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The Impact and Representation of Official Nationalism as Reflected in Helvy Tiana Rosa's Short Story, "*The Red Nets*"

Atyaka Laksmitarukmi
English Language Studies, Sanata Dharma University
Yogyakarta, Indonesia
vivelaquavinc@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study attempts to **first**, find out that the military operation as launched in Aceh under the name *Red Net Operation* is one of the examples of official nationalism. **Second** is to unravel how printed media and print capitalism are related to each other and the role of these two in affecting the sociocultural situation. Helvy Tiana Rosa is one of Indonesian female authors whose short story '*The Red Nets*' captured the event of MOA in Aceh. The notion of nationalism will be reviewed and will be presented related to how Indonesian people consider the meaning of it. Nationalism in relation with official nationalism, the factors that trigger and the impact will also be posed. This short story will be the object of the study because it represents an ideology, which can be considered as official nationalism. Intertextual references will be used largely to provide some pieces of evidence of the impact of *Red Net Operation* as one of the forms of official nationalism, an attempt to maintain the hegemony and power done by those who authorize and rule due to the possibility to be dethroned. The intertextuality will discuss the importance of maintaining hegemony for people with power. The role and appearance of print capitalism will be used in the research to capture the contribution of the short story used as the object of the research towards the objective of the project. Language and literature have big contribution toward social and cultural situation in many parts of the world including in Indonesia.

Keyword: Women's writing, cultural studies, woman, nationalism, Islamic fiction, military operation

Introduction

Indonesia has experienced various periods since the colonization era and still needs to struggle until now, not because of other periods of colonization yet due to the inside factor of the country itself. After Indonesia proclaimed the Independence on August 17, 1945, Indonesian government cannot conduct the administration peacefully without problems and obstacles. If then, the issues were caused by colonization, after the Independence the chaos came from the inside.

One of the noticeable events in Indonesia is the appearance of *GAM* or also known as *Gerakan Aceh Merdeka* (Free Aceh Movement or FAM). This movement is often classified as criminal and Indonesian government refers this as *Gerakan Pengacau Keamanan* (GPK or Security Disturbance Movement). During 1990 – 1998, Indonesian government appointed Indonesian National Armed Forces to launch a military operation called the *Operation Red Net* or *Military Operation Area* to handle the separatist movement led by Teuku Hasan Di Tiro.

The emergence of FAM became very concerning for the government in that era. Even until now, when FAM had been disbanded, the government still must be aware of other separatist movements in Indonesia, because their growth posed a threat to the sovereignty and stability in Indonesia. There are many possibilities that the movements can shake the ideology applied in the country and the government cannot handle the chaos. Furthermore, the innocent people and civilians who actually do not know the real problem but they will be the worst victims.

Helvy Tiana Rosa is one of Indonesia female authors whose works portrays social and national issues happening in Indonesia. One of her short stories entitled '*The Red Nets*' captured the event of a military operation conducted in Aceh. The story is about a girl named Inong who is traumatized by the massacre and rape several years ago. She has lost her sane yet she gets company by a volunteer named *Cut Dini*. Being traumatized by the tragedy, in the end of the story, Inong is forced to receive money by some people with the capacity to silent her for not telling about the massacre and torture happened in her area.

Purpose of the Study

On the grounds of dissatisfaction toward the ruling government or the different foundation and ideology of conducting governmental matters, the separatist movements start their actions. It has also happened in Indonesia. When their ideology does not comply with the current ruling government, there will be insurrection and national chaos cannot be avoided. Both parties (the government and the movement) will force the intention and it leads to a war in which there will be the winner and the loser.

Free Aceh Movement is one of the examples of separatist movement that causes terrible impact regionally, nationally and globally. Regionally, the local society where the movement is started will also be affected. The civilians who are actually innocents and they know nothing about the real problem can no longer live in peace, even worse is when they are victimized. Nationally, the separatist movements are national threat dealing with security, sovereignty and stability of a nation. Globally, the world will witness the issue and the impact can affect in the economy, social and politic.

Nonetheless, the attempt to eradicate the movement on the purpose of saving national stability and security does not mean without particular intention. Sometimes, the political intention causes worse damage and ironically, those who become real victim were innocent civilians. It is unjust toward human being and human right. The impact of the military operation in Aceh as the attempt to eradicate FAM was horrible by the massacre of more or less 3000 people not to mention those who are disappeared until today. The victims were whom considered as the member of FAM or helped Hasan Tiro although the truths and facts were unconfirmed.

This study attempts to **first**, find out that the military operation as launched in Aceh under the name *Red Net Operation* is one of the examples of official nationalism. **Second** is to unravel how printed media and print capitalism are related to each other and the role of these two in affecting the sociocultural situation. Inong, the main character of this short story is perceived as not only as a victim of physical and mental abuse but a victim of official nationalism. Besides, other characters show how the official nationalism is conducted as well as the result of this attempt. Although the official nationalism in this short story does not mention or appear clearly, some implications can be taken as the examples.

Literature Review

The Red Nets by Helvy Tiana Rosa is one of the stories in her book entitled *Dolls and The Man of Mist*. This short has received an award as the best short story in decade 1990 – 2000. In brief, the short story is about a girl named Inong (in the story, referred as 'I') who is the victim of the incident of Red Net Operation, a military operation launched in Aceh to control the rebellion of FAM (Free Aceh Movement). Her family was slaughtered including her fiancé. Some men raped her, she also saw how the men shot her family and her neighbors not to mention the houses were burned to the ground. She ended up losing her mind and she is taken care by a volunteer of an NGO named Cut Dini. In the short story the psychological condition related to traumatic experience and the depiction of situation happened in that place and time is clearly described.

Study related to the notion of official nationalism has been conducted regarding the field of Hispanism. Anderson proposes the idea of official nationalism by providing some examples of Russification and Anglicization. Nonetheless, he does not mention about the Hispanization in Latin America comprehensively. He only mentions that Hispanization is done by the Christian conversion and it has no relation with culture. Yet, a study proposes the sample of analogue that Anderson may look for as conducted by Alfonso Reyes in which, "for like the intellectuals of whom Anderson speaks, Reyes also stretched the philological skin of his Hispanic nation over an enormous political entity that had yet to be imagined as a totality, that had yet to be brought under the rubric of a National Culture" (Conn, 1998, p. 110).

Official nationalism is closely related to the notion of ideology and hegemony. Therefore, the notion of power proposed by Antonio Gramsci relates to the official nationalism. The discussion of power according to Gramsci is that power produces ideology or vice versa. A great power can be resulted by consciousness of people in which it can be accessed (Daldal, 2014).

Theoretical Framework

Nationalism according to Seton-Watson (1977, p. 3) has two different meanings. First is a doctrine about the character, interests, rights and duties of nations. Second is a political movement which is organized and it is designed to further the alleged aims and interests of nations. Official nationalism is the result of the second meaning of nationalism that has shifted. In his book, it is emphasized that the principle of dynastic loyalty is imposed to be the basis of government legitimacy. Therefore, imposing the nationality on all subjects completely including religion, language and culture is a moral duty for the leaders of the (most powerful) nation (1977, p.148).

Official nationalism is a term which is not widely used by people. People tend to discuss nationalism and values of nationality. Related to the object of the study, the official nationalism in this story is not clearly explained or told. By reading between lines, although it is not transparently described or written, the form of official nationalism can be observed. Therefore, this research is different from the existing ones because it captures the least used notion related to the sociocultural and political views.

According to Benedict Anderson (1991, p. 101), there are several aspects of official nationalism. First is compulsory state-controlled primary education. Second is state-organized propaganda. Third is the attempt to officially rewrite the history. The last are militarism and endless affirmation of the identity of dynasty and nation. In the short story, the setting of place and time, which is taken during FAM era, shows that in Indonesia, there was militarism and attempt of official rewriting of history.

The awareness of nationalism was affected by printed language brings three different points in the basis of national consciousness. First is the creation of unified exchange field

and communication. Second, print-capitalism plays important role in building the image of antiquity. Third is that print capitalism, which can create the language of power (Anderson, 1991, p. 45).

Significance of the Study

The discussion about official nationalism is very likely to conduct. However, the number of studies using this perspective is still limited. This study can give another shot to other studies which concern to the notion of power and ideology especially in areas that had experience of official nationalism, the shifted ideology and many more. Future research can be conducted by combining this notion with the post-colonial issues especially in post-colonial regions. Perceiving the “Self” and the “Other” or studying about literary works created by post-colonial writers in which most of them tend to show the resistance, yet the mental of being colonized has been already set up and it takes time to change.

Methodology

The short story will be analyzed from the way of telling and what the main character and the supporting characters try to convey. The focus of the analysis will be on the extrinsic elements of the main character’s condition after the massacre during the Operation Red Net. In addition, many other supporting data can be quoted as the evidence that official nationalism is represented in this short story. The author of the story did not intend to reveal about this notion. Therefore, this research deals with one of the characters of official nationalism and the impact of it. The data will be taken from the short story as the evidence.

The notion of nationalism will be discussed along with its relation with official nationalism, the factors that trigger and the impact will be also be posed. The reason behind the launching of the military operation in areas where separatist movements exist will also be reviewed. The use of intertextuality in providing the evidences of the impact of *Red Net Operation* as one of the forms of official nationalism, an attempt to maintain the hegemony and power done by those who authorize and rule due to the possibility to be dethroned. The intertextuality will discuss the importance of maintaining hegemony for people with power. If the militarism is one of the methods to preserve the authority behind the mask of nationalism, how it influences the social situation as Helvy Tiana Rosa captured in her short story.

Discussion

Culture develops in other fields of discussion including politics and nationalism. Today, it can be seen that some values have shifted and they influence so many aspects related to social, culture and politics. Power and authority impose particular ideology to maintain and prolong the ruling government. Nationalism has two meanings which are 1) a doctrine the character, interests, rights and duties of nations and 2) a political movement that is organized and created to further the alleged purposes and interests of nations (Seton-Watson, 1977, p.3). The embodiment of the nationalism is also reinforced by the use of vernacular language and the spread of printed language.

However, the idea of nationalism cannot be accepted by all people or the application is not entirely applicable. Therefore, for those people who feel that they have own idea about nationalism according to their opinion by proposing their idea and looking or others who also have the same ideology is acceptable. By that, the separatist movements rise and start to shake the current rule. Later on, the current rulers will consider them as a

disturbance toward the official government and release command or mandate to stop the separatist movements. Here is the notion of official nationalism then appears.

According to Benedict Anderson, official nationalism can be reviewed as 1) an event as the result of 'after' and 'in reaction to' particular situation. Initially it was a popular national movements happened in Europe in the 820s (1991, p. 86); 2) the rise of official nationalism can be triggered by the ruling classes that felt threatened by the spread of nationally-imagined community worldwide (1991, p. 99); and 3) it is an anticipatory strategy adopted by dominant groups which are threatened with marginalization (1991, p. 101).

In the short story entitled *The Red Nets*, the setting of time took place in Aceh during Free Aceh Movement reinforced their purpose of separating from Indonesia. The movement is triggered by dissatisfaction of Acehnese led by Teuku Hasan Di Tiro toward Indonesian government at that time (1990 -1998). After the rebellion, as the reaction, the government launched Military Operation named Red Net Operation to decimate the FAM. The government might feel threatened by the separatist movement since they proposed to separate from Indonesia and run a country independently. The military operation is the anticipatory strategy of ruling government in facing the rebellion of the marginalized parties or those who are disappointed with the government.

Referring to the second meaning of nationalism by Seton-Watson, the political movement tends to be dominant and put aside the character, interests, rights and duties of nations. It unfortunately narrows the range of the notion and thus, the word 'official' is used to refer to a particular society in which this community also has a specific purpose of why they have their own idea of nationalism. Ironically, the idea of official nationalism was initially formed by groups which own power to secure their own purpose and interests.

In the short story, it is told that some men came to Cut Dini bringing money for Inong as the reward if those girls keep silent and do not tell anyone about the human right violation happened during the military operation. Yet, Cut Dini refused and mentioned some other terrible slaughtered incidents and violation in surrounding areas.

"We ask her not to say anything to foreigners. She, or you as her guardian, is to sign this sealed document."

Dini read the document. I could see the anger on her face. But why? I poked my head forward to get a closer look through the window.

"No way! What about all the rapes, the torture, the murders, the corpses littering Bukit Tangkurak, Jembatan Kuning, Tamiang River, Cot Panglima, Krueng Campli Forest... everywhere!" Dini's voice was becoming shrill. "And what about the village with three thousand widows, the orphaned children so heartlessly left to fend for themselves! No, I won't do it!" (Rosa, 2002)

The men denied by justifying the incidents as the way to ensure the safety of people. There is a pathetic and ironic statement said by Cut Dini that people ended up are afraid of the Military instead of the FAM (Rosa, 2002).

"We're just cracking down on the GPK. This is a military operations area. We're ensuring the safety of the people." (Rosa, 2002)

"Oh yeah?" said Dini cynically. "And who are the people afraid of? There was a time when many of them were forced to spy on and report their own friends as followers of Hasan Tiro and the Free Aceh Movement. But that's all over now. There's no place around here anymore for the likes of you." (Rosa, 2002)

The Military Operation launched in Aceh had become an inappropriate step of ruling government since there were many violations of human rights such as massacres, rapes, cases of disappearance and tortures done by the Military with justification of security and safety for the civilians. In fact, the worst victims were the civilians that know nothing about the political situation in their area.

In the story, it was described when Military arrived at the village of Inong and start dragging innocent people who were considered as the help of FAM leader. The torture and slaughter were done as the lesson for the members of the Security Disturbance Movement. No matter how the civilians try to defend themselves by telling the truths that they are innocent, Military seemed to be blind and did not care about the civilians' statements.

"We're not defending them, they're not criminals," said Harun, the village head. "Pak Zakaria is just a muezzin. An ordinary villager." Hazily I saw our village head being tied to a tree. (Rosa, 2002)

The initial purpose of this movement or 'ism' is because the desire of getting equality and freedom. It ends up with the human ego to be always superior to others. Moreover, official nationalism is initiated because a group is afraid of the power or threat of popular communities which is oppressed in term of nationalism (Anderson, 1991, p. 109). Disguise in the idea to unite the community, official nationalism hides under the notion of imperialism, in which according to Hobson (2005, p. 281) is an attempt to retain control over lower parties (states, nations, peoples).

In *The Red Nets*, the way to cover the power maintenance is portrayed when some men came to Inong and Cut Dini bringing some money and ask them to keep silent about the violence and violations of human rights in Inong's area. Between official nationalism and imperialism, there is a very thin line boundary since, basically it is all about how to preserve the power. No matter what ideas to conveyed the purpose. If society wants to look deeper and behind the surface, they will only find that there is a surprisingly not surprising fact that power and domination is always the motivation of what power-group initiates an idea to unite people. In addition, the power-groups with ideas of official nationalism are actually betraying their own origin because they, in many ways, have equality and similarity with people who they marginalize.

Conclusion

Studying about official nationalism and how it is represented in society is one of the sociocultural studies that have a significant impact to conduct such as to raise the awareness of young generation about nationalism itself and they will more concern on the notion of 'loving the country'. An idea about imagined communities in which there will be a group of people that the members of even the smallest nation barely know other members, however, they have in mind about the image of the other communion (Anderson, 1991, p. 6) will be kept in mind and it will guarantee the sovereignty of Indonesia until later in the future.

The notion of retaining control over others are old issues yet it is still preserved by those with power and want to maintain their authority. Behind the guise of nationalism, and took similar basic to imperialism, official nationalism is another attempt to preserve current power for particular interests of leading elements. Analyzing a work from an Indonesian author also brings a new perspective about Indonesian literary works to particularly, Asian Literature and the World Literature. The print capitalism still contributes toward the way of conveying especially related to how empowers the awareness of individual to be more involved with togetherness of nation. This is expected

to be the seeds of nationalism that lead to stronger unity. Then, the notion of imagined community will remain in meaning that is more positive.

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