



Literary and Political Identity from a Cultural Studies Perspective

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Abstract

This paper examines the relationship between literature and society in Mbojo's politics identity. For this reason, the aim is to describe the form of political identity of Mbojo society in literary texts from the perspective of cultural studies. The theory used in this study is the theory of literature and political identity. Literature has been used to designate any 'image native', 'creative', or 'fictional' writing, whether in poetry, drama, or prose. Identity is an essence that is interpreted through sense of signs, beliefs, attitudes, and lifestyles. Identity is considered to be both personal and social and marks that we are the same or different from other people. This research used a type of qualitative research with the cultural studies perspective. It means that the cultural studies serve as an analytical perspective in dismantling or interpreting the texts in the novel. The research stages started from (a) preparation (initial observation and determination of research object); (b) data collection (reading and recording); and (c) analyzing and interpreting and triangulating (discussing with colleagues, comparing various relevant theories, and comparing information or data in different ways). In this study, it was found that the political identity featured in the TAMBORA 1815 novel is Islamic. The novel describes the values of obedience in following the orders of the leader, in this case is Ulil Amri. Leaders (Ulil Amri) are people who have responsibility of social problems.

Keywords: *Literature; Political Identity; Cultural Studies*

Introduction

Literature (novels, short stories, poetry, and the like) is an imaginative work. This means that the author wants to criticize the socio-cultural and even political conditions through fictional characters. Of course, it is imaginative. In other words, literary works are not mere fictitious works, but they are works of fiction that always inspire the ummah in every action, be it the ruler (power) or society. Literature and politics are two different fields of science but have a close relationship, namely talking about social,

cultural, and political conditions (the structure of society). It's just that literature talks about social, cultural, and political conditions through literary texts produced by authors, while politics talks about the real conditions of society. This is in line with Pardi in Ariska (2021) who argued that literary works predict life, literary works provide records of political life, and literary works provide resolution of national political cases.

Referring to the statement above, literature and politics cannot be separated, because literary works (poems, novels, plays, and the like) are considered capable of voicing values, ideology, and the like. The closeness of literature and politics has been existed for a long time. Literary works are used as a tool to convey thoughts and ideas as well as criticism to policy makers, in this case, the government. Literary works serve as a warning to state administrators because literature talks about good and enlightening things, it doesn't just talk about things that happened, for now literary works are left alone and function as learning media (radioedukasi.kemdikbud.go.id, 2021)

Lately, political identity is the sexiest or most frequently discussed issue. Both discussed coffee shops to air-conditioned rooms. That's why political identity is seen as disruptive or dividing citizens (polarization). Indonesian people have interesting experiences regarding political identity. During the election for the Governor of DKI Jakarta in 2017, there was alarming polarization. Until a statement came out which said that "whoever votes for Anies is guaranteed to go to heaven and whoever votes for Ahok is guaranteed to go to hell". This polarization has traumatized some Indonesian people about political identity, because "Heaven and Hell" are always spoken by citizens, and the effects of this polarization are still being felt today.

In the mass media, social media, and even in official forums, state officials and even the elite always remind citizens not to use political identity, as if political identity is something that is "forbidden", something that is "unlawful" and even disgusting. Political Identity is a politics of difference, which is based on class differences, differences in cultural identity, gender, and the like. According to Weda in Weda daily.fajar.co.id (2022) that the nationalism movement arose because it was based on political identity. According to fajar.co.id, the nationalism movement that underlies Indonesia and many colonized countries to be independent from colonialism is a real form of political identity, namely politics that is driven by the differences between "us" as a colonized nation and "them" as a colonial nation.

This means that the spirit of nationalism among the arose because of the politics of difference or political identity. In November 2022, President Jokowi reminded Indonesians to "be careful of political identity. According to Jokowi, political identity is very dangerous." "Avoid this. Do idea politics, idea politics. But don't get involved in SARA politics, the politicization of religion, don't do political identity!" (Jokowi in kompas.com, 2022). This means that even heads of state are worried about political identity. Apart from President Jokowi, National Police Chief Listyo Sigit Prabowo also said the same thing. The National Police Chief said that political identity must be avoided. "I always say that we will enter the 2024 election, which of course cover basic matters, such as maintaining unity, and avoiding political identity" (Listyo in republika.co.id, 2022).

Referring to the statements of the two figures, that political identity is very dangerous for the sovereignty of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI). However, this view is contrary to the views of the characters. For example, Morowitz in ahmadsastra.com (2022) argued that political identity is giving a firm line to determine who will be included and who will be rejected.

Based on the explanation above, it is important to research "Literary and political identity of Mbojo Society ". To see the affinity of literary and political identity, the writer uses the perspective of cultural studies. This means that cultural studies serves as an analytical tool in dismantling the text in the novel. Cultural studies is a theory as well as a method that seeks to provide or reveal the hidden meaning behind the texts. The text in the understanding of cultural studies is not only interpreted in writing alone

but can be understood in other forms that have meaning. The concept of text does not only refer to written words, although this is one of the senses that all practices have meaning (Barker in Hamjah, 2022).

The novel used as the object of this study is *Tambora 1815* by Paox Iben. In this paper, he does not observe political identity directly (is not involved in practical politics) but study political identity in literary works. This means that researchers will examine literary texts that lead to political identity. In other words, the researcher looked at the interviews produced by writers about the discourse of "Mbojo's Society of Political identity". The novel tells about the life of the Bima community (Mbojo) when the Bima community, especially the Tambora residents, arranged their lives. This novel is a historical novel that tells how the struggle of Mbojo society in 1815 when colonialism was still in power in the Mbojo region. In addition, the novel depicts the story of the people of Bima, especially the people of Tambora before and after the Tambora eruption.

The novel also provides an overview of the political struggle and political hegemony of the colonizers (colonials) against the colonized (natives) in the political configuration and dynamics of conflict between kingdoms in the archipelago from the 16th century to the 19th centuries. In this paper, the writer focuses on the political identity of Mbojo society in literary works. Meanwhile, the purpose of this paper is to find out the political identity of Mbojo society in literary works.

To answer the problems mentioned above, the writer uses literature theory and political identity. Literature is an imaginative work that contains values. In other words, the literature contains literary works and it provides some values that can inspire society. Goldman calls this "world vision". This means that literary works are not seen from how an author connects one sentence with another sentence, but he (literary work) must see how the values and ideology live in the literary works (Diha, 2023).

According to Wolfreys (2022), literature signifies the textual manifestation of writing. Literature has been used to designate any 'image native', 'creative', or 'fictional' writing, whether in poetry, drama, or prose. While Klarer (2004) states that literature is referred to as the entirety of written expression, with the restriction that not every written document can be categorized as literature in the more exact sense of the word. If it refers to the statement that literature is an expression of creative and imaginative writing as outlined by the author. The 1815 *Tambora* novel by Paox Iben is an imaginative writing about the condition of Bima people (Mbojo society).

However, Eagleton argues that if literary works are imaginative writings, then are other writings such as historical writings, cultural writings, and others not imaginative? For this reason, Eagleton said that a literary work is not seen from whether the writing is "fiction" or "imaginative", but it must be seen how strangely the author uses language. In other words, the language used by the author in literary works uses strange language and contains values (ideology). Eagleton (2003) argued that literature is definable not based on whether it is fictional or 'imaginative', but rather that it uses language in peculiar ways.

Meanwhile, political identity is the politics of difference. In another sentence that distinguishes political choices between one group and another. In line with that, Agnes Heller in Rozi (2019) argued that political identity is a political strategy that focuses on differences and the use of primordial ties as the main category. In this context, the writer wants to see the political identity of Mbojo society in the 1815 *Tambora* novel by Paox Iben Mudhaffar. Judging from the title of the novel, it represents regional identity, in this context the area of Bima (Mbojo). Identity is an essence that is interpreted through signs of tastes, beliefs, attitudes, and lifestyles, identity is considered to be both personal and social and marks that we are the same or different from other people (Barker in Diha, 2023).

Method

This research was designed using qualitative research with a cultural studies perspective. The cultural studies perspective is an analysis to provide meaning or reveal the ideology hidden behind the text (Hamjah, 2022). In the understanding of cultural studies, the text is not only interpreted as a written text but as anything that has meaning. This is in line in Barker (2004) who said that text does not only refer to written words, but is one of the senses but have meaning.

Referring to this opinion, the perspective of cultural studies used in this research is to see or reveal the meaning behind the text, in this case, the text in literary works (Tambora, 1915). The stages of this research consisted of (a) the preparation stage (initial observation and determining the research object), (b) the data collection stage (reading the novel and taking notes), and (c) the data analysis stage.

Finding and Discussion

The discourse on political identity is one of the discourses that always live in society. Why not, because the political identity gets special attention for Indonesian citizens. The political identity is always discussed everywhere, both in coffee shops and in air-conditioned rooms. Some people think that political identity is very dangerous, while others think it's normal. Political identity has been discussed for a long time. Widyawati (2021: 69) said that in post-colonial studies, basically identity and sociological politics have existed or been involved for a long time. In this paper, the writer looks at the relationship between literature and society in Mbojo's political identity. As explained in the previous section, in this paper, the author looks at political identity in literary works, in this case, the 1815 Tambora novel. In this paper, the author focuses on the discourse on political identity found in the three novels.

From the cultural studies perspective, discourse is not only produced through writing but also can be generated through cultural symbols. In addition, discourse is not neutral, but rather forms meaning and knowledge. Barker in Diha (2022: 28) argued that discourse is not a neutral medium for forming and transferring values, meanings, and knowledge that exists outside its boundaries, but discourse is a formation of values, meanings, and knowledge. In 1815 Tambora novel, the discourse that always appears is religious identity. In Loain's words, the characters in the 1815 Tambora novel always bring up religious identity. This can be seen on page 247 of Tambora 1815.

"I think this is a mosque or a mosque, my lord," said Daeng Wera. page. 247.

The sentence above shows that it's religious identity, in this case Islam. The 1815 Tambora novel describes religious identity, in this case Islam. Muslims always follow what is ordered by the leader, in this case, *Ulil Amri*. In <https://id.wikipedia.org/> the word "*tuangku*" refers to religious scholars or leaders, prominent people who master Islamic religious knowledge. That means that religious leaders are always followed by his orders. In the Islamic view, following the orders of the "leader," *Ulil Amri* is a must. Because those who have the power to take care of matters related to society is *Ulil Amri* or the leader. In line with that Bay (2011: 116) argued that *Ulil Amri* is a person or group who takes care of the interests of the people. Obedience to *Ulil Amri* (leader) is an obligation of the people, as long as it does not conflict with the sacred texts. In the 1915 Tambora novel, *Ulil Amri's* (*ulama/leader*) orders are always followed; Daeng Wera is a follower of Tuan Guru Shaleh Mustafa. Tuan Guru Shaleh Mustafa is a great scholar who preaches to the people of Tambora.

"Master Shaleh bin Mustafa bin Said bin Huseein Al Idrusy is a person who has reached *khawasul khawas* in *kebatinan* or Sufism, so he has a clear perspective and goes beyond common thoughts. His inner light can penetrate multiple dimensions. By some people, he is also considered *waliyullah*, the beloved servant of Allah. The experience of his life's journey in which he encountered many life problems, his firmness in defending the principles of truth, his persistence

in fighting for justice, and his closeness to the Most High Being have been brought to Maqamat of Substance al-Ma'rifat," Tambora (1815: 243).

According to Barker (2014: 134), political identity is related to actions aimed at changing social practices, usually through the formation of several coalitions in which several values are lived together, political identity is a derivative of cultural politics, and thus also deals with "power to name" and to make certain descriptions "more familiar" (sticky). Refers to Barker, Tuan Guru Shaleh bin Mustafa wanted to change social practices carried out by the community, from practices that did not lead to religion into religious practices, because Tuan Guru Shaleh bin Mustafa had the "power" to change these conditions. In Tuan Guru Shaleh bin Mustafa's conversation with residents who practice non-religious practices Tuan Guru Shaleh bin Mustafa advises not to forget the main obligation of humanity, namely worshiping God.

"Having fun is okay. But don't forget the main obligation. Life is short. Work for the world and worship for the hereafter," said Tuan Guru Shaleh bin Mustafa". (Tambora, 1815: 249)

The sentence above shows that the identity shown in the 1815 Tambora novel is Islamic. Diha (2023: 46) argued that identity is a characteristic of an area or individual that distinguishes one region or individual from another. In the holy Coran of, it is very clear that identity is deliberately created to distinguish one ethnic group/region from another so that they get to know each other, not criticize each other.

"O people! Indeed, We have created you from a man (Adam) and a woman (Eve), then We made you nations and tribes so that you may know one another. In fact, the first among you in the sight of Allah are people the most pious. Truly Allah is All-Knowing and All-Knowing," (Qs. Al-Hujarat: 13).

Conclusion

Based on the analysis and study of the 1815 Tambora novel, the political identity featured in the novel is Islamic identity. In the 1815 Tambora novel, Islamic values are always raised by the author. One example of obedience is obeying the leader.

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