

THE DISCOURSE OF PADANG RESTAURANTS IN GUS TF SAKAI'S NOVEL *ULAR KEEMPAT*

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ABSTRACT

The topic of the research is the novel titled *Ular Keempat* (the Fourth Snake) by Gus tf Sakai. It is focused on the text of *Rumah Makan Padang* (Padang restaurants) in the novel based on the study of cultural studies literature. In the final part of the story of *Ular Keempat*, there is a side text of *Rumah Makan Padang*. The main point of the research is the archeology of *Rumah Makan Padang*. The approaches used are the Foucault's discourse and Derrida's deconstruction.

The result of the study shows that the essence of the story of Hajj trip in the articulation of Minangkabau people's view of life can be revealed in some texts. First, text of Padang was the episteme discourse built by the Dutch East Indies government. Second, the discourse of Minangkabau Sufistic culture systemically was demolished by the Dutch East Indies government. Third, the discourse of Minangkabau culture was systemically controlled by the Dutch East Indies government. Fourth, the discourse of Dutch colonial's liberal culture is actually continued by the Indonesian government towards Minangkabau culture. Fifth, the literary approach can be applied by studying the metaphors and cultural hospitality. Through this research it can be argued that the text of Hajj trip, in the novel of *Ular Keempat*, is a manifestation of the essence of merantau text empirically. Life for Minangkabau people is actually migration and after life is the true home; this is their life view. Thus, Minangkabau culture is actually a sufistic culture, and surau is the center of Minangkabau culture.

Keywords: cultural studies literature, discourse, archeology, episteme, deconstruction

INTRODUCTION

The existence of literary works in the middle of a cultural reality essentially represents the culture itself. In other words, it is also stated that a literary work reflects and is the documentation of a culture (Junus, 1986:1). On the one hand, literary works are born and rooted from the culture; on the other hand, they revitalize the culture itself, as can be seen from the fact that the Indonesian literary works have been born from the Indonesian culture itself.

Gus tf Sakai is one of the prominent Indonesian men of letters. Sakai, as a man of letters as well as an intellectual, has identified and traced the discourse of the Minangkabau

Culture as the wealth of the Indonesian traditional culture which has become extraordinarily globalized.

Such a tragic condition can be seen from the sign, track, symbol and metaphor presented by Sakai in his novel entitled *Ular Keempat (The Fourth Snake)* (2005). In this present study, the minor or last part of the novel *Ular Keempat* is analyzed; it is not intrinsically, structurally and formally analyzed. The minor thing which is in the last part of the novel is *Rumah Makan Padang* (Minang restaurants) as the hidden sign, from which, if what is real in Padang City is traced in an indexical way, the fact shows that there is no *Rumah Makan Padang* in the city. What can be seen is *Rumah Makan Padang* which belongs to the Minangkabau ethnic group. Padang foods are the culinary wealth of the Minangkabau ethnic group. The phenomenon of *Rumah Makan Padang* is the sign and trace which are analyzed from the archeological, panoptic and genealogical discourses based on the paradigm of literary cultural studies.

This present study focuses on the text *Rumah Makan Padang*. It is a minor and marginalized text. It is a minor text in the literary work written by Sakai. The archeological discourse of *Rumah Makan Padang* cannot be separated from the socio-cultural practice, and focuses on the discourse of the Minangkabau cultural heart. The study does not only focus on the cultural practices only but also on the powers playing a role in the text network.

This present study is intended to understand the cultural discourse which includes: (1) the cultural archeological discourse found out in the essence of the culture from the minor thing, namely *Rumah Makan Padang* as a trace, sign, and symbol indicating the cultural violence in the Sakai's novel *Ular Keempat*. (2) the understanding of the essence of the articulation of the genealogical discourse of the identity of 'merantau' (the activity of leaving the home city or country to stay in another town or city in order to earn a living) in the Sakai's novel *Ular Keempat*. (3) find out how the panoptic discourse is presented in the Minangkabau ethnic group, especially in the domain of education from the paradigm of the literary cultural studies.

RESEARCH METHOD

The research method in cultural studies, as a whole, is under the postmodern paradigm. The postmodern perspective is the basic way of thinking in cultural studies, meaning that cultural studies are not under the modernistic epistemological studies as stated by Lubis (2006: 55-65, 133). He states that postmodernism opens space for political

differences and marginalized discourses used to strengthen justness and social changes. Furthermore, it is stated that postmodernism gives more emphasis on differences, particularities, decency and refusal to the permanent foundation of a reality, epistemology and what is universally and objectively stated to be true, the cult of objectivity and neutrality of a science.

The data were collected through intensive reading, observation, in-depth interview and discussion. The data were then sorted and classified in accordance with the characteristics found in the research process. the technique used to analyze data is the postmodern qualitative technique which has been constructed in the form of discursive analysis method. This technique includes (1) formulating the problems of the study, (2) classifying the text based on the form, factors, and meaning, (3) questioning the data found, (4) arguing using the theory of discourse, the theory of archeology, the theory of genealogical articulation, and the theory of panoptic representation, (5) presenting the representation of the textual facts in the form of the discursive articulation, (6) presenting the textual facts in the form of intertextual representation, (7) formulating the core of the discursive text behind the textual facts in the cultural practice.

Two strong theories used in the literary cultural studies, as stated by Barker (2004a: 29,23), are the theory of discourse proposed by Foucault and the theory of deconstruction proposed by Derrida.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this context *Rumah Makan Padang* is seen as a discourse and a text, namely a popular text in the Indonesian culture. The text *Rumah Makan Padang* in the Sakai's novel entitled *UlarKeempat* cannot be separated from the marginalized text. It is not the narrated text; it is not in the middle of the story, theme, plot and character. Similarly, the text *kari* (spices curry) and the text *balti* (container, earthenware flask with a neck and spout) are also marginalized. They are the signs representing the British colonial discourse against the Indian nation. They also represent marginalization and emancipatory articulation and oppression. The text *Rumah Makan Padang* is marginalized and is a sign representing the Dutch colonial discourse and the post-colonial discourse. Therefore, the text *Rumah Makan Padang* is a discourse which is archeologically analyzed from the literary cultural studies.

In the literary cultural studies, the messages in the novel *Ular Keempat* are encoded and the reader decodes the messages. The producer produces messages, namely the novel

Ular Keempat to make it meaningful to the reader based on the ideas within particular social, economic and cultural contexts which the reader has. In the encoding process, the reader interprets the messages which the text contains within his/her own context. It is how messages are constructed or encoded which constitute the intellectual matter of a literary work; in other words, messages are framed. It is such a framing which is frequently referred to as fiction. However, how the reader receives messages (decoding) can be divided into three types.

The word root and what is termed as *Orang Padang* 'Padang Ethnic Group' are not derived from the traumatic event when the civil war (PRRI against APRI) took place. Long before Indonesia was independent, the advertisement in which Padang Restaurant 'Rumah Makan Padang' was included in the *Soenting Melayoe* newspaper (1910s) published in Batavia. It was also included in the *Pemandangan* newspaper (dated 28 May 1937) during the Dutch government. This means that the term *Orang Padang* or *Rumah Makan Padang* has already been used since the Dutch government. From the archeological analysis of literary cultural studies, it can be stated that the Minangkabau people has been the epistemic discourse created by the Dutch government.

From the Dutch government to the Indonesian government, there has been a systemic discourse of Minangkabau implying the bad stigma of the Minangkabau culinary that the Minangkabau foods are not healthy and dangerous to the heart, contain high cholesterol, and lead to stroke. However, the scientific studies show that all the spices used in the Minangkabau culinary are herbal ingredients neutralizing all the diseases people are afraid of.

From the literary and framing points of view, and from the words used to refer to the text *rumah makan*, Rumah Makan Padang implies the metaphor, satire, irony and tragedy of a reality. From the analysis of the text Rumah Makan Padang in the novel *Ular Keempat*, it can be stated that there has been a discontinued discourse of a state, culture and epistemic violence.

One of the strong indexical things of the text Rumah Makan Padang in the novel entitled *Ular Keempat* is the text implying the activity of leaving the home town or country to stay in another town or country in order to earn a living. That has something to do with the essence of a restaurant 'rumah makan' as the representation or another form of the activity done by the Minangkabau ethnic group who live their home town or country to live in another town or country in order to earn a living. If the text *Rumah Makan Padang* is a sign, then the

text showing the activity of leaving the home town or country to stay in another town or country in order to earn a living is one of the indexical things for the Minangkabau ethnic group, as a specific characteristic of the Minangkabau culture. However, the representation of the text showing the activity of leaving the home town or country to stay in another town or country in order to earn a living implied in the Sakai's novel entitled *Ular Keempat* is marginalized; it is not used as the main topic, chapter or sub-theme; it is not made to appear in the surface of the plot. Therefore, it is this articulation which has made the indexical of the text showing the activity of leaving the home town or country to stay in another town or country in order to earn a living analyzed from the perspective of cultural studies. The text represents the life style of the Minangkabau ethnic group, its ideology and point of view towards life. Therefore, the genealogy of the text showing the activity of leaving the home town or country in order to stay in another town or country in order to earn a living, as part of the Minangkabaucultural life, has been made to be one of the processions which is popularly and naturally carried out by every generation of the Minangkabau ethnic group.

Apart from that, the text showing the activity of leaving the home town or country to stay in another town or country in order to earn a living is the representation of the matrilineal cultural identity. In so far the Miangkabau culture is concerned, leaving the home town or country to stay in another town or country in order to earn a living is aimed at being able to give things to others rather than being able to acquire things for those who do it. The essence of the characteristic of being fond of leaving the home town or country to stay in another town or country in order to earn a living is being able to "keep one's self away" from those who are loved to make one mature and find out one's identity. Leaving the home town or country to stay in another town or country in order to earn a living is an actual practice as the empirical essence of "moving to another place". In Islam this tradition is well-known as the tradition of *hijrah*, meaning that moving to another place makes one's love stronger and put to a test. It can be concluded that, for the Minangkabau ethnic people, living on earth is identical with leaving the home town or country to stay in another town or country in order to earn a living, and heaven is their actual home town or country. It is this the way of life of the Minangkabau ethnic people.

The text *surau* in the novel *Ular Keempat* is the third indexical of the text *Rumah Makan Padang* after the discourse of the text *merantau* (leaving the home town or country to stay in another town or country in order to earn a living). It is true that the text *surau* is the text which is not discussed; it is marginalized and is not used as the theme or subtheme.

Cultural studies focus on the marginalized text. However, the text *surau* plays an important role and is strongly related to the text *merantau* and the text *Rumah Makan Padang*.

The text *surau* is the beginning (indexicality) of the texts *merantau* and *Rumah Makan Padang*. The three texts form the cycle of the Minangkabau ethnic people's life in which the text *surau* is one of the Minangkabau cultural centers as it is the domain of education and the place where the Minangkabau ethnic people are formed.

The text *surau* was systematically demolished by the Dutch colonial government by building a great number of liberal schools as it was the Minangkabau cultural center. The liberal schools built by the Dutch government were the Minangkabau cultural derepresentation which took place gradually. The derepresentation was analogous to the frog which is placed in a container containing cold water before it is gradually heated until the frog dies. The Dutch colonial government knew that a school functioned as a social technology used to control and design knowledge and spirituality before it was used to control the Minangkabau ethnic people. It is this which is referred to as the panopticon from which the Dutch government could observe the Minangkabau ethnic people.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Finally, the answers to the three problems of the study which explored the Minangkabau cultural discourse from the novel written by Sakai can be concluded as follows. The archeology of *Rumah Makan Padang* is the text of the tip of iceberg. The text is not prominent; it is slightly seen in the last part; it is marginalized. In the politics of articulation *Padang City* does not have any *Rumah Makan Padang*; no *Padang* ethnic group is mentioned; the only Minangkabau culinary and ethnic people in West Sumatra, Indonesia, are mentioned. The archeological episteme of *Rumah Makan Padang* is established by the discourse of the Dutch government.

The strong genealogy of the text *Rumah Makan Padang* in the novel *Ular Keempat* is the indexical of the text *merantau* (leaving the home town or city to stay in another town or country in order to earn a living). It represents the life style of the Minangkabau ethnic people, their ideology and how they view life. The genealogical representation is interpreted from the main or central text, namely the text of the spiritual journey to Mecca. This represents the essence of the activity of leaving the home town or country made by the Minangkabau ethnic people to stay in another town or country in order to earn a living, and shows that living is

identical with the activity of leaving the home town or country to stay in another town or country in order to earn a living before going back home to die.

The panopticon of the text *surau* in the novel *Ular Keempat* is the third indexical of the text *Rumah Makan Padang* after the discourse of *merantau*. The text *surau* is the beginning (indexicality) of the texts *merantau* and *Rumah Makan Padang*. The three texts form a set of textual relations of the life cycle. The text *surau* is the essence of the cycle and center of the Minangkabau culture.

The Dutch government successfully demolished the text *surau* and replaced it with secular schools as the panoptic practice, and finally successfully managed and controlled the Minangkabau ethnic people.

Actually, the culture of the Minangkabau ethnic group is already “dead”; it has not been intact any longer; it cannot separate itself from tragic politics, power and socio-culture. Therefore, several suggestions are recommended as considerations. (1) The Minangkabau ethnic culture can only be developed and helped by its supporting community, starting from families. (2) The strategic steps which can be taken are building Minangkabau culture-based schools starting from elementary school to the university of Minangkabau culture. (3) The West Sumatra province should be changed into the Minangkabau province, or the Minangkabau ethnic group should establish a new province, although it is a small one. (4) The capital of the province should be relocated to a strategic cultural area of Minangkabau. (5) Padang City should be used a city of museum; reconstruction should be avoided as it will destroy and bury many historic artifacts. (6) The Minangkabau literary works should be developed based on the cultural root of the Minangkabau ethnic group.

The future of the Minangkabau culture can be predicted from the result of this present study. It is predicted that if the Minangkabau values are not improved and developed as early as possible, then it can be predicted that the Minangkabau ethnic people will gradually disappear from the historic stage. It is predicted that the fate of the Minangkabau ethnic group will be the same as that of the Betawi ethnic group living in Jakarta or the Malay ethnic group in Singapore; the Minangkabau people will be marginalized and, finally, they will disappear.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

In this occasion, the writers thank to *E-Journal of Cultural Studies* for the publication of this article.

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