

Women's Struggle Against Colonial Imperialism in the Tetralogi Novel *Bumi Manusia* by Pramoedya Ananta Toer

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Abstract—In connection with the effort of the form of women's struggle, this research focuses on feminism study towards tetralogy novel *Bumi Manusia* by Pramoedya Ananta Toer. This research is a study of literature with the study of feminism. This research was conducted to find out the relationship between literary texts with the living conditions in society, especially problems related to women in the tetralogy novel *Bumi Manusia* by Pramoedya Ananta Toer. Reasons for selecting tetralogy novel *Bumi Manusia* by Pramoedya Ananta Toer which consists of four novel series *Bumi Manusia*, *Anak Semua Bangsa*, *Jejak Langkah*, dan *Rumah Kaca*, because there are interesting female figures to be studied using the point of view of feminist criticism. This series of novels, written in the early 1900s, illustrates the forms of gender inequality and colonial imperialism experienced by female characters. A series of novel tetralogy *Bumi Manusia* this also illustrates how the struggle of female characters against imperialist oppression and to show its existence as a human who has prestige and dignity.

Keywords—novel and feminism study

I. INTRODUCTION

The tetralogy novel *Bumi Manusia* by Pramoedya Ananta Toer which consists of four novel series *Bumi Manusia*, *Anak Semua Bangsa*, *Jejak Langkah*, and *Rumah Kaca*, which elevates female characters that is interesting to be studied using a feminist critique point of view [1]. The novel tetralogy, written in the early 1900s, depicts the forms of gender inequality and the suppression of colonial imperialism experienced by female characters [2]. This series of tetralogy novels *Bumi Manusia* also describes the struggle of female characters against imperialist oppression and shows its existence as a human who has prestige and dignity [3]. Through the tetralogy of the novel *Bumi Manusia* we can know the form of oppression and the struggle of female characters in the fight against colonial imperialism colonialists.

Colonial imperialism is a policy of a state to be able to take control of government over other regions and to control a country over human territory outside its borders to seek dominance from economic resources from the cultural, labor and market resources of the region [4]. It also shows that the moral and even science possessed by colonizers is much greater than those being colonized.

Early on, this colonial imperialism was initiated by European nations since the 15th century because of the development of science [5]. The Europeans wanted to prove to the world that the European nations were much more advanced, for that it wanted to expand its colonies. So is the novel tetralogy *Bumi Manusia*, colonial imperialism is very thick inside it is told in every plot. In fact, the main objective is to control the human resources and natural resources of the territories they colonize. One of them is indigenous territory of Indies (Indonesia).

The tetralogy novel *Bumi Manusia* is a resistance that is done is symbolic. Resistance of the tetralogy novel *Bumi Manusia* against the oppression of women and colonial forms of colonialism. As stated by Wiyatmi in [6], that “*sastra mencerminkan persoalan sosial yang ada dalam masyarakat*”, or it can be translated as “that literature reflects the social problems that exist in society”. Novel is a literary work that serves as a place to pour the author's thoughts in reaction to the surrounding circumstances.

This research focuses on feminism study towards tetralogy novel *Bumi Manusia* by Pramoedya Ananta Toer.

The rest of this paper is organized as follow: Section II presents feminism study towards tetralogy novel *Bumi Manusia* by Pramoedya Ananta Toer. Finally Section III concludes this work.

II. FEMINISM STUDY TOWARDS TETRALOGY NOVEL *BUMI MANUSIA* BY PRAMOEDYA ANANTA TOER

A. *Feminism as a means of fighting against the oppression of gender inequality and colonial imperialism*

Feminism as a tool for women to fight for their rights is closely related to racial conflict, especially gender conflicts. This means that between class conflict and feminism have parallel assumptions, deconstructed domination and hegemony systems, the conflict between the weak and the stronger [7, 8]. Women's movement to demand equal rights with men, both in politics and economics, as well as socio-cultural movements echoed around the world. A woman's weak physical condition should not be used as an excuse to place women in a lower position.

Through the character Nyai Ontosoroh in the novel *Bumi Manusia* the female reader is taught to dare to oppose and to resist the injustices she suffers. Women must be able to

defend the honor of themselves and their families. Nyai Ontosoroh, a woman who was made a Nyai by a European (Mr. Melema), a victim of the colonial system. He bravely opposed the white court when his family was humiliated. For centuries the Europeans colonized the Indies, depriving the Natives of their possessions arbitrarily. Occupation of land, high taxes, and many indigenous women who are made as Nyai, are not legally married, have no rights, against their own offspring [1].

With full awareness Nyai Ontosoroh tried to fight a very unfair white court, especially against her, as a Nyai. What a white court law is made to benefit the interests of the Europeans alone, the indigenous must still be trampled down. Nyai Ontosoroh firmly strives against, as much power, as much as strength. Nyai Ontosoroh is a figure of female character who deserves to be an example for women, because of his courage, independence, and tenacity.

Nyai Ontosoroh realized that his suffering was only one of the indigenous sufferings, he understood that there was much more suffering experienced by the Natives but the Natives did not dare to speak. Nyai Ontosoroh holds that if he loses against the Europeans he will not be ashamed, at least he has just stepped on the Natives to dare to fight, dare to speak out. Nyai Ontosoroh imagine that if all the natives dared to speak it seemed the possibility of the sky would collapse by the noise.

The conflict experienced by Nyai Ontosoroh illustrates the reflection of the indigenous suffering caused by Dutch colonial imperialism. The law only benefits the totok white community. The rights of Indigenous people can be arbitrarily seized and trampled. The law of the Amsterdam court has established all assets pioneered by Herman Mellema and Nyai Ontosoroh, mostly belonging to Maurits Mellema. Even Annelies Mellema is treated like an inventory that can also be seized. Nyai Ontosoroh also lost the right to nurture the daughter of her own birth [1].

Nyai Ontosoroh also reached the story narrated by Khow Ah Soe to his son Minke, that the Europeans were still a cunning colony, they masked the reality of Japan's crawling but steady progress, the rise of the nervousness of the Chinese Young Generation, and the news of the Native Revolt of Filifina against Spain and America Union. All these realities escape from newspaper coverage, this is deliberately covered so that the Natives remain silent not to resist and remain under the rule of Dutch colonialism. The colonial people did not want that reality to open their eyes and inspire the Indies natives [9].

The Europeans who continue to want to enslave the natives by expanding their colonies. Indigenous people are used as coolies and laborers, but some have to go to school to become regular foremen. The Europeans are very cunning, it is also illustrated by the not allowed the native nation to get a high education, only allowed to attend school in the village alone.

Activities of imperialism and colonization are done to meet the needs of the mother country [10, 11]. During the practice these activities resulted in a great deal of oppression and misery both psychically and physically for the colonized peoples. Imperialism and colonialism have generated criticism from various parties for violating human rights and

the state. Marie van Zeggelen recounts the struggles of Acehnese women who participated in a war with men against colonialism. Recorded in the national history of the struggle of these Acehnese women, Cut Nyak Dien, and Cut Mutia whose inception in the Aceh War of 1873-1904. Their struggle is for the sake of loyalty to their homeland and religion for one word "freedom". Pram through the character Marie van Zeggelen explains that the Aceh War's reigns that they suffered cannot be compared with other wars in Europe. The struggle of Acehnese women is tough, lasts day and night and lasts for three centuries throughout the Native (Indonesia). History recorded for centuries, Dutch colonialism Hinda alienate the Native fighters who are considered to hinder his goal. Exile-exile against the Native warriors is one of the efforts to drain the nation's natural resources [9].

In the time of colonialism a strong man has the right to determine life and everything. Legal justice, deprivation of rights, all won by a strong party. Until finally the power must also be subject to the power of colonial power itself. At the time of colonialism in the Indies there was a racial classification. Full-blooded Europe is the first group of privileged layers, the second layer is the Indo half-caste, the third layer is the Chinese and Arabs, and the latter is the Indigenous group. Natives were classified again, Native Priyayi class or indigenous commoners class. The indigenous classes of the barren people suffered most during the colonial period. Many of the people who lost their land, burdened with expensive taxes, burdened with compulsory cultivation, no legal courtship, no higher education, deprivation of property, or honor were destroyed.

Women figures in the novel *Rumah Kaca* no doubt experienced the arbitrariness of colonial imperialism. As experienced by the figure Princes Kasiruta. Minke, the husband of Prinses Kasiruta was suddenly exiled to the Maluku, because Minke's writings in the Medan newspaper and his organization's activities in Syarekat Islam were thought to jeopardize the sustainability of Gubernian colonialism. Not only is it alienated, even all of Minke's precious assets are frozen and deprived without clear legal process by the Government. Even until the house occupied by Minke and Kasinuta Prinses were confiscated. As the wife of Prinses Kasiruta still trying to protect the safety of her husband, from the threat of thugs sent to intimidate. After her husband was exiled, he still boldly tried to defy Mr. Pangemannan by repeatedly visiting his residence. Although ultimately ending ill-fated, Prinses Kasiruta and Piah were arrested and beaten by the police, in jail for three days even though it was not proven to bring a gun or a sharp weapon.

In addition to the figure of Kasinuta Prinses, in the novel *Rumah Kaca* there are also figures Siti Soendari, a female activist movement organization, language teacher in Boedi Mujo, skilled in writing newspapers, beautiful, smart, critical and insightful. However, the action of Siti Soendari is considered to endanger the power of the government, so that the movement of Siti Soendari is really supervised by Alegrement Skretari.

The last attempt made by the Government to break the struggle of Siti Soendari is by pressuring the father of Siti Soendari to immediately marry his daughter. The emphasis

has two options, with the choice if her daughter is married then her father's position as head of a pawnshop will remain secure until retirement, as well as his brother Siti Soendari's education in the Netherlands is safe. On the contrary, his father still can not control his daughter then woe his father's career, and his brother Soendari can be dismissed in disrespect from his college place.

B. The Struggle and Attitudes of Women's Figures Against Colonial imperialism in the Novel Tetralogy Bumi Manusia

The struggle of female characters against colonial imperialism can be seen from the actions of Nyai Ontosoroh. Conflict between Nyai Ontosoroh against Ir. Maurits Mellema was a manifestation of indigenous conflict against colonial imperialism. With full awareness Nyai Ontosoroh valiantly opposed the court ruling of Amsterdam, in various ways began by hiring an advocate to fight by asking Minke to make a post in the newspaper. Although ultimately lost. At least Nyai Ontosoroh and Minke had tried their best, their struggle was the Native's first struggle against white court law. Nyai Ontosoroh and Minke's struggles have also received the attention of the Natives.

In the novel of *Anak Semua Bangsa* by Pramoedya Ananta Toer, the element of imperialism of colonialism is also felt. In this novel, much tells about the struggle of the natives who trampled the dignity and degree by the colonial nation (Nederland). Here are the struggles of some women leaders against colonialism imperialism, among them Surati. Surati is a symbol of the resistance of native women to colonial rule. Surati fight against colonialism by transmitting smallpox outbreaks to Mr. Paikemboh. The next character Minke. Minke is the main character in the novel *Anak Semua Bangsa* who fought for women and the natives. Minke fought the natives in order not to become more marginalized. In his writings, as a journalist Minke fight for the indigenous Indonesian nation rise from adversity.

The practice of colonial imperialism has always been the cruelty of many countries. Colonial imperialism always creates many humanitarian problems for the colonized state. As a colonized state, the nation's fighters do not remain silent. They (warriors of the nation) do various ways and strategies to escape from the form of colonization.

The struggle and attitude of women in opposing colonial imperialism in the novel *Jejak Langkah*. Maria van Zeggelen, a journalist who criticized the form of colonial imperialism. He fought to fight the form of invaders in the natives through writing. Maria van Zeggelen is described to have written extensively on the struggle of indigenous women. In a meeting on the Aceh War, he criticized the conquest of the Aceh War by the occupiers. Ang San Mei later, Ang San Mei as a Chinese girl who experienced a form of imperialism of colonialism in his country until he fled to the Natives to achieve his goals. In this Native Ang San Mei formed an organization of the Chinese Young Generation for the opponents of the indigenous forms of colonialism. There is also a Jepara girl, Jepara girl (R.A. Kartini) against the practice of colonial imperialism through his writings and thoughts. Through the letters he made, the girl of Jepara invites the whole society, especially women to be moved to

become human free from the dark era. *Habis Gelap Terbitlah Terang*. It also illustrates the struggle of Acehese women (Cut Nyak Dien) against the practice of colonial imperialism is by taking physical resistance. Resistance is done tirelessly and time to achieve a better state, namely independence.

In the *Rumah Kaca* novel the struggle of female characters against colonial imperialism is represented by Siti Soendari. Siti Soendari through his speeches and writings trying to resuscitate the indigenous people that this homeland is actually owned by Indigenous and Natives who are more entitled to their own homeland. Colonial imperialism had arbitrarily seized indigenous rights over its own land.

III. CONCLUSION

The colonial imperialism form of oppression contained in the *Bumi Manusia* tetralogy novel mostly tells of the indigenous people who were oppressed by Europeans in both economic and political repression. The European nations wanted to control the natural resources and human resources of the Natives. This is exemplified by the attitude of the Europeans who require the Natives to sell their land for a cheap price and oblige to plant sugar cane which is sold cheaply. Many indigenous women are made as mistresses. The indigenous people were not allowed to obtain higher education than the Europeans.

The female characters in the Novel tetralogy of the *Bumi Manusia* are given strong characters to oppose the suppression of patriarchy and imperialism of colonialism by its author. The characters who oppose the form of patriarchal oppression of imperialism of colonialism, are as follows. Nyai Ontosoroh who has a brave, tough, against the white court ruling. Surati fight against the form of colonialism by way of transmitting smallpox outbreaks against Mr. Plikemboh who want to make him mistress. Marie van Zeggelen, a women journalist who struggled through the writings raised the religiosity of Acehese women's struggles who participated in a war with men against colonialism. Ang San Mei has a critical attitude to what he experienced and observed, so that has a broad insight about the organization to achieve its ideals, namely to form the State of the Republic of China. Princess Kasiruta dared to resist colonialism without hesitating to protect her husband by firing shots at thugs sent by the government to intimidate. Siti Sundari has a critical and courageous attitude against colonial imperialism by writing in newspapers and speaking in public forums.

Thus, it can be inferred that the female characters contained in the *Bumi Manusia* tetralogy have an attitude against all forms of oppression of patriarchy and colonial imperlism.

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