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**Ambivalence on East and West Discourse  
As Seen in Dwi Cipta's Short Story *Tanah Merah***

**Firdiansyah**

State Islamic University Sulthan Thaha Saifuddin Jambi

[alfarizi04@yahoo.com](mailto:alfarizi04@yahoo.com)

**Abstract**

*The colonization of Western countries towards Eastern countries bring the identification of themselves as civilized countries and tend to identify colonized countries as uncivilized countries. However, all the efforts of identification that they have done only bring contradiction toward their identity as civilized nation. Many actions that have been done toward people in Indonesia, especially in Digul, shows that they are not better than colonized nation (Eastern country). It can be analyzed more in Dwi Cipta's work Tanah Merah by using Homi.K Bhabha's theory about ambiguity and polisemic discourse. The research will try to analyze the split identity of Western nation (colonizer) and Eastern nation (colonized). Having conducted the research, the writer prove that there is split identity of Western nation toward Eastern nation. It means all efforts to identify Western nation as civilized nation only bring the opposite condition or identity of themselves toward Eastern nation.*

**Key words:** ambivalence, identification, western countries, eastern countries, identification, split identity, Homi.K Bhabha.

**Introduction**

European colonization conducted against third-world countries led to a view and understanding of the society and culture in the colonized countries. Western nations (Europe) tried to identify the communities of the East, which is a state-colonies, in order to obtain a full picture of it. Picture or identity embodied try is what will be the reference for the West to understand and conquer the Eastern lands. But unfortunately the view or picture of the West against the East, which had been used as a reference, never reached their integrity. Identification of the West against the East and of themselves tend to split and cause ambiguity.

It is also experienced by the Dutch who colonized the Indonesian people for approximately four and a half centuries. Identification of the Dutch against Indonesia (Dutch East Indies), precisely to meet uncertainty about Indonesian people it self. On the one hand, the Netherlands considers Indonesia is a nation inclined backward and wild, so it takes power or military power to tame it. However, this view was forced to be revised as the discovery of some scholars belonging Indonesia, which can not be conquered by force, because it will provoke a similar reaction, but it must be faced with a political strategy, among others, by trapping them and banished. Additionally, the view of Netherlands that the Indonesian people are people who



are wild and dangerous, was also forced to be revised following the discovery of indigenous people who welcomed them like great guests when they landed in the particular region in Indonesia.

These cases were found in a short story entitled *Tanah Merah* written by Dwicipta. This short story tells the journey of a captain, named Becking, the Dutch along with his soldiers to the Digul area. An isolated area and closed in most eastern region of Indonesia. They carry out orders of Governor General of the Dutch East Indies, based in Batavia, to open Digul territory to be used as a special area of Indonesian political prisoner. A tough job because they were faced with the challenge areas that are difficult to reach and the potential danger of the indigenous people of Digul, they hear and know, the people who are still primitive and wild. A negative image of indigenous Digul people causing considerable concern in the minds and their thoughts when they try to explore the region. But in the end they realized their mistake, which considers indigenous people in the area Digul are people who are wild and dangerous, turned out to greet them with a friendly and there is no war or bloodshed occurred. This makes the captain and his men Becking revise their thinking about indigenous people in Indonesia, that not all indigenous people were wild and dangerous. On the other hand, instead he met the reality of otherwise the Dutch people themselves who he considers to have no conscience for throwing political prisoners in remote areas such as Digul and dare to remove the post as captain though he was successful in its mission to build the region Digul as shelter Indonesian political prisoners. The existence of ambivalence toward the picture of Indonesia as East representations and views of the Dutch nation against its own people is the underlying researchers to examine the short story *Tanah Merah* by Dwicipta with Postcolonial approach.

### **The Formulation of Problem**

The phenomenon of divisions or split in the identification of the East and West on the *Tanah Merah* works by Dwicipta in the formulation of issues to be addressed in this study. This study will try to assess the discourse divisions to the identification of the West (the Netherlands) and East (Indonesia), which is seen in post-colonial perspective of Homi K. Bhabha. In this case the discourse of identity divisions that represented the author in figures captain Beckings and his men who served in the Digul area.

### **III. Theoretical Framework**

The phenomenon of ambivalence on the East and West identification contained in *Tanah Merah* by Dwi Cipta became the base for researcher to analyze with postcolonial theory of Homi K. Bhabha. Based on the theory of Bhabha, the colonial discourse is always ambiguous and



polisemik. Therefore, the construction of the colonial nation about himself and about the meaning of the East can obtain various and even contradictory (Faruk, 2007: 6). McLeod in his book *Beginning Postcolonialism* Bhabha citing the ambiguous stereotype given Edward Said in his book *Orientalism*, the concept of the West and the East. It can be seen in the quotation below:

...the emergence of colonial stereotypes that represent various colonized people in derogatory ways. However, in an inspired departure from Said's concept of Orientalism, Bhabha argues that this important aim is never fully met. Because this is the 'discourse of colonialism' does not function accordingly to plan Because it is always pulling in two Contrary Reviews directions at once. On the one hand, the discourse of colonialism would have it that the oriental is Radically strange creature Whose bizzare and eccentric nature is the cause for both curiosity and concern. The colonized are Considered the 'other' of Westener (colonising subject), Essentially outside Western culture and civilization. Yet, the other hand, the discourse of colonialism attempts to domesticate colonized subject and Abolish Reviews their radical 'otherness', bringing them inside Western understanding through the Orientalist project of constructing knowledge about them. The construction of 'otherness' Thus Spake is Split by the contradictory positioning of the colonized simultaneously inside and outside Western knowledge (McLeod, 2000: 52-53).

From these quotations it is clear that Bhabha dubious concept of the West and the East were given Said. According to Bhabha, the concept actually lead to conflicting conclusions. On the one hand, the discourse of colonialism stated that the East is a very strange creature, which has a very peculiar nature and odd, which raises curiosity and anxiety. Moreover, the colonial considered 'the other' (East) are outside the culture and Western civilization. But on the other hand, the discourse of colonialism tried to tame the colonized subject and end the radicalness of 'the other' and brought them into the Western understanding through project the orientalist who construct knowledge about them. Although in the end the construction of the East (the other) becomes split by contradiction that the position occupied simultaneously inside and outside the knowledge of the West.

Furthermore Bhabha also said that the ambivalence of the colonial discourse of the East as a result of granting a position contrary to the colonized subject.

"The discourse of colonialism is frequently populated with 'terrifying stereotypes of savagery, Cannibalism, lust, and anarchy'. Any attempt to subdue the radical otherness



of the colonized is perpetually offset by the alarming fantasies that are projected onto them ". This indicates how, in the discourse of colonialism, colonized subjects are split between Contrary positions. They are domesticated, harmless, knowable; Also but at the same time wild, harmful, mysterious. Bhabha argues that, as a cosequence, colonialist representations in the colonized subject is always in motion, sliding ambivalently between the polarities of similarity and difference; he or she simply will not stand still (McLeod, 2000: 53).

Based on the above quote can be concluded that Bhabha suggested a split or divisions within colonial discourse of the colonized subject. Colonial discourse is often filled with a terrible stereotype of the East, like the wild, cannibalist, exciting, and anarchists. Any attempt to tame or control radicalism 'the other' or colonized repeatedly offset by alarming fantasies against them. Discourse about the East being described as something benign, harmless, and it is known, at the same time is also considered as something wild, dangerous and mysterious. So that the discourse of the colonized (the other) always misses and uncertain, between the polarity of the similarities and differences that exist to him. The phenomenon of colonial discourse divisions of the colonial peoples and of themselves in the short story entitled *Tanah Merah* Dwicipta work is what will try researchers analyzed in this paper. Surely by Homi K. Bhabha's postcolonial theory.

### **Ambivalence colonial discourse (West) towards the Occupied Nation (East)**

In *Tanah Merah* short story by Dwicipta, there is an ambivalence of colonial discourse (invaders) against the colonized people (East). In the case of identification of the Digul people, which is a representation of the colonized nations (Indonesia), an error occurs and confusion in the delineation of the Digul people living in isolated areas (split identification). This is shown in the statement of captain Becking and lieutenant Drejer in the following quotation: "I'm not afraid to malaria, Captain. But living in the dense forests Digul sort of the same with our heads handed to the hunters or the black cannibals there. That is what I fear, "said Lt.Drejer with head shudder. Not infrequently he (captain Becking) Drejer will remind Lt. natural ferocity new place and said he would subdue it as soon as possible.

The quotation above indicates the provision of stereotypes about people Digul, representing the East, as people who are cannibals and wild character. This proves the theory of Edward Said in



his book Orientalism, that the West tends to give East discourse as something wild, dangerous and mysterious. This view at once raises the desire of the West to conquer the East and make them become more civilized.

In the short story *Tanah Merah* by Dwicipta, captain Becking who have a view or picture of the people Digul considered cannibals and wild, should feel challenged to conquer them. Although this desire is also the implementation of orders of the governor-general in Batavia, but the commands given to the captain Becking as executor in the field, of course, based on stereotypes received Dutch government or information about the people Digul they receive. Means it can be concluded that the discourse of the West (the Netherlands) to the picture of the East always lead to wildness and savagery, as well as something that must be conquered.

Although captain Becking and his men managed to identify people Digul as a group of people who were cannibals and wild, but in the subsequent development of precisely what the previous assumptions about people Digul be contradictory when they are dealing directly with people such in Digul. This can be seen in the following passage: However, Captain Becking and most of the soldiers who brought convinced it is the voices of forest dwellers who have watched their activities since the morning. After waiting and they did not also appear or attack, all soldiers and porters forcibly exhaled in relief. "I'm sure they're not wild, wild because if they've had since last night they would attack us," said captain Becking next day. "I hope, too. If they're wild, we are going to be hard work again," the lieutenant Drejer replied.

In the quote above described how the atmosphere experienced by captain Becking and his men when they began to set foot on the ground Digul. When they begin to open up land for a temporary resting place in the morning, they see the fact that the area is as if uninhabited because no attack whatsoever from those Digul they consider illegal and dangerous. But when it is dark and they want to rest, they were surprised by the sounds of shouts of the people Digul as if to attack them. Although in the end they had to revise their assumptions and prejudices, because until the next morning they were not attacked by anyone. This incident made captain Becking and his crew to correct prejudices about the savagery of the orag Digul. He thought that people should Digul been attacked since they set foot in the region. But in fact it is not disturbed by anyone in there since they began to open up there.

Changing the presumption against porang Digul further enhanced when they finally come face to face with them in the absence of gunfire. As seen in the following quote: On the fifth day, when they were ready to start work after the midday break, they were startled



by the sound of screams as four nights before. From various directions, with only bird of paradise feather dress and carrying a papaya in hand, black men's athletic appeared in front of the soldiers and forced laborers, trying to attract their attention and then approached step by step very carefully. Captain Becking, who has conducted a long study of the area around this forest and its habit of approaching their citizens with chest pounding. Bows, arrows and spears they are ready to move. However, papaya fruit that is in the hands of a black man that made Captain Becking sure they will not make mischief.

The presence of people Digul to bring a papaya, which symbolizes peace and friendship more and make the prejudices that had been owned by the captain Becking and children buahya, as a representation of the West, be changed and it raises admiration on the openness and friendliness of the people Digul welcome them with a peaceful feel. In the end people Digul just want to exchange a gift to Becking captain and his men. This action do respon positively by captain Becking by doing the same thing, which is seen in the following quotation:

With trembling hands he took tobacco from his pocket blemish and with sign language from his hand and he invites them to exchange tobacco with papaya that they carry. Once they receive the tobacco and Captain Becking receive papaya, black people were cheering relief through out the newcomers.

Exchange goods made captain Becking and one resident Digul be the end of prejudices about people who have been described Digul sebgai and savage cannibal society, so it must be conquered. Associated with Bhabha's theory about the ambivalence toward Western discourse (colonizers) to the East (colonized), it can be concluded that what had been a common assumption Western nations (colonizers) on the East actually has been split (divisions). As quoted McLeod in his book Beginning Postcolonialism, which stated as follows:

This indicates how, in the discourse of colonialism, colonized subjects are split between Contrary positions. They are domesticated, harmless, knowable; Also but at the same time wild, harmful, mysterious. Bhabha argues that, as a cosequence, colonialist representations in the colonized subject is always in motion, sliding ambivalently between the polarities of similarity and difference; he or she simply will not stand still (McLeod, 2000: 53).

The quote above states that Bhabha draw conclusions about the existence of divisions (split) in the colonial discourse about the subject colonized. East actually be in a position diametrically



opposed. On the one hand, they are seen as a nation that is benign, harmless and can be recognized, but on the other hand, he looked wild, dangerous and mysterious. So that the colonial discourse about the East will always be missed and never stable. He's not as simple as what has been the contention of the West in general. Every effort is the identification of the East will never see integrity and will cause confusion in the discourse itself.

Short Story entitled *Tanah Merah* by Dwicipta provides an overview for divisions and confusion (ambivalence) in colonial discourse about the East, which in this case represented by the Digul.

### **Ambivalence Discourse Kolonial of West towards Themselves**

In addition to discussing the discourse of the West against the East, this study also discusses the ambivalence or ambiguity of the discourse of the West itself. Assessment Western nations against their own people turned out juga split or divisions experienced over the development of the situation and conditions. In that case, the short story Red Soil is also shown ambiguity to view Becking captain, as a representation of the West, against the Dutch colonial government in Batavia. At the end of this short story illustrated that the captain Becking who successfully run a command to clear land Digul to serve as shelters Indonesian political prisoners, finally got a defamation because they are leaking information about the location of the shelter to one of the journalists abroad to allow journalists entry to Digul region.

The captain and lieutenant Drejer finally feel disappointed with officials of the Dutch East Indies treatment they received, although from the outset they are also opposed to the central government's decision to the Dutch East Indies who want to put political prisoners Indonesia to Digul. This can be seen in the following excerpt.

"Even more surprising, is not the Governor-General de Graeff was well-known virtuous, Captain? How could he make terrible decisions like opening the exhaust camp?" Said Lt.

Drejer not understand. "What does it mean a virtuous governor general good if the system had been poisoned by officials to be dirty? It is they who do not want his position threatened by the act of the rebels who want to overthrow. And, to counteract these threats, dirty action was for them not anything and there is no harm done."

"Post Office? It is strange, in a wilderness like Digul how there may be a post office? It's a ridiculous notion that people of Batavia," said Lt. Drejer mock. The quote above shows the attitude of disapproval and displeasure Becking captain and lieutenant governor general Drejer against the decision of the Dutch East Indies which they





consider to have a good personality. In addition they both jug scornful behavior of officials in the Dutch East Indies in Batavia who just wants to look good in the eyes of the Dutch government and trying to justify any means to their personal interests. In addition, the Dutch government orders that sent political prisoners to the area Digul actually touching and humanitarian conscience of captain and lieutenant Drejer Becking. It is seen from this quotation: "They were dumped here just not act civilized, Captain. So vain they seek relationships with civilized people. "That actually hurt my honor, Lieutenant. I was more honorable killed in a battle than to make this kind of torture place."

Through the above quote in mind that the attitude of the captain and lieutenant Drejer Becking of political prisoners who were sent to Digul contrast with the attitude of the central government in Batavia Dutch East Indies. They tend to sympathize with the prisoners who had to serve a sentence in the territory sanat isolated from the outside world and in particular from their families. Even the captain preferred to die in battle rather than run the dictates of the governor general of the Dutch East Indies.

Another disappointment shown by captain Becking of the Dutch East Indies officials more visible when he knows that there are some unscrupulous officials of the Dutch East Indies were envied by kesukseannya build camps for political prisoners in Digul. It can be known through the following quotation. He also knows the Dutch authorities in Merauke did not like the disposal resulted in a camp. They made plans for menyingkirkanya foul. Once Lt. Drejer tell that officer Mon Joulah governing it. "He was very mad power, Captain," said Lieutenant Drejer.

Photos from the Danish journalist apparently has hurt the honor of officials Batavia. They increasingly seize on careless disposal entering reporters to the camp so that the news about the disposal of the camp extended throughout the world. That's when he decided to send a wire to Batavia and resigned from military service.

When he found out that he actually dropped by fellow Dutch captain Becking was a very shocking and ultimately decided to resign from his post, returned to Batavia. Bhabha related to the theory of the ambivalence that can also occur in Western discourse about themselves. The author of the short story is trying to show the other side of the colonial toward identification (West). The view of the colonial discourse that had regarded the West as civilized nations deconstructed by the author through the characters Becking captain and lieutenant Drejer. The presumption that the discourse about the west that had been considered superior to the view towards the East, in fact degraded and ultimately have a position that is unclear or unstable. Short story writer is trying to lift the other side of the Western identity, in this case the





Dutch government, which had been regarded as a nation that is superior because it is able to conquer the East (Indonesia) into a nation that is actually problematic in themselves. It accordance with Bhabha statement about ambivalence, namely that the colonial discourse is always ambiguous and polisemik, hence colonial construction of him as well as the East can gain meaning diverse and even contradictory (Faruk, 2007: 6).

## **Conclusion**

Based on the analysis conducted above it can be concluded as follows:

1. Colonial Discourse (West) towards the East will never see the integrity and tend to experience ambivalence (ambiguity). Western views of the East can be contrary to the reality that tends to lead to the identification of the wrong (false identification) of the East (colonized). In the short story *Tanah Merah Dwicipta* work, the authors illustrate that there has been ambivalence of colonial discourse (Netherlands) against the colonized people (East). The presumption that people are cannibals and wild Digul was not proven, and it is contrary to reality.
2. Western view of him also suffered splits or divisions. Western nations that had been considered more civilized it is also the moral degradation that makes it different from what has been seen as the character of the East. This short story writer reverses the notion that the West is civilized nations become civilized through figures Becking captain and lieutenant Drejer, which is a representation of his own people (the Netherlands). In the end, Bhabha's postcolonial theory about the ambivalence in colonial discourse of the colonial peoples can be demonstrated in a short story entitled *Tanah Merah Dwicipta's* work. Every effort toward the identification of the East and the West itself will never be complete and will tend to split or suffer divisions.

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