

# Novels of Children's Literature in *Vorstenlanden* 1910-1940

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**Abstract.** The study of children's literature in Indonesia needs to be more extensive. The history of children's literature in Indonesia is deadlocked and lacks references. The curation of original Indonesian children's literature still needs to be improved, so studies on Indonesian classic children's literature are rarely conducted. This study aims to describe early Indonesian children's literature novels in *Vorstenlanden* 1910-1940. *Vorstenlanden* is the area under the rule of four monarchy fractions of the Sultanate of Mataram, namely Surakarta, Yogyakarta, Mangkunegaran, and Pakualaman. This study uses descriptive analysis to reveal historical facts about Indonesian children's literature novels in *Vorstenlanden* between 1910-1940. Searching archives and libraries obtained data. The analysis results show that several children's literary novels published by *Vorstenlanden* 1910-1940 were considered significant. The author of these novels is Jasawidagda (Bocah Mangkunegaran, Kirti Njunjung Drajat, and Cariyos Lelampahanipun Peksi Gelatik) and Soeratman Sastradiardja (Bocah ing Gunung and Tig lan Tor). Children's literature in *Vorstenlanden* 1910-1940 was marginalized for discussion in history because the intellectual perception at that time considered children's literature low-quality, packaged in small and thin books. The impression is not qualified because its content emphasizes moral teachings and has little literary meaning, so it is only considered a reading book for children and ignorant village people.

**Keywords:** Novel, Children's Literature, Indonesia, *Vorstenlanden*

## 1 Introduction

Indonesian literature is divided into the period of Old Malay Literature and Modern Indonesian Literature. These periods are further divided into Batch 20, Batch 33, Batch 45, and Batch 66. These periods still have various versions, according to literary experts. The division of the period applies to adult literature [1]. Then what about the division of Indonesian children's literature periods? This question has yet to be answered. The division of Indonesian children's literature periods is still being determined. The history of Indonesian children's literature development can still be completed.

Nevertheless, the study of the period of children's literature in Indonesia has begun. Oejeng Soewargana wrote *Literature Development for Indonesian Children*. The contents of the essay do not reflect the title. The contents of the essay explain the characteristics and types of reading suitable for children [2]. The essay needs to explain the developments of children's reading in Indonesia.

Furthermore, Rusman Sutiasumarga, in his article *The Role of Balai Pustaka in Floating Children and Family Reading* Briefly examines the development of children's books and magazines from the *Commissie vor de Inlandsche School en Volkslectuur* [3]. Christantiowati discussed a comprehensive study of children's reading period under the *Indonesian Children's Reading Tempo Doeloe* [1]. The book is a preliminary study of the period of children's literature from 1908-1945. The catalog displayed in the book is quite complete. Readers can have an overview of the scope of Indonesian children's literature during the pre-independence period. Sindhunata wrote the most recent study on children's literature in a book entitled *Kitab di Taloe* [4]. Nevertheless, the book focuses on illustrations of children's reading from 1901-1961. Based on some of the studies above, the completeness of the study of Indonesian children's literature in the pre-independence period of Indonesia is still open for further development and supplementation.

Children's literature has an essential role in child development, which means that children's literature has a role in a nation's generation. Children's literature is a form of literary work intended for children reading children's stories, generally the creative, imaginative results of someone who depicts a fictional world, presenting understanding, enjoyment, and experience. Children's literature has a considerable influence on their life because it makes positive activities and improves reading skills for children, as a means of entertainment for children as well as an educational tool in the context of inculcating values, norms, behaviors, and beliefs in a society. Children's literature is literature for children. Of course, the ideal writer is a child. However, because literature can be used to educate, adult writers can also write children's literature, with notes: on the theme, language, writing style, and so on, really paying attention to children [5].

The limitation of this research is children's literature produced by authors in the *Vorstenlanden* area in the 1910-1940 era. *Vorstenlanden* is an intellectual center in Java, so some authors produce literary works, especially children's literature. *Vorstenlanden* is the king's territory which includes the areas of the Governor of Jogjakarta and the Governor of Surakarta. These regions are led by a governor [6]. Evidence of intellectual progress in *Vorstenlanden* is the many schools founded in the area. In *Vorstenlanden*, there are various schools of the Western model. According to data released by educational institutions in the Surakarta area in 1930, the group was broadly grouped as follows; State schools in regional languages, Dutch-language neutral schools, Schools managed by Zending, Schools managed by Mission, Schools managed by Muhammadiyah, Schools managed by Budi Utomo, and Schools schools managed by the government [7]. *Vorstenlanden* also has reliable native literary authors, one of whom is Jasawidaga [8]. This research seeks to explore works that have yet to be studied in previous studies. This research seeks to complete the repertoire of the period of children's literature in *Vorstenlanden* 1910-1940.

## **2 Research Methods**

This study uses descriptive analysis to reveal historical facts about children's literature novels in *Vorstenlanden* between 1910-1940. The qualitative method is research that displays

procedures that produce and analyze descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from people. In this case, researchers interpret and explain the data obtained by researchers from documentation studies to get detailed and precise answers to problems [9]. Searching archives and libraries received data.

### **3 Result and Discussion**

#### **3.1 Children's Reading at *Vorstenlanden*: Not Literature**

The author will explain the context of children's literature in *Vorstenlanden*. Children's literary works in *Vorstenlanden* in the 1920s were considered low-quality, light reading, and not even literary works. Most of the children's literature produced at that time was packaged in small and simple books that gave the impression of being of low quality. This impression arises because the content is more of a moral teaching and does not contain much literary value, so it is considered only a textbook for school children [9]. Examples of these books are *Serat Panutan* by Prawirasoedirdja 1913 and *Rara Kadreman* by Koeswadiardja, 1916 which have didactic value; *Trilaksita* by Mangoenwidjaja 1916, which is somewhat romantic; and *Rara Rarasati tuwin Bok Randha Setyadarma* by Wiljaatmadja 1916 and *Waris Ian Lalis* by Wiradiardja 1913 as reading material for school children. A small book intended for ordinary villagers who need educational reading. The quality of these books is often close to morality books. Therefore, Javanese literary experts do not recognize it as literature and read it as nothing more than a reading book. In contrast, only traditional written works in the form of *macapat* songs are considered literature.

Consistent with the opinion above, many prose works containing novels published by *Balai Pustaka* are mostly distillations; Various jokes and scenes have been condensed into a series of biographies whose aim is the moral education of school children. In this context, prose works such as *Durcara Arja* and *Trilaksila* are called novels because they are relatively thick and contain western novel-style narratives [10]. During the transitional period of modern Javanese literature, javanese folk song works were also written and published for reading to meet the needs of school children at that time. These works include *Kakarangan* (1913), composed by Astranagara; *Wacan* (1913), composed by Kramaprawira; and *Carita Becik*, composed by Reksatenaja (1913) [1].

#### **3.2 Children's Literature Novels at *Vorstenlanden***

*Balai Pustaka* published literary works recognized by both the royal and Dutch authorities. Besides publishing novels (for adult readers), *Balai Pustaka* also publishes children's novels. As with children's stories in general, the children's stories published by *Balai Pustaka* between 1910 and 1940 were also constructed by facts: plot, characters, setting, and other means. The only difference is that the facts and literary devices in children's stories are processed in such a way as to suit children's reading ability, which generally demands simplicity. Nevertheless, the simplicity in children's stories does not mean reducing or eliminating some of the elements or elements that make them up because the fact shows that the elements in the stories are complete even though everything is straightforward and far from being complicated.

*Vorstenlanden* has reliable authors. The author tries to trace authors whose works have been widely discussed and even translated from Javanese into Indonesian. The writer found two big names in the literary repertoire at *Vorstenlanden* in 1910-1940. The authors are Jasawidagda and Soeratman Sastradiardja. Some of his works are still being studied in adult literature—the frequently discussed works *Jarot* by Jasawidagda and *Kanca Anyar* by Soeratman Sastradiardja. *Jarot* and *Kanca Anyar* have a content of resistance against the aristocrats and the Dutch. Unknown to many, the two authors also wrote works of children's literature that are rarely discussed and not even included in literature. Some children's literature works are *Bocah Mangkunegaran*, *Kirti Njunjung Drajat*, *Cariyos Lelampahanipun Peksi Glatik* by Jasawidagda, *Kanca Anyar*, *Bocah ing Gunung*, and *Tig lan Tor* by Soeratman Sastradiardja. There will be no detailed discussion of these works in this preliminary study. The author will specifically present the work of Jasawidagda and Soeratman, but other related works will also be discussed. The writer will discuss the characteristics of children's literature in *Vorstenlanden* by looking at its internal structure.

Due to the adjustment tendency in children, most of the children's stories in *Vorstenlanden* have a single plot, so it is rare to see complex multiple plot branches. Meanwhile, judging from the constructed sequence of events, it is rare for children's stories to appear in those feature plot reversals or flashbacks. So, in general, children's stories have a linear plot (starting from the introduction, then complexity, climax, and finally completion). The stories are also closed with a clear, precise, and satisfying ending to the reader, so almost all of the children's stories in *Vorstenlanden* are the closed plot.

Some examples of children's stories that have a linear plot are *Mitra Loro* (1931) by Van Deun, *Cariyosipun Sendhang ing Tawun* (1922) by Sastra Mintardja, *Lelakone Bocah Kampung* (1926) by Kamsa Wirjasaksana, and *Suwarsa-Warsiyah* (1926) by Sastradiardja. These stories generally start from the opening, introduction, climax, and completion. Meanwhile, an example of a children's story that has a double plot is *Cariyos Lelampahanipun Peksi Glatik* (1924) by Jasawidagda. Although Van Deun's translation of *Mitra Loro* has a linear plot, the story's ending is quite interesting because it is open. Jasawidagda's work is said to have a double plot because the story describes two different events or stories. The first story is about animal characters, namely a pair of sparrows named Tika and Tiki. When the female sparrow (Tiki) is about to lay her eggs, the male sparrow (Tika) finds a place (nest) to lay her eggs. However, the two animals seem responsive to the situation, so they are unwilling if the nest is in the farmer's yellowing rice field. Because of that, the two animals (Tika and Tiki) then chose a nest in a box deliberately installed by Siya. In that box, Tiki laid eggs, and after some time, the eggs hatched.

The second story is about human figures whose Names are Siya, Mardi, and Sarma. When Siya saw a sparrow laying eggs in her box, she intended to take both the eggs and the nest. Mardi and Sarma had already advised Siya not to disturb and take the bird's egg. However, Siya seems to ignore Mardi and Sarma's advice so that her intention is to be carried out. By coincidence, one night, Siya had a terrible dream. In that dream, he met a man who was burly, significant, and scary and who wanted to disturb him. That is why, the next day, Siya became aware that the dream reminded her not to do anything wrong, even if only to an animal. Thus, Siya promised that from today onwards, she would not tease or arbitrarily treat her fellow creatures, including the sparrow. These are examples of children's stories that have multiple plots.

Most of the published children's stories appear to be something that functions to help solve the story's problems, which is coincidental and miraculous. In Javanese children's stories, such elements often appear as coincidences. One example is that Siya coincidentally dreams of meeting a scary person, so she discourages her from taking the sparrow, as in the story above. If there is no element of coincidence, the author's message will not be conveyed. So, such elements are essential in children's literature.

Besides that, one example of a children's story with a loose plot is *Tig lan Tor*. The story in *Tig lan Tor* is centered on the characters of brothers *Tig and Tor*. The two children have different habits in learning. Tig used to study regularly every day, whereas Tor only intended to study before exams. These different habits also have different impacts. Tig, who studies regularly, is finally accepted at a higher school level, while Tor, who studies lazily, is not accepted like Tig. Thus the focus of the story is Tig lan Tor. However, there is another story: Tig returns home before the exam and manages to catch a wood thief on the plantation. After the thief was caught, Tig came back and was about to take the exam. Thus, the story displays a loose plot. Behind the main plot, there is another different plot. That other plot usually will not eliminate the story's logic if it is removed.

In addition to plot and plot, characters and characterizations are essential elements in children's stories. Based on observations, children's stories in *Vorstenlanden* from 1910 to 1940 generally presented two types of characters: humans and animals. The animal figures are generally symbolic. The animal characters used in these stories are usually also adapted to the nature and character of the animal, for example, a tiger or a giant to describe human ferocity and a cat to describe a good human character.

Almost all the children's stories at *Vorstenlanden* at that time featured flat character traits. In the sense that the character remains the same from the beginning to the end, the good ones still show their best, and the bad ones still show lousy behavior until the end of the story. Such character traits, for example, appear clearly in Tika and Tiki, who is good in *Cariyos Lelampahanipun Peksi Glatik*, and Murdini, who is always responsible in *Lelakone Bocah Kampung*.

Nevertheless, such social backgrounds are still abstract by their category as fiction. The abstractness will be felt more clearly if the stories are categorized as fairy tales. The physical setting that refers to time (morning, afternoon, evening, night) and place (such as in a forest, palace, or village) is clearly stated. However, that time and place is the time and place where events occurred, not a precise time and place that can be traced in history.

Nevertheless, the story setting is closely related to the characters and characters displayed. For example, figures from the royal court seemed to appear to be role models because, at that time, the palace was indeed a source of values worthy of being embraced by the people. Meanwhile, figures from low social backgrounds (village) are significant because there are many good and many bad ones.

In general, this children's story is told in the third person. Thus the narrator can freely treat his characters according to the author's will. This point of view is made consciously because only with techniques like that children's stories will be more readily understood by children. So,

children no longer need to think about how to interpret the characters because everything is clear. A good character certainly has good character according to the norms he knows, while even a lousy character clearly shows that he is not good. In children's minds, giants are synonymous with evil, unlike cats. In addition, the style of humor and humor also appears in many children's stories. The humor appears explicitly in stories featuring animals (animals). This style feels right because children's stories demand funny and witty things. This style, among other things, was the trend toward children's literature in *Vorstenlanden* from 1910-1940. Although this description is not detailed, these characteristics are typical of children's literature produced by colonial publishers.

## 4 Conclusion

Problems of children's literature in the *Vorstenlanden* period 1910-1940 were not considered part of the literature. Children's literature is considered inferior, packaged in the form of a small and thin book. Children's literature could be of better quality because its content emphasizes moral teachings and has little literary meaning, so it is only considered a reading book for children and village people. The problem of children's literature is the target of tracking old children's literature. Old children's literature is rarely well-collected. Few consider the children's literature of the *Vorstenlanden* period 1910-1940 important. However, the study of children's literature in *Vorstenlanden* can still be traced through the traces of famous writers in *Vorstenlanden* from 1910-1940. The author tries to trace authors whose works have been widely translated and even translated from Javanese into Indonesian. The writer found two big names in the literary repertoire at *Vorstenlanden* in 1910-1940. The authors are Jasawidagda and Soeratman Sastradiardja. Some of his works are still being studied in adult literature—the frequently discussed works *Jarot* by Jasawidagda and *Kanca Anyar* by Soeratman Sastradiardja. *Jarot* and *Kanca Anyar* have a load of resistance against the Aristocrats and the Dutch. Unknown to many, the two authors also wrote works of children's literature that are rarely discussed and not even included in literature. These children's literature works include *Bocah Mangkunegaran*, *Kirti Njunjung Drajat*, *Cariyos Lelampahanipun Peksi Gelatik* by Jasawidagda, *Kanca Anyar*, *Bocah ing Gunung*, and *Tig lan Tor* by Soeratman Sastradiardja.

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