited by *Kompas's* senior journalist Atmakusumah, contains information on the practice of censorship and prohibition during the Sukarno and New Order periods. In 1997, Stanley Prasetyo Adi from the *Institut Studi Arus Informasi* (ISAI) wrote a report that estimates 'as many as two thousand books may have been banned during the New Order' to restrict the range of permissible ideas.⁴⁹

The above scholarship examines censorship from a traditional perspective that follows 'two general tendencies in the way censorship has been studied over the last hundred years in the West,' namely, on the one hand, 'a story of the struggle between freedom of expression and the attempts to repress it by political authorities; on the other hand, an account of constraint of every kind that inhibits communication.'⁵⁰ Bunn calls such traditional perspectives that see censorship as external, coercive, and repressive a 'liberal conception' of censorship, which focuses 'on the actions of authoritative figures within the state or state-like institutions who deploy coercive force to intervene in the free exchange of ideas to repressive effect.'⁵¹ This liberal conception risks an oversimplification of censorship, by implicitly or explicitly locating it in the realm of binary oppositions, e.g. perpetrator versus victim; censor versus subject of censorship; and state versus publishers/authors. Some of these traditional scholars of censorship overlook the complex mechanisms of censorship, particularly where literary authors react and engage, and leave out the sometimes generative effects of censorship and non-repressive relations on both censors and the censored.⁵²

⁴⁹ Prasetyo 1996; Saunders and Human Rights Watch 1998, p. 45.

⁵⁰ Darnton 2014, p. 17.

⁵¹ Bunn 2015, p. 29.

⁵² Jansen 1988 in Bunn 2015, p. 25.

Building on recent theorizing in censorship in other societies that critiqued the Manichean divide between free speech and regulation (Darnton, 1984, 2015; Bunn, 2015, Burt, 1994, 1998; Yamamoto, 2011), I am convinced that the ambit of censorship studies should be expanded and ‘recast from an external repressive force, concerned only with prohibiting, silencing, and erasing, to a driving force that creates new forms of discourse and new genres of speech.’⁵³ To make this argument, I explore acts and mechanisms of censorship, machinery and institutions, alleged and underlying narratives of justification, and entanglement with political, social, cultural, and market conditions. My exhaustive fieldwork in the Attorney General Office in Jakarta and immersion in its archives have shown me that censorship was (and still is) ‘a diffuse, ubiquitous phenomenon in which an array of actors’ (personal, impersonal, the state, publishers, and authors) function both as producers and simultaneously effective co-censors of literary works.⁵⁴

Through the case of censorship on literary works in Indonesia under the authoritarian New Order regime, I share insights on literary producers’ experience and their negotiations with various kinds of censorship during the creative process. I apply a nuanced analytical approach that explores the dynamic and intricate interaction between censors, publishers, and authors. In this regard, I situate this research in the non-traditional undertaking that moves away from the more hardened, traditional, liberal conception of censorship and ‘veers toward the notion that censorship is simply an inescapable feature of communication.’⁵⁵ This insight, drawn from the archives, historical reflection, recent theory, and the lived experience of creators under such regimes, is perhaps unexpected. But it seems particularly valuable, because the lessons from censorship in Indonesia demonstrate that the practices and ideologies of the New Order regime share much in common with those of authoritarian regimes from other eras and other places.

Research Methodology

Trained as a literary scholar, and inspired by recent developments in censorship studies, I set up this research at three levels: a. the governmental politics of literary censorship; b. the politics and practices of publishing, and the networks between authors, publishers, and censors; and c., the strategies of writing. Principally qualitative, my research draws from a wide range of Indonesian and English-language sources obtained from archives, libraries, and research in Indonesia and the Netherlands. Among the sources that I examine are classified state documents and archives. Archival research in Indonesia was conducted at the Directorate for Supervision of Printed Matters (*Subdirektorat Pengawasan Agama, Kepercayaan Masyarakat, dan Barang Cetakan* -SUBDITPAKEMBARCET — formerly known as *Ditpolkam-Direktorat Politik dan Keamanan*, or Intelligence Bureau), a special

⁵³ Bunn 2015, p. 26.

⁵⁴ Bunn 2015, p. 29.

⁵⁵ Bunn 2015, p. 41.

branch of Deputy Attorney General for Intelligence Service, formerly OPSUS – *Operasi Chusus*, Special Operation), Office of General Attorney in Jakarta, personal libraries of authors whose works are at the heart of this study, *Kompas* Research and Development Center in Jakarta, and Leiden University Library. The archives used in this study yield important information, but they do not provide a full picture of the topics with which this dissertation is concerned. Accordingly, I draw on additional sources. Among these are pictures, receipts, newspapers, and magazines.

For my research, I also conducted interviews in Jakarta, Bandung, Bekasi, and Banyumas. Data that I use throughout the following chapters are obtained from informants that include: literary authors of the novels discussed in this dissertation, former chief editor responsible for the publication of the novel in series format in *Kompas* newspaper as well as (former) editors in Gramedia Publishing House in Jakarta, and most importantly the officials and former officials at the SUBDITPAKEMBARCET, to which the state delegated the sole authority to ban and censor printed matters. A combination of semi-structured and in-depth interviews with authors provides useful information on the creative process, the act of remembering, and recounting, as well as the ways in which they (re)constructed the past. In addition, semi-structured interviews gave me a considerable amount of leeway to probe the authors while maintaining the basic structure of questions prepared in advance. The former chief editor of *Kompas* and current editor at Gramedia revealed information on publishing mechanisms from manuscript to print, as well as the type of internal censorship that they employed such as pushing authors to follow a set of writing guidelines, which adhere to “*nilai-nilai Pancasila*” (the values of Pancasila) to immediate omissions of passages that were deemed sensitive. My approach to officials at the Attorney General Office, however, was slightly different. I resort to more in-depth interviews, which leaned towards a normal conversation carried out during breaks or lunch but with an underlying subject. In regard to consent, it was never written, but verbal. The efficacy of this approach was demonstrated when I was eventually provided access, albeit limited, to extensive dossiers that included classified documents on decrees for ban, lists of prohibited books, meeting minutes, circulars, instructions, and invitation letters that indicate (in)direct involvement of professionals and intellectuals in the process of book bans. In order to maintain the confidentiality of the dossiers, and to minimize any harm that could result from the discussion of this sensitive topic, I have given pseudonyms to some informants, especially state officials and censors, including scholars actively involved in the process of state censorship.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Initially, all informants in this research were identified by their real names and positions. However, after considering one particular incident, the cautious approach of anonymizing them seemed both prudent and necessary. Lamentably, around six months after I concluded my fieldwork in the censorship agency in Jakarta, the director of the agency was transferred/demoted to different office in completely different agency outside the Attorney General Office. By phone he informed me that he had been deemed no longer suitable to run the office responsible for intelligence affairs, supervision, and censorship. Although transfer is common in government agencies in Indonesia, I cannot help but suspect that this was due to his providing me access to classified documents vis à vis my research. As

In regard to investigating the novels central to this research, in the final chapter I use textual analysis, including narratology and discourse analysis (Genette, 1980; Stanzel, 1984; Prince, 1987; Bal, 1997). Furthermore, Gallagher and Greenblatt's New Historicist approach (2000) helps to investigate the narrative and strategies employed by the authors, in connection with their position in history and society at a given time. As the name suggests, this approach has a very firm basis in historical context. New Historicism began as a response to the divorce of literature from context and the tradition of studying literature in isolation, as a self-contained, self-referential text. In this regard, in addition to close readings of the novels, I also revisit the literature reviews on relevant analyses of the novels, as well as news articles and magazines. An investigation of accompanying written sources, such as reviews, newspaper articles, and biographies of the authors, serves to give comprehensive information related to the position of literature and the interplay between the text and the context of writing literature.

Chapter Overview and Organization

This dissertation is divided into six chapters, structured according to the intertwined research questions.

Chapter 2 analyzes the context of the New Order in which economic growth, political stability, and cultural change took place (Elson, 2001; Frederick, 1997; Hill, 1994; Hooker, 1999) in order to understand the framework and circumstances under which literary production took place. Furthermore, it explores the regime's policy on cultural expression and discusses its contribution to literary development and language policy. According to Hatley (1994), by the early 1970s, a new period of growth, initiating new cultural institutions and activities, had begun as part of more general processes of economic and social development. In the field of production and marketing of literary works, the New Order saw developments favorable to the expansion of popular literature. Literacy increased dramatically, and so did the percentage of people with a high school education. From the early 1970s onward, bursts of creativity and growth of commercial publishing houses associated with major daily newspapers and magazines took place. In addition to the gradual establishment of the publishing industry, dominant trends in artistic expression began to appear with the founding of important arts centers in Jakarta, such as Taman Ismail Marzuki (TIM) and Dewan Kesenian Jakarta (DKJ), as well as other literary circles, such as Yayasan Buku Utama (founded in 1973), Teater Kartupat (founded in 1976), and Taman Budaya Yogyakarta (founded in 1977). Indonesian expression abounded in creativity and talent applied to diverse topics in diverse forms and styles. However, the regime's drive to maintain stability for national development has caused a shift in the structure of cultural production: the regime evolved from providing a somewhat open and highly participatory atmosphere, where opinions

of July 2018, he has been stationed in a department responsible for protecting public health through the control and supervision of food safety, medicines, and cosmetics.

were relatively freely expressed, into a state of increased constraints and tighter control (Mackie and MacIntyre, 1994). Under the New Order, all publications and printed materials, both literary and non-literary, could be put up for review and banned if found harmful or offensive to the interests of the state and its citizens. The regime controls, homogenizes, and polices cultural production (Hooker, 1993). The literary community chafed under restriction and censorship.

In Chapter 3 I turn to several state bodies, most importantly the Attorney General Office, to which the state has given full control and authority for supervision, surveillance, and banning. It thematizes and reflects on the difficulties of getting information on the research topic as I carried out my field research in the Attorney General Office. This chapter gives answers to the questions: What is being censored? Why? And how? What would be the accepted standards for what constitutes books that could be published or books that should be banned? This chapter also elaborates on the implementation of censorship and banning, which includes the mechanisms, legal foundation, legal standings, rationale, authority, and the criteria and procedure for bans. My first field research from July to November 2017, together with interviews and consultation of the library and archives, shows that state censorship was neat and complete: the regime believed in the idea that censorship had to be carried out through certain standard operational procedures. In addition, the Attorney General office does not only rely on internal resources but also involves numerous other censors that consist of state officials, apparatuses, community groups, and society members. For example, reports from concerned citizens on activities or publications of sensitive materials are constant. Experts from various ministries — namely, the Ministry of Information, the Ministry of Culture and Education, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Defense, and the Ministry of Religious Affairs — participate in providing justifications, and elaborating on the reasoning behind the banned books. University professors are often asked to give their academic insights on the matter in dispute.

Chapter 4 examines the complex interplay among authors, editors, and publishers; and examines how they all three cope with the state censorship which eventually contributes to the success of production, circulation, and distribution of the novels. It looks at publishing policy, which includes editing practices as well as the mechanisms, distribution, and circulation of the book. In line with the recent turn in censorship studies, this chapter argues that Indonesian popular novels are a product of complex historical interactions that involve the writers themselves, their readers, the publishing industry, and the larger society to which they belong. They are inextricably linked with the history of the modern Indonesian censorship that shapes them. Furthermore, this chapter discusses internalized censorship and negotiation — whether it was done out of fear and whether they anticipated what was required and acted accordingly? This chapter also problematizes the political affiliations of the authors. How did the authors position themselves within Indonesian political/literary circles? Who were they friends with?

Chapter 5 describes and analyzes the language of narrative with its regularly recurring patterns and interpretive codes that are found in *Mencoba Tidak Menyerah*,

Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk, and *Anak Tanahair*. It utilizes narratology, a theory of narratives, narrative texts, images, and events as cultural artifacts that tell a story (Gennete, 1980; Stanzel, 1984; Bal, 1997). As it studies the nature, form, and functioning of narrative, this theory allows me to break down the story for its overall meaning and comprehend the structure of the authors' work and see the authors' strategies in writing the story the specific way they did. Through the New Historicist approach, this chapter also looks at 'the intersections of narrative as individual, as well as shared, history.'⁵⁷ This approach sees literature as having historical agency and reveals connections between history and literature. The authors re-narrate events of distant past as one way of responding to or even challenging state discourse of the same theme. This chapter problematizes, for example, differing recollections of two authors, twin brothers, Yudhistira Massardi and Noorca Massardi. They give opposing accounts of the same lived experience. Noorca, on the one hand, claims that Yudhistira's novel has autobiographical episodes. On the one hand, it is 'an act of connecting the temporal levels of past, present, and future'⁵⁸ in a fictional representation of remembering. On the other hand, Yudhistira denies the claim and insists that names, characters, places, and incidents in his novel are products of his imagination, which might be a literary representation of historical problems.

Finally, Chapter 6 discusses the findings in the context of the relationship between the state cultural policy, literary production, and censorship during the New Order period — also in the light of theorizing in censorship studies which, as Jansen puts it, asks not whether there is censorship, but rather what kind.⁵⁹ In sum, this thesis contributes to theorizing in censorship studies as it completes if not challenges existing scholarship and the traditional view, which argues that censorship under the New Order regime in Indonesia was maintained by incompetent censors with overlapping responsibilities, by means of poor and unchecked machinery. This thesis demonstrates otherwise. Censorship under the New Order was both ubiquitous and obvious. It was designed to operate nation-wide and in a uniformed way, and was simultaneously systematic, unilateral, and 'dispersed among a variety of regulatory censors,'⁶⁰ including intellectuals and commercial publishers. It was supported by well-resourced and well-founded mechanisms and practices. In regard to the state's cultural policy, literary production was a part of a larger configuration in the framework of the regime's national development projects, which, therefore, necessitated complicity of the publisher and authors. As the 'internalization of censorship norms is a constitutive feature of the production of literature', this insight, ultimately, should put an end to the ongoing question of why the literary works under study slipped the net of censorship — because as a matter of fact, they did not.⁶¹

⁵⁷ Erll 2009, p. 213.

⁵⁸ Erll 2009, p. 213.

⁵⁹ Jansen 1988, p. 25.

⁶⁰ Burt 1998, p. 17; Yamamoto 2011, p. 8.

⁶¹ Bunn 2015, p. 26.