The Sublimation Power of Hwan Le Wah: The Study of Chinese-Javanese Women and Its Relevance in Socio-Environment Harmony

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Abstract: This paper examines Hwan Le Wah as the warrior princess and traditional Javanese woman based on Sik Jin Kwi text of the Chinese-Javanese manuscript belonging to the Library of Universitas Indonesia (NR 142). The text is written in Javanese script, around the beginning of the 20th century. The methods applied reveal the the woman studies which represent the power of sublimation in Chinese-Javanese traditions. As a warrior princess, Hwan Le Wah was tough, brave, and having magic or divine power, loved by Gods and Goddesses. It means that she has a power as a man to be a war commander. On the other hand, as a traditional Chinese-Javanese woman, she has also tenderness of woman’s attitude. The conclusion is, as a human being, Hwan Le Wah has represented masculinity and femininity, in order to balance her life into the social harmony and universe.

Keywords: harmony, woman, power, sublimation, Chinese-Javanese, Peranakan (half-breed)

1. Introduction

In the early decades of the twentieth century, some Chinese merchants began to settle for long periods in Java (marrying locals), and a new pattern of Javanese art and literature developed. In fact, some of them became authors. The word ‘Cina’ (Chinese) was first introduced by the Europeans based on the name of the Qin dynasty (read: Chin, 225-206 BC). Politically, the Chinese people as the citizens of the People's Republic of China call themselves Zhoungguoren (read: Cungkuoren). Their land is called Zhongguo (read: Chungkuo or Tiongkok in Hokki-en). In Indonesia, before the 20th century, they were commonly referred to as the Chinese (or wong Cino, tiang cinten by the Javanese).

After the intermarriage between the Chinese and the Javanese, "the Chinese Peranakan (half-breed)" was later known, especially in Java. The word ‘Tionghoa’ was introduced by the Chinese Peranakan with the establishment of Chinese schools, such as Chinese Hwee Koan. The word Tiongkok refers to the People from Republic of Tiongkok. While the use of Tiongkok follows the convention of articles or the researchers in the fields of history, sociology, and culture. The authors are aware that using the term Cina, Tionghoa, or Tiongkok is not easy. It is caused by various problems related to the Chinese people in Indonesia.

The existence of the Chinese people in Java has occurred for centuries through trade routes. Until the end of the 19th century, most of the Chinese people in Java originated from the Hokkien Province (Fujian in South China). According to Dahana, the marriage between the Chinese merchants and the local women led to a mixture of Chinese culture and the local culture. Various forms of art and culture in the archipelago were, inevitably, influenced by the Chinese culture, such as music (gambang kromong), theatre (lenong), performing arts (wayang potehi, wayang golek), dance, fashion, language, literature, culinary, romance, and others.

The late 18th century was an important period in the development of the Chinese-Javanese society. A Chinese-Javanese society began to grow and consolidate itself. The Chinese people who became Javanese in the period of 1850-1899 were the ones who voluntarily engaged in cultural interaction. They became Javanese because they had Javanese descent. They no longer understood
Mandarin until a modern school for the Peranakan Chinese community of Batavia was established in 1900, founded by the Tiong Hoa Hwee Koan (THHK) association. The school was established because there was no school for the Chinese people. They also could not attend the Dutch or Bumiputra (native) schools. The Dutch colonial government did not like the Chinese-oriented THHK schools, so they established the HCS (Hollandsch-Chineesche School) for the Chinese population, and it was taught in Dutch.

Javanese-Chinese literature appeared in the mid-19th century, when the Javanese/Malay Peranakan Chinese were in need for translations of Chinese history and romance literatures. There was a wave of Chinese immigrants who spoke Chinese and emphasized their Chinese identity. This condition made the Peranakan Chinese who settled in Indonesia feel close to their ancestral land. The first manuscript appeared in Java in 1857 was San Kok (Revolt against Tang). The first volume titled Fan Tang or Hwan Tang (Revolt against Tang) consisted of 750 pages, and was followed by more than 7 volumes. Some of the adaptations were composed in the form of a chronicle (babad), and a number of pakem wayang (set stories), wayang thithi, told the story of the Tang Dynasty (618-907).

The Manuscript of Sik Jin Kwi, code NR 141-142-143, is a collection of the Universitas Indonesia Library, written in Javanese language and script, in the form of tembang macapat. The story of Hwan Le Wah can be found in the text of Sik Jin Kwi volume 2 (NR 142). The classical Chinese legend about Sik Jin Kwi has also been published in various print media. Sik Jin Kwi Ceng Tang and Sik Jin Kwi Ceng Se were also re-published in 2010 by Suara Harapan Bangsa Publishing House (Jakarta). In the 1952’s the story of Sik Jin Kwi was published in the Star Weekly newspaper based on the initiative of Tan Hian Lay and Auwyong Peng Kun or P.K. Oyong in the form of comic strips. They were then collected and published by Keng Po newspaper which changed its name to Kinta. Sie Djien Koei Ceng Tang and Sie Djien Koei Ceng Se were published by Zambhala and Gabungan Tridharma Indonesia in 1984. Publisher Gabungan Tridharma Indonesia in 1983 worked with Oto Suastika or Siauw Tik Kwie as the painter/illustrator. In 1993, Sie Jin Kwie Berperang ke Korea was published, and in 1998 Sie Jin Kwi Berperang ke Barat written by Marwan Aceng Setiawan was published. In 2010, Sie Jin Kui was re-published following the enhanced Indonesian spelling system by Wastu Lanas Grafika Surabaya.

The stories of Sik Jin Kwi Ceng Tang and Sik Jin Kwi Ceng Se written in Javanese language/script are estimated to be adaptation of the stories of Sie Jin Kui written in Malay. Adaptation of Classic Chinese stories requires more comprehensive research. In China, the stories of Sik Jin Kwi Ceng Tang and Sik Jin Kwi Ceng See are known as Xue Rengui Zheng Zi Episodes I and II (General Xue Conquers the West). The figure of Sik Jin Kwi is named Xue Rengui. His son, Sik Ting San or Xue Dingshan, inherited his father’s might and continued the family tradition as a family of knights [7]. In keeping with the family tradition, Sik Ting San was assisted by his second wife, Hwan Le Hwa or Hwan Le Wah or Fan Lihua, a female military general who had supernatural powers beyond Sik Jin Kwi or Sik Ting San as well as their enemies. Sik Jin Kwi tells the journey of an ordinary young man who eventually became a military general in the Tong Tyo kingdom led by Prabu (Emperor) Li Si Bin of the Tang Dynasty and was appointed as a viceroy in Ko Le Kok which was conquered by the Tong Tyo. Sik Jin Kwi was honest, loyal, modest, good at martial arts, and he had compassion for fellow human beings, which made him a knight. In the Javanese tradition, a knight (satria) is someone who is constantly improving his meditation (nyampurnakake kasubratan), able to master the martial arts (olah kaprajuritan), and loving (welas asih).

Hwan Leh Wah is the daughter of General Hwan Ong from the Ang Kang Kwan’s fortress. After she finished her apprenticeship with Dewi (Goddess) Le San Sing Bo, Hwan Le Wah became a magical knight without match. Her teacher told her that she should follow her destiny to marry Sik Teng San, the son of Sik Jin Kwi. The marriage would bring happiness to the universe. To realize her
teacher's message, Hwan Le Wah accidentally killed her father and her two brothers. After going through various difficulties, finally Hwan Le Wah married Sik Teng San who already had two wives.

2. Discussion

2.1. Chinese and Javanese Culture

Koentjaraningrat explains that acculturation can be extreme, meaning that the process of acceptance allows the foreign cultural and artistic elements to remain intact. The concept of local genius refers to the factors that cause the foreign cultural and artistic elements to undergo changes in form, characteristic, and conception.

The Chinese and Javanese cultural value systems are distinct, but they can affect each other, especially for the Peranakan Chinese living in Java. In terms of the nature of life, both cultures believe that life is full of misery and suffering that must be accepted. This difficult condition can be corrected by trying hard and continuing endeavor in life, both related to the work ethic. The Javanese people do not have a strong motivation to work. Real life is emptied for the afterlife. In contrast, the Chinese people have a strong motivation to work as an effort to keep the good name of their parents and to be loyal to the family, so that happiness in the afterlife can be achieved. Both the Javanese and Chinese people try to live in harmony with the nature, blending in with the macrocosmic and religion-magic world. Concerning time, both have orientation towards the present and the past. The Chinese culture tends to have an orientation of time towards the future. Social values, like helping each other and kinship solidarity, can be found in the Chinese and Javanese cultures [10].

2.2. Traditional Chinese and Javanese Women

A Chinese woman who is married but has not yet acquired the status of daughter-in-law from her mother-in-law cannot be buried in the tomb of her husband's ancestors. Her body should be brought back to her family’s home. According to the teachings of Confucius, a man should honor his wife because she is the one who gives birth to the next generation of the husband's family. The Chinese tradition is patrilineal. Before marriage, a Chinese woman is dependent on her father since childhood. When she gets married, as a woman, she is dependent on her husband, and she is dependent on her children when her husband passes away. This dependence is called San Tsung. Chinese women have a philosophy of life to serve and surrender, including if her husband chooses to have another wife.

Confucianism governs the relationship between people. Every human being should behave according to his/her status. There is a clear line between men and women. If there is deviation, there is no harmony. Chinese women need to know and be able to position themselves, not talking too much, not having many desires, being well behaved and acceptable, diligent, and skilled at taking care of home. Chinese women have a philosophy of life to serve and surrender, including if her husband chooses to have another wife. In addition, they also have to follow the customs, such as tying the sole of the foot up to a length of 10 cm. Women are represented by Yin, which means closed, unknown, and always behind the Yang. It represents setback, passiveness, darkness, earth, moon, woman, darkness, water, weakness, difficulty, and negativity. Meanwhile, the men are represented by Yang, which indicates openness, and it is always in front of the Yin. It represents activity, noon, fire, light, sky, strength, happiness, and positivity. Yin-Yang's relationship is oppositional, alternating, complementary, and resulting in harmony.

The situation of Javanese women is not much different from that of the Chinese women’s in the Yin-Yang concept. Javanese tradition seeks to harmonize values. Both the Chinese and Javanese traditions always have a middle way to remind people to always be introspective and not haphazard. The middle way feels better and can embrace both sides that are far apart. Javanese women are kanca wingking (a friend behind the husband).
The discussion in this paper uses women’s perspective because research activities with women’s perspective are based on the principles of ‘research with a feminist perspective’. The data analysis does not always use feminist concepts. Concepts in women's studies have evolved, as seen in notions such as power relations, the concept of marginalization, subordination, oppression, and so on. In social studies, women’s position is often subordinated, meaning that there is a presumption that the role of one sex is lower than the other. For example, women are held responsible and have more roles in domestic or reproductive affairs, while men dominate public affairs or production.

Sublimation in this paper is defined as the transformation of emotion in psychology. Emotional transformation or self-transformation arises in each individual so that they become a more mature person. Emotion is an important factor when a person makes a decision. There are 9 (nine) types of emotions: apathy, grief, fear, lust, anger, pride, courage, acceptance, and peace. The six initial emotions are more destructive. The last three emotions are positive emotions that build up self-esteem, which make a person wise in character.

2.3. Hwan Le Wah: The Warrior Princess

The storyline of Hwan Le Wah (abbreviated HLW) begins with a depiction of her courage in fighting against her father's enemies. HLW managed to defeat Lo Ciang and Tou It Hou, the royal knight of Tong Tya. Her charm turned peanuts into warriors, and the emergence of the magical army scared the royal troops of Tong Tya. Tou Sian Tong’s wife, Sik Teng San, lost the war against HLW resulting in a great war, and Tou Sian Tong lost.

HLW was courageous and victorious in her fight against Sik Teng San, the ultimate knight who knew how to use arms and fight in wars. Both were mesmerized when they first met each other. HLW said that their matchmaking was meant to be and inevitable. However, Sik Teng San replied that by disparaging HLW. It angered HLW, and she uttered her spells up three times. Quote: “... nora sudi ngrabi sira tanpa wirang. Sang dyah bramantya nerajang, ngetab kuda medhang wani, …” (49.7-8). Sik Teng San was squashed by a mountain, besieged at the top of the mountain with a tall tree, and drowned in the ocean.

Quote: “... Sang retna Hwan Le Wah musna, Sik Teng San kaget ningali, bingung tan wruh kulon wetan, ler kidul tan udani, among sesek ribandhil, kiwa tengan gunung dhuwur, …” (49.20). Finally, HLW was accepted as the wife of Sik Teng San. Quote: “… sareng sang gapi matur mami, jurungipeksa-peksha, nuli kinen dhaub, krama lawan Ni Hwan Le Wah (51.22). However, when Sik Teng San learned that HLW’s father and brother were killed accidentally, he left HLW. Quote: “Heh Hwan Le Wah nyata ala, noro ana ramakane den pateni, ... ramadulur supradene sira bunuh, si jungut ratune ala, ingsuningkang males pati.” (54.1). Grief enveloped HLW’s heart, and she went to visit her teacher, Dewi (Goddess) Le San Seng Bo in Le San mountain.

The teacher said that their matchmaking would still have to go through the obstacles made by an animal incarnated as Yo Hwan. Quote: “…, kanjeng Ibu pun Hwan Le Wahuwun pamit, mring suwarno sovan guru, matur sang SingBo retna,kados pundi jatukrama sasar susur, yen wis terang dhawuhing Yang, kondaid timbuli warih …” (54.28). Later, Sik Jin Kwi would ask HLW for help. When the attack took place, Thia Kaw Kim was sent by Sik Jin Kwi to ask for HLW’s help. Initially, HLW refused to help because she felt deceived, and finally she did not care about the incident that happened in the kingdom of Tong Tya. Sik Teng San’s despotic actions as her husband made HLW feel apathetic, and she experienced grief, anger, and pride. However, HLW’s humility and compassion overcame these negative traits. Quote: “…, dhuh kanjeng pangeran sepuh, kawula matur secara, yen sampun panduka ingkang ngerimuk, pun Hwan Le Wah datan neja, mangke nurut ibu mami.” (64.1).

HLW also expressed her willingness to help Sik Jin Kwi’s troops who experienced difficulties. With a sense of love and peace, HLW left for Tong Tya. Quote: “Dereng pesthi palakrama, mung nayomi dhawuhe kangjen Dyah Ko Kim, kang ibu ngandika arum, iya Gusti mangkata, sun rewangi nenedha sigra, ngrasuk busanane juri.” (64.5). She killed Niu Tau Cou Su (a false priest) who turned out to be a dragon trying to infiltrate the earth. HLW pulled out a talisman letter that made a loud noise and wiped out all the evil influences.
When the second marriage ceremony between HLW and Sik Teng San was in progress, Si Eng Liong came. He is HLW’s adopted son who insulted Sik Teng San calling him arrogant for daring to marry his mother without his permission. HLW had to endure Sik Teng San's angry insults calling her a bad woman for having a relationship with another man who was not her husband, and thus having a child from that relationship. Unable to bear the slander, HLW fainted. Sik Teng San's arrogant attitude made Sik Jin Kwi angry and order his guards to execute Sik Teng San. The death penalty was canceled at the request of the ministers, and it was replaced by caning. HLW wanted to commit suicide because of embarrassment. However, it was prevented by his brother-in-law, Sik Kim Lyan. HLW went back to her mother's house in Han Kang Kwan. Quote: “…kaping tiga dhauporadadi, mangke dadi kembang lambe kathah, sakin gtiwas kula dhewe, nanging kula pun nyebut, datan sudi alaki malih, arsa wadad mertapa, sarwi cukur rambut, dadi ya pandhita rara, …” (67.22)

Soon after, Emperor Li Si Bin, the supreme leader of Tong Tya's kingdom, died. The crown prince Li Ti replaced his father's position as the Emperor. With the approval of all parties, HLW was appointed as the military general. This was the highest rank ever achieved by HLW, having previously experienced various problems that always shook her life, making her suicidal. Quote: “..., duh sinuwun pawestri niki prajurit, inggih niku warnanipun, nami Dewi Hwan Le Wah, boten dameh ngenounkean lungtipun, ping kalihsureng nglalaga, digdaya sureng ngajurit.” (79.3). After HLW served as a military general, Sik Teng San received commutation. The death sentence was replaced by an order to deliver HLW’s letter of appointment as a military general, and he had to walk to HLW’s house. However, it was not easy for Sik Teng San to deliver the emperor's letter, because HLW and her mother rejected his arrival and expelled Sik Teng San.

On the third arrival, Sik Teng San was accepted by the mother. However, the mother reported that HLW had died. Sik Teng San cried and apologized for his actions and remarks to HLW. When Sik Teng San fell asleep next to HLW's coffin, there was a crackling sound from inside the coffin. Sik Teng San saw HLW getting up from inside the chest. Finally, they celebrated their marriage for the third time. Quote: “Ni Hwan Le Wah tumungkul alinggih, Raden Ting San alon, majeng sarwi arum ngandikane, kulanuwun sepurane gusti, pun Ting San angabdi, mring dika wong ayu.” (85.15). They had a boy named Sik Kong. The birth of Sik Kong was dramatic. He was born when HLW was fighting against Sa Po Tong (the arch-rival of Sik Jin Kwi). The magic of Sa Po Tong caused HLW to fall from her horse and give birth to a baby that emitted a brilliant red glow. The light was so powerful that it destroyed all Sa Po Tong’s weapons.

In the last phase of this transformation of emotion or self-transformation, HLW experienced acceptance and peace. After being slandered for having a child out of wedlock (Si Eng Liong was her adopted son) by Sik Teng San, HLW fainted and returned to Han Hwan Kang, her mother’s home. There, HLW replaced his father’s position as a senapati (commander), and spent her time training the soldiers to be more agile with their weapons when fighting against the enemy. Finally, Emperor Li Ti decided to appoint HLW as the royal warlord of Tong Tya. The task of HLW as the royal warlord of Tong Tya's kingdom was to conquer the small kingdoms outside Emperor Li Ti’s power. Together with Sik Teng San and all of Tong Tya's soldiers, they succeeded in conquering these kingdoms. HLW again showed her shrewdness in war strategies and courage in leading the royal soldiers. HLW was always present in every war, supporting the soldiers and the royal knights Tong Tya.

Various spells were spoken, among others, a spell to call the rain, incantation of talam wasiat, and incantation of sapu tangan wasiat. The most difficult task was to conquer Sa Po Tong whose magic was extraordinary. Sa Po Tong, the arch enemy of Sik Jin Kwi, was the incarnation of the green dragon, the enemy of the gods. With the help of his teacher Le San Si Bo and the gods, HLW succeeded in crushing Sa Po Tong from a small kingdom named Giok Liong Kwan. Emperor Li Ti immediately welcomed her victory.
3. Conclusion

As a woman during the Classical Chinese era, HLW showed a different position in comparison to the women of her day. HLW cannot be seen as a woman who symbolizes Yin. She was only weak when she was slandered to have an affair with another man and when Sik Teng San broke his promise. The defeat or acceptance (‘narima’ or ‘pasrah’), often stereotyped in most women, becomes a defensive attitude because she did not want to cause conflict with Sik Teng San. HLW’s peacefulness represents her surrender to the gods to resolve all the problems. Her teacher, Le San Si Bo, said that her matchmaking with Sik Teng San would not go as smooth as she thought. There would still be many disturbances that had to be experienced by HLW. Her effort to forget Sik Teng San by training her soldiers should be seen in positive light, and that is a characteristic of Yang. Yang is more dominant than Yin in HLW. HLW’s femininity is evidenced by the birth of her son, who emitted a brilliant red glow that could destroy various weapons.

The greatness of HLW was further reinforced by the portrayal that when she was pregnant, HLW still performed her duties as a warlord, and she even gave birth on the battlefield. Even though wars are often dominated by men, HLW succeeded in bringing the glory and victory of Tong Tya kingdom. As a female figure symbolized by Yin, HLW is the mother earth or motherland who gave birth to a son. This is so great! HLW’s character describes two traits within herself: femininity and masculinity. She has tenderness, affection, as well as the courage and firmness. Inside the Yin there is Yang. Likewise, inside the Yang there is always a Yin. In the tenderness of a woman, there is firmness, courage, or positive attitude from men. A strong, open man, always looking ahead, also has tenderness and weakness. Both traits build a complete and complementary character for balance and harmony. Classical texts in local language or local scripts have local wisdom relevant for universal harmony in the future.

4. References

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