**Cultural Discourse of *Siasat* Magazine at 1947-1961**

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**ABSTRACT**

In the period of 1945-1965, there were efforts to formulate a national culture conception through the mass media. Written in Indonesian for Indonesian readers, the 1945-1965 cultural journals and magazines had provided information about the cultural discourse that took place at that time and articles that cover the broad topic of discussion. In the period of 1950-1960, *Siasat* became one of the magazines which took part in the formulation and events recording of Indonesian culture from the 1945s to the 1960s. Various discourses were published by *Siasat* that talk about Indonesian Cultural Identity: between Internationalism and Nationalism, and Cultural Development of Indonesia.

***Keywords***: Discourse, Culture, Siasat Magazine

1. **INTRODUCTION**

The 1950s for Indonesia was a period when the search for national identity and all visions of the nation, especially culture, were formulated and contested. The cultures before independence were faced with critical attitudes and new ideas about culture were explored intensively to get new cultural treasures [1]. The openness and optimism become a tendency of the search for Indonesian cultural identity that can not be separated from the desire to know what is happening in the outside world and the spirit to break the isolation of thought.

The initial effort to formulate post-independence Indonesian culture was carried out by the Indonesian government [2], who deliberately placed culture as a tool to define national identity through state cultural institutions consisting of galleries, museums and cultural centers [3]. The Indonesian government also moved by sponsoring cultural conventions and congers in 1948, 1951, 1954, 1957 and 1960 [4].

Beyond the Indonesian government-owned channels, there are efforts to formulate the conception of national culture through mass media, which has taken root since the 1930s and continued in the 1950s. Despite the political, economic upheaval and chaos in the first years of independence, dozens of new journals and cultural magazines emerged, one of them was *Siasat* magazine.

According to historical timelines*, Siasat* magazine was established on January 4, 1947 in Jakarta by Rosihan Anwar, Soedjatmoko, and Gadis Rasjid [5]. In the early years of its establishment, *Siasat* magazine discussed more about politics, especially about the *Konferensi Meja Bundar*. And then, in 1948 a group of artists who were members of the *Gelanggang Seniman Merdeka* expressed their desire to write in *Siasat* magazine [6]. So, Chairil Anwar with Ida Nasution took steps and a cultural rubric called *Gelanggang* was born [7].

In the *Gelanggang* rubric, the writers such as Asrul Sani, Rivai Apin, Usmar Ismail, Wiratmo Soekito, Mochtar Lubis, JA Dungga, Amir Pasaribu, Hamka, and Sitor Situmorang articulate cultural ideas and the development of art that took place in the 1950s. One of the famous cultural ideas in the *Gelanggang* rubric is the *Manifesto Surat Kepercayaan Gelanggang* which opens with provocative sentences.

Through the opening sentences of *Surat Kepercayaan Gelanggang*, the conceptors of *Surat Kepercayaan Gelanggang* assume that new arts and culture are generally universal, not confined by the boundaries of language, ethnicity, and territory. Thus, Indonesian culture is part of the world's cultural traffic [8]. Furthermore, the statement of *Surat Kepercayaan Gelanggang* echoes the cultural practices of internationalism and cosmopolitan cultural attitudes, which negatively conceptualize imitation, adaptation, acculturation, and the others [9].

1. **RESEARCH METHODS**

This study uses a historical method which consists of four stages consisting of heuristics, source criticism, interpretation, and historiography. First, heuristics or stages of data collection and other relevant sources. Second, source criticism is the process of testing the truth of facts. Third, interpretation is to look for the relationship of meaning that is related between the facts that have been obtained so as to facilitate the writing process. Fourth, historiography or writing stage, where the synthesis that has been obtained will be presented in the form of chronological history.

**3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

1. **History of *Siasat* Magazine and *Gelanggang* Rubric**

During the 1950-1960s, *Siasat* became one of the magazines which took part in formulating and recording cultural events from the 1950s to the 1960s. In its history, the magazine with the slogan "Reviewing Social Problems for Indonesian Development", was founded on January 4, 1947 in Jakarta by Rosihan Anwar and Soedjatmoko, which was motivated by the ignorance of Rosihan Anwar and Soedjatmoko on Dutch propaganda which after independence reoccupied Indonesia and the establishment of *Siasat*. The aim is to provide awareness to the public about the state and democracy and to record what is happening to the international world and its impact on the Indonesian nation [10].

The idea of establishing *Siasat* was emerged when Soedjatmoko as chief editor in *Het Inzicht* and Rosihan Anwar as *Merdeka*'s first editors attended the Malino Conference in July 1946 [11], organized by Lieutenant Governor General, Dr. H.J Van Mook. They were placed in the Oranje Hotel and placed in one bungalow. At one moment in the morning, Budi Setiyono wrote, the two men squatted side by side in the *lunglap* toilet, there was a conversation about frivolous matters, politics, literature, and philosophy. From this toilet sessions, also emerged the idea of the need to publish a political and cultural magazine in Indonesian as a means of public political education and the ignorance of Rosihan Anwar and Soedjatmoko on Dutch propaganda.

In its development, over a span of about 14 years, from the first time it was published in 1947 until closed in 1961, the *Siasat* has been able to record various political and cultural events that occurred in Indonesia from the time of the Revolution to *Demokrasi Terpimpin*. In the political scene, when *Siasat* was published, Indonesia was divided into regions that controlled by the republic and the Dutch. *Siasat* had quickly and accurately covered various political events that occurred at that time [12]. Futhermore, in the following years, *Siasat* developed quite rapidly, marked by more extensive and varied news. This can be seen from *Siasat*'s reportage, which is not only about Jakarta, but instead starts reporting on regional conditions. Thus, *Siasat* became a national forum where public issues from across the country are publicized [13].

In the realm of culture, *Siasat* issued a rubric called the *Gelanggang Cahier Seni dan Sastra* [14], which was first published in *Siasat* number 83, year II, March 1948 [15]. In its history, the *Gelanggang* cultural space was born from the initiative of the *Gelanggang Seniman Merdeka* art association which has the desire to write permanently in *Siasat* and has the aim of opposing the narrowness of cultural views. This cultural rubric was initially redacted by Chairil Anwar and Ida Nasution [16], assisted by Asrul Sani and Rivai Apin. In 1948 when Ida Nasution disappeared without a trace on a trip from Jakarta to Bogor, and Chairil Anwar died in 1949 [17], the editors of the *Gelanggang* cultural attachment were held by Asrul Sani and Rivai Apin, assisted by Siti Nuraini as editorial secretary [18].

*Gelanggang* cultural space at *Siasat* magazine, quickly became known as one of the many cultural magazines that recorded documentation of artistic activities and cultural debates during the 1950s. Many artists and cultural figures use *Siasat* magazine as a medium to convey their ideas and expressions. It is because the position of the *Siasat* magazine was impartial and general and makes *Siasat* magazine "inclusive" and democratic proven by the diverse backgrounds of writers who write in the *Gelanggang* column starting from the right intellectuals, left artists, and writers who incidentally do not have cultural views which is the same as *Siasat*. For example, *Siasat* accepts the writings of Lekra members, such as Buyung Saleh and Joebar Ajoeb. Therefore, *Siasat* shows that the magazine established by Rosihan Anwar does not have a particular cultural tendency and become a forum for discussion that accommodates various cultural discourses.

1. **Cultural Discourse of *Siasat* Magazine**
2. **Indonesia Cultural Identity**

An essay contains the ideals of an internationalist Indonesian culture, one of which is listed in the *Surat Kepercayaan Gelanggang*. The birth of *Surat Kepercayaan Gelanggang* is a sign that Indonesian culture which is imbued with the spirit of independence must be in line with the cultures of other nations in the world [19], and is a sign that boundaries in culture are no longer relevant. In its development and growth, the new and modern Indonesian culture, as envisioned by *Surat Kepercayaan Gelanggang*, is no longer based on ancient and local culture, because the spirit of Indonesianness does not rest on the brown skin and the temple bones that protrude forward, but rather a lot more expressed by the expression of the heart and mind [20].

In the timeline of Indonesian cultural history, *Surat Kepercayaan Gelanggang* contains the orientation of Indonesian culture based on cultural internationalism because Indonesian culture is determined by the unity of various sound stimuli caused by voices emitted from all corners of the world. Cultural writers at *Siasat* see cultural development in Indonesia in the 1950s as an internationalist project, in which various world cultural influences, be it from "West" or "East" or in other words cultural universalism, are used to build a new Indonesian culture, swhich not the culmination of regional culture [21].

On the other hand, there are writers in Siasat who are distracted by the internationalist orientation of Indonesian culture who claim to be the legitimate heirs of world culture and therefore prefer a cultural nationalism, one of which is Buyung Saleh's writing. For Buyung Saleh, there is no such thing as a world culture or a universal international culture, because in Buyung Saleh's view there is no international community or society that is organically homogeneous and therefore world culture is only an allusion, even though scientific and technical advances have unified the world, but this unification will not eliminate the nations of the world into one homogeneous nation [22].

In his writings, Buyung Saleh rejects his contempt for the cosmopolitan pretentious dreamed by internationalism-oriented cultural leaders and activists who want to make culture not rooted in society and the people, because of the slogan of international culture which never exists in reality and wants to turn people away from their nation and the earth in which he was born, lived, and died. For Buyung Saleh, cosmopolitanism is an empty slogan that has no attachment to the people at large and which "deliberately or not help to abolish nations for something that cannot be praised."

1. **Indonesian Culture Growth**

The discourse of Indonesia's national culture growth is also discussed in *Siasat* Magazine. In this article, it is written that the growth of Indonesian culture cannot be separated from the political revolution. The Indonesian cultural revolution was the result of a political and economic revolution that had been going on since 17 August 1945. The first ten years of independence, Indonesia had created favorable conditions for the development of Indonesia's national culture, which if under colonial rule would have taken centuries. For example, the Indonesian language, which is the strongest element in the unity of Indonesian culture, has developed rapidly since Indonesia's independence [23].

If Buyung Saleh sees the growth of Indonesian culture as a result of the political and economic revolution in 1945, Rusman Bratakusuman in his essay *Merawat Kebudajaan*¸ argues that the growth of cultural life cannot be separated from two factors - objective factors and subjective factors. The objective factor is the external factor that determines the growth of cultural life such as the economic realm, the political realm, and the social realm, while the subjective factor is when the cultural life is determined by internal factors, especially the psychological realm, such as mental, consciousness, personality, and so on. These two factors, in Rusman Bratakusuman's view, can maintain an ideal balance in cultural life. However, both must be fought for, because Indonesia had just become independent in 1945 and gained complete control over its sovereignty in 1949 [24].

Geographically, the growth of Indonesia's national culture, cultural writers in *Siasat* magazine, such as Sitor Situmorang, see villages as more suitable places for cultural growth and renewal, because 80% of the Indonesian people in the 1950s lived in villages and villages gave more life power, still has roots, has cultural values that are more humane and culturally independent [25]. A village with all its technological backwardness and all irrational elements in the mind, sociologically more rooted, more lively and cultural growth and development can benefit the villagers economically and socially.

The aim of cultural development in the village is that the village community is economically and socially prosperous, and the village is seen as a suitable place as a fortress for the Indonesian revolution. In addition, cultural development in villages is based on the fact that in the history of Indonesian culture, cultural growth has often been centered in cities which have actually been uprooted, giving birth to a national culture that is too urbanized and belongs to the middle class, has not been evenly distributed to the villages and covering all the people [26].

**4.CONCLUSIONS**

The diversity of the contents of *Siasat* magazine means that the magazine does not have a "single" cultural discourse. It means that there is no one big discourse that is discussed intensively. Cultural writers in *Siasat*, on the one hand, crave a new, modern Indonesian culture that becomes part of the world cultural traffic or cultural internationalism, as contained in essays discussing the development of culture and arts in Europe, America and Asia. On the other hand, the writers at *Siasat* suggest that Indonesian culture is the culmination or combination of regional cultures.

In addition, cultural discourse shows various kinds of debates and thoughts about the new Indonesian culture. Starting from the orientation of Indonesian culture, the growth and development of Indonesian culture, cultural cooperation and cultural congresses, aesthetic polemics, artistic duties, and the relationship between art and society. The cultural debates and discourses that appeared in *Siasa*t magazine were part of the decolonization process after Indonesia gained its sovereignty in 1949. In addition, the discussions that have emerged on *Siasat* show an openness to various viewpoints about how 'Indonesian' culture was imagined and the enthusiasm for intercultural contacts and influences that characterized the cultural debate in the early 1950s.

Thus, the core of *Siasat*'s cultural discourse, which is extracted from various writings or discourses, produces a synthesis of cultural discourse - preserving ancient and regional culture and producing a new Indonesian culture based on the spirit of Indonesian independence.

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