

Pendidikan Jang Keliroe: A Reflection on Chinese Community Education during the Dutch Colonial Period

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Abstract. *Pendidikan Jang Keliroe: Toneelstuk dalem Lima Bagian* by Lauw Giok Lan (1922) is a Chinese *Peranakan* drama text published during the Dutch colonial period. The author is a journalist, founder of the Sin Po newspaper, and active in the Tiong Hoa Hwee Koan and Cheng Hwa Hui organizations. This drama represents the education system during the Dutch colonial period, which was considered immoral and unable to improve the fate of the people of the Dutch East Indies, including the Chinese community. This literary work criticizes Dutch education policies, which can only produce low-class workers and never succeed in making graduates rich. Colonial education only sharpened racial and social class discrimination. Through postcolonial theory, this research aims to see the ambivalence, resistance, and author's views on homeland and motherland that appear in this work.

Keywords: postcolonial, ambivalence, resistance, education, *Pendidikan Jang Keliroe: Toneelstuk dalem Lima Bagian*

1 Introduction

During the Dutch colonial period in Indonesia, all access to the Indonesian state was controlled by the Dutch, one of which was the education system. The Dutch education system for native people and other races, such as Chinese *Peranakans* in Indonesia, was considered only to benefit the Netherlands. This was criticized in a literary work in the form of a Chinese *Peranakan* drama text by Lauw Giok Lan (1922). In the drama text entitled *Pendidikan Jang Keliroe*, the author criticizes the education system and the bad habits of the Dutch people that hurt the Bumiputera and *Peranakan* Chinese communities. Dutch education in Indonesia created a feudal society. This happened because the colonial government's education was run in a discriminatory manner that categorized groups of people. This division is based on the types and levels made by the colonial government into three groups: Europeans, foreigners, including the Arab and Chinese races, and natives [1].

Children of foreign and indigenous races who attended Dutch schools were racially discriminated against. To be accepted by Western society, the children of the Foreign East race follow the character and lifestyle of the Westerners. This is depicted in the drama text *Pendidikan Jang Keliroe*. The arrogant and extravagant Western character is depicted in Louw Tiang Sioe, the son of Louw Lam Oen and Mrs. Louw Lan Oen. Louw Lan Oen's family is of Tinghoa descent and trades. The social status of a family with an excellent economic background, the Louw Lam Oen family, has the privilege of associating with people from the first class.

Living under Dutch colonial rule, the Louw Lam Oen family gave their son, Louw Tiang Sioe, a Dutch-style education. As a mother, Mrs. Louw Lam Oen was responsible for educating her child. She taught her son to live a life of royalty and hedonism, just like the lifestyle of the Dutch people around him. Louw Tiang Sioe was also fluent in Dutch but not Mandarin. As a Chinese family living in Indonesia, the Louw lam Oen family did not teach their children Mandarin or Malay. Lessons related to Chinese norms and lifestyles should have been given. This caused Louw Tiang Sioe to grow up as a child with a Western lifestyle.

Previous research which also discussed education in the pre-Indonesian period was entitled Representation of Chinese Peranakan Education in the Dutch East Indies Period in "Ruma Sekola I Dreamed" by Kwee Tek Hoay, written by Yacub and friends in 2011. The researcher used an approach based on literary and sociological theory that examines human and societal phenomena. Through this theory, researchers found that exclusive education created a distance between the colonizers and the colonized, namely Europeans and non-Europeans. Apart from that, the education system designed by the Netherlands (Europe) implemented unequal theoretical and practical learning. The trading lessons are given in theory rather than in practice. That happened because trading with foreign and native easterners was irrelevant to the Dutch (European) government program. This research will discuss the topic of reflection on Chinese community education during the colonial period in Indonesia using postcolonial theory[2].

In this research, the research method is divided into two: data analysis and data collection methods. The data analysis is a research technique that extends the human mind not to collect data but to find relationships between data [3]. Then, the data collection method is carried out through literature studies to obtain facts in the form of narratives related to the research problem. The data were obtained from reading the play script novel *Pendidikan Jang Palsoe* and writing sources related to the research problem, such as books, journals, dissertations, and theses. Then, the technique used for data collection is the closed reading technique; the researcher reads and examines the data source, and then the data obtained is qualified into each category according to the needs of data analysis. The research results will describe the reflection of Chinese community education during the colonial period in Indonesia.

2 Finding and Discussion

The discussion will be divided into two, namely, the ambivalence of the figures and the resistance of the figures to the Dutch education system.

2.1 Ambivalence: Not All Must Be Followed

In the drama text *Pendidikan Jang Keliroe*, Lam Oen's family sends his son to a Dutch school with the hope that after graduating from school, he can quickly get a good job and live prosperously like the Dutch. In the Dutch education system, the language used is Belana. Louw

Tiang Sioe's character, from his lower-level education until he was 20 years old, was still attending a Dutch school. The long study period made Louw Tiang Sioe fluent in Dutch. The instruction given to Louw Tiang Sioe's character only focuses on formal education at school. The Lam Oen family had not been worried about the growth of their children, who went to school and socialized with Westerners.

At first, Lam Oen's family, which has an upper-middle-class economic status, did not feel concerned about their son's habit of not being able to manage finances. However, growing up, Louw Tiang Sioe's character strongly embraced the Western lifestyle and could not speak Mandarin and English. However, the Lam Oen family realized that those who were considered Eastern foreigners by the Dutch would not get equal superiority with the Dutch. This is in line with the opinion of Dewojati which explains that ambivalence occurs because love and hate for something happen simultaneously [4]. The Lam Oen family's concern for their son's personality can be seen in the following quote.

"LOUW TIONG GIE: Well, that's the result of your education! From the past, we've been reminded, Oen, that every nation has been taught its language, and now we're taught the underwys of other nations. You see the shine on the outside, but you don't think about the inside. Don't you remember the Lam Seng's old letter, what he said?" [5]

"LOUW LAM OEN: Owe think: we are in the Dutch Empire, we should learn the Dutch language. Later, make him learn Mandarin." [5]

In the quote above, the author wants to convey that a child sent to a Dutch school must learn to speak Mandarin as his ancestral language. That is due to mimicry in being able to speak Dutch. At that time, having the ability to speak Dutch was considered a form of approaching or equalizing oneself with the powerful European nations. That is an attempt by the Chinese people to raise their social status. They believe attending a Dutch school and speaking fluent Dutch is an advantage for the future, like having a job with a reasonably large salary. However, the reality is that people who can speak Dutch have no guarantee of having a good job. These views are influenced by Western superiority in Indonesia, so the ideal standard of social life that is applied is the European perfect standard.

2.2 Important Chinese Lessons for *Peranakan* Chinese

The Dutch East Indies government implemented education to form citizens into workers in the interests of the colonizers. This labor force would be a tool to strengthen the position of the Dutch East Indies. Thus, the goals of education made for the benefit of the colonizers were presented in knowledge and skills that were considered to help maintain economic and colonial political power [6]. The Dutch education system was considered detrimental to Eastern foreigners and Bumiputera. The character Louw Tion Gie gave his opinion on Dutch education, which people initially thought could improve life. This can be seen in the following quote.

LOUW TIONG GIE: Here, you're mistaken, Oen, really wrong. You may think so; other Chinese people here may feel the same. They need a better view of the world and think that, with the Olanda education, it will be easy for their children to get jobs. Formerly, it may have been true in the past 10-15 years. But now there is something else! Nowadays, look how many Olanders

themselves have no job. Indo-Europeans are being pushed out by Boemipoetra people, who can work a little better. If you don't want to be better but can receive cheaper salaries. As the number of people who understand the Dutch language grows larger and larger, the Dutch studies will no longer be a shock to the public. Ten years from now, that's our time, Hoakiauw, can feel narrowness" [5]

The quote above describes Louw Tjong Gie's view of Dutch education, which cannot be considered a place to improve life. Louw Tjong Gie's character argues that the more people who study in Dutch schools and can speak Dutch, the fewer work opportunities. Even many Dutch people are unemployed. This will be even more difficult for Bumiputera and eastern foreigners who are inferior. In addition, the wage system provided by the Dutch to Bumiputera and eastern foreign workers is very cheap, which cannot be used as a guarantee of family economic welfare. Louw Tjong Gie's character saw the lifestyle of the Dutch people who could not manage their finances, making Louw Tjong Gie's character think that this could hurt Eastern foreigners who were forced to imitate the Western lifestyle. From Louw Tjong Gie's point of view, following the Western lifestyle will be a burden in future life. The economy will continue to deteriorate, and trade will be damaged. Thus, Louw Tjong Gie advised the children that the successor of the family business is very necessary to learn Chinese and English lessons. That is indirectly the author's view, which wants to convey that only some things about the West, in this case, the Netherlands, provide good things for non-inferior societies. Continuing to survive and perpetuate the culture of origin is one of the things that can be done to enrich knowledge in life. There is no need always to follow the 'life' of Western society because it will not raise the social status of an inferior society. This can be seen in the following quote.

"Louw Tjong Gie: Well, this is indeed one of the diseases I'm most worried about. Europeans here live too generously, and many spend more than their income. By providing this education, namely dealing with the daily way of life of Europeans here, how do you want your children not to imitate that royalty? What's more, now, people here are spoiled for a vacation. The comedy house is still full. Aside from that, there are bioscoops, feesttenein-feestterrein, and others, so at least a little entertainment is available. This, Oen, is the way of the West. If this is the case, the merchandise here will be really broken in the next ten years. Many sell, but there are not many who can buy. So that we can have supplies for our children and grandchildren, they need to be taught Chinese and English." [5]

The quote above describes the consequences of children being educated in Dutch schools. Namely imitating the hedonistic lifestyle of Dutch society. The Dutch brought many destructive impacts to Indonesia, one of which was hedonism. As an inferior nation that wanted equality with its superiors, Chinese and native people naturally followed the lifestyle of Dutch society to a greater or lesser extent. These imitations are like wasting money looking for entertainment, such as at the cinema. This makes a Chinese child far from the attitudes lived by the ancestors of the Chinese family.

In the 18th century, the Dutch reached a golden peak in the power sector of trade funds. This did not affect the economic position of the *Peranakan* Chinese. In the early 19th century, Chinese trade was further advanced with the facilities and support of the Dutch [7]. The facilities and support provided by the Dutch to the Chinese people are inseparable from the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. Thus, Chinese education was critical to maintaining

generations of trading businesses that were expected to be a platform to fight the Dutch. In this case, it is against the bad habits and impacts brought by the Dutch. Apart from that, the author, through the characters he presents, wants to convey that to 'fight' the Dutch, skills or attitudes that are lived by the good ancestral culture are needed. That is done to avoid being drawn too far into Dutch culture and lifestyle. That can be seen in the following quote.

"Louw Tjong Gie:But! Ah, again, you say: Listen first, Oen! We Chinese cannot win in that struggle to get from there because they can live more economically. You can't, you really can't, Oen! The proof is clear that we cannot win in this competition. We can only beat capital and trading brains in one thing. But most of the Chinese children who learn Dutch are not the children of the rich, so in the end, they only encourage the children of the klerk-klerk, who are poor. Another thing for those who are good at letters and Chinese. Why don't you tell Tiang Sioe to take a private Chinese class in the afternoon??" [5]

3 Conclusion

Jang Keliroe's educational text tells the story of the importance of Chinese ancestral education amid Dutch colonial life. Through this text, the author finds that in every colonial life, there are postcolonial discourses. As stated in this text, it is a form of mimicry. The mimicry that emerges is imitation in social, educational and linguistic terms. The Chinese community sends their children to Dutch schools so they can speak Dutch. That is assumed to make life easier in the future. However, this imitation can be interpreted as an attempt by the Chinese people to achieve similarity and equality with the Dutch as colonialists. Apart from that, children as Dutch school graduates are also portrayed as imitating the behaviour and lifestyle of hedonistic Dutch society. So, the Chinese community feels the need to continue providing education through the teachings of their ancestors, one of which is to continue being able to speak Mandarin. It was believed that this could be a guide to life and could 'fight' the domination of Dutch power.

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