



The Resistance of Slave in Colonial Era toward Surapati by Abdoel Moeis



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Abstract

This descriptive qualitative research is done based on slave and slavery problem in Indonesia in literary work. It is executed by using deconstruction technique, and it has the goals to describe: (1) The relation between colonials and colonized people in Surapati novel and (2) The resistance of slave to the employer, and (3) The characteristics of Surapati novel in postcolonial perspective. The result of this research shows that the relation between colonials and colonized people, it is between Dutch and Indonesian indigene is an unbalanced relation. Dutch's domination toward indigene is shown through Dutch's prejudices toward indigene, animal stereotyping to indigent, and skin color discrimination which is constructed by colonial. Dutch viewed themselves are more civilized than indigene because they have white skin color, otherwise indigene have black skin color, or not white. This point of view is reconstructed in their mind and attitude, so there is a stereotype that indigene is uncivilized, negligent, lazy, and like an animal (monkey). The impact of this domination (discrimination, racism, and marginalization) makes indigene perform resistance. Resistance is done by slave/indigene in form of mimicry, and mockery that mocking Dutch colonial as an effort to destroy their power. The mimicry and mockery show the hybrid attitude of slave/indigene, so the discourse that is constructed in Surapati novel is ambiguous. So that, in postcolonial perspective this novel can be said having ambiguous characteristics. In one side it constructs opponent discourse, but in another side it is hegemonies by colonial discourse.

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1. Introduction

Universally, humans are born without owning the social class; moreover, they were born as slaves. Sarup (2003: 30) stated that *men and women are not born with an Identity*. Giving slave identity shows that superiority exists behind the identity giving. (West) creates inferiority (East). This assumption makes humans oppressing the others. The superiority lead issues for humanity itself.

The human issues have ever been suffered by Indonesia people on slavery long ago (Wertheim, 1998: 186). Nevertheless, slave and slavery have rarely been researched (Anatona, 2000), although the slaves have made the resistance on Indonesia independence history. That slavery history was written on the novel entitled *Soerapati* by Abdoel Moeis and the novel was released in 1965 (4th edition). The human issues have ever been suffered by Indonesia people on slavery long ago (Wertheim, 1998: 186). Nevertheless, slave and slavery have rarely been researched (Anatona, 2000), although the slaves have made the resistance on Indonesia independence history. That slavery history was written on the novel entitled *Soerapati* by Abdoel Moeis and the novel was released in 1965 (4th edition). That novel needs to be analyzed by using post-colonial approach because this approach is able to reveal the colonialism trace on the literary work, to identify the existence of colonialism, and to assess the characteristics and the importance of textual effects on the clues (Foulcher, 2002: 3). On the post-colonial study, the literary work actually reveals the traces of colonialism, i.e. the confrontations of inter-races, inter-nations, and inter-culture related to unbalanced domination since imperialism era (ibid). Meanwhile, Sumarwan (2004: 61) said that the post-colonial approach is an alternative approach to reading and interpret Indonesian literary in an attempt to track the opposition between the colonials against the colonialized, indicating the potential violence inside. Thereby, post-colonialism give the space for the marginal people to sound their own opinions (Bhaha, 2006). In this case, post-colonialism views that reality is the result of imagination or the actors' discourse as a representation of their knowledge. The colonials' knowledge was used to systematize the others considered as the retarded (Said, 1978: 3).

The purpose of the research is to describe (1) the relationship between the colonials and colonialized, (2) the slave resistance against the masters, and (3) the characteristic of *Soerapati* novel, owning the purposes to accumulate the literary science, especially post-colonial theory, to bridge the readers comprehension towards *Soerapati*, and to echo the thoughts of subaltern group, i.e. the struggle of absolving their selves from the colonials' fetter. Therefore, this research is hoped to increase the nationalism of Indonesian teenagers for fulfilling the independence in the global era. On discussing the issues, the researcher uses the concept of West and East relation on Orientalism by Edward Said, the concept of passive and radical resistance on *Postcolonial Transformation* by Bill Ashcroft, and the concept of mimicry, hybrid, and ambiguity on *The Location of Culture* by Homi Bhabha.

Said refers to the correlation between the Eastern and the West as a complex relation of power, domination, and various levels of hegemony (1978:5). The Eastern is *easternized* not only because it has been found "eastern". Rather, it can be easily *easternized* in any case the average considers to be common. According to Said, orientalism is not merely an inane fantasy about the Eastern world, but a figure of intentionally created theory and practice. There is hegemony of European ideas related to the Eastern world, which reiterates the statement about European's superiority towards the Eastern's backward- ness. The Eastern reality is distinct from the Western reality; its custom, exotic complexion, memory and wonderful experience. It should be understood that the Eastern has got some restrictiveness and weakness and thus it needs the Western's power and knowledge. Therefore, the Eastern is ready to be redirected, ordered, governed, and reconstructed.

The Western's treatments in the forms of systematization and resistance rise from the colonialized party (Eastern). Ashcroft (2001: 19-20) suggests that resistance has two forms: the passive and the radical ones. The passive resistance can be executed through mimicry in the effort to expand hope and aspiration of the colonialized party (Ashcroft: 2001: 3). In Bhabha's concept (2006: 122-123), mimicry serves as a strategy for the colonialized party by means of adapting to "the other" because it visualizes power and results in deep and interrupting effects to the colonial power. Mimicry thus contains *mockery* (Lo and Gilbert, 1998: 12). On the other hand, the radical resistance serves as the people's resistance toward the colonial dominance. This radical

resistance is characterized by organized plans for its movements, which is executed by a direct attack through making war or producing reading text (*ibid*).

The colonialized's resistance, the colonial's dominance, and the colonialized ambiguous self-nature raise including in their literary works (Bhabha, 2006: 122-123). Faruk's finding (2007) in his study on some Indonesian novels reveals that Indonesian novels, such as *Siti Nurbaya*, *Hikayat Kadiroen* show ambiguity. Liliani's study (2005) on the play *9 Oktober 1740* also results in the same conclusion. In regard to this ambiguity, a study on the novel *S* needs to be carried out. Therefore, the postcolonial theory in the novel *S* is applied by using deconstruction technique.

2. Research Methods

This study used a qualitative approach by applying postcolonial theory, especially the concept of Homi Bhabha, Bill Ashcroft, and Edward Said. Data analysis is done critically: using postcolonial perspective and deconstruction techniques to the data already collected from the novel *Soerapati* by Abdeol Moeis. In detail, the researchers conducted research stages, namely identifying the data, reducing the data, analyze the data and draw conclusions.

3. Results and Analysis

3.1 The Relation between the Colonial and the Colonialized

There is an imbalanced relation between the colonial and the colonialized. The imbalance is indicated by the domination of the colonial toward the colonialized. The domination is performed by the employer clan, namely Tuan *edeleer* Moor and Suzanne toward *si Untung*, and by the Dutch colonial toward the indigenous people.

The imbalanced treatment of Tuan *edeleer* Moor toward *si Untung* appears on the scene when Suzanne sank into the sea, though at last she was rescued by *si Untung*. Tuan *edeleer* Moor blamed *si Untung* for that accident. In the situation, *si Untung* reflects the *subaltern* party, who could not choose nor declare himself right. As a slave, he really gave up his life to his employer since all his life has belonged to him (Nooij, dkk., 1996: 90). Based on Ashcroft's view (2002: 102), Tuan *edeleer* Moor has claimed himself in the superior class who has privileges making him distinct from *si Untung*. Such treatment has raised marginalization (Ashcroft, 1998: 135).

Another domination relation between employer and his slave is performed by Tuan *edeleer* Moor toward *si Untung* and Nyonya Voorneman and Nyonya Dammers to her slave. Those employer clans committed to bullying to their slaves, even they would tickle the police in order to be permitted to bully their slaves.

"Nyonya Voorneman jang meninggal, tahu benar tjara apa ia bergaul dengan segala budaknya. Tiap-tiap mereke berbuat salah, haruslah dirotan 20 sampai 40 kali. Asal kita suka membajar 10 atau 12 ketip, budak itu boleh dihukum dihadapan pulisi dengan pukulan rotan. Tak usah kita menghadapi teriakannya tak usah pula kita dengarkan. Perkaaranya tidak diperiksa asal kita mengadu dan membajar, hukumannya sudah boleh dijalankan. Saja sendiri kemarin dulu telah menghukum budak 40 rotan.

"Nyonya Voorneman who died, knew for sure how she treated her slaves. Whenever they made mistakes, they had to be struck with rattan 20 to 40 times. With 10 or 12 ketips (a currency), the slave can be punished by the police with rattan strikes. We don't need to cope with their shout; we don't need to listen to their cry. I myself had punished my slave with 40 rattan strikes yesterday" (RAS: 53)

The employers' bullying to their slaves has positioned the slaves not as humans, but animals. Nobody would listen to their voice anymore. In Breman's finding (1997: 213) in Deli (Sumatera), this *animalization* serves as the employers' way to remove their slaves' humanitarian identity and get away with their fundamental human characteristics. In addition, any treatment to them is then considered to be legal and need not be justified at all. Fanon (2000: 269) views this as an effort to systematically resist to others and as a will to resist to the admission of their humanitarian attributes.

In addition to bullying their slaves physically, the employers also would not admit their cogitation. Suzanne would not admit that *si Untung* could think because he was a slave. Just like slaves in general, he is dumb and ill-mannered. To Gouda (1995: 215), such views are how Dutch think of the indigenous people as underdeveloped species or as the self-reincarnation of the middle-aged Europeans. In Ashcroft's opinion (1998: 198), such colonial view working from the race. In colonial view, the white-skinned is on the most top position. Therefore, he admits himself as the superior class and others is the inferior ones. Jean Chetian Baud (in Houben, 2009: 71) suggests that the meeting between the white-skinned and the collared one always triggers a conquest. In that

conquest, the white always wins. Racism provides a means to declare the colonial's superiority (Fritsch, 2001: 3).

3.2 The Slaves' Resistance toward the Employer

Resistance can be executed both passively and radically (Ashcroft, 2001: 20). Passive resistance, as Ashcroft suggests, may expand aspiration and hope, and can be executed through mimicry or imitation. The mimicry done by the indigenes is very often in the effort of *mockery*. Such mimicry and mockery as well appear in si Untung. He learned from Suzanne thus he learned that he and his clans are the colonialized and the oppressed party.

Nasib budak-budak di kota Jakarta tak asing lagi baginya. Mendengar mereka disiksa oleh tuannya masing-masing, naiklah darahnya, dan ia pun tahu bahwa mereka itu menjadi budak, bukan karena menjual diri, melainkan telah jatuh menjadi korban daripada keganasan saudagar-saudagar budak, dan sebagai akibat dari peperangan-peperangan yang ditimbulkan oleh Kompeni di segala daerah yang hendak dikuasainya

“The fate of the slaves in Jakarta is no longer new for him. Hearing that they were bullied by their employers, he got mad, and he also knew that they became a slave not because they trade themselves for money, but because they had been the victims of the cruel slavery merchants, and as the result of wars made by Kompeni (the Dutch Colonial) anywhere they wanted to govern’ (S: 1)

Learning that he was the oppressed clan, si Untung resisted. He married Suzanne without the knowledge of Tuan *edeleer* Moor. In the wedding, si Untung was against Tuan *edeleer* Moor by marrying Suzanne. In the resistance, Tuan *edeleer* Moor's domination was casted down by si Untung. Tuan *edeleer* Moor lost his hope to get his daughter married to a native Dutchman, named Herman de Wilde. In line with Sharpe's statement (1995: 99), si Untung can be referred to as a *mimic man*, who refused the indigene as the *subaltern* clan. He did an imitation toward the Dutch's treatments, such as putting on his lieutenant grade when he was about to be arrested by the Dutch colonial in the woods. In the effort to keep himself and his property, namely Pangeran Purbaya, and his brothers in arms, he called himself a Dutch soldier with the lieutenant grade. Si Untung did so to keep his property rights. Ashcroft (2001: 20) says that such passive resistance as the imitation provides a way to keep his identity and property rights.

Not only passive resistance, Si Untung also did radical resistance. He did it by killing Dutch soldiers. As suggested by Lo and Gilbert (1998: 12), resistance is carried out in an organized way in the effort to set one free from the colonial. In novel *S*, the organization is done by si Untung together with Ki Ebum, and Wirayuda in a jail. They cooperate with other slaves and prisoners to beat the Dutch colonial up. After that, they moved to the Kartasura Kingdom, and si Untung was believed to lead a kingdom in Pasuruan. As a king, si Untung was so brave that the Dutch colonial stood in fear of him. At last, he could defend his authority and defeat the Dutch colonial when they were attacked by the Dutch soldiers.

3.3 The Characteristics of novel S

Novel *S* is ambiguous. Bhabha (2006: 122-123) says that its ambiguity raises because the colonial subject does not only support the colonial power, but it also resists and beat it up. This ambiguity is resulted by the mimicry (*mockery*) done by the indigenes (the colonial subject) and it does interrupt the colonial power. This colonial discourse tends to be ambivalent because the colonial subject never properly imitates the colonial's power. The ambiguity of novel *S* appears in its triggering events performing ambiguous cogitation, attitude, and behavior. It is reflected in the characters Suzanne and si Untung. The ambiguities they developed lie in their view that there should be a peace between the indigenes and the Dutch colonial, but then they refused that idea themselves through resistances. Besides, Suzanne and si Untung thought of their marriage as a digression, whereas they had thought before that it was one way to make a harmonious relation between the Dutch and the indigenes real.

That ambiguity cannot be separated from the Dutch colonial hegemony that still bound the indigenes, even though the indigenes had done some resistances. However, novel discourse cannot be separated from the power of the colonial. The finding for this third problem shows the conformity of view to Faruk's (2007) and Liliani's (2005) findings suggesting that Indonesian literary novels, like *Siti Nurbaya* and *Hikayat Kadiroen*, as well as the play *9 Oktober 1970* arranged by Remy Sylado, are ambiguous.

4. Conclusion

The relation between the colonizers (Dutchmen) and colonized (Indonesia Indigene) are in unbalanced condition. The Dutch dominated the indigene. The domination was showed by the Dutch's thoughts, attitude, and act toward the indigene. The indigenes were humiliated, tortured, discriminated, and marginalized. The marginalized treatments were triggered from the Dutchmen claim that they owned the special authorities which are different from the indigent so the people outside them were considered as the 'others'. The colonials' treatments were pictured by the authors on the novel S, *Tuan edeleer Moor* toward si Untung, Suzanne toward si Untung. The Dutchmen oppressed and take over the hegemony by making warfare or battle.

The impact of the colonial oppression is the indigenes did the resistance by two ways, using 'mockery' mimicry and radical resistance. The mimicry and mockery resistance were conducted by si Untung toward Suzanne. Besides that, si Untung also used this resistance toward the Dutch soldier. He pretended and ridiculed the soldier by claiming himself as the Dutch soldier. He used Dutch's ways for saving himself from the soldiers.




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