

From Ethnic Prejudice to Ethnic Solidarity: Representation of Muslim Women in Pre-independence Indonesian *Peranakan* Chinese Literature

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ABSTRACT

Javanese women, particularly Muslim women, in the colonial era were often portrayed as passive, gentle, obedient, and powerless parties. Whereas Muslim women also took part in the resistance movement against tradition and the oppressive colonial system. Studies on the representation of Muslim women in the colonial era are generally studied from manuscripts and literary works from the palace, and rarely from Indonesian *Peranakan* Chinese literature. This article aims to fill this gap by examining the representation of Muslim women in *Peranakan* Chinese literature in the Indonesian pre-independence era, the golden age of *Peranakan* Chinese literature. To understand the shift in the portrayal of Muslim women, the research employed Nielsen's theory of ethnic solidarity and Lugones' decolonial feminism. As a research approach, Fairclough's Critical discourse analysis (CDA) was applied. The findings of this study were that the representations of Muslim women in the texts of *Peranakan* Chinese literature varied in each decade. In the 1910s, Muslim women were represented as Javanese women with aristocratic social class (*priyayi*), European-educated, but irrational. In addition, Muslim women were positioned as a lower social class, namely servants in Chinese families. Meanwhile, in the 1920s, Muslim women were not only servants in Chinese families but were also illiterate and easy to be bribed. Both eras showed the existence of ethnic prejudice and the coloniality of gender. In the era leading up to Indonesian independence in the 1930s to be precise, Muslim women were portrayed as embodying decolonial subjectivity and as parties capable of fighting alongside other ethnicities, notably the Chinese, against the Dutch colonial authorities. As a result, ethnic prejudice has diminished and been replaced by ethnic unity. These ethnic groups are acknowledged as Indonesian citizens via decolonial subjectivity.

Keywords: Muslim Women; Ethnic Solidarity; Decolonial Feminism; *Peranakan* Chinese Literature; Pre-independence Indonesia

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INTRODUCTION

To date, the image of Javanese women in the colonial era as passive, gentle, powerless, and lacking initiative has turned out to be incorrect. In Dutch East Indies colonial literature, Javanese women are described as submissive dolls, helpless and always smiling no matter what happens (Khariroh, 2021). Javanese women in fact actively fight for justice and their rights (Rahmi, 2017; Carey & Houben, 2016). Even they had taken a significant role in political and social affairs in the years before the outbreak of the Java war (1825-1830). Apart from that, women's movements against traditions and the colonial system which were reining also occurred (Stuers, 2008). This shows that women in the Indonesian pre-independence era were not passive.

Even so, studies on Javanese women, particularly Muslim women, are mostly sourced from classical manuscripts and Javanese literary works themselves. This is similar to what was carried out by Nancy K. Florida (1996) who traced gender relations in literary works from Surakarta palace (*Keraton*) in the 19th century. Not much has been studied concerning the role of Muslim women in the Indonesian pre-independence era from the Indonesian *Peranakan* Chinese literature.^b The study of the image of women in pre-independence Indonesian *Peranakan* Chinese literature tends to examine the image depicted (Nugroho & Purnomo, 2017), maintaining their cultural identity by means of self-protection and ensuring positional security (Susanto, 2017), as well as the ambivalence manner displayed (Dewojati, 2017).

Although many studies have been conducted on *Peranakan* Chinese in Indonesia (Suryadinata, 2022, 2015, 1976; Neo, 2016; Walujono, 2014; Ali, 2007) and on *Peranakan* Chinese women themselves (Jaschok & Miers, 1994; Neo et al., 2020), the image of Muslim women in *Peranakan* Chinese literature that played roles in Indonesian independence has been largely overlooked. It is possible that this trend emerged due to the presence of ethnic prejudice and competition within the literary sphere as well. The *Peranakan* Chinese literature spanning the colonial to independence period was little appreciated. It was as if Indonesian *Peranakan* Chinese was not a part of the Indonesian community as a result Chinese Indonesian literary works were included in a separate genre that was *Sastra Peranakan Tionghoa* (the Literature of Chinese born in the Dutch Indies). This can be shown in the Indonesian literary history books written by prominent Indonesian literature critics: Teeuw, Rachmat Djoko Pradopo, Ajib Rosidi, Bakri Siregar, and Yugiyono K.S.

Furthermore, Indonesian *Peranakan* Chinese literature has never been included and discussed in the periodization of Indonesian literary history compiled by H.B. Yassin, Buyung Saleh, Nugroho Noto Susanto, Ajib Rosidi, and Rachmat Djoko Pradopo. Jakob Sumardjo is the one and only Indonesian critic who has given attention to Indonesian *Peranakan* Chinese literature by compiling a periodization of low Malay literature produced by previous researchers, such as Salmon, John. B. Kwee, and Nio Joe Lan (Sumardjo, 2004). However, Indonesian *Peranakan* Chinese literature is categorized as Low Malay literature since it does not accordance with *Balai Pustaka* standards (Damono, 1999). This indicates discrimination against *Peranakan* Chinese literary works that are less appreciated.

^b The Indonesian *Peranakan* Chinese literatures are those which written by *Peranakan* Chinese in Indonesian pre- and post-independence eras. Across Southeast Asia, *Peranakan* refers to a unique group of hybrid communities with roots in Chinese, Indonesian, Malay and Western heritages, traditions and influences (Rocha & Yeoh, 2022). The perceived hybridity of *Peranakan* Chinese (those born in Indonesia) was encapsulated in the appellation used to describe them in pre-Independence Java: *Cina wurung, londa durung, Jawa tanggung* ('no longer a Chinese, not yet a Dutchman, a half-baked Javanese') (Allen, 2003). Meanwhile, within the Chinese ethnic community there is also a division of social groups consisting of the Chinese native (*totok*) and the descendants or *Peranakan* (Lohanda, 1996). The so-called *Peranakan* Chinese are Chinese who were born in Indonesia (often from a mixture of Chinese and Indonesian descent) and to some extent, they are assimilated into the local culture. On the other hand, *totok* Chinese are new immigrants and their culture and language are still oriented towards China (Suryadinata, 2007).

The worth of examining the depiction of Muslim women in pre-independence *Peranakan* Chinese literary works is to broaden the viewpoint on the position of Muslim women in the Dutch colonial era objectively before the *Peranakan* Chinese population was marginalized in Indonesia. In Indonesian history after independence, efforts were made by the government to stigmatize ethnic Chinese to curb 'indigenous' nationalism (Suryadinata, 2003). This is why the ethnic conflict in Indonesia has not yet been resolved because racial prejudice is ingrained and passed down through Dutch colonization. At the time, the Dutch colonial government created a hierarchical classification of the Dutch Indies population based on three ethnic groups: Europeans, foreign eastern people (including Chinese and Arabs), and native-born (Suryadinata, 1999; Dewojati, 2018). As a result of this program, ethnic Chinese were deemed close to the Dutch, resulting in racial hatred for hundreds of years as a sort of ethnic rivalry that has never abated.

Even now, there is a discourse of ethnicity in contemporary political events in Indonesia in post-independence which is still being used in which there is prejudice between ethnicities, namely between *Peranakan* Chinese, Arab, and *pribumi* (the indigenous). Whereas in the colonial era, the position of Indonesian *Peranakan* Chinese also played a role in the national narrative (Mujiningsih & Suyatno, 2020). This shows the existence of ethnic solidarity which goes beyond ethnic prejudice caused by structural discrimination. However, Mujiningsih & Suyatno (2020) did not examine the views of *Peranakan* Chinese authors who photographed the existence of ethnic solidarity that was raised by Muslim women at the end of the Dutch colonialism period.

Based on this discussion, it is important to examine the views of *Peranakan* Chinese authors towards Muslim women. Not only because there is a scarcity of study on *Peranakan* Chinese literature, but also because it is critical to investigate *Peranakan* Chinese opinions on the position of Muslim women during the colonial era. This also demonstrates that Muslim women are not helpless victims of colonial oppression. The colonial era, from the 1910s to the 1930s, was chosen because it was the greatest age of *Peranakan* Chinese literature (Dewojati, 2017). As a result, the research question is: how did ethnic solidarity and decolonial subjectivity arise from the Muslim women's movement in the Indonesian pre-independence era as a result of colonial oppression of gender in *Peranakan* Chinese literature?

CONCEPT OF ETHNIC SOLIDARITY AND DECOLONIAL FEMINISM

The concept of ethnic or ethnicity is not viewed as permanent but as a social process (Barth, 1969). Today, ethnic is no longer seen as immutable or as a fixed entity; rather, it is seen as fluid as it is situationally defined in the social interactions with other groups as well as by the boundaries it establishes and maintains as a result of these interactions (Suprajitno, 2020). Kivisto claimed that ethnic is essentially a social boundary (Bowen, 2021), with these boundaries being mental and cultural rather than physical and being more important than the culture they enclose.

Ethnic boundaries are formed by certain cultural characteristics originating from their members so that they are relevant. In other words, the cultural features that are perceived as typical for their community (Wimmer, 2008) and can reinforce their collective identity (Smajda & Gerteis, 2012). Therefore, ethnic is more related to the emotional significance attached to the cultural content rather than the cultural content itself.

To establish and maintain boundaries, ethnic groups try to maintain their sense of identity and ethnicity. This continuity of feelings that gives a sense of belonging and social existence is referred to by Cornell (1996) as *ethnic persistence* which, if demeaned by other ethnicities, can lead to *ethnic prejudice*. Theoretically, prejudice is conceptualized as an attitude: the negative

evaluation of specific ethnic or racial groups or ethnic groups in general (Masson & Verkuyten, 1993). In the Dutch East Indies colonial society, ethnic prejudice was also formed by the Dutch colonial government through a hierarchical classification based on ethnicity, namely Europeans, Foreign Easterners/non-Europeans and non-natives/*pribumi* (including Chinese and Arabs), and *pribumi*.

Subsequently, Hechter (1975) also introduced that there is a persistence of ethnic solidarity with the framework of the *reactive-ethnicity* model. In this view, ethnic solidarity is a reaction of the culturally distinct periphery against exploitation by the center. Ethnic solidarity occurs when there is a cultural division of labor, or a pattern of structural discrimination such that individuals are assigned to specific types of occupations and other social roles based on observable cultural traits of markers (Hechter, 1974). With the cultural division of labor, ethnic boundaries tend to coincide with lines of structural differentiation, and ethnic solidarity is increased. The greater this coincidence, and the relative disadvantage of the peripheral population, the greater the likelihood of solidarity (Nielsen, 1985).

An ethnic group is defined as (Barth, 1969) a population that has a membership that identifies itself and is identified by others, as constituting a category distinguished from other categories of the same order. Identification is carried out based on racial or cultural markers such as language, religion, or customs. Thus, ethnicity is at least limited to the recognition of ethnic differences by the population involved and precedes solidarity. In explaining ethnic solidarity, François Nielsen (1985) developed a model of ethnic solidarity theory (Figure. 1). In the structural factors, ethnic solidarity arises as a result of cultural labor division, labor market division, and so on by the central government, as in link 1 in Figure 1. In this structural division, ethnic prejudice arises in the horizontal social region of society. Later, due to the suffering of this structural division, a sense of ethnic persistence arises, giving rise to ethnic solidarity.

The response to ethnic solidarity in political incorporation in link 2 is an official recognition of ethnicity by the state. In the context of Indonesian pre-independence, ethnic groups that were in solidarity against the Dutch colonialists were later able to gain recognition from the Indonesian government so that they became Indonesian citizens.

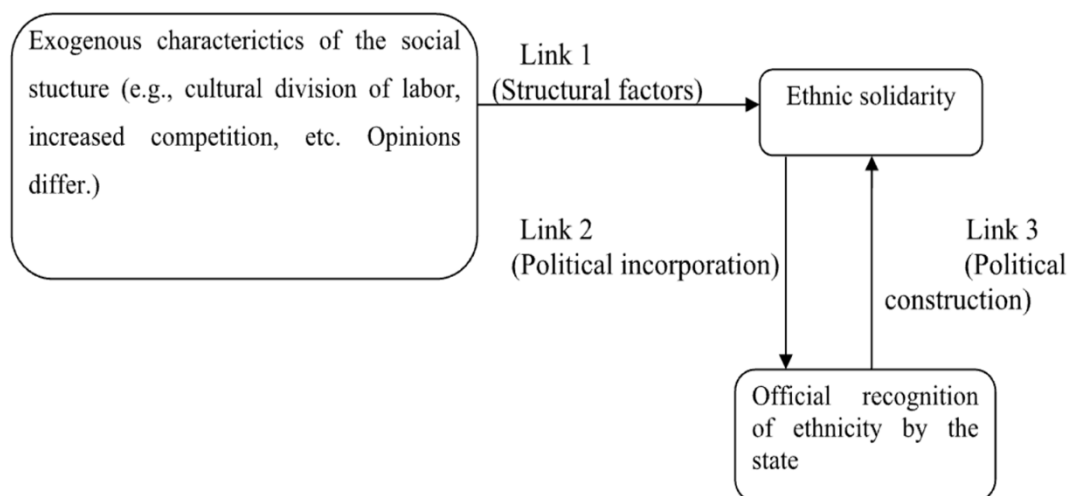


FIGURE 1. Model of Ethnic Solidarity
Source: Nielsen, 1985

The next mechanism is related to link 3 which is referred to as the political construction of ethnicity. This ethnic recognition from the central government in fact made the previous ethnic divisions stronger, increased ethnic groups, and encouraged new groups mobilization that were not previously recognized in order not to be expelled from the country based on ethnicity (Nielsen, 1985). This is similar to the mechanism for marginalizing *Peranakan* Chinese from the New Order to post-reformation eras in Indonesia. This is what explains the ethnic struggle that still occurs today.

The notion of decolonial feminism will then be operationalized in the context of Dutch colonial history to operationalize women's subjectivity against colonial authority. Decolonial feminism has also offered a distinct voice to marginalized groups of women, survivors of nation-state programs, and global fast advances (Swastika, 2023).

Decolonial feminism's job is to execute a critique of racialized, colonial, capitalist, heterosexualist gender oppression as a lived social transformation (Lugones, 2010). As a demarcating utterance, decolonial feminism is important for revealing colonial and racializing activities within the history of feminist movements (Paramaditha, 2022).

Verges (2021) promoted decolonial feminism as a kind of solidarity for women in the Global South. Brazil, India, Pakistan, Indonesia, and China are often regarded as belonging to the Global South, along with Nigeria and Mexico, as the largest Southern states in terms of geographical area and population.

Postcolonial rhetoric was heavily criticized in subsequent feminist thought for its lack of direct engagement with actual reality. As a result, decolonial feminism engages in greater political activities. Decolonial feminism also explicitly supports the experiences of women and other marginalized groups as a result of a capitalist, patriarchal, and colonial state (Cabnal, 2018).

Lugones (2010) made a further parallel, stating, "I call the theory of racialized capitalist gender oppression 'the coloniality of gender'". "Decolonial feminism" refers to the potential of eliminating 'the coloniality of gender'. In other words, the background of occurrences known as coloniality of gender in a location must be evaluated and condemned utilizing decolonial feminism. The mission of a decolonial feminist includes decolonizing 'agency' (Paramaditha, 2022). This demonstrates that women's subjectivity may be viewed through the social framework in which they are bound and so rebel.

The theory of ethnic solidarity was used in this research to explain the phenomena of shifting representation of Muslim women; from being subjugated, racialized, and segregated by a colonial system full of ethnic prejudice to being able to establish ethnic solidarity to oppose Dutch colonialism. Meanwhile, decolonial feminism was utilized to illustrate how ethnic discrimination has a gender coloniality. Thus, ethnic solidarity is also an attempt to undermine gender coloniality. This is known as decolonial feminism.

METHOD

To connect literary works, writers, and society, this study employed an extrinsic approach (Wellek & Warren, 1970). Fairclough's critical discourse analysis (CDA) was used to look for different depictions of Muslim women in Indonesian *Peranakan* Chinese literature before independence. To obtain the representation of Muslim women in *Peranakan* Chinese literature in pre-independence Indonesia, the period had been broken into the 1910s, 1920s, and approaching independence, the 1930s.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) asserts that language assumes a significant role in diverse social processes, as argued by Fairclough (2014). This approach focuses on examining the correlation between created language and the ideological perspectives of the language producer, as shown via various textual forms (Fairclough, 2010). CDA investigates the interconnectedness of three aspects: linguistic practice, discursive practice, and social practice (Udasmoro & Rahmawati, 2023). The linguistic aspect first investigates the text, in this instance *Peranakan* Chinese literature. The discursive element then demonstrates the link between the text and the author's evoked intertextual and interdiscursive networks. The final part is social practice, which is the application of the generated text in what the author does in the social environment described in the text.

For that reason, *Peranakan* Chinese literature is placed in each period and context. In the 1910s, the literary works analyzed were “Karina-Adinda” (1913), and “Allah jang Palseo” (The False God). In the 1920s, the literary works analyzed are “Akal Boesiek dalem Pendjoedian” (Bad Sense in Gambling) (1928), and “Korbanja Yi Yung Toan” (Yi Yuang Toan's Victim) (1928). While in the 1930s only one literary work was analyzed that is, “Drama di Boven Digoel” (Drama at Boven Digul) (1938). Meanwhile, the data in this study were expressed as phrases, clauses, sentences, and words in the research object, which frames Muslim women in the categories of ethnic prejudice, coloniality of gender, ethnic solidarity, and decolonial subjectivity.⁶

The linguistic feature of “Korbanja Yi Yung Toan” may be noticed in the Muslim women who are shown as servants of the *Peranakan* Chinese family. A discursive feature of the discourse on Chinese independence nationalism and the demand to return to their hometown is the context. Here, too, Muslim women are portrayed as submissive, ignorant, impoverished, and devoted to their lords. This is referred to as ethnic bias. The social practice component is shown in the author, Kwee Tek Hoay, who positions himself to attack the Chinese nationalist rhetoric by portraying Muslim women as virtuous slaves who are devoted to their owners. Because she is portrayed as a defenseless lady, the positive aspect of this woman demonstrates gender coloniality.

Meanwhile, in “Drama di Boven Digoel”, Muslim women are portrayed as the pioneers in eradicating ethnic prejudice and fostering ethnic cooperation. This falls within the category of linguistics. The discursive part includes the background of struggling for rights against colonial authority persecution as well as the context of the growth of communism in the 1930s. Kwee Tek Hoay, as a novelist, opposes colonialism while also opposing communism. At this stage, the social practice element is illustrated by portraying Muslim women as decolonial subjects capable of fighting for independence from the Dutch colonial administration in solidarity with other nationalities.

According to the brief descriptions of two of Kwee Tek Hoay's works from various years above, there is a transition in which Kwee Tek Hoay first positioned Muslim women as passive in “Korbanja Yi Yung Toan” to active in “Drama di Boven Digoel”. This study adopted ethnic solidarity and decolonial feminism concepts to show a shift in the representation of Muslim women in *Peranakan* Chinese literature at the end of Dutch colonialism, namely from ethnic prejudice to ethnic solidarity.

⁶ This is different from research on identity representation using a systemic functional perspective (Tan et al., 2023), the use of *Peranakan* Chinese Language as a marker of group identity (Hun et al., 2019), or women as subjects in social media using female gaze perspective (Arifin et al., 2023).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In each period, from the 1910s, 1920s, and 1930s, Muslim women were presented in different ways in *Peranakan* Chinese literature. In the 1910s, Muslim women were represented as occupying a high social class and European education, but still believing in supernatural powers. Besides that, in the late 1910s, Muslim women were also described as being of a lower social class, namely as servants in Chinese families.

In the 1920s, Muslim women were not only servants in Chinese families but were also illiterate and easy to be bribed. These two eras show the ethnic prejudice and coloniality of gender existence in Muslim women's representation. Muslim women figures were captured doing decolonial subjectivity and as being able to stand in solidarity with other ethnicities, namely *Peranakan* Chinese who both experienced discrimination from the Dutch colonial government. This is where ethnic solidarity emerged from Muslim women to fight against the Dutch colonial government towards Indonesian independence.

Therefore, there was a shift in the representation of Muslim women in *Peranakan* Chinese literature in the Indonesian pre-independence era, namely from the emergence of ethnic and coloniality of gender prejudice due to structural, cultural, gender, and social discrimination. This discrimination was widespread among non-Western ethnic groups, giving rise to ethnic solidarity against Dutch colonialism.

ETHNIC PREJUDICE AND COLONIALITY OF GENDER

This study revealed that ethnic prejudice and coloniality of gender in fact appeared in all *Peranakan* Chinese literature in the 1910s, 1920s, and 1930s. The conditions later shift to bring up ethnic persistence between ethnicities. However, in the 1910s, this ethnic prejudice did not shift at all. It indicates that Muslim women are shown in ethnic discrimination structurally, culturally, and gender. This can be seen in “Karina-Adinda”, and “Allah jang Palseo”.

KARINA-ADINDA

The position of Muslim women through the lens or frame of Chinese Indonesian writers is seen in the script of the play “Karina-Adinda” (1913). The script, translated by Lauw Giok Lan from Victor Ido's manuscript shows nuances of discrimination, that is *pribumi* and the colonial discourse. Although the writer is a Chinese Indonesian, the script does not significantly feature ethnic Chinese. On the contrary, Chinese Indonesians take an attitude or position toward the colonial discourse between *pribumi* and the Dutch colonialists, that is Lauw Giok Lan's point of view.

The play “Karina-Adinda” describes the life of a Javanese of noble descent named Karina Adinda who is European-educated. Her father, Wiriosari is a regent (*bupati*) who is aligned to the Dutch colonial government, power-hungry, foedal, and anti-nationalist. Karina has a lover, a Dutchman named Willem Rennenberg, a believer in ethical politics and supports *pribumi*. Meanwhile, Karina is promised by her father to Patih Bintarang. When Regent Wiriosari is bribed by the Dutch capitalist factory managers to save a Dutch-owned sugar plantation, by directing the flow of the Brantas River flood from the sluice gate to the rice fields and the farmer's village. As a consequence, many lives were lost. William Rennenberg who found this out immediately shut the sluice gate, but Regent Wiriosari sent his subordinate Boesono to murder Renennberg.

The process of discrimination and identification is the process of labeling someone with specific characteristics. In the process of discriminating, there are categories and specific criteria such as gender, ethnicity, and structural discrimination. This identification of categories results in someone taking action in a certain contested environment, or a certain path in life. This is what Lugones (2010) referred to as coloniality of gender.

Sex is forced to stand alone in the characterization of the colonized in colonial nations. Indeed, gender and sex may not be inextricably linked and socialized (Lugones, 2010). This is seen in the script of Karina-Adinda with Dutch-Javanese racial elements, men-women, nobility-commoners to old-young becoming the determinant of someone's social characterization. As a Muslim woman, Karina is shown to be irrational by believing in supernatural powers and having to believe in feudal Javanese traditions even though she has a European education.

- RENNENBERG : Oh, there isn't, — but...because you asked...there are superstitious beliefs, such as dreams, devils, spells, and...
- KARINA : Do you feel embarrassed about me?
- RENNENBERG : No, Karina, I am talking about Eastern mysticism, which has nothing substantial to it but which you place a high value on as if you depend on it. [...].
- KARINA : Mr. Controller, how am I to respond? If I answered yes, you would not believe me since, as you know, magic of no consequence. If I respond 'no,' I may be considered an untrue case, according to some. As a result, I don't know. (Ido, 1913).^d

The quote above shows Karina's firmness of belief in supernatural forces. At this point, it seems that the writer still has a gender bias in portraying *pribumi* women. Karina is in fact, of Javanese ethnicity and a woman, although European-educated is portrayed as irrational, by cultivating a representation of Islam and locally held beliefs. This is also portrayed in another female character, who is Raden Ajoe, Karina's grandmother. Individuals, however, have the liberty to choose their own beliefs. As a representative of the Dutch colonial administration, Renneberg appeared to underestimate Karina's convictions. Observing colonialism is tantamount to perceiving the formidable reduction of human beings to animals, to inherent inferiority, in accordance with a schizoid reality view that divides humanity from nature and from non-human entities, and consequently imposes an ontology and cosmology that are fundamental in nature and power (Lugones, 2010).

Ethnic discrimination may also be evident in Muslim women stereotypes, which are demonstrated to be inconsistent, and illogical, but European educated. However, in this work, despite being born into a feudal Javanese noble family, Karina refuses to heed her father's order for an arranged marriage. This condition demonstrates yet another paradox. This denial demonstrates Muslim women's subjectivity. This reinforces Abu-Lughod's (2002), Mahmood's (2005), and Deeb's (2006) investigation of the premise that characterizes Muslim women as oppressed.

^d Translations of all literary works are done by the authors.

ALLAH JANG PALSOE

Meanwhile, in the literary work “Allah jang Palsoe” (1919), Muslim women are described as being at a lower social level, even as servants in Chinese families. The drama text “Allah jang Palsoe” (The False God), written by Kwee Tek Hoay in 1919, tells the story of a poor Chinese Indonesian farmer’s family who lives in Cicurug, Bogor, Dutch East Indies. There are 14 characters in the play, nine Chinese ethnics, and five *bumiputra* (natives) who play a small role (appearing as female and male domestics, and horse-drawn carriage drivers (*sado*)).

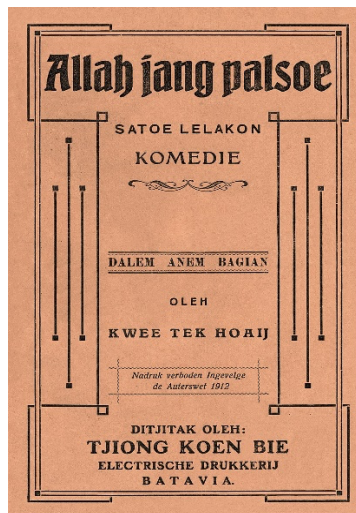


FIGURE 2. Cover *Allah jang Palsoe*

The play “Allah jang Palsoe” tells the story of two relatives, that is Kioe Lie and Kio Gie. Both relatives went off to find work outside the city to improve the fate of their poor families. On one hand, Kioe was a male who was obsessed with the false god that was rich. Because of that, he then left his betrothed and married a rich widow. However, in the end, Kioe Lie became bankrupt and had to keep on the move to sustain his life until finally meeting once more with his younger sibling. On the other hand, Kioe Lie’s sibling, Kioe Gie, was a person of high integrity. He then chose to resign from the newspaper business which meant that he changed directions to one of opposing the people’s interests. Although initially difficult, Kioe Gie and his wife, Hap Nio, eventually find happiness.

Muslim women in this drama text are shown through the character Saina who worked as a servant in the Tan Houw Nio family. Even Saina had to crouch down and worship her master.

(SAINA, a domestic, approaches while bending over, then crouching in front of her mistress and pressing her hands together in front of her face to show respect (*menyembah*).)

SAINA : Yes, mistress.

HOUW NIO : Why didn’t you come in directly?

SAINA : I was waiting for the mistress to call (Kwee Tek Hoay, 1919).

The quotation shows the writer's effort to portray the difference in the social strata between the Muslim woman to the Chinese woman. As a domestic, Saina shows the lowliness of her position, giving respect by crouching and *menyembah* (worship) to her mistress. This represents a racial stereotype of Muslim women, that is a low social and economic status.

Therefore, ethnic prejudice in the form of stereotypes towards Muslim women as a low social class, irrational, inferior, and submissive is different from 'Karina-Adinda' which is shown in terms of resistance against matchmaking traditions. This portrayal demonstrates the coloniality of gender as a complex interplay of economic, racializing, and gendering systems in which every individual in the colonial encounter participates (Lugones, 2010).

But instead, it is also shown that *Peranakan* Chinese was experiencing unfavorable economic conditions. Even Kioe Gie, who worked at *Kamajuan* newspaper under the Dutch colonialist's leadership, had to act racist and cornered the Chinese community. Even though he was constrained by financial problems, Gie tried to maintain the *Peranakan* Chinese ethnic solidarity principle by replying to letters and writings defending the Chinese ethnicity. However, Kioe Gie had to be dismissed from his job.

- KIOE GIE : Firstly, he requested that I copy writings from several current newspapers that criticize the attitudes of the Chinese ethnics in the Indies in the matters of the Vice-presidency, the militia, and so on. . .
- KIOE GIE : So, Yan, please note that I now had to choose between betraying one's own people or making one's wife and children live in misery?
- YAN NIO : Hold onto your decision, don't change it again.
- KIOE GIE : Which decision, Yan?
- YAN NIO : A decision which said, beginning from tomorrow Tan Kioe Gie resigns from being the editor of *Kamajuan*, and no longer has any relationship with that newspaper (Kwee Tek Hoay, 1919).

This shows that besides Muslim women, ethnic discrimination and coloniality were also felt by the *Peranakan* Chinese. It was at this point that ethnic persistence emerged among *Peranakan* Chinese since they experienced the same discrimination from the Dutch colonial government.

AKAL BOESOEK DALEM PENDJOEDIAN

In the 1920s, *Peranakan* Chinese literature also featured Muslim women. In "Akai Boesoek dalem Pendjoedian" (Bad Sense in Gambling), Muslim women are described through the character Gimah who reinforces discrimination and stereotypes of indigenous ethnicity as a lower class in Dutch East Indies society. This inferiority is increasingly affirmed by the character of Gimah, a *pribumi*, who becomes a subordinate of the Chinese race, represented by Mrs. Thio and Sing Ok.

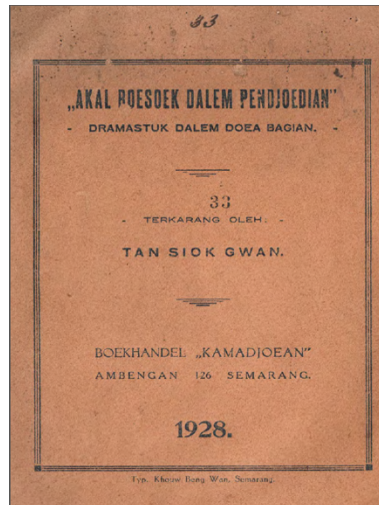


FIGURE 3. Cover *Akal Boesoek dalem Pendjoedian*

Apart from her poor status, Gimah is also portrayed by the writer as an ignorant, illiterate, and easily bribed individual. This gives rise to a binary of gender with the character of Gimah, a *pribumi*, who was represented as irrational, whereas Doctor M. Money was a man who was made to be highly educated. In the same social class at the very least, the male *pribumi* domestic, Troeno was portrayed as cleverer than Gimah. Even, frequently, Sing Ok used Gimah's ignorance to help him hide his gambling habit.

- Gimah : I myself cannot count, because I am just an uneducated person, I can only say, at first, he gave me a yellow paper bill, the second time a smaller bill, but I forget its color, while the seventh time was per, wasn't it, the largest, five bills. It was like that. Mistress, in other words, just getting a small percentage.
- Mrs. Thio : (becoming bitter again) You are senile, ill-mannered. Why are you so late, not telling me earlier (more bitter)? Obviously, you conspired with that incorrigible child! (Tan Siok Gwan, 1928).

What can be noticed in the preceding sentence are the author's many unfavorable images of the character of Gimah. First, there is the image of being uneducated, as evidenced in Gimah's admission of ignorance and lack of education. The author confirmed this through Gimah's restriction in distinguishing currencies. Second, as a result of being readily misled, the picture of a low economic level was observed. Ignorance and poverty are used by Sing Ok to bribe Gimah who did not know the value of currency. Third, the image of low social status. The negative stereotype is shown by Mrs. Thio who calls Gimah "senile and ill-mannered" and accuses her of conspiring with Sing Ok to deceive her. Lugones (2010) argued that colonized females were never understood as lacking because they were not men-like. According to de Beauvoir (1953), women in cultural contexts are presented as the second sex. Thus, double discrimination is experienced by Muslim women.

The quotation above shows ethnic prejudice and coloniality of gender by showing Gimah's low position in the eyes of Mrs. Thio's family. Although making efforts to defend herself by explaining the actual situation, Gimah is only able to get sharp behavior from her boss. Thus, the author affirmed the existence of differences of strata which cannot be removed between the Chinese and the *pribumi* group of low social status such as Gimah. Apart from that, in the eyes of the author, the loyalty of Muslim women such as Gimah is only solely based on money. Her life is only to the extent of making a living and meeting everyday needs. In this way, the representation of the Muslim woman in this play is made to be an inferior figure: a low social class; backward; without education; and easily bribed.

KORBANJA YI YUNG TOAN

Furthermore, *ethnic prejudice* and coloniality of Muslim woman as a housemaid is also found in the drama "Korbanja Yi Yung Toan" (Yi Yung Toan's victim). The play is the work of Kwee Tek Hoay, its content is about the propaganda of Chinese nationalism which emerged within the *peranakan* Chinese community itself in the Dutch Indies. This work was first published as a serial in the magazine *Panorama* numbers 58—73, year II, over the period January—Mei 1928. Using the setting of Canton and Batavia around the 1920s, Kwee Tek Hoay criticizes Chinese nationalism and the call of the homeland to the diasporic youth. This story is about the character Hie Seng, who is charmed by the teachings of Lie Bo Hong to join in Yi Yung Toan's movement, a movement to defend the Chinese homeland. But, in fact, in this drama, what is depicted is that the youths do not get a suitable place in the 'homeland' that they are defending as a consequence of language and cultural differences.

In the story around Chinese nationalism, the characters in the play are dominated by *peranakan* Chinese. The play has 10 characters of Chinese ethnicity, one character acts as a Dutch police commissioner, and four *pribumi* were cast as domestics, Mrs. Tjin Kek Siem, Moestapa, as a neighbor, and two assistant police officers. The Muslim women in the play are represented by the character of Moenah who is portrayed as a help maid of Mrs. Tjin Kek Siem, Mrs. Hie Seng who is suffering because of the departure of her child.

When confronted with colonial systems, ethnic Chinese as a group aspired to protect their independence and safety while still retaining their Chinese identity (Susanto, 2017). At this period, ethnic discrimination may be evident in the Dutch colonial government's placing of Muslim women at a low level. The position of the character Moenah in the play affirms an ethnic stereotype in the Dutch Indies by Chinese Indonesian authors. The *pribumi* characters are in general placed in a lower social class than other races, playing the role of Chinese family domestics.

Coloniality is more than simply a categorization of people; it is also the practice of actively reducing individuals, the dehumanization that allows them to be classified, the process of subjectification, and the desire to reduce the colonized to less than human beings (Lugones, 2010). This is precisely what happened to Moenah. He was not only placed in a low social status but he was also subjected to complete obedience to his master.

This affirms that Kwee Tek Hoay, as the most significant author in Indonesian *peranakan* Chinese literary history sometimes still becomes trapped in social class classifications based on race in colonial society. Moenah, Mrs. Kek Siem's housemaid, is portrayed as an indifferent person. However, the author also includes good traits in her such as being a devoted and tolerant individual.

Mrs Kek Siem : Thank you Moenah, you are very good! [...] Not only did you look after me, but you also helped look after and raise my children. Now fate has returned me to poverty and sadness which for all of my life I have never experienced. All my family and friends do not care, only you yourself, who still faithfully stays with me. Oh, Moenah, although you are Muslim, and Javanese, you have love and devotion more than those of my own people, more than relatives and friends (Kwee Tek Hoay, 2009).

From the quotation above, the author shows a positive representation of a Muslim character which is not compared directly to a social status or education. The character of Moenah is an example of the author's view that Muslim women in general indeed are of a low economic stratum, but also show loyalty and devotion to others. In this regard, the author opposes the racial stereotype with the negative image of Muslim women.

DRAMA DI BOVEN DIGOEL

"Drama di Boven Digoel" shares a lot about inter-ethnic struggles. In outline, "Drama di Boven Digul" (Drama at Boven Digul) tells of the romance of Moestari and Noerani who are from contrasting family backgrounds. Moestari is an assistant resident, and his father is the Regent, Soekaboewana. Meanwhile, Noerani is a teacher at the Kartini School, a girl's only school, whose father is Boekarim, a PKI (Indonesian Communist Party) activist. Meaning, Moestari comes from a family which is comfortable with the colonial order, whereas Noerani's family, conversely is working to topple the colonial establishment. Beyond a common Muslim identity, the differences between Moestari's and Noerani's families are class and the relation of power.

Boekarim does not agree with Noerani forming a romantic attachment with a colonial worshipper and lackey. What he wants is for Noerani to be affianced to Radeko, a young and bright communist. Likewise, Regent Soekaboewana has promised Moestari to another woman. Eventually, on 12 November 1926, PKI rebellion broke out in Batavia. Boekarim is arrested and exiled to Digul. Noerani, although not in keeping with her father's thinking, still accompanies him to the place of exile. Moestari, who is so in love with Noerani, also follows her to Digul leaving the job of resident. Radeko then also follows Noerani, and finally, the love story in Tanah Merah Digul unfolds.

Unlike previous *Peranakan* Chinese works that portrayed indigenous, particularly Muslim women, as inferior, it appears in "Drama di Boven Digoel" that ethnic prejudice was directed against the Dutch colonial administration and other ethnic groups that became its accomplices. Ethnicity is no longer a consideration, but class awareness of the equality of suffering. The aristocratic social class and communist activists are shown as classes that are not in line and show each other's sentiments. Ethnic borders tend to correspond with lines of structural divergence as a result of cultural division of labor, and ethnic solidarity is growing (Nielsen, 1985). This is where *Peranakan* Chinese authors' attitudes regarding Muslim women change toward ethnic solidarity, with Muslim women portrayed as having agency. As a result, this agency must be interpreted within the context of decolonial feminism.

ETHNIC SOLIDARITY AND DECOLONIAL SUBJECTIVITY

Besides showing ethnic prejudice existence in the form of discrimination from the Dutch colonial government, “Drama di Boven Digoel” also illustrates how ethnic solidarity between ethnic groups is formed. Here Muslim women are shown as the earliest to erode ethnic prejudice among their respective ethnic groups, so that creating ethnic solidarity to fight against the Dutch colonial government.

It is important to explain that in fact the setting of Boven Digul, used by Kwee Tek Hoay was used for sensation only, because at the time there was a ceaseless exiling of communists to Digul. Kwee Tek Hoay on the contrary did not support revolution and the colonial discourse. This is explained by Kwee Tek Hoay himself in the introduction to the first volume of the novel. Kwee Tek Hoay responded to the communist doctrine, in the Dutch Indies, understood by the communist movement at the time. The character of Noerani herself did not share her father’s thinking because she considered her father to be consumed by visions of a revolution by “a movement as large as an elephant but in fact only as large as a mouse”, a force easily subjugated.

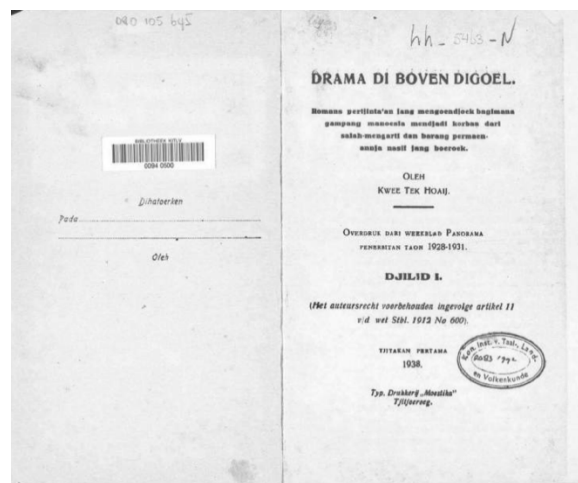


FIGURE 4. Cover *Drama di Boven Digoel*

John B. Kwee discussed “Drama di Boven Digul” in his article “Kwee Tek Hoay: A Productive Chinese Writer of Java (1880-1952)”. His article stated that by making the character of Moestari a king in the Country of Freedom, the writer appears to be portraying a political utopia of a nation (John B. Kwee, 1980).

The author expounded his utopian political ideas when he made Moestari king of the *Kebebasan* (freedom) area, his wife, Noerani, Minister of Health, teaching people to stop cannibalism and instilling a knowledge of the truth, and their friend Soebaedah, Prime Minister. (King) Moestari wanted to ask the Dutch East Indies government for self-rule for his (kingdom) *Kebebasan* under the sovereignty of the Dutch government.

(John B. Kwee, 1980)

Apart from ethnic Javanese, the novel also features ethnic Chinese. In Digul, Noerani meets an ethnic Chinese named Dolores and his father Tjoe Tat Mo. The character of Tjoe Tat Mo is a philosopher and poet who applies the teachings of Buddha, Confucius, and is not reluctant to pray

according to the teachings of Muhammed. His ideas are pluralist and accept many traditions. Tjoe Tat Mo introduces Noerani to love and hate so Noerani is able to do what is good for the Papuans.

According to Elizabeth Chandra in “From Sensation to Oblivion: Boven Digul in Sino-Malay Novels”, this novel is Kwee Tek Hoay’s means to condense the differences between communism and nationalism as ‘revolution’ versus ‘evolution’ (Chandra, 2013). Communists, such as Boekarim believe that those who do not want to create a revolution and struggle, cannot hope to advance. Meanwhile, Moestari and Tat Mo reject this view with the response that evolutionary progress creates a stronger foundation, because progress, which is forced by revolution, sometimes can damage the state, and destroy the nation rather than achieving an aim.

Starting from this basis, Dolores and Tat Mo give support to Noerani’s and Moestari’s relationship, young characters who have ideals to build national solidarity. The desired type of national solidarity to be realized is a solidarity of all ethnic types by living in harmony and respecting each other. Dolores becomes Noerani’s friend and advisor. Moreover, what is said by Dolores to Noerani is followed and executed. This shows a Chinese person and a *pribumi* so intimate and close.

Noerani is accepted by Dolores like family. Although we are of different nationalities, in past lives perhaps we were once close relatives, until the first time I was watching over you while you were reading a poem and crying, my heart felt strongly drawn and straight away felt a strong sympathy toward you”

(Kwee Tek Hoay, 2001)

The quotation could be interpreted as ethnic Chinese siding with and having a close relationship with a Muslim *pribumi*. As Mujiningsih in her article “Posisi Peranakan Tionghoa dalam Narasi Kebangsaan: A study of *Drama di Boven Digul dan Zonder Lentera*” interprets this as accepting all ethnicities in a peaceful life (Mujiningsih & Suyatno, 2020).

Ethnic solidarity can also be seen in the dialogue between Tjoe Tat Mo and Dolores, and later in the dialogue between Moestari and Noerani who both use Lingua-Franca Malay or Market Malay, or Low Malay. Even though Moestari, as a native Javanese of aristocratic descent, and Tjoe Tat Mo, who is a *Peranakan* Chinese, could have used their respective ethnic languages. However, it is shown here that they are not distinguished by their use of language.

“What’s the point of using a language that is foreign and most of it doesn’t match our habits?”

(Kwee Tek Hoay, 2001)

Dolores uses the pronoun ‘we’ to describe herself who is a *Peranakan* Chinese, and Noerani who is a Javanese. This also shows the existence of ethnic solidarity.

This Low Malay previously was banned by the Dutch colonial government, so that literary works using Low Malay were referred to as *bacaan liar* (wild reading). The use of Low Malay among figures of different ethnicities shows ethnic solidarity since they understand the discrimination similarities by the Dutch colonial government. This is as Nielsen (1985) explains that ethnic solidarity does not presume other structural characteristics of an ethnic group, such as a common language, a propensity to endogamy, a closed network of interactions, that may well facilitate the expression of solidarity but are not intrinsic parts of it.

The representation of Moestari, Noerani, and Dolores shows a network of transnational networks of nations that go beyond ethnicity. Soebaedah is an intelligent and free-spirited woman, and Moestari’s cousin and Noerani’s close friend. The representation of Muslim women here is Noerani and Soebaedah. More than this most basic identity, Soebaedah calls herself an Indonesian

and a leader of a women's movement. This can be seen from her awareness of an 'Indonesian' solidarity. Instance the following quotation.

Yes, those who use it are mostly communists or those who are anti-government. Be aware in the Indies there is a nationalist movement, the words Dutch Indies will no longer be used by the indigenous, and will be replaced by Indonesian, and the word native or Javanese will be replaced by Indonesian. That is the reason the government feels unhappy hearing the words 'Indonesia' or 'Indonesian', not because the words are evil, but only because those who usually use it in general are from a leftist party, nationalist or revolutionary.
[...] By using the words 'Indonesia' and 'Indonesian', we will try to eliminate divisions and differences, so that we can create a combination of all nations that are under the direction of white people in this part of the world.

(Kwee Tek Hoay, 1938)

This quotation shows the view of Soebaedah on the question of nationality, the aspiration desired to be realized at that time. More than that, Soebaedah's role is so important. She stops working at the Kartini School to nurse Noerani who is ill. She is also suspected as a communist and is detained by the police. She then escapes and prevents the marriage of Moestari with the daughter of a power-hungry official. Moreover, at the time of becoming an escapee, Soebaedah disguised herself as a man to find Noerani in Papua. Resistance to the coloniality of gender and decoloniality is being established here. Gender decolonization is inherently a practical task (Lugones, 2010). As if divesting a gender stereotype, Soebaedah appears smoking, a male habit, running away from detention, and willing to make a sacrifice in the interests of innocent people without viewing their ethnicity, identity, and nationality.

Soebaedah's subjectivity, in the aspiration of human solidarity, unlike Boekarim who wants to force out the Dutch, just like that. Soebaedah inclines towards indigenous and Dutch cooperation, and other ethnicities to prosper the Indies at that time. This it appears is from Soebaedah, who does not see ethnic and race distinctions in the question of Indonesian independence. Soebaedah appears to realize that decolonizing gender necessitates collaboration and learning from other resisters (Paramaditha, 2022; Lugones, 2010) to stand in solidarity against the colonial system's racist, colonial, capitalist, heterosexualist gender oppression.

Notwithstanding this, there were also many Dutch who supported Indonesian independence, and on the other hand, many *pribumi* who were comfortable being colonized by the Dutch government such as *priyayi*, the lackeys of the colonial government. Decolonial subjectivity can be indicated as the idea of *ethnic solidarity* appears from a Muslim woman called Noerani, but moreover concerns a gendering diasporic which appears in the Muslim female character of Soebaedah. Through this ethnic solidarity, these ethnic groups were finally recognized as Indonesian citizens when Indonesia became independent. As a result, the portrayal of Muslim women's resistance is not only fighting aimlessly and independently from others who are similarly oppressed but battling colonial oppression in collaboration with other ethnic groups.

CONCLUSION

This study can fill in the gaps in the study of Muslim women from the perspective of *Peranakan* Chinese authors in the Indonesian pre-independence era. This research will also help to broaden our understanding of Muslim women's roles throughout the Dutch colonial era. Aside from that, this study demonstrates that Muslim women are not portrayed as passive actors, but rather as exerting subjectivity in the face of Dutch colonization.

This study suggests that *Peranakan* Chinese authors' representations of Muslim women are not consistent. Muslim women in the 1910s were shown as having a high social level and a sophisticated education, yet believing in the supernatural. In addition, Muslim women are described as servants in Chinese families. While scripts of the 1920s place Muslim women in a low social strata that is as domestics. Not only that but Muslim women are also shown to be illiterate and easy to be bribed. At this point, an ethnic prejudice and coloniality of gender are seen towards *pribumi* Muslim women. The coloniality of gender towards Muslim women manifests itself by reducing their beliefs, repressive imposition in low socioeconomic level, portraying women as stupider than men, and racial stereotypes.

However, in the 1930s, Muslim women were shown as the party that was capable of solidarity with other ethnicities, including *Peranakan* Chinese, against the Dutch colonial government. This is where Muslim women can erode ethnic prejudice in their respective ethnic group areas so as to create ethnic solidarity to fight against the Dutch colonial government. Women are shown as having agency at this moment to struggle against the Dutch colonial administration, which repressed and discriminated against women and other ethnic groups. Decolonial subjectivity emerges from resistance to the coloniality of gender. This subjectivity fosters a sense of communal unity in the battle against colonialists. Therefore, there is a shift in the representation of Muslim women from ethnic prejudice to ethnic solidarity in *Peranakan* Chinese literature in the Indonesian pre-independence era.

This finding concludes that Muslim women's ethnic unity might be a helpful lesson at a time when ethnic discrimination persists in Indonesia. This is also to emphasize the importance of women in achieving Indonesian independence and unifying races. In reality, male supremacy during Suharto's New Order destroyed unity and solidarity until now. Because this study intends to highlight alterations in the image of Muslim women in each decade, it does not focus in-depth on just one of *Peranakan* Chinese works. Furthermore, this study is confined to literary studies rather than investigations of other historical manuscript sources.

As a result, more studies should be conducted by closely investigating other *Peranakan* Chinese works from the same era. Furthermore, study on historical records and manuscripts may be conducted to trace the role of Muslim women in Indonesia's pre-independence era.

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