

Dimas' Expression of His Identity as an Indonesian in Leila S. Chudori's "Pulang"

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Abstract: In this study, I observe the way the character in Leila S. Chudori's, *Pulang*, preserves his identity in a foreign country. In analyzing the novel, I use the theory of social symbols by George H. Mead. In the analysis, I find that Dimas uses symbols as Indonesians to preserve his identity. By doing so, he gets the acknowledgement by the Indonesian community as a part of its member even though he lives in different nation. This shows Dimas perceives his identity because he is aware that he is part of Indonesian community. As a result, Dimas can preserve his identity as an Indonesian even though he lives far away from Indonesia.

Key words: Expression, Identity, Social, Symbols, Preserve

INTRODUCTION

On thirtieth of September, seven generals were killed. Coup d'état issues soared in every corner of the cities (Krismantari, Aritonang & Razak, 2015). Many parties, such as Indonesian army, accused Indonesia Communist Party as the mastermind. Under the regime of New Order, a mass purge happened. Those who were communist sympathizers and related to them, like their family and colleagues, were captured, tortured, and even murdered regardless they were guilty or not. Those who were lucky enough managed to run away far away from Indonesia and lived in foreign country as political exile. The story of political exiles attracts a woman who is a reporter and a writer to write a novel.

Leila Salikha Chudori is a senior editor of Tempo New Magazine of Indonesia was triggered to present a story which elevates a story of Indonesia's dark history which is starting to be forgotten to regain the consciousness of the reader that it should not happen again in the future (Kwok, 2013). She began to collect data about Indonesian political exiles in order to re-create the historical event into a fiction in a novel entitled, *Pulang*, after she met Umar Said, an Indonesian political exile in Paris.

Pulang portrays the life of political exiles about how they are separated away from their family, terrorized by the military, and received bad stigma from the society; but, even though they are mistreated by the Indonesian government, they miss Indonesia. Dimas Suryo was only a junior reporter in Kantor Berita Nusantara who was ordered by the head of Kantor Berita Nusantara, Hananto Prawiro, to attend International Organization of Journalist on September 1965 in Chile when G30S/PKI happened. Though Dimas did not make a preference on which political side he was in, the fact that Hananto was an adherent of Indonesia Communist Party (PKI) made the government accuse all reporters in Kantor Berita Nusantara for being pro-left wing party. Because of the incident, he and his three friends decided not to go back to Indonesia because not only were their passports revoked but their lives would also be in danger. They decided to flee to Paris and start new lives there as political exiles. Dimas married a Parisian woman, Vivienne, and acquired Parisian citizenship. However, though he had regained new life in Paris, he could not detach his identity as an Indonesian. He preserves his Indonesianess in his life aspects even when he has gone for too long from Indonesia, and up until the end of his life, he wanted to be considered as an Indonesian.

The central topic of the political exile in *Pulang* interests me because, in reality, most of them struggle with their identity. Exile, regarding to Oxford Dictionary (2010), means 'the state of being sent to live in another country that is not your own, especially for political reasons or as a punishment'

or ‘ a person who chooses, or is forced to live away from his or her own country’ . People who became the political exile during New Order era were forced to stay away from Indonesia since they could be arrested and killed. The feeling of missing home and family in their homeland then makes them struggle to maintain identity that they already have even though they are staying among the foreign society with distinct culture. Therefore, there must be ways to express their identity in order to preserve their identity.

Through this research, I find out that the writer of the book digs deep into the idea of political exiles in the real life and how she overcomes the idea of political exiles through the main character of the book, Dimas. The society may think that the political exiles are the traitor of the nation. However, Dimas as the main character of this book who is a political exile, have the sense of belonging toward his country, Indonesia, in which he implements his Indonesianess in his life.

In order to understand how Dimas expresses his identity, I would like to use theory of identity through symbolic interaction. In the *Mind, Self, and Society* (1934), George H. Mead, an American philosopher, sociologist and psychologist, believes symbolic interaction has a big role in defining self-identity. Mead views that society embeds identity to an individual through the interactions and communications with others. The interaction among the society then creates symbols which can be understood among the society. According to Mead, the symbol is in the form of gesture, either action, like hand shaking, or verbal, like the using of language. Furthermore, in *Identity Theory* (2009), Burke and Stets discussed that ‘symbol can be used to represent objects and events in the situation when the objects and events are not physically present’ (p. 19). Based on the understanding, the symbols of Indonesia in *Pulang* are memory of Indonesia, Indonesian language, Indonesian foods, and Indonesian fragrance. The symbols then stimulate the mind of an individual to adjust himself to those responses. In other words, the mind refers to the ability of an individual to relate himself to his environment. It can recognize the self and treat the self as an object which is accepted as the part of the society.

The ability of the mind allows an individual to think and act the same way like his environment. Here, self refers to the ability of an individual to reflect his mind in order to be recognized by others. It means an individual can make adjustment with his environment, and also can change his environment even himself and his behavior to be the part of the community. In order to achieve the goal, an individual differentiates himself as ‘Me’ and ‘I’ (*Mind, Self, and Society*, 1934, p. 143). ‘Me’ refers to an individual as an object. The ‘me’ refers to the generalized object which represents learned behaviors, attitudes, and expectation of society. In the contrary, ‘I’ is a subject who is a spontaneous behavior which represents the self-identity based on the response to ‘me’. Based on the context, ‘me’ refers to Dimas’ self who expresses his identity to both Parisian community and Indonesian community in order to get acknowledgment. On the other hand, ‘I’ refers to Dimas’ self who breaks the community’s expectation in order to achieve what he wants.

Although the person is aware about his or her identity, identity is not only an individual’s perception. However, identity is also a social perception (*Identity Theory*, 2009, p. 21). Even though an individual, like Dimas, admits that he is Indonesian, he must get acknowledgment from the Indonesian community in order to preserve his identity. It is because the nature of human is social beings, so an individual does not only need himself, but also a place in the community.

In analyzing how Dimas expresses his identity, I will look up the symbols of Indonesia that Dimas uses to express his identity among the Parisian community. Then, I will use this theory to find out how Dimas’ relates himself to the symbols and how he makes a statement in order to shows his identity.

DIMAS’ WAYS IN EXPRESSING IDENTITY

As a political exile in Paris, Dimas misses Indonesia. However, he is also afraid to go back since he can be arrested and imprisoned for his relation with communist party supporters when he was working as a journalist. Even though he has a new life in Paris, a Parisian wife, a daughter, and a job in Paris, Dimas does not want to lose his identity as an Indonesian. In order to preserve his identity as an Indonesian, Dimas expresses it through his jobs and his family.

The first time Dimas came to Paris as an exile, he lived in poverty. He had to spend his money wisely and could not buy book in second-hand bookshop because he did not have much money to survive in Paris. Years after that, he married a French woman and still did not have a fixed job. Years after he started living in Paris and married a Parisian woman, his wife had to work as a lecturer in order to meet their needs since Dimas could not get a proper job. Then, he realized that his family needed financial support from him so he was willing to work in the Ministry of Agriculture. However, Dimas expresses his unhappiness working in the Ministry of Agriculture despite his quite high salary. Based on that, having a job is not only about money for Dimas. Instead, a job is a place where he can express his passion freely. Because he cannot find satisfaction in his job in the Ministry of Agriculture, he decides to have jobs that can satisfy him, which is through his job as a journalist in Political Exile Newsletter and as a restaurant owner.

When he was in Indonesia, Dimas used to work as a journalist in Berita Nusantara. Writing is not only a job for Dimas, but it is also his passion and his calling. Instead of looking for another job which can give him much money, he continues to write for Tahanan Politik Newsletter where Dimas will not get a good income from it. He keeps writing essay and poem then publishes them in the newsletter for his fellow Indonesian exiles in Europe. Dimas uses newsletter to approach a selected audience in which the name of the newsletter, Political Exiles Newsletter, clearly shows that the target reader of it is Indonesian political exiles. For Dimas, working as a writer in the newsletter is a form of preserving his identity by sharing the memory of Indonesia and cultivating the Indonesian language.

First, he shares the memory of Indonesia with the Indonesian community in Europe through distributing the newsletter. Living far away from the Indonesian community, he has to engage with the Indonesian community in Europe so can get recognition from them that he is still an Indonesian. As Meltzer (as cited in Burke & Stets, 2009) says that mind affects behavior, Dimas' consciousness of being an Indonesian initiates him to write in a newsletter in order to reach the Indonesian political exiles in every continent in Europe. Dimas writes about the news in Jakarta and sometimes writes essay and poems in the newsletter. Sharing the current news in Indonesia, his opinion in his essay, and his feeling in his poem through the newsletter are some effective ways to keep the memory of Indonesia with his fellow Indonesians in Europe. Dimas does not need to know or even meet them face to face. Through sharing the same symbol, which here is the current news of Indonesia, they live in the image of their communion in their mind. Also, he can engage with fellow Indonesians in Indonesia by writing in the newsletter. He gets the news from his friends who work in the media in Jakarta. As the Burke & Stets (2009, p. 19) writes that someone can achieve his identity by having the same think and act with his environment, Dimas has achieved his identity through his writing because he thinks and acts like the other Indonesians. By writing in the newsletter Dimas would like to help the fellow Indonesians in Europe to gain the awareness toward their current issue in Indonesia. So, even though he and other Indonesian exiles do not live in Indonesia, they can have the same think and act toward what happening in their country like the Indonesian fellows in Indonesia.

Moreover, by becoming a writer in Political Exile Newsletter, Dimas cultivates Indonesian language. He writes essay and poems to fellow exiles in Europe. It may not imply in the quotation whether he uses Indonesian or French, however it can be concluded that Dimas writes it in Indonesian since his intention is to communicate with Indonesian exiles. Furthermore, Dimas keeps communicating with his friends in Indonesia so that he gets the current news of Indonesia from his friends in Jakarta. Communicating with his Indonesian friends shows that Dimas still uses his mother language, Indonesian. Sharing the same the language with Indonesian community makes Dimas becomes the part of Indonesia. The community recognizes Dimas as an Indonesian because they understand each other by communicating in the same language.

Thus, Dimas feels that being an Indonesian means he has to stay in the Indonesian community. For him, it can be achieved by sharing the memory of Indonesia by writing news of Indonesia in newsletter and using Indonesian language. Here, the 'I' in Dimas' self thinks that preserving his identity as an Indonesian is way more important than making money because he gets emotional

satisfaction through engaging with his community. Meanwhile, the 'me' in Dimas' self fulfills the Indonesian society expectation that he is participating in where he has a job to keep engaging with his community in the foreign country. Another way which Dimas does to preserve his identity is through opening an Indonesian restaurant.

Tanah Air Restaurant is a culinary business which is established in 1982 by Dimas and his other exile friends consists of Tjai, Risjaf, Mas Nug. Dimas and his friends feel unhappy with their job and they get an idea to open a business together in order to find their happiness back. The idea of opening a restaurant comes out from Risjaf's complain about the non-existence of Indonesian food in Paris. For them, a job which can make them happy is a work which they can relate to their identity as Indonesian. They think so because they feel need to show their as Indonesians. Dimas states that culinary will effectively introduce their identity as an Indonesian. So, they build a restaurant where they can gather fellow Indonesians in order to preserve the Indonesian community. By establishing the Indonesian restaurant, they create a replica of Indonesia and sell Indonesian foods to keep the culture of Indonesia.

First of all, the name of the restaurant creates an image of Indonesia. The name of the restaurant relates to Indonesia. Dimas initiates Indonesian term "Tanah Air" as the name of his restaurant which means "homeland" in English. Oxford Dictionary defines homeland as 'the country where a person was born (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 2010). In other words, homeland, that Dimas' uses as the name of the restaurant, refers to Indonesia which is his and also his three other friends' homeland. According to experiment of Memory & Cognition, 'individuals remember emotional words with more detail than they remember neutral words' (Kensinger & Corkin, 2003). In Dimas' case, the words "Tanah Air" reminds him of where he comes from but cannot go back to there. Since he knows that his country will not greet him warmly, the name gives a hope that his country will welcome them warmly. Thus, the name 'Tanah Air' gives a hope for them about Indonesia being a place where they can be greeted like in their own homes. Furthermore, the name of the restaurant can strengthen the community. Dimas states that Risjaf, Tjai, Mas Nug, and he are the *empat pilar dari Restoran Tanah Air* (four pillars of Tanah Air Restaurant). Oxford Dictionary (2010) defines pillar as 'a large round stone, metal or wooden post that is used to support a bridge, the roof of a building, etc, especially when it is also decorative'. In short a building needs pillars to support it so that it will not fall down, like how a country also needs pillars to unify its people. Indonesia has four pillars of the nation consist of Pancasila, The 1945 Constitution (*Undang-Undang Dasar 1945*), The Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (*Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia*), and Unity in Diversity (*Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*). The idea aim of the notion of four pillars of Indonesia is to preserve the unity of the nation. Thus, Dimas wants the four of them to unite as Indonesian and also their fellow Indonesian in Paris like how the four pillars in Indonesia unite the nation. As a community among foreign community, the four of them brace the restaurant in order to preserve their community identity in order to not forget of who they are.

Furthermore, the Indonesian food which they sell expresses their cultural identity. Dimas wants to show that Indonesian culture is an equal to the European culture. He wants to introduce Indonesian food so that he and the Indonesian community can be recognized by the European community. Fortunately, it actually works. The customers love the beverage, such as *es cendol*, which he provides for his customers. He then feels a sudden emotion which makes him cry. Dimas is affected because he successfully expresses his identity as an Indonesian through the food. Looking at the enthusiasm of the customers who ask for more *es cendol*, the customers admit the deliciousness of Indonesian food. It means that Dimas and his exile friends successfully bring Indonesian beverage to Europe and get the acknowledgement that it tastes good. Also, Dimas and his friends successfully express their Indonesianness through establishing the restaurant because their restaurant gets the recognition from fellow Indonesians. Tanah Air Restaurant gets acknowledged from an Indonesian sociologist, Armantoro Bayuaji. Armantoro praised Tanah Air Restaurant as the cultural ambassador of Indonesia in Paris. It means that Dimas and his exile friends successfully show their Indonesianness by

introducing the Indonesian foods in Europe. So, Dimas and his friends can consider themselves as Indonesians because they can represent their country in a foreign country.

Overall, Tanah Air Restaurant is a form of hope for those who share the same fate like Dimas and his friends and also an expression of the culture of Indonesia they want to cultivate. Sharing the symbol of Indonesia makes Dimas gets recognition from the Indonesian community. The restaurant accepts every person, whether you are political exiles or not. The restaurant also shows that even though Dimas and his friends live far away from Indonesia, they always embrace their Indonesianness through the Indonesian culture, which is Indonesian food. In regards to the social success in expressing his Indonesianness, Dimas also creates a mini Indonesia in Paris through his family.

Once, Dimas considered himself as a stateless person when he learnt that he could not go back to his country for the first time. Dimas feels he does not have an identity because he cannot go back to Indonesia nor keep in touch with his fellow Indonesians and his family in Indonesia since it will be dangerous for both parties. Moreover, his passport is revoked by Indonesian government. Years after being exiled, Dimas has a family in Paris. However, Dimas' wife, Vivienne acknowledges that Dimas never belongs to Paris. Vivienne compares Dimas to a seagull which is migrating with its group. However, Dimas is a different seagull from the others because he always wants to go back to where he comes from. According to what-your-sign, seagull is symbolized as freedom (Avia, n.d.). In addition, seagull is a free bird; the chatty character of seagulls symbolizes the fearlessness to speak out the mind. So, when Dimas applies the Indonesian values to his family, Vivienne never objects it. The values which Dimas bring to his family are the language and the symbols of Indonesia. Through the family, we learn values which become the guidance of the behavior in society and establish standards for maintaining culture (Defrain, J., 2008). So, Dimas expresses his Indonesianness by embedding the Indonesian values to his family by giving Indonesian name to his daughter and keeping Indonesian's traits in his apartment.

Name is an identity. Ralph Ellison (1995), an American author, said that, "It is through our names that we first place ourselves in the world." It means that name is not only basic information to introduce yourself to other, but also to show who you are. Even though Dimas' daughter is born in Paris, Dimas does not give her European name. Instead, Dimas gives her Indonesian name, Lintang Utara. There are several reasons why Dimas gives Indonesian name to his daughter.

The first reason is by giving his daughter an Indonesian name, his daughter also becomes an Indonesian. The Indonesian name becomes a symbol for Dimas to express his identity in which his family also belongs to Indonesia. Even though his daughter is also half French, Dimas seems to want deny that part of his daughter. At that time, when Lintang was born, the 'I' in Dimas's expresses a rejection that his daughter also belongs to French by giving her an identity through a name. Even though his daughter resembles Europeans physically, for him Lintang is an Indonesian. Having westernized face, people may consider her as a European. By giving Indonesian name, Dimas wants to imply that even though her daughter has western face, but she is Indonesian by blood. According to the article *Names and Personal Identity* by H. Edward Deluzain, American writer and researcher, the relation between name and identity creates a symbolic contract between the society and the individual (Deluzain, 1996). Through the name, the society acknowledges the existence of the person, whether the person is part of the society or not. The Indonesian name is a symbol that bonds Lintang to the Indonesian community.

Furthermore, the Indonesian name gives Dimas a hope that he can preserve his identity as a whole Indonesian. Dimas' daughter has big impact to Dimas' life. At the moment Lintang comes to his life, she becomes the reason why Dimas decides to stop sailing and anchored for a moment. It seems like Dimas sacrifices his desire to return to Indonesia because he has a daughter which he nurtures with all his heart. According to Nameberry, 'Lintang' is a name for a male baby which means 'Star'. (Lintang, n.d.). On the other hand 'Utara' is Indonesian word meaning 'North'. So, Lintang Utara means the North Star or astronomically well known as Polaris. North Star or known as Polaris is the brightest star which always stays in its position because of its location in the axis of earth (McClure,

2017). Because the position of the North Star which never changes from its position, people believe that if they follow the North Star, they will not lose their way. It means that when a person becomes a leader, this person has to keep his belief and becomes the role model for the others. In accordance to the definition, Lintang Utara becomes the star in Dimas' life. For her, Dimas willingly pushes off his desire to go back to Indonesia. However, at the same time, Lintang is the guidance for Dimas that he should never lose his way as an Indonesian in a foreign country. He gives the name Lintang so he can feel like Lintang will keep his link with Indonesia intact.

To sum up, name giving is a way for Dimas to get acknowledgement as an Indonesian from his surroundings and also a form of hope for him to not lose his identity as an Indonesian. The 'I' in Dimas' self wants to show that his family belongs to the Indonesia community. Here, the 'me' in Dimas' self thinks that in order to get accepted in the community, he has to present the symbol of Indonesia to the Indonesian community in order to get acknowledgement. Furthermore, Dimas preserves his identity by not only giving his daughter Indonesian name but also keeping the Indonesian attributes in order to remind himself that he is still part of it.

Living far away from Indonesia for a long time, Dimas experiences a longing nostalgia to his country Indonesia. He feels homesick because he misses his family and his friends. He even cannot be there when his mother dies. Since he cannot go back to Indonesia, he then displays the Indonesian traits in his apartment in Paris. He keeps Indonesian attributes like wayang and the fragrance of Indonesia.

First of all, Dimas keeps wayang in his apartment. Dimas displays two wayangs in their living room which are Ekalavya and Bhima. Wayang is an Indonesian puppet from Javanese culture whereas Dimas was born and used to live in Java Island before he ends up in Paris. By 'planting' wayang in his apartment, Dimas wants to express his fondness toward his cultural identity as an Indonesian. However, the part of Indonesia that Dimas wants to show is the Javanese culture, his origin culture, not the whole Indonesia. For the Javanese people, wayang has a relation to human life. Wayang is taken from Javanese language which means 'shadow' (Wayang, 2013). In the book *Wayang dan Karakter Manusia*, the writer discussed about wayang as the depiction of human beings in the world (Mulyono, 1989). It is a symbol of the relation between human and this universe. Thus philosophically meaning, wayang can be interpreted as the reflection of human's soul. Dimas reflects his loyalty and devotion toward Indonesia through having Bhima and Ekalavya in his house. The fact that Bhima is always loyal and willing to protect Draupadi despite her not loving him is similar to Dimas who is always loyal to his Indonesianness even though the Indonesian government does not adore him. On the other hand, Ekalavya symbolizes his devotion toward his country, Indonesia. In the story of Mahabharata, Ekalavya was made a statue of Dronacharya and worshiped it before and after he practiced archery even though he is rejected by him. Lintang said that Dimas always played Ekalavya puppet and narrated its story whenever he heard Indonesia government rejected his visa. The story of Ekalavya reflects Dimas' life which gets denied by Indonesian government from getting the visa to Indonesia. Through the story of Ekalavya, Dimas learns that being an Indonesian does not mean that he has to live in Indonesia. However, Dimas has to devote himself and be loyal to his country to be a whole Indonesian, just like Ekalavya who worships his teacher statue to be a great archer and Bhima who is loyal to Draupadi.

Moreover, Dimas not only keeps wayang but also keeps the fragrance of Indonesia. Dimas keeps a jar of turmeric and a jar of cloves on the bookshelf. The first is the clove. Clove is a kind of spice and herb from Maluku, Indonesia (Brann, 2015). By keeping the fragrance of clove, Dimas is showing the distinctive aroma of Indonesia which cannot be found anywhere else and owned by European. Clove will remind him that his identity like the fragrance of clove. He may live there and get the new identity as European, but the truth is he will always belong to Indonesia, a country where he comes from. On the other hand, turmeric keeps his memory of Indonesia which he shares with an Indonesian woman named Surti. According to Dr. Mercola (2015), fragrance can trigger memory and emotion. So, when Dimas smells the fragrance of turmeric, Dimas will remember about Surti. Surti used to be Dimas' lover who then got married to Dimas' best friend and the head of Kantor Berita

Nusantara, Hananto. It was not Dimas who should have gone to Peking, but Hananto. Hananto knows that Dimas will get into the trouble in Jakarta because of his relation with communist sympathizer like him. Since so, Dimas feels guilty to Surti and her children because Hananto sacrifices himself so that Dimas will not get captured by the Indonesian army. Whenever he smells the fragrance of turmeric, he will always remember of his guilt toward Surti. Furthermore, the fragrance of turmeric and clove is a symbol of his sharing memory with Surti as Surti also remembers Dimas when smelling the fragrance of turmeric and clove. Dimas and Surti are the victim of the after effect of the 30th September Movement of Indonesian Communist Party. Dimas becomes an exile while Surti and her children should suffer because she is terrorized by Indonesian army asking about about her husband presence (p. 382). The memory of the event is the symbol of the Indonesianess within Dimas. Through sharing the same symbol, Dimas feels that he get the acknowledgement that he is a part of Indonesia through Surti.

Thus, being devoted and loyal and also keeping the memory of Indonesia makes Dimas feels that he is a part of Indonesia even though he no longer lives in Indonesia. As John Locke implied that having the same memories of past determines who the person is, the 'I' in Dimas' self wants to always remember the Indonesia that he used to know in order to show his identity.

Conclusion

In conclusion, being an Indonesian does not mean he has to live in Indonesia but rather how he manages to show his identity toward to the society for Dimas. He needs the recognition and acceptance of the Indonesian community to preserve his identity. The success of Political Exile Newsletter and Tanah Air Restaurant shows that Dimas has successfully gained the recognition of his identity as an Indonesian because he participates in spreading the social symbols of Indonesians: the current news of Indonesia and Indonesian culture. Thus, a person can preserve his or her identity although he or she does not live in their own country. It is because the person keeps sharing the same symbols, such as culture, memories, and language, like his or her community. By then, the community acknowledges the person as the part of their community wherever he or she goes. It is because they have similar identity as a part of the same nation. The reason is because Indonesia is not only a region in Southeast Asia, but Indonesia is a nation in every Indonesian's mind. Thus, a nation is constructed by a community. As long as the members of the community keeps in mind where they belong to, the nation will always alive wherever they are. This finding finds that the writer of the novel digs deep into the idea of political exiles in the real life and how the author overcomes the idea of political exiles through Dimas. As the matter of fact the genre of this book is historical novel which author did deep research, this novel shows the real life of political exiles in overseas. The main character, Dimas, shows a political exile who implements his Indonesianess in his life even though he does not live in Indonesia anymore because his country rejects him. This proves that the idea of political exiles which most people have about political exiles as traitor of nation is wrong because they actually have the sense of belonging toward Indonesia. Even though they cannot go back to Indonesia, they do not forget who they are so that they implement their Indonesianess in their life in overseas.

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