

Translation as a Political Identity Practice of Colonial: A study of Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* in Indonesian Literature in 1900 Era

Dwi Susanto¹ and Nur Saptaningsih²

^{1,2}Indonesian Department, Faculty of Cultural Sciences, Universitas Sebelas Maret, Surakarta, Indonesia

E-mail: nursaptaningsih@staff.uns.ac.id

ABSTRACT

The presence of translation literature in colonial society has put effects on the colonialization process through the construction of identity. The Robinson Crusoe novel in Indonesian literature shows a similar point. The main problems dealing with the presence of the work are how the construction of colonial identity was realized and how the reaction was in Indonesian literature. By using postcolonial perspective, with a special attention to translation and identity, this paper provides answers to these questions. First, Robinson Crusoe shows the idea of super human identity, favoring reason and ability (culture) to conquer and enlighten the nature. This is the desire of colonialism introduced in the text. Secondly, Indonesian literature is resistant, reintroducing the spiritual idea of the East. This, for example, appears in Abdul Moeis' *Salah Asuhan* (1928) and Dahlia's *Kesopanan Timoer* (1932). From both works, Western culture and its development were used as a means to achieve the ideals of the East.

Keywords: *Identity; Translation Literature; Postcolonial*

1. INTRODUCTION

The presence of Western translation literature in Indonesian literature leads to the question of identity and colonialism. This is related to the view that the translation of foreign literary is part of colonial practice. This topic or assumption has been discussed by experts in postcolonial literary, [1],[2]. In addition, various studies conducted by experts also show that literary translation and other forms of translation have implications for the issue of identity. This is related to the way colonialism builds the identity of colonized societies. This, for instance, is the study of Panwar [3] which sees the role of translation in Indian society in the context of globalization or modern colonialism as a new paradigm. In addition, [4] provides a review of translation and identity for women in the context of the translation carried out by the White in Galician literature. [2] has given the earliest ideas regarding the possibility of translation and

colonization. Some of these studies, in essence, show that the colonial subject or colonized society faced an attempt of identity deconstruction by imperial or colonial society.

In Indonesian literature, this fact has been examined [5],[6] by considering aspects of identity in Indonesian literature[7], [8] see translation in the context of colonial literary and policy recreation. The translation of Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and a number of other literary works, such as Alexander Dumas's *Count de Monte Cristo* in the 1900s in Indonesian literature became part of colonial practice. In addition to the importance of providing reading material for colonized societies, literary translation became an alternative in approaching discursive forces in colonized societies. The study by Taufiq [5] and especially [6] have seen such trends in the context of Indonesian literature and its remarks. The studies conducted [6] share the same topics and ideas as written [4], which center more on the subject of literary translators among the White towards the construction of female identity in Galician literature.

Translation, in colonial Indonesian literature, is basically a phenomenon similar to that in other literature and culture of colonized people, such as in India, Algeria, Tunisia, (Francophonie literature), Singapore, Malaysia, Caribbean, Latin America, and others [9]Attempts to free themselves from the influence of colonial psychological emerged. In addition, the issue of foreign literary translation becomes part of the construction of identity and the strategy of "mission civilization" as an ideology [10]. However, what is interesting in Indonesian literature is the effort of the Dutch colonial government to disseminate and simultaneously "provide" forcibly literature-based colonial reading books. For example, romantic idea was used as colonial ideology for the construction of Indonesian identity[11].

Bassnett and Trivedi [12] reveal that the translation also touches on the problem of encountering and internalizing the traditions, language, spirit, and cultural values of the recipient. Shamma [13] says that translation becomes a field and arena for language, power, and power to play and change ideas and rebuild the identity of the receiving community. Similar facts were also raised by postcolonial theorists such as Gayatri C. Spivak regarding epistemic violence in English language lessons or problems regarding the construction of colonial literary texts, with the cases in English literature [2]. Thus, the presence of *Robinson Crusoe* in Indonesian literature shows a battle in the arena of identity, between the West (colonial) and the East (colonized).

Based on the discussion, the main problem in this paper is how the translation of *Robinson Crusoe* built a new identity in Indonesian literature. In addition, from the identity construction offered, the response of Indonesian literature became an inseparable part. Thus, the reaction to the construction needs to be interpreted as a cultural strategy.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1. Identity Construct of Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* in the Colonial Era

Translation is a means of presenting the encounter of two cultural traditions and two identities. In such a context, the common thing occurring is the interaction between two cultural traditions and two worlds or two thoughts. Said [14] suggests that stories are the essence of colonial's intention and the author gives meaning to the geographical area, and therefore, it becomes a part of the colonizing nations to assert themselves and the existence of their identity in their own history. As a result, resistance to such situation becomes logical [15].

Robinson Crusoe (1686) is an adventure novel written by Daniel Defoe. The first translation of this novel, *Hikajat Robinson Crusoe*, was done by Adolf von de Wall in 1875 [16]. This novel received good response from the public at that time. Moreover, this was translated into various local languages, such as Sundanese in 1879, Javanese in 1881, and Torajanese in 1914. In addition, for Chinese-Indonesian community in Indonesian, translation and adaptation of this novel were also done for several times, one of which was by author Tjan Kiem Bie [7]. Researchers focusing on Indonesian literature, such as Faruk [11], assert that this novel is interesting because it is a journey story and is supported by an exotic picture of stories, about adventure desires, and an effort to find a new experience.

The construction of identity presented by this story is an idea of colonial desire. This can be seen through pictures of stories presenting the efforts of mastering, discovering, and naming a new area [17]. The character in this novel is a representation of the strength of a strong and large subject. He was able to overcome economical, physical, and cultural obstacles. At the start, the subject was an ordinary character. However, he later became an extraordinary figure. In his failure on the voyage, he was able to create a new subject of identity, his great ability to master the small island where he was stranded. For him, the island had no inhabitants, and hence, he believed that the island was his and he was the discoverer. Finally, he gave the name of the island as its creator.

The desire and power offered by the subject of Robinson Crusoe is continuously carried out. He continued to reproduce colonial discourse. For example, when he became a Moorish robber prisoner, he was able to escape. His voyage from Brazil to Africa became the next calamity, in which he was stranded on the small island. In such circumstances, he experienced emptiness, alienation, and isolation without the point of emotional bond. Living alone on the island, Crusoe traveled on the island to recognize his environment. Finally, he succeeded in spotting the island with his abilities. As a result, he felt as "the inventor" of the island and declared himself the ruler and creator of the island. Furthermore, he used the calendar he made and various tools he created, and was able to communicate with animals and control them.

However, Robinson Crusoe had the power above not only nature and animals, but also human. This was proven in his 23rd year living on the island. Crusoe found nine naked people eating other humans as prisoners. Apparently, the act of eating humans had become commonplace. One of them fled and found Robinson Crusoe. Finally, Crusoe gave the man a name, Friday. He educated and made him as loyal follower. He carried out a mission to civilize that person.

From the narrative ideas that the text suggests, this novel has proven that it forms an identity. Crusoe as a subject of invaders presented himself as a super power. He could master, subdue, and control the environment to face various obstacles during his journey. In fact, he was also able to create, discover, and master the objects found and created. Crusoe introduced the idea of culture as a way or tool to control environment and people. Thus, reason and logic were something supreme and great so that he was able to control nature and the environment.

This idea has proven that Europe and colonial subjects were presented in *Robinson Crusoe*. Crusoe was a super, strong, and racial human, and favored a superior mind in the form of culture. This text clearly presents an idea of the superiority of subject and his ability in conquering and creating a remote island. This sort of idea is a colonial idea or a colonial discourse [18]

2.2. Reaction of Indonesian Literature to Robinson Crusoe Subject

The idea that was put forward by Robinson Crusoe through translation literature was in fact a colonial practice. The Dutch East Indies government deliberately selected reading books that were in accordance with colonial interests. This was seen in the period of 1904, with the establishment of an institution supervising reading and providing reading books for colonized communities [8]. Gradually, this institution became Balai Pustaka in 1918 until now. During the process of the institution becoming Balai Pustaka, various policies and identity politics were made through readings. One of efforts is creating canonical literature of colonial heritage. Literary works, including *Siti Nurbaya* (1922) by Marah Rusli and *Salah Asuhan* [19] by Abdoel Moeis, were published by Balai Pustaka. However, in fact, thousands of literary works which were not published by the Balai Pustaka were considered as wild literature and "not literature".

Salah Asuhan (1928) by Abdoel Moeis was a work as a reaction to Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. This literary work seems to defend and glorify the colonial ideas brought by Balai Pustaka. In this case, this work, at first, could not be published because of the negative image of Dutch women presented in the novel. Later, the work was published through various compromises. However, through the deconstruction reading strategy, it was found that this literary work essentially rejected the idea that was raised by Balai Pustaka as a colonial institution. The refusal seems to be hidden in the text and presented to fool the colonial discourse. It is a strategy carried out by colonized subjects for their resistance efforts through the mimicry in the colonized subjects in the text. This is so because literature becomes a power of discourse that is capable of hiding opposition.

Salah Asuhan had ideas about race, ethnicity, Indo or mestizo, hybridity, mimicry, and liberalism [20]. The debate between traditionalism and liberalism was an interesting part of this text. In general, the text implies that the Eastern people, represented by Hanafi figure, should hold Eastern identity, even though they have been educated in the West and have lived and experienced Western culture. Dahlia in *Kesopanan Timoer* (1932) and other authors, such as Njoo Cheong Seng in his various literary works, brought about the principle that 'East is East and West is West'.

In general, *Salah Asuhan* (1928) or *Kesopanan Timoer* (1932) basically do not only deal with the problem of colonized-colonizing relations in the segmentation of race, ethnicity, and gender. However, both texts are, in essence, an attempt to reject the power of the invaders. The refusal was a rejection towards the identity construction offered by Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. *Salah Asuhan* (1928), published by a colonial institution, was conveyed in disguise, as if defending colonial discourse. On the contrary, Dahlia's *Kesopanan Timoer* (1932) actually conveyed it with a very firm and straightforward manner. Both were not able to let go of the roots of tradition and culture. In facing the meeting of two cultural traditions, the East (Java) and the West, the two texts are more East-centered.

These two texts finally draw a conclusion that Western education was merely an instrument to achieve the ideals of the East. Rejection of liberalism shows transition of thoughts to hold identity. It symbolizes that the culture or customs and traditions of the East should be adapted to the environment and remain held. This was seen as an attempt to avoid the influence of liberalism in the colonial era. This rejection of the Western standardization of the East world at the same time showed that there was an attempt to resist European power, through its culture and traditions. This concept underlies the existence of cultural nationalism which is built on the basis of race, ethnicity, and cultural religion to achieve the identity of the Indonesian-Indonesian identity (Susanto, 2017: 263).

The fact that was raised mainly by *Salah Asuhan* (1928) was basically an attempt to fight and deconstruct the ideas conveyed by *Robinson Crusoe*. The subject constructed in *Robinson Crusoe* is different from that in *Salah Asuhan* (1928) or in *Kesopanan Timoer* (1932). Through these novels, colonized society had an effort to face the ideas of liberalism and mission of civilization that were hidden in the context of colonial discourse. This idea was not only presented by Abdoel Moeis or Dahlia. This discourse of rejection of *Robinson Crusoe's* colonial subject was also seen in other texts, for examples, *Aannemar Tan Ong Koan* (1919-1920) by Lim Khoen Giok, *Nona Olanda Sebagai Istri Tionghoa* (1926) by Njoo Cheong Seng, *Mariam* (1929) by So Chuang Hong, and others.

2.3. Colonialized Subject versus Colonizing Subject in Translation Literature

The text of *Robinson Crusoe* displays an identity of super human, mastering, creating, and controlling. The text presents the identity of man and culture that control and rise colonial desires. In contrast, Indonesian literary texts rejected them by creating their own ideas and identities. This was a form of resistance to the presence of *Robinson Crusoe's* translation as a translation literature in Indonesia. Undeniably, the identity expressed by *Robinson Crusoe* is a modernization project in view of colonial discourse as a continuing discourse (Sairin, 2011: 4). One of the main underlying ideas is the superiority of mind and reason over nature. This idea ultimately led to high trust in human knowledge and abilities. Nevertheless, finally, this idea led to the nature of "racial and cultural superiority", because they had been able to create various tools for the progress of their society [21].

Comparing *Robinson Crusoe* and the two texts in Indonesian literature, *Salah Asuhan* (1928) and *Kesopanan Timoer* (1932) resulted in some interesting findings. First, the two authors come from different ethnicities and races. Abdoel Moeis is a Sumatran, particularly from Minang tribe. In contrast, Dahlia is Chinese-Indonesian or Chinese descent. Secondly, these two authors have a similar attitude in dealing with the issue of liberalism even though they are in different race and cultural segmentation contexts. Third, presenting a subject of colonized woman, Dahlia did not only voice her ideas of a woman in the context of the construction of identity, but she also represented the Eastern community or what she referred to as those who had Eastern politeness.

In general, the strategy carried out provides evidence that colonial discourse with the construction of its identity was rejected by Indonesian authors from various ethnicities and cultures. This prove that at that time, although colonial politics separated ethnicities in Indonesia, in the context of identity or identity as human beings, people agreed and had the same attitudes and views. This similarity of nature and views shows that liberalism and colonialism were a dangerous force in changing the minds and souls of colonized humans. On that basis, refusal and similar reaction would be given by colonized communities. Thus, the presence of translation literature especially *Robinson Crusoe* in Indonesian literature provided a cultural resistance to society even though the literary work had gained popularity and favored colonized society. This also confirms that the nature of colonial society was mysterious and their reaction was difficult to predict.

3. CONCLUSION

The presence of translation literature in Indonesian literature in the colonial era provided evidence of identity construction in imperialism discourse. However, the colonized subjects were not silent on the construction. They made a recreation on the construction of identity by imitating, as in *Salah Asuhan* and *Kesopanan Timur*. Nonetheless, the effort was basically a cultural resistance to the construction offered by *Robinson Crusoe*.

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