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Reading Abbas: A Postcolonial Study of One of the Main Characters of *Kelas Internasional*

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This chapter is divided into two parts. The first part presents the conclusions of the present study based on the analyses in the previous chapter. The second part puts forward some suggestions intended for further research.

5.1 Conclusion

The present study aims to observe how an African is represented in *Kelas Internasional* from season one up to season three and discover the meaning behind the representations. Stuart Hall's (1997) framework of representation, Emmanuel Fru Doh (2009) framework on stereotyping African, and Edward Said's (1979) framework of orientalism have been used in order to analyze the representations of the character Abbas. In addition, Heintz and Stracey's (2008) techniques on film (i.e., dialogue, sound effects, music, songs, set designs, properties, and costumes) are also used as the analytical tool for this study to find out how the character is represented throughout the film. The meaning behind the representations lies in the significance of the analyzed data.

The findings of the research reveal that the representations of Abbas as an African are dominated by negative representations. Abbas is negatively represented as educationally backward, economically poor, and attitude-wise impolite. However,

even though Abbas is dominated by negative representations, the findings also reveals several positive representations of Abbas, which are: punctual, neat and clean, friendly, hard-working, and confidence.

In terms of education, the findings of the research imply that Abbas is represented as a backward student. Abbas' backwardness can be seen through his poor concentration ability. For instance, Abbas often makes mistakes in his homework. He also has been caught sleeping in class for several times by Pak Budi, his teacher. Moreover, Abbas often makes silly mistakes too. Abbas' backwardness can also be seen in his low achievement test score. He ranked the seventh out of eight students in class. After seeing his achievement test score, Abbas confesses that he is lazy hence why he does not do good in school. Abbas' laziness indicates that he does not value himself enough which means that he also has low self-image. Furthermore, Abbas' backwardness can be found in the second and third seasons of the film as well. His poor concentration ability does not seem to undergo any changes in the second season of the film. Moreover, in the third season of the film, Abbas can no longer afford education and he is shown as having low-level jobs since his skills are lacking.

In relation to economy, the findings of the research indicate that Abbas is represented as poor. Abbas' poor economy condition can be seen in the way the character often runs out of money. He is shown as having the failure in human basic needs such as food and shelter. Not only as a penniless man, Abbas is also shown as a man in debts. Being penniless forces him to be in debts to survive in Indonesia. Abbas' poor economic condition in the third season of the film is also shown by the way the character is struggling to get money by doing low-level jobs, such as: becoming a *cangcimen* seller, laundry man, hair-washer, bodyguard, and barber. These low-level jobs do not give him enough income to afford shelter and food. Abbas is also shown as having the failure to afford education hence why he starts to work to get money and survive living in Indonesia.

Not only being represented as educationally backward and economically poor, Abbas is also represented as attitude-wise impolite. Abbas' impoliteness can be seen in the way his surroundings react to his actions and speeches. Most of the time, people gives negative evaluations towards Abbas' actions and speeches. Abbas' impoliteness is shown in the way he does things as he pleased and annoys people. The findings also indicate that Abbas often lies and insults people.

The analyses of the negative representations of Abbas reveal that it actually creating a vicious circle. In the first and second season of the film, Abbas is shown as being educationally backward compared to his other classmates. In the second season of the film, Abbas starts to show his poor economic condition by confessing that he has no money for several times. In the third season of the film, Abbas can no longer afford education and since he does not have good educational background, he starts to sell *cangcimen* and does other low-level jobs to get money. His jobs in the third season does not give him enough income to afford food and shelter hence why he often runs out of money and be in debts. Having low educational background also makes him become uneducated. Since Abbas is uneducated, he acts manner-less or impolite.

Surprisingly, the study also reveals that these three negative representations of Abbas as an African are considered misleading or as stereotypes. Representing Abbas as educationally backward indicates that *Kelas Internasional* perpetuates the negative stereotype about African. Emmanuel Fru Doh (2009) believes that most of Africans actually get proper education. There are good schools in most of Africa and every child must go through primary school and at the very least up to high school. There are also many of Africans who are acknowledged by the world. Two of the most influential figures are Maya Angelou and Nelson Mandela. This shows that Black people does not remain silenced for their voices start to be heard.

Moreover, by representing Abbas as poor, the film might also create an image that Africans are poor to the audience, while in fact, not all of Africans are struggling

against poverty. Doh (2009) believes that Africa, just like any other places on Earth, has the poor and the wealthy, the haves and the have-nots. African societies are structured economically like elsewhere, with the poor, the middle class, and the rich. In some of African societies, however, the middle class is almost disappearing.

The findings also reveal that Abbas is represented as attitude-wise impolite or mannerless. Stereotyping African as having bad-manner is actually a discriminatory practice since not all Africans are bad-mannered. Even though some might have bad mannered, this phenomenon does not only happen in Africa, but in all of the continents in the world. There are always bad-mannered people even in the so-called most advanced continent in the world (Doh, 2009).

Unfortunately, rather than helping the Black people to fight negative stereotypes, *Kelas Internasional*, as a situational comedy from Indonesia, participates in disseminating the misleading representations of African through the creation of the character Abbas as educationally backward, economically poor, and attitude-wise impolite. Compounded by funny atmosphere created by the laughing sound effects in the film, the film can be regarded as discriminating Africans.

However, even though the character Abbas is dominated by negative representations and stereotypes, some of the findings in the present research suggest several evidences against the stereotype of African. In the film, Abbas is represented as a friendly man since he greets strangers cheerfully. He is also represented as neat and clean and it can be seen in the way he dresses. Moreover, Abbas is also represented as a hard-working and confidence man. This shows that being backward and poor does not make him desperate and give up on life.

Through Abbas' positive and negative representations in *Kelas Internasional*, this study becomes another evidence of the complexity of representation, the theory by Stuart Hall (1997). Representation is complex since it does not deal with only a single frozen meaning behind it. The process of representation itself is

multidimensional since it involves several dimensions or aspects, or as called by Stuart Hall (1997) as the circuit of culture.

On the other hand, the overall set of the findings in the present study leads to the interpretation that since *Kelas Internasional* is a comedy series, it is possible that the way a comedy series to (intentionally or not) perpetuate stereotype is by creating all the stereotypes of African laughable. However, this might happen for the sake of gaining profit for the television company. This also indicates that what the filmmakers believe to be funny are the stereotypes of African they create in the character Abbas. Moreover, the fact that these negative stereotypes are laughable by Indonesian indirectly confirmed that Indonesian have the power over Abbas as an African. In other words, Africans are more power-less than Indonesian.

The issue of power is the main issue in postcolonial study. Orientalism, as one of the theory in the study of postcolonialism, derived from the power relation between the powerful and the powerless or the Occident and the Orient, or in Edward Said's (1979) theory means the West and the East. Even though according to Said (1979) African and Indonesian are both considered as the Orient. The issue of power that is presented in the present research shows that Indonesians actually see themselves as more powerful than Abbas as the representation of Africans by being able to laugh over the negative stereotypes of Africans through the film. When surprisingly, throughout the analyses in this study, the representations of Abbas as an African in the film are mostly dominated by misleading negative representations. This specific issue might have been overlooked for it has been taken for granted by the audience.

5.2 Recommendation

Based on the conclusions presented in the previous section, there are some suggestions proposed for further studies. Although some of the findings in this research reveals how Indonesian perceived African through TV series, the design in

this research is limited to only one foreigner character in *Kelas Internasional*. For this reason, other researchers can try to conduct a study regarding how Indonesian perceived the West through the same literary work. The result might as well be surprising.

In terms of cultural studies, it is also recommended for the next researchers to conduct a research regarding how other races perceived Indonesia through literary works. It may be useful to investigate how Indonesians are stereotyped in other culture. It may also reveal new issues that may have been ignored or forgotten by other researchers.

In relation to film studies, it is highly recommended to conduct the research regarding filmography since film is the most popular literary work today and it brings so much issue on it. It is also recommended to investigate what is lacking in the techniques of film used by most of Indonesian film. This kind of study will give contribution to Indonesian film world and might help Indonesia to develop in terms of cinema world.

The writer hopes that with this study, the development of research in film studies and postcolonial study within the department would flourish. Moreover, the students should try to use postcolonial studies and film studies to enrich the research regarding those issues in the department.