



Pramoedya Ananta Toer, *This Earth of Mankind* and *Buru Quartet*

Sasaki Takuo

This Earth of Mankind is a monumental work in Indonesian literature that remains a timeless masterpiece since its publication in the 1980s. It has been translated in over forty languages, and Pramoedya has been frequently discussed as a candidate for the Nobel Prize in Literature. Thanks to Oshikawa Noriaki's brilliant Japanese translation, we are able to savor to our heart's content this grand-scale historical novel. As we turn the pages, we become immersed in this literary world, the beauty of which lingers for decades, or perhaps, forever.

The story is set in the Dutch East Indies in the early 20th century. The protagonist is a young elite Javanese student named Minke whose identity as a new race (Indonesian) awakens through his encounters with various people. We follow the growth of Minke and feel sympathy for this young man getting lost at the critical juncture of history leading to the independence of the Asian peoples, stumbling but rising to his own feet once again. The words of the people he meets, particularly the women, reach deep into our hearts. We find ourselves in an intense but rich time-space, witnessing Minke change and the world transform.

The characters are modeled on real people and the social occurrences in the story are based on historical facts. The book thus provides the best guidance for the understanding of modern Asian history.



Photo : Sasaki Takuo

Source:

The Buru Quartet

- *Bumi Manusia* (English version: *This Earth of Mankind*, translated by Max Lane, Penguin Books, 1996)
<https://penguinrandomhousehighereducation.com/book/?isbn=9780140256352>
- *Anak Semua Bangsa* (English version: *Child of All Nations*, translated by Max Lane, Penguin Books, 1996)
<https://penguinrandomhousehighereducation.com/book/?isbn=9780140256338>
- *Jejak Langkah* (English version: *Footsteps*, translated by Max Lane, Penguin Books, 1996)
<https://penguinrandomhousehighereducation.com/book/?isbn=9780140256345>
- *Rumah Kaca* (English version: *House of Glass*, translated by Max Lane, Penguin Books, 1997)
<https://penguinrandomhousehighereducation.com/book/?isbn=9780140256796>