



Teacher's Response to the Narrative of The Chinese Rebellion in Indonesian History Textbook

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Abstract: This study analyzes the teacher's response to the Chinese Rebellion narrative in the Indonesian History textbook for class XI SMA based on the 2013 Curriculum published by the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia in 2017. This study uses a qualitative descriptive method. The data sources are five history teachers who use the textbooks in the history lessons they manage. The data source in this study is not to represent the population but to represent the information through the purposive sampling technique. Data were collected through interviews supported by a literature study. The data were analyzed with a hermeneutic approach to interpreting it to conclude. As a result, history teachers who became research informants considered the Chinese Rebellion narrative critical, especially diction and aspects of value internalization. For this reason, some teachers are negotiating by using narratives from other learning sources as a comparison. Some are opposed to reinterpreting the narrative based on their perspective and method. Apart from informants, it is also possible that history teachers who feel that the narrative is appropriate will tend to be hegemonic-dominant.

Keywords: teacher response, history textbook, the Chinese Rebellion narrative.



Introduction

The Indonesian History textbook for class XI SMA published by the Ministry of Education and Culture of Indonesia in 2017 is based on the 2013 Curriculum. In this book, Basic Competencies 3.2. Analyzing the strategy of the Indonesian people's resistance to European colonization (Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch, English) up to the 20th century is outlined in the subject of "War Against Colonialism and Imperialism." One of the historical events studied was the Chinese resistance to the VOC (*Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie*). In the textbook, the narrative of this event is entitled "The Chinese Rebellion" (Sardiman & Lestariningsih, 2017). In some historiographies, the event is also referred to as the Muara Angke Tragedy. This political turmoil was followed by Geger Pacinan or the war between the Chinese-Javanese alliance and the Dutch VOC. This event is considered a major conflict that occurred in almost entire Java during the period of 1740-1743 and resulted in weakening the VOC military capacity in the archipelago. It also significantly influenced further historical developments especially in local politics (Daradjadi, 2013; Rimmelink, 2002; Wijayakusuma, 2005).

The historical writings of the Chinese rebellion had been lost for a while before they reappeared in textbooks. This reality is inseparable from changes in the political regime in Indonesia that affect policies in the national curriculum. Due to political reasons, changes in the curriculum have become a natural dynamic in many countries (Wu, 2020; You, Lee, & Craig, 2019). Chinese-related history was no longer taught during the New Order era, especially after the *Sejarah Nasional Indonesia* (SNI), the official history encyclopedia, was published in 1975 (Kwartanada, 2020). In the name of assimilation, the Chinese contribution to Indonesian history was eliminated. It was only during the Reformation period, through the 2013 Curriculum, that this topic reappeared. In fact, during the time of President Sukarno, material presenting Chinese contributions in history textbooks was not uncommon (Pane, 1956; Sanusi, 1955; Sundhoro, 1969; Suparno, 1960).

Over three decades of loss of this material in history textbooks have missed generations studying these events. Students and teachers under the age of 50 also consider it "new" material. Many teachers were not aware of this material in textbooks or the need for this topic to be taught. Moreover, it turns out that not all Indonesian History textbooks currently circulating contain narratives of



Chinese resistance to the VOC. So the existence of this material in the Indonesian History textbook published by the ministry is an exciting phenomenon. The collective memory of the people during the New Order period strongly influenced the view of this event, especially the perspectives of textbook writers and teachers who shaped students' knowledge.

This study highlights the teacher's response to the Chinese Rebellion narrative in the Indonesian history textbook from the ministry. Understanding these historical events becomes an essential basis for knowing the teacher's perception or view of the narrative built in the textbook. This identification becomes the basis for the teacher in conveying the learning narrative, which can be classified according to the methods used. This teacher's response cannot be separated from the nature of history education which plays a vital role in internalizing the values through meaningful learning for students.

Methods

This study used the descriptive qualitative method. The method was chosen because the data collected were in words, sentences, or pictures that had a more significant meaning than just the presentation of numerical data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Sutopo, 2006). The sources for this study were five history teachers from five different schools as informants. This data source does not represent the population but represents the information through the purposive sampling technique (Creswell, 2013). Informants are considered to have in-depth information related to the problem and can be trusted to be a solid source of data (Sutopo, 2006). The informants have been using the history textbook in learning published by the ministry in 2017.

Data were collected through unstructured interviews or in-depth interviewing of the five informants using open-ended interview questions (Sutopo, 2006). The informants' views were dug in depth to obtain complete information regarding their responses to the Chinese Rebellion narratives in the textbooks. The literature study includes the textbook in question, other supporting books, and relevant scientific journal articles. Data analysis is inductive, so it does not intend to prove or test hypotheses but draw conclusions from all data found in the field (Sutopo, 2006). The data were analyzed using a hermeneutic approach to interpret the contents of the text and the results of interviews with informants (Moleong, 2012). Then, the analysis is presented to be concluded.



Findings

Teacher's View of Narrative. The narration about the Chinese Rebellion in the History textbook for first-semester class XI, published by the ministry in 2017, cannot be separated from the fact that it has a significant impact on national history. So, it should be studied at schools (Supriatna, 2008). Moreover, the political changes after the Reformation provided a strong background for the emergence of this text because, during the New Order era, there were discriminatory views and treatment against the Chinese. This text was written by Sardiman, A.M. and Amurwani Dwi Lestariningsih. Brief explanation compared to other materials in the same sub-chapter: Aceh Versus Portuguese and VOC, Maluku Take Up Arms, Sultan Agung Versus J.P. Coen, the Banten Resistance, the Gowa, the Riau People Take Up Arms, and the Prince Mangkubumi and Mas Said Resistance.

Based on a survey of several history teachers conducted at random, it turns out that the use of textbooks in history learning is very diverse. Only some use textbooks published by the ministry. Some use the textbook as the only primary learning resource, and some add textbooks from private publishers as companions. In comparison, some of them do not use textbooks from the ministry. However, they only use textbooks from private publishers, usually sold in the book market as compulsory learning resources. This dynamic is interesting to be investigated further related to the reasons for choosing a textbook, its use, and learning outcomes from using the textbook.

Teachers who did not use textbooks from the ministry did not present any material on Chinese uprising in their class. Although some were able to explain – even in passing – these historical events, they admitted that they had never brought it up in classroom. The reason is simple but intriguing; the material is not taught because it is not found in their textbooks. They said that only other materials – which must be taught – were often not delivered to students according to the teacher. Teachers view the textbooks used as basic guidelines that refer to the curriculum. Everything must be presented thoroughly from A to Z. This finding is one of the thorny problems of history teachers in dealing with curriculum hegemony (Supriatna, 2007).

This finding confirms that the position of textbooks is still dominant in learning in schools. History teachers still rely on textbooks. Most feel that the material contained in the textbook – regardless of the publisher – is an official



description resulting from a formal interpretation of the applicable curriculum. Teachers feel they are not authorized to reduce or add other material even though it is beneficial for students. The teacher's view that the curriculum is oriented to the transmission of knowledge is firm. On the other hand, history textbooks also have a political aspect. History textbooks are an essential part of the education system in any country because they play a significant role as guardians of ideology and shapers of national identity (Huntington & Won, 2020; Kochar, 2008; Pavlick, 2019; Purwanta, Santosa, & Haryono, 2015; Qazi & Shah, 2019; Wang, 2016).

The results of a subsequent survey of five history teachers who used this textbook published by the ministry, one person admitted to making it the leading textbook used predominantly in learning. The other four teachers used textbooks from the ministry with other textbooks and modules as companions. Some of the accompanying textbooks mentioned by the teacher were published by private parties, namely Erlangga Publisher and Intan Pariwara Publisher. The consideration is that the textbooks are available online and can be downloaded freely by students making them accessible and inexpensive. Meanwhile, the teacher prepares the modules independently or jointly in the *Musyawarah Guru Mata Pelajaran (MGMP)* at the local or foundation level.

The narrative presented in history textbooks is an official history that presents a single perspective and is propaganda (Hsiao, 2005; Kello & Wagner, 2017; Maposa & Wassermann, 2014). Government-issued textbooks will give more substantial legitimacy to the messages built in them as school history that must be taught in schools. So the Chinese Rebellion narrative contained in the textbook published by the ministry can be ascertained to contain certain discourses outlined or at least agreed upon by the government and the author of the book. The five teachers who used the textbooks had critical views and attitudes towards the Chinese Rebellion narrative.

Two main things are in the spotlight of the teacher, namely the problem of diction and the internalization of values. One of the awkward dictions appears in the title of the text until the entire content that structures the text from beginning to end is "rebellion". The teacher criticizes this diction from the point of view of historical writing, which is Indonesia-centric. The term "resistance" or "taking up arms" – as is also used to narrate other similar events in this textbook – is considered more appropriate. The mention of



rebels or traitors for the fighters is a Neerlandocentric point of view (Mulyana & Darmiasti, 2009). The diction of “rebellion” shows uncertainty in placing the Chinese as historical actors, which if viewed as part of the Indonesian nation, of course, what they do is also part of the nation's struggle.

In addition, two history teachers have problems with “Cina (read. China)” term. They refer to Presidential Decree No. 12 of 2014, which changed the designation of “Cina” to “Tionghoa” to refer to people or communities and “Tiongkok” (Indonesian version of “Zhong Guo”, China original name) to refer to the state. According to them, this text does not heed the rules by retaining the Chinese designation. The use of the term Chinese – regardless of whether there is an intentional negative meaning – has historically been politically derogatory and contains hateful connotations that are not in line with the spirit of diversity (Lembong, 2011; Suryadinata, 2002).

The 2013 Curriculum seeks to respond to the dynamics of political change that is more democratic and does not discriminate against the Chinese. The 2013 Curriculum inclusively encourages the inclusion of the role of the Chinese as a marginal group in learning Indonesian history. However, the author of the text *The Chinese Rebellion* seems to be still in the shadow of the hegemony of majority group power. Indeed, not all generations have accepted this change openly, including teachers and textbook writers who have matured with the discourse on the history of New Order production. In contrast to students who are the post-New Order generation. They are more ready to accept new views and discourses. Moreover, this generation is classified as a digital native who can access various information.

The teacher is also observant – by realizing the central vision of historical education – in questioning the aspects of the values that will be instilled in the narrative of the Chinese Rebellion. The teacher feels that the cognitive aspect in the form of facts of events chronologically dominates, but almost no narratives related to the values aspect are found. The incident of the Chinese Rebellion mainly shows the multicultural aspect of National History. Every element of the nation from various regions, tribes, ethnicities, and religions have a role in the nation's struggle. However, it was not fulfilled because of the narrow meaning as a curriculum demand. Even aspects of values such as courage, patriotism, and nationalism shown by the Chinese community until their movement received support from the Islamic Mataram court were also



not touched. In the end, the Chinese Rebellion text represents the Chinese community but at the same time marginalizes it (Segall et.al., 2018).

Types of Teacher Responses to Narratives. Hall (1999) explains three different positions taken by the audience (recipients) in decoding the meaning of a text.

1. Dominant-hegemonic position occurs when the receiver is in a dominant point of view. There will be minor misunderstanding and miscommunication in this position because the sender and receiver of the message share a standard view of rules, assumptions, and culture. This position will allow the transmission of ideas to be best understood.
2. A negotiating position is when most of the message is understood. However, the receiver is in a negotiating position that does not have to submit to the hegemony of the message sender's point of view. The closeness of the recipient to the domination of society enables him to decode the message adequately. However, the recipients of the message can interpret it from a personal point of view.
3. Opposition position when the receiver decodes the message based on his own beliefs or community and more often sees other meanings that the message does not want. In this position, there is a rejection by the recipient based on a certain critical point of view so that he chooses to interpret or interpret it himself.

Based on the interviews, the five history teacher informants had the same view that the narrative was problematic. However, there is a difference in dealing with it. One teacher is in a negotiating position, and the other four are in opposition. None of the informants belonged to a dominant-hegemonic position. However, apart from the informants, there may be history teachers who are in a dominant-hegemonic position. The history teacher in this position will take for granted the narrative of the Chinese Rebellion and the discourse constructed by that narrative. There is no conflict with the teacher because he is entirely submissive to the textbook. The teacher in this position does not allow students to have a dialogue criticizing the material being studied. In this situation, the transmission of textbook ideology will occur optimally.

The negotiating position occurs because of the teacher's proximity to contemporary issues and the tendency of views that develop in society. Even



though they understand the meanings that are marginalized or hidden in the text, the teacher responds carefully and compromisingly. In addition to presenting narratives from textbooks published by the ministry, teachers also use textbooks published by Intan Pariwara as a comparison. The narrative in this textbook is entitled “Chinese Resistance” (Rokhmah, Kusumaningrum, & Persada, 2021). This narrative describes the facts of events chronologically, but the diction used is much different from the narrative in the ministry textbooks. By being faced with two different narratives, students are expected to be critical and creative by constructing their understanding and values.

The oppositional or counter-position taken by the other four history teachers can be described as a form of rejection towards the Chinese Rebellion narrative. The teacher has a certain critical point of view, so he chooses to interpret the event himself. This attitude cannot be separated from teachers who feel that the narrative holds problems, so that it needs to be deconstructed. The method used by these teachers is to convey the narratives they have compiled from other sources to their students. The teacher, with his narrative, directs students to find the expected values such as tolerance, multiculturalism, and integration. However, the teacher's efforts were minimal to encourage students to deconstruct the narrative and construct a new narrative jointly. As a result, this method does not develop students' critical power and limits divergent thinking skills.

Conclusion

The narrative of the Chinese Rebellion in the Indonesian History textbook published by the ministry in 2017 opens room for criticism. Teachers criticize two main things, namely, the problem of diction and the internalization of values. The diction of "rebellion" shows that the Chinese as historical actors have not been seen as part of the history of the Indonesian struggle. Meanwhile, the term “Cina” does not follow the current social development dynamics and the official regulations which considering for usage of another term of “Tionghoa”. Furthermore, by realizing the central vision of history education, the teacher questions the value aspects instilled by the narrative, which is dominated by exposure to the facts of events in chronological order.

Based on this perception, the teacher takes a negotiating and oppositional stance. Teachers with a negotiating response try to compromise and deal with them carefully, using other learning resources as comparisons. By being



confronted with two or more different narratives, students' critical and creative thinking skills develop through understanding and values for themselves. The opposition teacher rejects and deconstructs the narrative by conveying that he composed himself from other sources. With the new narrative that he compiled, the teacher directs students to find the expected value. This method does not develop students' critical power and limits students' divergent thinking skills. Apart from the informants, teachers who consider the Chinese Rebellion narrative appropriate will tend to be hegemonic-dominant.

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