

Colonial Influence, Resistance, and Cultural Identity: A Study of Pramoedya Ananta Toer's *This Earth of Mankind* and Its Connections to Butonese Customary Law

Pengaruh Kolonial, Perlawanan, dan Identitas Budaya: Kajian tentang Bumi Manusia Karya Pramoedya Ananta Toer dan Kaitannya dengan Hukum Adat Buton

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Abstract

This study explores Pramoedya Ananta Toer's *This Earth of Mankind* as a reflection of postcolonial cultural identity and resistance, comparing its insights to the Butonese people's experience of identity preservation. The novel delves into tensions between traditional Javanese culture and Dutch colonial modernity, particularly through characters like Minke and Nyai Ontosoroh, who embody cultural hybridity and resistance. Postcolonial concepts, such as Homi Bhabha's 'Third Space' are employed to analyze cultural shifts and empowerment offered through education. The Butonese people's maritime culture and strategic location are examined as a case of sustaining identity amid external influences, showcasing parallels in navigating colonial legacies. The research question of this study is: how does *This Earth of Mankind* illustrate postcolonial influence, and how does its portrayal of cultural identity and resistance compare to the Butonese people's efforts to preserve their culture? The study aims to explore postcolonial influence, cultural identity, and resistance in *This Earth of Mankind* and to analyze their relevance to the contemporary socio-cultural challenges of the Butonese people. The Methodology of this study, focusing on cultural identity shifts in Minke's journey and its parallels with the postcolonial experiences of the Butonese people, supported by scholarly articles and webs to back up arguments. The theoretical framework of this study linking the narrative of *This Earth of Mankind* with Butonese people's cultural identity and identity through applying theories of Homi Bhabha, Stuart Hall, and Clifford Geertz to explore hybrid and cultural identity. A key finding is that Dutch colonialism profoundly influenced the socio-political and economic systems of colonized communities like the Butonese. The Dutch introduced new administrative structures, economic policies, and social hierarchies that undermined traditional leadership and local economic practices. Despite these adversities, the Butonese showcased resilience by preserving their identity through their adat, spiritual traditions, and maritime practices. Another key insight is the role of hybridity in shaping identity and resistance among the Butonese. Drawing on Homi Bhabha's theory, they blended Western influences like education and technology with their traditions, crafting new expressions of identity. Resistance emerged through both cultural affirmation and creative adaptation of customs, highlighting their resilience and adaptability against colonial authority.

Keywords

Postcolonialism; Cultural Identity; Resistance; Colonial Influence; Butonese; *This Earth of Mankind*; Pramoedya Ananta Toer.

Abstrak

Studi ini mengeksplorasi *Bumi Manusia* karya Pramoedya Ananta Toer sebagai refleksi identitas dan perlawanan budaya pascakolonial, membandingkan wawasannya dengan pengalaman masyarakat Buton dalam pelestarian identitas. Novel ini menyelidiki ketegangan antara budaya Jawa tradisional dan modernitas kolonial Belanda, khususnya melalui karakter seperti Minke dan Nyai Ontosoroh, yang mewujudkan hibriditas dan perlawanan budaya. Konsep pascakolonial, seperti 'Ruang Ketiga' karya Homi Bhabha digunakan untuk menganalisis pergeseran budaya dan pemberdayaan yang ditawarkan melalui pendidikan. Budaya maritim dan lokasi strategis masyarakat Buton diperiksa sebagai kasus mempertahankan identitas di tengah pengaruh eksternal, yang menunjukkan paralel dalam menavigasi warisan kolonial. Pertanyaan penelitian dari studi ini adalah: bagaimana *Bumi Manusia* menggambarkan pengaruh pascakolonial, dan bagaimana penggambaran identitas budaya dan perlawanannya dibandingkan dengan upaya masyarakat Buton untuk melestarikan budaya mereka? Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi pengaruh pascakolonial, identitas budaya, dan perlawanan dalam *Bumi Manusia* dan menganalisis relevansinya dengan tantangan sosial-budaya kontemporer masyarakat Buton. Metodologi penelitian ini berfokus pada pergeseran identitas budaya dalam perjalanan Minke dan paralelnya dengan pengalaman pascakolonial masyarakat Buton, didukung oleh artikel ilmiah dan situs web untuk mendukung argumen. Kerangka teoritis penelitian ini menghubungkan narasi *Bumi Manusia* dengan identitas dan jati diri budaya masyarakat Buton melalui penerapan teori Homi Bhabha, Stuart Hall, dan Clifford Geertz untuk mengeksplorasi identitas hibrida dan budaya. Temuan utama adalah bahwa kolonialisme Belanda

sangat memengaruhi sistem sosial-politik dan ekonomi masyarakat terjajah seperti masyarakat Buton. Belanda memperkenalkan struktur administratif, kebijakan ekonomi, dan hierarki sosial baru yang merusak kepemimpinan tradisional dan praktik ekonomi lokal. Terlepas dari kesulitan ini, masyarakat Buton menunjukkan ketahanan dengan mempertahankan identitas mereka melalui adat, tradisi spiritual, dan praktik maritim mereka. Wawasan penting lainnya adalah peran hibriditas dalam membentuk identitas dan perlawanan di antara orang Buton. Mengacu pada teori Homi Bhabha, mereka memadukan pengaruh Barat seperti pendidikan dan teknologi dengan tradisi mereka, sehingga menciptakan ekspresi identitas baru. Perlawanan muncul melalui penegasan budaya dan adaptasi kreatif terhadap adat istiadat, yang menonjolkan ketahanan dan kemampuan beradaptasi mereka terhadap otoritas kolonial.

Keywords

Postkolonialisme; Identitas Budaya; Perlawanan; Pengaruh Kolonial; Buton; Bumi Manusia; Pramoedya Ananta Toer.

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1. Introduction

Indonesia is the biggest country in the Southeast Asian Nations. It consists of the five biggest islands. They are Sumatra, Java, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, and Papua, which diverse in terms of linguistic codes and cultures. The latest report of Indonesia's population for 2024 estimates approximately 280 million people (Indonesia Investment Report, 2024). The history of Indonesia is the journey of strategic location, trade, the archipelago kingdoms and its literary works. A profound story of Indonesia was well captured in Pramoedya's *This Earth of Mankind* novel. Pramoedya narrated the beauty of Indonesia from the perspective of history, cultures, and society. His stories highlight Indonesia's rich cultural heritage and complex social landscape include the resilience of the natives Indonesia against colonialism.

Pramoedya experienced the harshness of being imprisoned, due to his outspoken criticism. Three different rulers imprisoned him; the Dutch colonial authority in 1947-1949 put him. The Dutch colonial authority in 1947-1949 put him into jail, then in 1960-1962 he was detained by the Sukarno government, and the last one was by Suharto's New Order regime in 1965-1979. Being imprisoned for 14 years did not make him quit writing more works to educate people and to preserve the existence of culture amid the influence of outside cultures.

The Dutch colonized the East Indies for 300 years and took all the resources, and a huge number of work labors where their rights were taken out by the authority. Although demand coming from a Liberal Democratic member of the parliament of the Netherlands. Conrad Theodor van Deventer commented that the Dutch had taken so many resources from the East Indies thus it should be given back (Britannica-Dutch Rule). But the exploitation continuously occurred and reforms to fill the treasure of Dutch colonial government. Along with the stratified society along racial and class lines, relegating indigenous people to positions of inferiority, claimed to contribute to this subjugation.

Furthermore, the social identity designed by the Dutch colonial into division: aristocrat, *priyayi*, and common ground. As per their rank, the royals have access to oppress the weak. Oppression accepted as the normality caused the weak to be actually projected as the uncivilized. The social norms, myths, and the language carry hierarchy, and it allows the natives to feel inferior. The concept of superiority and inferiority transformed into a different label, for instance the term 'superior' and 'inferior' affiliated with 'bourgeoisie' and 'proletariat'. Gramsci (1971) highlighted the proletariat as the working class; they have to recognize exploitation committed against them. A society rank gives a distinction between the have and the weak. Anshen (2017) defined that society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other- bourgeoisie and proletariat. It clearly explained that the working class is exploited, and it is widening the wealth gap. To recap, cultural identity allows a certain rank to demonstrate the privilege they own to oppress and subjugate the marginal groups.

In *This Earth of Mankind*, Pramoedya dives the conflict between traditional Javanese culture and Dutch colonial modernity which created cultural tensions. Realistically, the tense of being natives and the temptation of being into Dutch circle produced duality within Minke. Pramoedya also gives example a Dutch concubine, Nyai Ontosoroh, turned independent woman, embodies this resistance and her willingness to absorb western education through readings. Despite facing marginalization under colonial laws and Javanese patriarchy, she asserts her autonomy and safeguards her cultural values. Her story defies stereotypes of submission, showcasing cultural resistance as a powerful response to colonial

response. Cahyani (2022) stated that Pramoedya constantly creates characters who represent and symbolize traits, notions, or a whole class. Instead of praising the conventional ethical narratives Pramoedya exposes injustice by portraying harsh realities and highlighting the struggles of marginalized individuals.

The Dutch colonial practices physical domination and cultural subjugation to impose European cultures and preserving a sense of inferiority among the natives of East Indies. *This Earth of Mankind*, literally shows the perspective of education from the lenses of oppression and but also a source of empowerment. Pramoedya's duality standpoint can be seen in *This Earth of Mankind*, which reconstructs the importance of Western education, challenging the conventional mindset of the natives either, politically or economically (Akbar & Kurnia, 2015). Thus, Pramoedya negotiates the idea of cultural identity relates with the curiosity of seeking knowledge.

Having mentioned that there is a deep thought of the researchers to delve into cultural identity and resistance of Pramoedya Ananta Toer's *This Earth of Mankind* and to relate with the Butonese perceive their cultural identity using postcolonial and cultural theories to uncover the nuances of Toer's critique of colonialism. Firstly, a glimpse history of Sultanate in Buton hopefully can foster us to sense of cultural identity. The Sultanate of Buton, in present-day Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia, was a constitutional monarchy governing Buton Island and nearby areas. Founded in the 1300s, it initially followed local traditions before converting to Islam under Sultan Murhum Kaimuddin Khalifatul Khamis. Its territories, known as *Liwuto Pataanguna* ("Four Islands"), were noted for ironworking and had historical ties to the Majapahit Empire. The Sultanate of Buton was structured around four social classes: the *kaomu*, from whom the sultan was chosen and who held exclusive positions; the *walaka*, an elite group responsible for selecting the sultan; the *papara*, villagers living in relatively self-governing communities; and the *batua*, individuals in servitude, often working for the *kaomu* and *walaka*. While slavery was officially abolished in 1906, the path to equality for former slaves was slow. Following Indonesia's independence struggle (1945–1949), overt class distinctions became less socially acceptable, though they persisted informally, especially in marital practices. Today, Butonese society remains flexible, with education playing a key role in promoting social mobility and reducing class barriers ('History and Cultural Relations-Butonese').

Further, Geertz (1973) defines culture encompasses the entirety of a people's way of life, representing the social heritage an individual inherits from their community. It reflects a collective framework of thought, emotion, and belief, serving as an abstract construct derived from observable behavior. In similar way, Homi Bhabha, a Professor of the Humanities at Harvard University, the most important figures in contemporary postcolonial studies, elaborates cultural identity as the hybrid nature of cultural identity. He introduces concepts of the Third Space, conceptualizes the third space of enunciation in coloniality and postcoloniality in a political discourse of in-betweenness and hybridity (Bhandari, 2022). Pramoedya Ananta Toer's *This Earth of Mankind* and the history of the Butonese people both reflect the resilience and adaptability required to navigate cultural hybridity and preserve identity in the face of external pressures. Minke's characters, and Njai Ontosoroh, embody this struggle by embracing Western education and using it as a tool to assert agency and redefine their place in a colonial world. Similarly, the Butonese people demonstrated adaptability during colonialism and globalization by maintaining their cultural identity while engaging with new influences. Both narratives highlight the dynamic nature of identity,

shaped through negotiation, resistance, and integration within shifting socio-political landscapes, resonating with Homi Bhabha's concept of cultural hybridity and the Third Space.

1.1. The Research Question

How does *This Earth of Mankind* reflect the impact of postcolonial influence, and how can its exploration of cultural identity and resistance be compared to the Butonese people's struggle to preserve their identity through customary law?

1.2. Objectives of the Study

The objectives of research are to seek the impact of postcolonial influence and to identify cultural identity and resistance in Pramoedya's *This Earth of Mankind*. This research also examines the relevance of the findings in understanding the contemporary socio-cultural challenges of the Butonese people today.

2. Methodology of Research and Theoretical Framework

2.1. Methodology of Research

This research applied an interdisciplinary approach to integrating ideas, methods, and viewpoints from various academic fields to explore complex problems or research topics, providing a more comprehensive understanding. The researchers used literary research and legal culture analysis. Literary research involves systematic study and analysis of literary texts and their content, specifically in the novel. The researchers used postcolonial theories to explore cultural identity and resistance within the broader narrative of colonization in Pramoedya's *This Earth of Mankind* (*Bumi Manusia*), using it as a lens to understand the postcolonial experience of the Butonese people. Meanwhile, legal culture analysis is employed to examine how colonization impacted the cultural identity of the Butonese people by exploring their cultural context. Relevant resources, including scholarly articles, historical records, and websites, support the analysis.

2.2. Theoretical Framework

In this research, *This Earth of Mankind* will be analyzed through the lens of postcolonialism, and the novel's narrative will be interpreted with reference to Butonese people's cultural identity through resistance strategies. The researchers further expanded on cultural theories by postcolonial critics, such as Homi Bhabha's concept of hybrid identity, Stuart Hall's cultural identity, and Clifford Geertz along with additional theories, which will be applied.

2.3. Data Collection

This research employs an interdisciplinary approach, combining legal culture analysis and literary research. The primary data sources include *This Earth of Mankind* and the cultural identity of the Butonese people. The study focuses on quotations related to cultural identity and resistance within the novel, while the legal culture analysis connects ideas of legal cultures, cultural identity, and resistance in the Butonese context.

The data collection process involved the following steps:

- a. The research focus was defined.
- b. Primary sources were gathered from *This Earth of Mankind*.
- c. The text was analyzed through the application of postcolonial theories.
- d. Quotations pertinent to cultural identity and resistance were selected.

- e. The colonial experiences depicted in the novel were contextualized within the social framework of the Butonese people.
- f. The cultural identity, legal traditions, and modes of resistance within the Butonese community were critically examined.

3. Literature Review

3.1. Postcolonialism, Cultural Identity, and Resistance

“Colonialism is an apparatus of power that turns its gaze upon itself in the restless and repeated attempts to know and control its’others’. It thus opens the margins of its own authority to the possibility of resistance.”

Homi Bhabha-The Location of Culture

The colonizer imposes their rules to natives and exercises unequal relationships to decolonize the weak. In broader definition that colonialism is domination exerts political, economic and cultural control over another. Postcolonial studies highlight the effect of colonialism onto the oppressed, its legacy can be found in bureaucracy, cultures and historical perspectives. The term of postcolonialism is used to explain the struggle of the natives in the third world across the globe in the early 21st century for freedom. But it transformed to the interpretation of self-government and self-determination (“Britannica, postcolonialism, 2024”). As Bhabha translation in cultural identity as the ongoing negotiation which re-creates hybridity as “the newness enters the world” (Simon 1994: 211). He highlighted the idea of ‘third space, a space that emerges between the colonizer and the colonized, a dynamic zone where new cultural identities, meanings, and forms of expression are created through processes like translation and reinterpretation, and it creates a new mode of cultural exchange.

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In the study of Resistance in occupied Palestine; 1948-1966, the term of “resistance” first time expressed by the Palestinian writer, critic, Ghassan Kanafani (Harlow, 1987). His critical essay gives distinction of literature which was written “under occupation” and “exile” which literally proposes a collective entity of a common land, common identity that possible to articulate the modes of historical and political existence. Which both means literature in both is medium of struggle and resistance is means as defense mechanism. Taking the rights of the opponents to speak up through detaining them produces resistance. For instance, Pramoedya orally told the story of Buru Quartet in the exile place (Buru Island) and smuggled them

outside, then it was published without the consent of the authority, followed by his prison's notes, *'The Mute of Soliloquy.'*

Further, the Dutch colonial government exercised subjugation in the East Indies (Indonesia). They allowed literary works to be published with exception the themes should be about traditions, customs, the issue of forced marriages and similar notions. It aimed to redeem the awakening of nationalism. The subject of forced marriages became a dominant one in Indonesian literature (Sykorsky, 1980). The Dutch power concerned with the effect of literature or any foreign writings that can boost the nationalism, this the reason of Dutch formed the Commission of People Reading which transformed to Balai Pustaka as explained by Prof. Hilmar (Bagus Muljadi, 2024). The theme of resistance in that context is literature under Dutch occupation controlled and manufactured based on the interest of the Dutch colonial. However, amid the harsh of injustice that the Dutch colonial imposed to writers, but, except for Pramoedya, his works *This Earth of Mankind* produced in the exile island (Buru Island), he narrated orally to his fellow prisoners and smuggled outside. This novel perfectly narrated cultural identity in the context of western education, historical sequence and Journey of Minke to challenge colonialism which will be revealed in the next part.

3.2. Cultural Identity Context in This Earth of Mankind

“Everyone wants to be priyayi. The ones who are already priyayi want to become even more priyayi. The rich ones want to be richer. The ones with rank want higher rank. All of them are priyayi. Rank, wealth, title, that's what being priyayi is about. Any one of those alone, that's priyayi. Not to mention all three of them at once. Pre- pare yourself, my daughter. The time has come.”

-Arswendo Atmowiloto, *Canting* (1986)

In its internal social relations, Javanese people bring hierarchy in linguistics and in society's rank. Social hierarchy typically marks the upper class and the lower class. There were three class of Dutch colonial rule, defined by Miranda, H; Dutch group who have circle for the privilege, those who can access to wealth and the law system. The native Javanese who own royal lineage, those allowed to get education in Dutch school, for instance ELS (*Europeesche Lagere School*) and HBS (*Hogere Burgerschool*) While, the outsider groups their rights have taken out from the Dutch system, they were the farmers, peasants, workers, and commoners. Due to the injustice that demonstrated by the Dutch colonial power, Pramoedya criticized the exploitation, and the division based on race, religion and ideology. *This Earth of Mankind* portrayed the outlook of Javanese society under the Dutch colonial government. The colonizers brought their superiority and subjugated the inferior, the lower class. The discrimination in law practiced to the indigenous people and within the structure of the culture this gesture freely exercised by the Dutch. To reach the higher position in Dutch's bureaucracy would be given easier access to the natives like *priyayi* to be in Dutch system.

Pramoedya also highlighted the importance of education. Minke projected with privilege hierarchy enabled him to exposure western education. He challenged the Dutch colonial policy through his writings. In his thick Javanese blood, to live in harmony with traditional value implanted to him. Instead of adoring western education, he started to be critical and dismantle the superiority of western cultures through collectively build his own newspaper. Though, liberal ideals and individualism values of Western created conflicts with young

Minke. At the end, he adjusted and embraced hybridity. According to Franz Fanon, that concept of rightness attaches to the West, articulating dominance into the language form for their interest to conquest. Muljadi said language is the area of mind battles (Bagus Muljadi, 2024).

The perspective of repression transformed into education, to educate natives with the way of the Dutch thinking can boost the Dutch superiority and those educated natives will be employed in the Dutch companies to help Dutch run their enterprises. This is the reason why that the Dutch colonial set up the dictionary of Malay language to accommodate the spread over of literary works which contained the values of nationalism and to translate the scattered thoughts, even the Dutch allowed the translation of foreign literary works with the version of theirs. In the year of 1919 till the year of 1920ish the rose of novels which were written in Malay language, Tirta Adhi Soerjo was one of the profound journalists who turns the language of the novels to express the notions of the freeing Indonesia from the oppressors. Benedict Anderson highlights that the emergence of vernacular press played a pivotal role in sparking and nurturing nationalist consciousness (Hagen, 1997).

Pramoedya's *This Earth of Mankind* showed that the scattering of languages in Indonesia is the source of being united and shaping the uniqueness of identity. Languages reflect the nation's diversity and richness, which strengthens the collective sense of belonging and enables the culture to share. Literary works carry languages and the sequence events of the events that can provoke the notions to challenge the colonial politics, so all the sources are used to conquer, maintain and expand the hegemony of a certain nation. Do you know what colonial politics are?" it is a system or power structure to consolidate hegemony over occupied countries and peoples. Someone who agrees with it, but also legitimizes it, carries it out and defends it (Toer, 1996, p. 211).

According to Benedict Anderson, the Indonesian identity did not automatically arise from the use of vernacular language, people had to explore and define it themselves. Journalists did not impose this identity but helped readers imagine the idea of a nation by shaping their perspective through news. Over time, readers moved from emotional reactions to deeper reflections, understanding the meaning and value of stories. Journalists used various strategies to inspire this process of imagining a national identity (Hagen, 1997). It can be concluded that cultural identity actively shaped through shared narratives, literary works, languages and journalists contributed significantly by presenting stories that encouraged people to reflect their shared experiences, values, and aspirations. This process helped communities construct a cultural identity that unified them, emphasizing that cultural identity evolves through interaction, interpretation, and the collective effort to define a sense of belonging.

However, Pramoedya's *This Earth of Mankind* illustrated cultural identity through the clash between Javanese tradition and Dutch colonial interest. Minke's journey reflects a struggle to reconcile his indigenous roots with Western education and values. The novel highlights how colonialism shape's identity while also inspiring resistance and the emergence of a unified Indonesian cultural consciousness.

3.3. The Brief History of Buton Kingdom and Its Journey

Buton is the island in Indonesia, located adjacent to the southeastern peninsula of Sulawesi. It is purposefully located between the East Nusa Tenggara Flores and the Banda Sea, the ships traveling between the east and west passing this route. According to Hasan (2023, p. 7), the

Buton people's maritime culture, driven by their strategic location and trading activities, has sustained their tradition over time. Further, their seafaring enabled them to connect with diverse communities and cultures, often leading them to settle in new areas for residence and sustenance. Butonese's maritime culture shaped their cultural identity by fostering adaptability, facilitating exchanges with diverse communities, and preserving traditions. The 16th century was a period when Buton played a significant part in managing regional trade with the Ternate Empire. The fusion of history, trade, and politics played a pivotal role in shaping the Buton kingdom. To give a clear picture of the Sultanate of Buton can be seen from the map (Figure 1).



Source: Song (2018)

Figure 1. The Buton Map Shows the Sultanate of Buton's Territory in Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia

The map of the Buton Kingdom above likely highlights its geographical location, trade networks, and political influence. The Kingdom's strategic position in Southeast Sulawesi, its role in maritime trade, and its connections with neighboring regions, offering insights into its historical importance. One of them was the Buton fortresses, a defensive structure built to protect the kingdom from colonial forces and pirate raids. Positioned on elevated coastal areas, they controlled key maritime routes, safeguarding the region from naval attacks. Malim et al. (2019, p. 5) stated that beyond their military function, these forts also symbolized the Butonese people's resistance and efforts to maintain cultural identity and autonomy during colonial times.

The strategic location of the Buton Kingdom attracted traders from the Arabs, Persians, Indians, and Europeans, thriving as a maritime trade hub. This helped shape the Butonese people's rich cultural heritage, rooted in Islamic faith, local customs, and their history as an influential kingdom. Although Buton was never formally colonized by the Dutch or British, agreements were made with both colonial powers. However, these agreements did not

establish an emotional bond with the colonizers, allowing Buton to retain a degree of independence. Basically, Buton framing itself in unique cultures resulted from the influence of animism, Hinduism and Arabic along with the other influences that allow the assimilation of them. All these factors commonly reflect the diversity in languages and traditional ceremonials. Johnson (2003, p. 100) in his research posited that four linguistics codes, and each of them has various dialects, Wolio language is one from these three that own a literary tradition where the society is divided into different ranks. He added that the Butonese cultures may has three basis identity, they are Butonese political traditions (the sultanate), Butonese religion (folk Islam), and Butonese livelihood (fishing). All the cultural elements can be changed as the expansion of new values that can also bring the new cultural identity of Butonese.

The conception of 'cultural identity' by Johnson referred to 'cultural identity' that shared the experiences, practices and ways of life that overall may form a collective identity. Cultural identity is dynamic process and contextual ones while if it is unchanging or it is essential one and as a fixed core then it is 'one true self'. In his attempts to explain 'cultural identity', Stuart Hall, a cultural theorist, stated that at least there are two different ways of thinking about 'cultural identity' the first is shared cultures, experiences, interactions and social contexts which means fluid construct and its ongoing process. While the other part he highlighted, 'One True Self' the essential core or a fixed core (Hall, 1989, p. 69).

In Butonese contexts, the Butonese political tradition (the sultanate), religion (folk Islam), and livelihood (fishing) are aspects of their cultural identity represent shared practices, values, and way of life that shape collective identity, but if the elements viewed unchanging or essential core then they could be seen as part of their 'One True Self.' Thus, the distinction of those aspects is seen depending on whether it is dynamic (cultural identity) or as fixed core (One True Self). Rudyansjah (1997, p. 44) in his writing defined the division of society in Wolio society into four parts; Kaomu, Walaka, Papara, and Batua. The first two social categories, Kaomu and Walaka, are included in the category of Wolio people. In contrast, the last two social categories, Papara and Batua four, are classified as non Wolio people. The cultural identity of these four categories may be fixed or ongoing depending on the dynamic process of the elements, except, Batua and Papara may consider 'One True Self' as fixed and unchanging. But in its development, there is a shift as the influence of education and modernity change the outlook of society.

The Kingdom of Buton, established in the 15th century, witnessed its sixth king embrace Islam in 1540 or 1542, becoming the first Sultan. Under his reign, the entire kingdom, including the islands of Muna, Kabaena, Tukang Besi, and Buton, officially converted to Islam, with governance centered in Baubau, the capital of Buton Island. During the Dutch colonial era and Japanese occupation, from the 17th to the 19th centuries, the sultanate retained limited control while under the protection of the VOC. The Butonese take immense pride in their ability to preserve their independence, asserting that they were never fully colonized by the Dutch or the Japanese.

3.4. Butonese People's Customary Law (Legal Cultures)

The kingdom of Buton was founded by Mia Patamiana, four individuals from the Malay Peninsula, who established Wolio (now Baubau) and formed four regions, Limbo, each led by a bonto. These regions, along with nearby small kingdoms, united under Wa Kaa kaa as their first ruler in the 1300s. She married Si Batara, of Majapahit descent. The kingdom later

converted to Islam under King La Kilaponto, who became Sultan Murhum Kaimuddin Khalifatul Khamis. Before joining Republic of Indonesia, Buton Island run by the Kings but it turned to be Sultanate when the sixth King converted to Islam in 1540 since then he became the first Sultan. There were different narrations how Islam officially accepted to be the prominent faith in the Buton Kingdom. First, Sheikh Abdul Wahid bin Syarif Sulaiman al Fathani brought Islam in Buton Island. Second, Islam arrived in Buton due to the Arab traders who spread over Islam through trade. The narrations of Buton's history carry the long journey into the process of becoming the part of Indonesia. Yuval Noah Harari, the historian and the author of the book *The Brief History of Humankind* once pointed out that history is that history is not the past. History is the study of change, history should be relevant to how we live today, to the questions that concern us right now (PTI, 2023).

As [Faharudin \(2022, p. 522\)](#) stated that Indonesia has recognized customary law since its independence, as affirmed in the 1945 Constitution amendments, Article 18B. first paragraph acknowledges special regional government units governed by law, while second paragraph respects customary law communities and their traditional rights, provided they align with societal development and the principles of the Unitary State of Indonesia. Thus, Indonesia's cultural identity is closely connected to the recognition and preservation of customary law, which underpins traditional practices, values, and community structures. By embedding customary law into its legal framework through the 1945 Constitution, the nation affirms the significance of these traditions in shaping its diverse cultural fabric. This acknowledgment not only safeguards the unique identities of various customary law communities but also integrates them into the national framework, ensuring they remain compatible with societal progress and the principles of the Unitary State.

Buton joined Indonesia in 1960, adopting the 1945 Constitution, which officially replaced the *Martabat Tujuh* law. However, the *parabela* still apply it in practice to manage local indigenous communities ([Nalefo, 2018, p. 6](#)). *Martabat Tujuh* is the law has been a guiding principle in the Buton Sultanate since 1613, serving as a framework for the *parabela* in practicing customs. It embodies strong democratic values, even surpassing modern democratic standards. The *Martabat Tujuh* originated from the Sufi text *At-Tuhfah al-Mursalat Ila Ruh an-Nabiy* by Muhammad Ibnu Fadhlillah al-Burhanfuri, a prominent Sufi from Gujarat (d. 1620 AD). It outlines seven divine stations based on the philosophies of Ibn Arabi and Abdul Karim Al-Jili. Interestingly, the *Martabat Tujuh* was once used as a legal source in Buton, locally known as *Undang-Undang Murtabat Tujuh Sara Wolio* or simply *Undang-undang Martabat Tujuh*.

The transition from a kingdom to an Islamic sultanate in Buton brought significant changes to its socio-political structure. The introduction of the *Martabat Tujuh* constitution marked a progressive shift in the political landscape, particularly in the way officials, including the king, were selected. Prior to this, Buton followed an absolute monarchy system, with the position of the king being inherited in a hereditary manner from the first king to the third Sultan. However, after the *Martabat Tujuh* constitution was enacted, the process for appointing a king was altered, requiring approval from the Pata Limbona. This new system also involved a secret and sacred selection process, reflecting the evolving political norms in Buton.

4. Discussion

4.1. Cultural Identity and Resistance; in *This Earth of Mankind* and Butonese Customary Law

Minke's internal conflicts with his identity in *This Earth of Mankind* by Pramoedya Ananta Toer are profoundly connected to his role as a young Javanese man facing the challenges of colonial governance, societal pressures, and individual goals. In the role of protagonist, Minke finds himself caught between two worlds: his traditional Javanese heritage and the Western-educated, modern ideals he encounters through education and exposure to European thought that distances him from his cultural origins, resulting in inner conflict. Leaving him conflicted about his own sense of self. Minke's identity is further complicated by his social status as a "pribumi" (native Indonesian) attempting to assert his autonomy in a racially discriminatory colonial system. His efforts to balance his ambition, personal beliefs, and cultural background highlight his internal struggle to forge a stable and authentic identity. As it can be seen from quotation in Pramoedya's *This Earth of Mankind*, "Naturally this breast of mine swelled. I'd never been to Europe, so I did not know if the director was telling the truth or not. But because it pleased me, I decided to believe him. And, further, all my teachers were born and educated in Europe. It didn't feel right to distrust my teachers. My parents had entrusted me with them. Among the educated European and Indo communities, they were considered to be the best teachers in all of the Netherlands Indies. So, I was obliged to trust them." (1996, p. 16). In *This Earth of Mankind*, Minke embraces Western education, which instills critical thinking, individualism, and the power to challenge colonial oppression. These values enable him to question authority, assert his identity, and advocate for justice in Dutch-ruled society, becoming a voice for the oppressed.

Additionally, Minke's challenges are influenced by his connections with significant figures, like Annelies and Nyai Ontosoroh, whose experiences oppression, colonialism, and strength. His connections with these individuals raise issues of race, class, and power, amplifying his feeling solitude. Minke struggles with the demands imposed on him by his community, the Dutch colonial structure, and his personal moral convictions. His aspiration for social and intellectual independence through writing conflicts with the demands of conventional Javanese customs and colonial limitations. "Write Nyo, always about humanity, humanity's life, not humanity's death. Yes, whether it's animals, ogres, gods, or ghosts that you present, there's nothing more difficult to understand than humanity. That's why there is no end to the telling of stories on this earth. Every day there are more. I don't know a lot about this myself" (Toer, 1996, p. 111). The opposing forces create a continual negotiation of self, as Minke strives to establish his identity while opposing the influences that aim to marginalize him. This internal conflict depicts a young man battling not just with his own uncertainties but also with the larger societal injustices of his era. Through writings Minke, protagonist character of *This Earth of Mankind* believes that writing can be a powerful tool to challenge Dutch colonialism by exposing injustices and amplifying the voices of the marginalized. Through his writings, he seeks to bridge cultural gaps, assert his identity, and inspire resistance, using the written word as a form of intellectual and moral defiance against oppression.

Pramoedya's *This Earth of Mankind* portrays Indonesia's creation as a lengthy process marked by societal divisions imposed by the Dutch to maintain control. The novel highlights the struggles of inferiority and superiority within this colonial hierarchy, where local feudalism and class exploitation thrived. Similarly, during the Dutch colonial period,

interactions between Butonese and colonial cultures reflected resistance, adaptation, and coercion. Dutch rule disrupted traditional governance in the Buton Sultanate, undermining its political authority. While the novel emphasizes oppressive social divisions in Javanese society, it also draws parallels to the challenges faced by Butonese customary law, which must adapt to societal changes to remain relevant. Without evolution, such traditions risk becoming outdated and ineffective for the communities they serve. The Butonese were subjected to new economic policies, such as forced labor and cash-crop production, which were enforced by the colonial administration. These policies altered traditional economic practices, such as fishing and maritime trading, and placed pressure on the Butonese way of life. Despite these challenges, the Butonese adapted by incorporating certain elements of European administration and technology, such as Western-style education and ship building techniques, while maintaining their cultural traditions.

At the same time, the introduction of Western education further impacted on the Butonese cultural landscape. While Islam remained a central unifying force in their identity, the presence of Dutch, created divisions within communities and exposed the Butonese to new ideas and ways of governance. These cultural exchanges brought opportunities for some Butonese to attain positions within the colonial system through education, while others resisted these changes to preserve their cultural practices and traditional belief systems. The hybridity of these interactions illustrates how colonization was not a simple process of domination but a dynamic exchange, with the Butonese navigating and negotiating their identity and traditions in the face of shifting political and cultural influences.

The Butonese asserted their cultural identity through the maintenance of traditional ceremonies, local crafts, and maritime expertise. Practices like *sarong* Buton weaving and *Pakande-kandea* feasts reinforced communal bonds and asserted their distinct social values and way of life. Additionally, the Butonese navigated cultural hybridity by incorporating elements of Western influence selectively while maintaining their core traditions. Through Islamic teachings and local customs, they resisted the spread of Christianity and Western values introduced by colonial missionaries. These forms of cultural resistance illustrate how the Butonese preserved their identity by adapting their heritage while rejecting the full assimilation demanded by colonial systems. This cultural assertion allowed them to maintain their social cohesion, heritage, and resistance, even as they faced the pressures of foreign domination.

Homi Bhabha's theories on cultural identity focus on the concepts of hybridity, ambivalence, and the *Third Space*, which challenge static or monolithic representations of identity. According to Bhabha, cultural identity is not a fixed essence rooted in a singular tradition but is constantly evolving through interaction, negotiation, and exchange between cultures. His idea of hybridity refers to the process by which cultures influence and transform one another, creating new, hybrid identities. This concept disrupts the notion of pure cultural boundaries, emphasizing instead the fluid and dynamic nature of identity formation in colonial and postcolonial contexts.

Bhabha's *Third Space* is particularly significant in understanding the representation of cultural identity. This theoretical space emerges in the interaction between different cultural perspectives, where meaning and identity are negotiated. It is a site of both tension and creativity, allowing marginalized groups to resist dominant narratives while forming new ways of self-expression. Through this lens, cultural identity is represented not as a static inheritance but as a product of dialogic and transformative encounters. Bhabha's work

highlights the complexity of representing cultural identity in a globalized world, where histories of colonization, migration, and cultural exchange continuously reshape how individuals and communities see themselves and are seen by others.

Bhabha also introduces the concept of ambivalence in cultural representation, emphasizing the simultaneous attraction and repulsion that can occur in the interaction between colonizer and colonized cultures. This ambivalence destabilizes fixed hierarchies of power and identity, exposing the limitations of dominant cultural narratives. For instance, in colonial contexts, the colonized often mimic aspects of the colonizer's culture, but this mimicry is not a simple act of imitation; it is a form of resistance that subverts the authority of the colonizer. In this way, ambivalence complicates the representation of cultural identity, revealing it as a site of contradiction and negotiation rather than one of uniformity or consensus. Through these ideas, Bhabha's framework highlights how cultural identity is deeply contested, always in flux, and subject to redefinition within historical and political contexts.

5. Conclusion and the Relevance of the Study

The main insights from the analyzing of *This Earth of Mankind* and its associated cultural contexts emphasize the intricate interaction among colonialism, cultural identity, and resistance. A key finding is that Dutch colonialism greatly affected the socio-political and economic systems of colonized such as Butonese. The Dutch authorities established new administrative framework, economic strategies, and social hierarchies that weakened traditional leadership systems and local economic methods. In spite of these challenges, the Butonese demonstrated resilience by affirming their identity through maintenance of their *adat*, spiritual beliefs, and seafaring customs.

Another significant finding is the impact of hybridity and cultural exchange in forming identity and resistance. Utilizing Homi Bhabha's theory, the Butonese community incorporated aspects of Western influence, including technological progress and education, while also resisting the loss of their cultural identity. This blending allowed the Butonese to craft fresh identity expressions and contest colonial authority systems, especially via cultural affirmation in customs, rituals, and traditional practices. Resistance manifested not only through rebellion but also via the inventive negotiation of their cultural customs, emphasizing both flexibility and resistance.

Ancestral heritage emerged as a vital foundation for resistance, with traditional practices such as *Pakande-kandea*, Buton weaving, and maritime skills serving as more than cultural symbols—they became tools of active defiance. These traditions helped the Butonese maintain unity, moral guidance, and shared memories in the face of colonial challenges. By fostering a strong collective identity and sense of belonging, ancestral customs empowered the Butonese to navigate the pressures of colonial rule while safeguarding their cultural and social independence. This underscores the importance of preserving cultural traditions, honoring historical memory, and embracing communal practices as strategies to resist external domination and affirm identity.

In *This Earth of Mankind*, the connection between Javanese cultural traditions and Butonese hierarchy is reflected in the shared emphasis on social order, respect for authority, and the preservation of cultural identity. While Javanese society values refinement and a structured, centralized social system, Butonese society operates with a more decentralized yet deeply respected hierarchy. Both cultures emphasize the role of leaders and elders in

guiding their communities and protecting traditions, illustrating how both Javanese and Butonese social structures act as mechanisms of resistance against colonial influence, preserving cultural autonomy and social cohesion.

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