

**THE MEMORY OF FEMALE CHARACTERS IN THE NOVEL  
TEENAGE VIRGINS IN THE GRIP OF THE MILITARY  
BY PRAMOEDYA ANANTA TOER:  
A REVIEW OF LITERARY MEMORY**

**Sinta Ariska**

sintaariska017@gmail.com

**Suantoko**

stsuantoko109@gmail.com

**Mansur**

mansur.7111964@gmail.com

Public Junior High School 1 Montong Tuban  
FKIP-Ronggolawe PGRI University

Tamanlugo Kulon, Pakel, Kec. Montong, Kabupaten Tuban, Jawa Timur 62357  
Jl. Manunggal No.61, Wire, Gedongombo, Kec. Semanding, Kabupaten Tuban,  
Jawa Timur 62381

---

**Article History:**

Received:  
March 14, 2022

Revised:  
April 2, 2022

Accepted:  
April 9, 2022

**Corresponding Author:**  
[stsuantoko109@gmail.com](mailto:stsuantoko109@gmail.com)

**Abstract:**The Indonesian state stands by leaving a long history behind. Indonesian historical records show that the Indonesian state was colonized or occupied by the Japanese for 3.5 years, starting from March 8, 1942 and ending on Independence Day, August 17, 1945. Of course, that specific period left its mark in the shape of indelible memories on the collective minds of the colonized population. The social reality applied by the Japanese, as recorded in the memory of the indigenous population is far from positive and can even be classified as difficult to accept. One of these dark events was recorded in Pramoedya Ananta Toer's novel *Teenage Virgins in the Grip of the Military*. This study aims to describe the memory of female characters. Cognitive Psychology has been used as an approach in this study. Cognitive Psychology is regarded as a part of psychology that focuses on the study of perception, memory, and decision-making. This is a challenging subject to study because it deals with behavior. The data analysis techniques make use of Miles and Huberman who specialize in workflows: data collection, reduction, presentation, and data verification. The results show that the female character recalled in her memory that the soldiers from Nippon had raped a local

---

female student. This brings about memory transmission and has traumatic consequences for women who have been 'grabbed'. Women are sexually assaulted. The incident made Buru Island women marginalized. The women of Buru Island never had the opportunity to learn as had been promised. Such treatment triggers a nightmarish and traumatic memory.

**Keywords: literary memory, women, cognitive psychology, trauma**

---

## INTRODUCTION

Literary works in Indonesia have shown an increasingly rapid development. This is marked by the presence of various new literary works with varied themes that are not far removed from the habits and situations that occur in social life. One of these is the theme of psychology, especially the state of cognitive psychology that is directly connected to the influence of emotional reactions to memories of past events that are neatly stored in one's memory.

(Assa, 2019) stated that it is not surprising that memories are recorded in the memory of each person, and with the ability people have to transmit the memory in writing, it can be enjoyed by other people. The memory can be a historical experience that is experienced either directly or indirectly recorded in a person's memory and then re-narrated through other vehicles that the reader is able to receive.

(Cahyasari, 2017) adds that these memories can be stored neatly or just pass along as other memories accumulate so that they are automatically replaced by memories that have their own power to bind themselves and take root in the heart of each individual. Recorded memories reveal various events in life, not only dealing with happiness but also memories of suffering experienced by individuals or groups collectively.

Further memory studies are closely related to multidisciplinary studies that begin with the development of memory focusing on the very broad dimensions of social memory and memory of a political nature. The focus subsequently develops in general how memories work collectively in representing the past, how memories elevate various cultural sources to cultural identity and how memories are capable of being extracursive about the reading of the past. The perspective of psychology views memory with regard to memory individually while the perspective of sociology emphasizes the social and cultural basis of shared memories (Elita, 2004).

The author of the novel *Teenage Virgins in the Grip of the Military: A Record from Buru Island* is a person who is rated as a bright and brilliant writer, He presents the work

with a loaded psychological value, especially the memory of the past that influenced the character's way of life in everyday life. For this reason, an analysis of this particular novel is needed to find the memory of the past that was experienced and happened to the character that appear in this novel by Pramoedya Ananta Toer.

The researcher took a novel by Pramoedya Ananta Toer entitled *Teenage Virgins in the Grip of the Military: A Record of Buru Island* as the object of research because there is an interesting problem to study, namely the problem of memory contained in the contents of the novel which becomes a memory that we need to remember later. In addition, the novel has a unique title, namely *Teenage Virgins in the Grip of the Military: a Record of Buru Island*. After reading the bias it is concluded that in this book there is a sad, sensitive, and tragic history of women. Tragically, those who experienced the brutality of Japanese war crimes in 1943-1945, these teenage virgins aged 14-19 years (amounting to the shocking number of nearly 200,000 throughout Asia) were occupied by the Japanese, and this included Indonesians.

In Indonesia, this fraud was carried out by the Japanese through Sendenbu (propaganda office). The pretext was that these teenage girls would be sent to Japan and Singapore, but in fact women are made women to join the Japanese army in posts or lodges in war zones. Pramoedya Ananta Toer's work is interesting to study, because even women condemned to death had no known whereabouts. After the surrender of Japan, they were simply released. Displaced, curled up, not knowing the direction (disorientation), some could not go home. Some even hesitated to go home due to personal mental pressure and gathered so as not to shame the family. This history must be revealed, because it is worth knowing that the Indonesian Government itself neglects to reveal this, even the Japanese themselves have the point of circumventing responsibility that women who were victims did so voluntarily or are called *jugun ianfu* (comfort women). With notes and interviews collected by Pramoedya Ananta Toer and his fellow exiles on Buru Island (some of the victims were stranded there) it would be enough to scratch, tear hearts apart and offend the humanity of its readers.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This research is classified as qualitative research, which is a study that produces descriptive data in the form of what is spoken by informants or texts and observable behavior. The researcher describes the object that is systematically studied regarding the facts, properties and various aspects related to the research. The qualitative approach is employed because the data needed is in the form of literary text data (Endraswara, 2008).

The researchers in this study have collected information related to women's memories in the novel "Teenage Virgins in the Grip of the Military: A Record of Buru Island" by Pramoedya Ananta Toer. The Cognitive Psychology approach is used as a way of looking at sharpening the focus of research.

(Hastjarjo, 2015) says that cognitive psychology is understood as part of psychological science specializing in perception, memory and decision making. Cognitive psychology has a close relationship with memory and is regarded as a difficult subject to observe. The subject of study in the approach of cognitive psychology is invisible to humans. In addition, the processes involved in the human mind cannot always be directly understood. Data analysis techniques make use of Miles and Huberman who specialize in workflows: data collection, reduction, presentation, and verification.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The novel *Teenage Virgins in the Grip of the Military: a Record of Buru Island* by Pramoedya Ananta Toer describes the experience of psychic and physical violence, in which something happens that ultimately produces various memories or memories. In addition, the female characters in this novel are marginalized. The marginalization of women occurs due to sex differences that result in poverty. Marginalization occurs not only in the state or social context but can occur in a smaller scope in the family environment. The marginalization experienced by teenage virgins during Japanese rule occurred due to fraud; hope and reality are not in line with those given by the Japanese government to indigenous peoples.

The main character in the novel describes the teenage virgins of the time, who served as sex slaves of Japanese soldiers, even though at that time, they were given a promise to go to school abroad. Until finally they were completely deceived and taken advantage of by the Japanese soldiers, they had lost their future, to the point that they were embarrassed to go home to see their families. Because the main character thought that they had been greatly humiliated by the incident that had happened to him. In this book, male characters play a very important role, because the content of the male characters themselves is the Japanese *tantara*. The Japanese *tantara* here are a group of people who are horribly inhumane and extremely vicious; based on this attitude, they enslaved juvenile virgins from the interior or even from any area. Starting from Javanese teenage virgins, the victims included Chinese, South Koreans, Filipinas, Burmese and even Japanese teenage virgins themselves. In addition to the Japanese *tantara*, "Sutinah narrates her story of why she ended up to the island of Buru. She had been tricked by the Japanese, who (she said)

would send Indonesian girls to Japan. It turned out that she was taken to Buru to be used as a prostitute to serve Japanese soldiers in the *Maluku* (Moluccas) region, especially Buru. She is placed in Namlea and feels distressed by the lowered self-esteem. With the help of a young Alfuru she was able to escape with two of his friends." (Toer, 2019: 48).

On the island of Buru, the female characters were taken as wives by native men and had children in the interior of the forest. They carried out all activities to the detriment of the colonized party. Apart from that, the thing that stands out the most is what the Japanese did to teenage virgins. They gave a promise that would make them more educated people by saying they wanted to be sent to school abroad. They forcefully took teenage virgins into every home.

Derived from these events, teenage women recorded the island of buru notes experiencing memory transmission. Memory transmission is seen as the process of transferring memory from traumatic generations who managed to survive past events to generations that were not there or were not involved in the events because they were not born so did not witness the events. Therefore, a memory is created so that we can see the events of that time, and we can appreciate it for now (Bhinnety, 2008).

Here are some quotes that cover the matter. The island of Buru became an outcast for teenage virgins during the Japanese colonial period from 1942 to 1945. The teenage virgins who became exiles actually wanted to go back to their families. The specific circumstances made them lose the courage return to the family in their local origin. The above evidence suggests that there is an abomination occurring in society. The heinous attitudes that occur in *Teenage Virgins in the Grip of the Military* based on Pramoedya Ananta Toer's Buru Island notes or records explain the labeling of the majority group in the country and household. Many government regulations, cultures and habits are developed due to the labeling of a group or person. This situation is said that during the Japanese rule there were many events that were highly unexpected, especially for women at the juvenile age of virgins.

"No one can do anything else except surrender, accept everything that must happen, unprotected, with a broken heart, and feeling sad. Threats with violence are not unusual. Japanese women who are there as dormitory mothers always give entertainment to them so that they can still do their "work" well. Sumiyati's tears began to spill over the time of her life story until a part of her dormitory, with 50 girls from Java, visited by a large number of Japanese soldiers and rotating them wave after wave. Each girl gets one cubicle. *Nippon* soldiers who had sex came to the room specified on the ticket containing the cubicle number. Those who have not been able to turn will have to wait until the inside comes out.

Sinta Ariska

*Indonesian EFL Journal: Journal of ELT, Linguistics, and Literature*, Volume 8, Issue 1, July 2022

Sumiyati went on to say that the girls had "working hours" outside of which no soldiers entered." (Toer, 2019: 41).

The female character is the main factor in an event that occurs. Social status during the colonial period was a matter of great concern, as they were teenage virgin girls who experienced a decline in the form of violence, abominations and deception, restrictions on their space of movement that had been controlled by the Japanese army, this happened because of the class division in people's lives, so there was a gap between the rulers and the people. Then, judging by the lack of social institutions as a support for people's lives or the lack of guarantees from the government to live a prosperous life, there was a betrayal from the ruler against those juvenile virgins who were propagandized by the Japanese army during the colonial period, those who were promised to be schooled were in fact only used as sex slaves by Japanese soldiers. The women propagandized by the Japanese army were alienated from their former customs and traditions. There was no other choice they could make and eventually they had to plunge themselves into a very primitive life and in customary bonds.

The deprivation of the right to a decent life affecting the female character of Pramoedya Ananta Toer's Novel *Virgin Youth in the Grip of the Military (Buru Island Notes)* has occurred along with a considerable amount of deprivation of rights in Indonesian society. All walks of life lived in a state of deprivation, and poverty. The goods that could still be sold lined up fell into the hands of merchants. Because, indeed, only merchants can live well from that poverty and hunger. The extremely suffocating circumstances of life made them sick, even to the point of death. When Japan colonized the country of Indonesia. In 1942, in those days the life of the indigenous population was of great concern. The indigenous people were in a very poor state. The gaps and differences between the indigenous people and the Japanese government caused the Japanese government to treat the indigenous people casually and indifferently. This portrayal shows the differences between the natives and the Japanese government. The Japanese government's treatment of indigenous peoples is in dire straits. The character Aku in the novel tells about the life of indigenous peoples during Japanese rule.

"In villages farmers are not entitled to harvest, they are instead subjected to forced labor outside their villages. More than three-quarters of a million of them were never able to return to their families because they died in the region, in the *darata*, and on the islands of Southeast Asia" (Toer, 2019: 4).

The oppression of women resulted in many major problems that resulted in something fatal. Teenage girls and indigenous peoples received a promise from Japan that teenage virgins would be educated abroad. The announcement made by the Japanese government was a falsehood. The picture, in fact, describes the oppression experienced by the teenagers involved.

"Based on the records followed later, it is foreseeable that most of the teenage virgins that Japan transported had died in agony, without being witnessed by their loved ones, never had the opportunity to learn as promised, and died in distant lands. And it really shakes the feelings of humanity, except for the Japanese soldiers." (Toer, 2019: 20).

During Japanese rule, teenagers were transported abroad to continue their studies so that they could lead the Indonesian state when they became independent. The teenagers were subjected to torture and violence. Some even died. The surviving teenage virgin suffered trauma.

Trauma in the Social context is experienced by female characters. Trauma is often associated with great emotional and psychological distress, usually due to unfortunate events or experiences related to violence. In the novel *Perawan Remaja Dalam Cengkeraman Militer (Catatan Pulau Buru)* by Pramoedya Ananta Toer, there are many traumas caused by the Japanese government to the Indonesian people, especially the female characters. During the Japanese rule, teenagers were given the lure lured to continue their studies abroad. In those days, all parents was obliged to register his their teenage children. But in the end, it is not the education they get received but the injustice that they have had to face. They must become sex slaves of the Japanese soldiers.

"There is indeed a group of teenagers who are happy to leave, as witnessed by Sukarno Martodihardjo, but it is foreseeable that most of them set off with a heavy heart, forced, fear of parents or at the threat of the Japanese, where their parents were completely helpless."

"Of course, the question arises to you: why are people afraid of the Japanese threat? Was there no law at that time? The answer is simple: all must follow the will of Japan, so then the punishment is to carry out its will. The Japanese who carried out the task did not hesitate to demonstrate cruelty, abominations and gluttony, and its truly sickening violence. I myself have witnessed the backwardness of this culture and civilization many times since they landed in Java on March 1, 1942. Of course, there is no need for me to detail one after

another. But, if necessary, I can indeed tell a special story of my experience that I witnessed with my own eyes.”(Toer, 2019: 12).

Deception of female figures as marginalized by the Japanese Government Deception is a lie made up for personal gain that obviously harms others. In this case, the novel entitled *Perawan Remaja Dalam Cengkeraman Militer (Catatan Pulau Buru)* by Pramoedya Ananta Toer contains the many lies told by the Japanese government to the Indonesian nation. When Japan colonized the country of Indonesia. In 1943, teenage virgins who were deceived by the Japanese government on the grounds that they were to be educated abroad turned out to be sex slaves (prostitutes) known as comfort women for Japanese soldiers.

“They were there to satisfy the lust of sex-hungry Nippon soldiers. It's not just Indonesian girls who were sacrificed, they also included Filipino and Japanese girls themselves, and [they] exchanged experiences with each other.” (Toer, 2019: 37).

### **Stereotypes of Colonized Women by Colonizers**

Stereotypes are based on the labeling or naming of a particular group. The novel *The Teenage Virgins in the Grip of the Military* by Pramoedya Ananta Toer tells a great deal about the stereotypes experienced by women. In the novel, it is told that women, especially virgins, were forced to become sex slaves of Nippon soldiers during the Japanese colonial period. The teenage virgins who became exiles actually wanted to go back to their families but the circumstances made them lose the courage to return.

### **Suppression of Events**

The events that occurred during the reign were very difficult to forgive, even the indigenous people were severely oppressed and harmed.

The Cruelty Event can be said to really have a memory when everything that happened was felt very deeply, and the cruelty that happened during the Japanese Government at that time was exceptionally heinous. The deception that occurred at that time was when the Japanese troops went to Indonesia by giving promises to teenage virgins to be educated abroad, but this was a lie. In actual fact, the teenagers who were sexually abused. A situation that marginalized them from their families and countries because of the actions of *Dai Nippon* soldiers. The following data proves the marginalization experienced by adolescents during Japanese rule.



## CONCLUSION

Based on the results and discussions that have been carried out in the novel *The Teenage Virgin in the Grip of the Military: A Record of Buru Island* by Pramoedya Ananta Toer, several conclusions may be drawn. The female character recalls in her memory that soldiers from Nippon had raped a local student. This triggers memory transmission and causes traumatic causes for women who have been 'grabbed'. Women are sexually assaulted. The incident caused Buru Island women to become marginalized. These women never had the opportunity to learn as had been promised. Such treatment becomes a nightmarish and traumatic memory.

## REFERENCES

- Assa, A. E. (2019). Postmemory dalam Novel Taopal Karya Ngarto Februana. *Poetika*.
- Bhinnety, M. (2008). Struktur dan Proses Memori. *Buletin Psikologi*.
- Cahyasari, I. (2017). Kekuatan Memori dan (Ketidak) Mungkinan Pengampunan Dalam Novel Hanauzumi Karya Jun'ichi Watanabe. *Poetika*.
- Elita, M. R. (2004). Memahami Memori. *Mediator*.
- Endraswara, S. (2008). *Metedologi Penelitian Sastra (Revisi)*. MedPress.
- Hastjarjo, D. (2015). Kajian Tentang Memori. *Bulletin Psikologi*.
- Prastyo, Hari (2008) *The correlation between discourse quality and readability of the english reading texts used in the State Islamic Senior High Schools (MAN) Jombang*. Undergraduate thesis, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim.
- Toer, P. A. (2011). *Perawan Remaja dalam Cengkeraman Militer: Catatan Pulau Buru*. KPG.