

# Robinson Crusoe as a Textbook In Schools During the Dutch Colonial Period in West Java

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Abstract: *The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe of York Mariner* by Daniel Defoe was first published in England in 1719. It has been translated into over a hundred languages since its first publication, including Sundanese language written in Javanese script. It was published as *Carita Robinson Krusoe* [sic!] by the Dutch colonial government press in Batavia, Landsdrukkerij in 1879 and translated by Raden Kartawinata. However, little attention is given to the fact that it was one of the first adaptations of European novels during the Dutch colonial period in Indonesia. Furthermore, in West Java, the novel was distributed to schools, which established by the Dutch, and used as a textbook in classrooms attended by indigenous Indonesians. This condition was a result of the Dutch Ethical policy which was aimed at bringing progress and prosperity to the native population. It was a contrast with the initial nature of colonialism brought by the Dutch to the Indonesian archipelago, which was to obtain maximum possible benefits. Therefore, literary research is required in order to understand better the contents of this work. This particular work can be further analysed to understand better the motivations within the text, which are not free from the values and norms of the spirit of the age.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

*The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe of York Mariner* by British author Daniel Defoe (1659—1661) was first published in two volumes in 1719 and 1720 in England (Proudfoot, 1997, p.45). It is generally considered to be the first novel written in the English language. Some even believed that the story was actually based on real-life incidents since the first edition credited the work's protagonist Robinson Crusoe as its author.

The story tells about a young Englishman who, from a young age, wants to go away to sea to seek his fortune, rather than living a comfortable life he has in England. His intention, however, is not approved by his parents because he is the only son left in the family and they want him to pursue another career. Against the wishes of his parents, Robinson Crusoe is determined to sail the sea. While traveling by ship from Brazil to Africa, he is caught up in a terrible storm and finds himself a castaway on an uninhabited island in the Caribbean. He spends 28 years of his life on the island, living almost entirely on his own. The novel is considered to be the source of influence of

many literary works of the 18th century and the 19th century in Europe. It has been translated into over a hundred languages since its first publication, including Sundanese language.

According to Moriyama (2005), in his published dissertation *Semangat Baru: Kolonialisme, Budaya Cetak, dan Kesusastraan Sunda Abad Ke-19: "Senarai Buku-Buku Cetak Berbahasa Sunda Sebelum 1908"* (2005, p.277), it was not until 1879, Robinson Crusoe was translated to Sundanese language in Cacarakan script. The translation entitled *Carita Robinson Krusoe* [sic!] was published by a Dutch publisher, Landsdrukkerij, and translated by Raden Kartawinata (1846-1906). The known copies of the manuscript are now available in the National Library of Australia (NLA) and in the Library of the University of Leiden.

In Indonesia, the work is considered as a threshold that marks the modernization of traditional literature. In addition, *Carita Robinson Krusoe* (henceforth CRK) is one of the few literary work adaptations that paved the way for the emergence of print culture in Indonesia. At that time, the printing house was exclusively an instrument of the Dutch

colonial government and thus any publication had to serve the government's interests.

CRK was first translated into Sundanese in Cacarakan script by Raden Kartawinata in 1879. However, it is unknown whether Kartawinata translated his adaptation from the Dutch version of the novel by Gerrard Keller, as written in the title page of CRK, or from the Malay version entitled *Hikayat Robinson Crusoe* by Adolf von De Wall, which was published four years before CRK. An in-depth philological research is required to trace back the history of each publication. But, when a literary work is translated into another language, it inevitably undergoes not only a grammatical and semantic transformation, but also an ideological one. Therefore, this paper aims to identify the modifications made by Kartawinata in adapting the story of Robinson Crusoe to conform to the acceptable values in Sundanese culture and, at the same time, suit the Dutch colonial government's ideological and political agendas.

Since a manuscript such as CRK has not been distinctively categorized, it was not easy to obtain information regarding the manuscript from the National Library of Indonesia (PNRI). On one hand, manuscripts such as CRK are still often excluded because they are written in traditional languages and thus not considered as part of Indonesian modern literature. On the other hand, they are too "modern" to be categorized as traditional manuscripts.

On the cover page of the manuscript, the title *Carita Robinson Crusoe* is written in Cacarakan script. The title page is written in Latin as *Robinson Crusoe, naar het Hollandsch van Gerard Keller door Raden Karta Winata, translateur voor de Soendashe taal, Batavia Landsdrukkerij, 1879*. This information was obtained from *Tjarita Robinson Crusoe, disalin tina basa Walanda ku Raden Kartawinata, dipindahkeun ku R. Mohamad Saleh sareng R.A. Machbub Danaatmadja, 1960*. *Tjarita Robinson Crusoe* (henceforth TRC) was published by the initiative of R. Moehamad Saleh and R. A. Machbub Danaatmadja in 1960 due to their concern regarding the lack of good reading materials for Sundanese people (Saleh and Danaatmadja, 1960, p.ii).

CRK was printed in Landsdrukkerij Weltevreden, Batavia, while TRC was printed by the publisher Fa. Dana Guru which is located at Jln. Penggangsaan Barat no.12 Djakarta. There is, however, no reliable information regarding the locations where both of the manuscripts were first copied. But considering the fact that in 1879 Raden Kartawinata had been assuming his duty as a translator, it is possible that CRK was reproduced in Garut before he became the

vice governor of Sumedang in 1883. CRK is considered as a direct adaptation of the Dutch version of *Robinson Crusoe* by Gelard Keller. As for TRC, many believe that it was adapted from CRK.

Robinson Crusoe was published by the Dutch Colonial Government to address the need of a textbook for indigenous Indonesians who enrolled in their schools. This condition was a result of the Dutch Ethical policy, which was aimed at bringing progress and prosperity to East Indies by establishing schools and educating the native population. However, there are possibly other considerations behind it.

In Indonesia, the novel has already received a lot of critical attention, both in literary criticism and postcolonial criticism, among which are: *Robinson Crusoe in Indonesia: traces the evolution of a sub-genre of literature* by Ian Proudfoot (1997), "*Di Ambang Gelombang Kedua: Terjemahan Cerita Eropa*" by Mikihiro Moriyama in the book *Semangat Baru: Kolonialisme, Budaya Cetak, dan Kesusastraan Sunda Abad ke-19* (2005), and an essay "*Sastra Populer dan Subjektivitas Postkolonial: Robinson Crusoe, Count de Monte Cristo, and Sherlock Holmes di Indonesia Masa Kolonial*" by Doris Jedamski in *Clearing a Space* (2008).

By the late of 19th century, the convention of traditional writing was being replaced by the new method of writing brought by the adaptations of European literary works made possible by the printing press. Thus, the structure of traditional writing was challenged by a new style of writing (prose), which eventually evolved into a new genre (the novel) and in turn would shape Indonesian literate culture.

## 2 THE NARROWING MEANING OF LITERATURE AND EARLY ART PRINT IN INDONESIA

The definition of "literature" is often limited to merely fictional work. Scholars have argued over what makes a piece of writing "literature". First, in a literary text, events, experiences, and feelings are written down in poetry, prose, or drama. Second, a literary text is generally characterized by a feature known as fictionality (Van Luxemburg, Bal, and Westseijn, 1989, p.21), which is a narrative mode that enables readers to immerse in a story.

The emphasis on the understanding of literature as purely "fictional" has shaped how the majority of Indonesian readers understand literature or *sastra*. The definition of *sastra*, which is originated

from Sanskrit, is any writing of good quality. It is very different with *fiksi* (fiction) as 1) *fiksi* (the novel, short story); 2) not based on real life; imaginary; purely fictional (Tim Penyusun Kamus, 2008, p.466). In fact, *sastra*, in the old sense of the word, include various types of writing. All forms of science were written in *sastra*, for example: *Shilpa-sastra* (the science of sculpture), *Vaastu-sastra* (the science of architecture), *Artha-sastra* (economic science), *Niti-sastra* (political science) In this sense, *sastra* is a writing that explain all ideas. The meaning of *sastra*, therefore, is more than fiction.

Thus, the definition of literature understood by the majority of Indonesians today is far from its original definition in Sanskrit. Moreover, literature as a subject is not adequately taught in schools. This situation is possibly resulted from the arrival of printed books in the 19th century in Indonesia.

It is necessary to discuss the emergence of the new convention of writing/printing in Indonesia since it is not only considered as a technological progress, but also a cultural milestone, which transformed the way writings had been produced and distributed in the Archipelago centuries before the arrival of the printing press.

The invention of the printing press by Johann Gutenberg (1400-1468) in Germany not only transformed Europe, but also the rest of the world, including Indonesia. The Gutenberg Bible was the first major book printed using the printing press in 1456. In 1500, around 250 printing houses were established in many places in Europe and it is estimated to print approximately 27.000 titles (Kasijanto, 2008, p.291).

During the first quarter of the 17th century, printing machines were shipped by the Dutch to Indonesia. The first printing machines were shipped in 1624 by the missionaries of the Church of the Protestant Reformers of the Netherlands. The machines used to print brochures, almanacs, books, and other printed materials that support the activities of the missionaries in the Archipelago (Kasijanto, 2008, p.291). There were at least three types of printing businesses in the Netherlands East Indies during early development: religious publisher, private publisher, and the third publisher of the city under the institution (state) later called the government publisher.

The printing machines paved the way for the emergence of printing houses and publishing companies in the Archipelago. Johan Nieuhof who have lived in Batavia between the year 1667-1670, had the chance to see the first printing product called *tytboek* (1659)—a sort of daily almanac derived from

the word *tijd* (time) and *boek* (book). In the mid-17th century, publishing companies managed by either individuals or the church emerge in Batavia (Kasijanto, 2008, p.292). Around 1659-1695 at least there were six printing houses in Batavia (according to the research of F. Valentijn, quoted by Kimman (1981) in Kasijanto (2008, p.292). They were a group of 'city-printers' or *stadsdrukker* which is considered to be independent from VOC's interests.

The presence of the printing of this town is quite interesting. In the midst of the monopolistic power of the VOC, it gave the opportunity to the printing business outside its control. This is possibly because a printing business at that time was still considered to have a small economic value. Printing was considered no more than a technical activity and not viewed as one of the elements that could bring about cultural change (Kasijanto, 2008, p.292).

### 3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION ON CHANGES IN WRITING SYSTEM

In 1870s in West Java, there was an increase in the publication of stories translated to Sundanese by the Dutch government publisher, Landsdrukkerij. One of the prominent figures involved in this endeavour was Raden Kartawinata (1846-1906). He learned Dutch in Garut directly from K. F. Holle, who was a good friend of his father, Raden Moehamad Moesa (Moriyama, 2005, pp.242-243). It is estimated that he translated no less than 20 books (Moriyama, 2005, p.265).

Kartawinata was appointed by the government as a Sundanese assistant translator in February 1874 before designated government's official translator. The Dutch government in Batavia considered Kartawinata a reliable translator. In addition to working as a translator, he was sworn into office as vice governor of Sumedang in 1883 and assumed a position as *Zelfstandig Patih* of Sukabumi (1892-1904). He passed away in 1906. Kartawinata's works in the field of translation had been widely recognized and he was considered as one of the prominent indigenous scholars.

Kartawinata's greater achievement is his adaptation of Willem Yabrandt's Bontekoe's journal, a famous book about the adventure of Captain Bontekoe and his ship during his voyage from Hoorn the East Indies between 1618 and 1625. It was first published in the 17th century and popular among students in the Netherlands. Similar to the Dutch

version, the Sundanese language version the story of Captain Bontekoe is also morally charged (Moriyama, 2005, pp.246-247). K. F. Holle was behind the publication of his student's work. He was hoping that European fictional works would portray a positive image about Europeans among the indigenous people.

The theme of faith and religious belief in *Carita Kapten Bontekoe* fascinated native readers and it can also be found in CRK. For example, when Crusoe is faced with disaster, then only God ("Allah", "Gusti Allah", "Allah nu Kawasa") who determines the fate of men. Europeans wanted to emphasize to native readers that they also believe in God, and the message is repeated in the book, as follow:

*Ari Robinson mimitina tjitjing didjero kamar kapal bae, nyenangkeun maneh keukeudeungan, sabab anjeuna mah manehna meunang luwang hanteu risieun tjara barang mimiti, rasana mokaha bae, tapi barang ngadenge sora matros2 tjareurik bari ngadowa, pokna: "Allah tulung! Allah tulung! Kapal botjor! Botjor!"* (Saleh and Danaatmadja, 1960, p.6).

Robinson was alone in his vessel's room, enjoying himself while he could because now he was not as busy as he had been. Nothing was unusual until he heard the sailors crying and praying: "God help us! The ship is leaking! The ship is going to sink!"

The translation of "God" as 'Allah' instead of 'Lord' at the end of the 19th century the evangelists are involved in these polemics, which ended with the conclusion that the word 'Tuhan' is used to avoid Islamic connotation. Kartawinata translated 'God' into 'Allah' so that the readers would understand the message in that story (Moriyama, 2005, p.266). In addition to faith in God, the story of Bontekoe also promotes the supremacy of Western civilization (Moriyama, 2005, p.248). It was also found that the people in the archipelago were portrayed as cannibals, barbarous, and wild.

According to Moriyama (2005), it shows the Western view of a local inhabitant who is considered uncivilized. Moriyama further explained that Kartawinata's works, such as *Cariyos Tuwan Capitan Marion* and *Carita Kapitan Bonteku*, share a colonial ideology. Unlike Robinson Crusoe, they highlight a huge gap between Europeans and the local inhabitants (Moriyama, 2005, p.p.248). In CRK, however, the relationship between Crusoe and Jumaah (Friday) is the closest thing to a "contact" that a European man and an indigenous inhabitant can have, which is an ambivalent one. The ideology of Dutch colonial is

based on the idea that the colonial subject should be welcomed to a certain degree, but the impression of discrimination should be avoided as not to create antipathy among the colonized against the colonizing (Moriyama, 2005, p.248).

Postcolonial approach is required in analyzing the phenomenon. Postcolonial study analyzes how literature reveals the "traces" of colonialism in the confrontation of "races, nations, and cultures" that occur within the scope of the "unequal power relations" as the impact of European colonization over the third world nations (Budiman, 2008).

Postcolonial literary studies attempt to analyze and criticize the way authors on both sides of the colonial dividing line, reproduce, challenge, or remove textual colonialism in their works. Based on the description above, from postcolonial point of view, CRK is considered as a text that dominantly displays Western hegemony.

Not only detailed description of Western thoughts and customs that makes Kartawinata's adaptation look modern, it also contains sketch illustrations accompanying the texts, which were fascinating to the eyes of indigenous readers at that time. The illustrations acted as visual stimuli as they read the story. It was a new reading experience for them, a new way of perceiving the world (Moriyama, 2005, p.252). Kartawinata's adaptation introduced alternative sentence structure and grammar that later would assimilate.

Kartawinata seemed to be aware of the difference between *kalimah* and *dangding*, but the style of prose is tailored to the aesthetic considerations of traditional writing convention (Moriyama, 2005, p.255). At that time, the art of speech or reading aloud was customary. Lenggang Kantjana was an indigenous who first stated that reading can be practiced individually and in solitary. *Carita* or stories are best read in solitary. Reading a book is an individual activity performed in silence while lying down or sitting in a rocking chair, like the Europeans (Moriyama, 2005, p.255).

Europeans believed that, all other humans outside Europe are uncivilized and, therefore, need to be civilized. This can be traced in CRK in the following excerpts:

*...kula aya dina pulo kosong euweuh sato galak nu pingabinasakeun awak, coba lamun kapalidkeun ka pasisir Afrika mah nu loba pisan sato galak jeung jelema leuweung, sakumaha pitiwaseunana!* (Kartawinata, 1879, p.63).

...I am on an inhabited island where no wild animals can attack me. If I had drifted to the coast

of Africa, I would have died devoured by wild animals or by savage people.

In the mind of Europeans, Africa is the land of death inhabited by *jelema leuweung* (savage people). Robinson is grateful that he is not stranded on an African coast.

*Poe harita jeput nepi ka sore kula beak nya nalangsa, tina kula teu boga pisan papakean, teu boga pakarang keur bekel hirup. Rasa kula dikeprung ku baya maot, teu meunang henteu kudu maot harita, tina sabab langlayeuseun atawa dihakan sato galak atawa dipaehan ku jelema leuweung.* (Kartawinata, 1879, p.67).

I was suffered the entire day, and I did not have any clothes to wear, nor weapons to defend myself. I was besieged by death on all sides, it was certain that I should have been dead, got lost or devoured by wild animals or killed by savage people.

Then, every European who came to any region outside of Europe would always be suspicious. Even before departing from their homeland, they would imagine the danger. In addition, Friday (Jumaah) is a character portrayed as 'savage' that, from the perspective of a European, is described as follow:

*Rasa Robinson eta jelema rupana jeung dedegna tegep kacida, beungeutna segut sarta cangker, tapi jauh pisan kana matak sieun. Ari umurna pangira Robinson dua puluh lima taun atawa dua puluh genep taun.* (Kartawinata, 1879, p.181).

He appeared like a man. He seemed strong in physical appearance and stature, but did not cause Robinson to fear him. Robinson estimates his age is twenty five or twenty six years old.

Even in the other part of this story, Friday—who had become friends and had much help Robinson faced obstacles—still deems it not human.

*Eta meureun kamanah ku sadayana sakumaha bungahna Robinson, reh boga batur jelema leuweung nu sakitu bodona ayeuna geus mimiti rek iang-iang cara jelema. Malah Robinson ge ayeuna geus henteu pati hayang balik ka enggon jelema.* (Kartawinata, 1879, p.190).

It might be quite understandable to all that Robinson was pleased to see his friend, an uncivilized, simple-minded savage, was now beginning to act like human.

Racism has given rise to the justification of colonialism because native non-human beings 'mimiti rek iang-iang cara jelema' before meeting European standards of which is religion:

*...Ku Robinson tuluy dipapatahan agama Kristen, sarta sejen-sejen elmu nu jero-jero ku Robinson diragragkeun kabeh ka Jumaah, kitu deui dicaritaan kaayaan nagara Robinson jeung carita-caritaanana, Jumaah semu suka ati pisan ngadengekeun papatah jeung carita-carita juraganana.* (Kartawinata, 1879, p.203).

...Robinson continued teaching him about Christianity and other knowledges, about life in the country where he came from. Friday seemed to take great pleasure in listening to his master's stories.

In addition to the narrative is subtle racism which sets the Europeans remain as superior of the indigenous peoples and should be civilised, there are also narratives about religiosity and faith of the Europeans—who represented by the character of Robinson—were captured in large quantities in this story:

*Geus kitu pitulung Allah nu Kawasa eta kapal kandas, jadi meh geus luput tina bahaya maot kalebuh...* (Kartawinata, 1879, p.10).

By the help of God almighty, the ship ran ashore, escaped from danger of the sea, saved from death by drowning....

*...Robinson nahankeun maneh bae, diingetkeun manehna wajib sukur ku pitulungna Gusti nu sipat rahman, rehna dihirupkeun keneh, sabab salawasna hirup mah ulah putus pangharepan. Kitu deui tandana sukur kupitulung Allah kudu tawekal sarta ihtiar.* (Kartawinata, 1879, p.36).

...Robinson refrain, reminded that he is obliged to gratitude for the help of the Lord who is *rahman*, that is still alive, because during the life do not give up hope. Patience and trust in God is a sign of gratitude to God for his guidance.

The concept of God is often presented with diction: "Allah", "Gusti Allah", "Allah nu Kawasa", "Gusti nu sipat rahman", "nu Kawasa", "Allah nu Wisesa". The effect it has on the reader is to think that the God often uttered by Robinson-as well as other characters in the story-is the same God as the Muslim-majority reader. In Islamic terminology God is Allah. Also, with the title *Gusti nu rahman* 'God of rahman' and *Allah nu wisesa* 'Almighty God' affirms that the God worshiped Robinson is also the same God

worshiped by the majority of Muslims. This is very important to be adjusted because not the greatest resistance to the Dutch colonial government came from the Islamic side. Thus, Robinson—who represents the image of the Europeans—is imitated as faithful as the one who stands firm on the teachings of religion:

...rek nangtung henteu kaduga sapoe jeput kula euweuh deui gawe kajaba: “**Ya Gusti, mugi sing welas ka kuring! Allah mugi kuring dihampura.**” (Kartawinata, 1879, p.86).

...I was even unable stand up and there was nothing I could do except for praying, “May God's love be with me! Oh God please forgive me!”

In certain parts, identity of Robinson was to be affirmed, that he is not a muslim.

...manehna datang ka teu bisa sasarean gandeng ku guntur sarta angin, tuluy bae manehna maca kitab **Injil**.... (Kartawinata, 1879:p.156).

...he could not fall asleep fuss by the thunder and the wind, kept read the **Gospels**...

...ku Robinson dihatean bae pokna: “**Allah nu mayungan urang**...” (Kartawinata, 1879:p.246).

...Robinson reassured him by saying: “**God protects us**...”

Therefore, the impact of understanding that gave birth to mutual understanding, even though different religions but has levels of faith are the same height, equally wise, and equally pious. Although there is a possibility that it is just the impact from the point of view of the translator—in this case Kartawinata the son of Muhamad Musa—who was a muslim.

## 4 CONCLUSIONS

It can be concluded that Robinson is described as a man of strong faith, religious, high moral, and wise are arranged in such a way that the story is not denied readers the school children in his day—that the majority of muslims—with a fixed place the individual European higher (superior) of the indigenous population that need to civilized as the recognition of who should be lordship.

Kartawinata passed away in 1906. It was not Kartawinata who firstly introduced *Cerita Robinson Crusoe* (1879). In 1875—four years earlier—had been published a similar story entitled *Hikajat Robinson Crusoe* by Adolf van De Wall which is a translation

of the German version of the Robinson Crusoe adaptation of Joachim Heinrich Campe from the original story *The life and strange suprising adventures of Robinson Crusoe* in 1719. It should be traced back that the German version of the novel is a composite of Heinrich Campe from the original Robinson Crusoe story which is more concerned with moral and didactic elements associated with the educational revolution in Europe. It is also possible that the Dutch version of Robinson Crusoe by Gerald Keller that leads into the second story of Robinson Crusoe in Indonesia: the work of van De Wall and works Kartawinata. Robinson Crusoe gave birth to a new literary genre in Indonesia. Manuscripts such as CRK is a proto-novel, the forerunner of modern literature in present-day Indonesia.

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