



Representation of the Imagination of Western and Eastern Orientalism in the Novel *Sang Raja* by Iksaka Banu: A Postcolonial Study

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe and explain the representations of Western and Eastern Orientalist imaginaries in Iksaka Banu's novel *Sang Raja* using Edward W. Said's postcolonial theory of Orientalism, namely: (1) the Oriental imagination as a simple and inferior indigenous people, (2) the Western imagination as a superior and legitimate subject, and (3) the ambivalent imagination in the power relations between the West and the East. The study focuses on Iksaka Banu's novel *Sang Raja*, which portrays colonial reality through the characters' perspectives, historical experiences, and social relationships between the colonial authorities and the indigenous people in colonial society. The research data consists of narrative excerpts, dialogues, and events containing representations of Western and Eastern Orientalism. The research instrument was developed by the researcher using a corpus of data to facilitate data categorization according to the research focus. Data analysis was conducted using a qualitative descriptive method with content analysis techniques through the stages of data collection, categorization, interpretation, and drawing conclusions. The research findings reveal the existence of a stereotype of Eastern inferiority, portraying the East as simple and weak; a construction of Western superiority, depicting the West as rational and powerful; and the emergence of ambivalence in the power relations between the West and the East. These findings confirm that Orientalism is not merely an imaginative representation but also serves as an ideological justification for colonial domination.

Keywords: imagination, Western and Eastern, orientalism, novel, postcolonial study

Representasi Imajinasi Orientalisme Barat dan Timur dalam Novel *Sang Raja* Karya Iksaka Banu: Kajian Postkolonial

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan dan menjelaskan representasi imajinasi orientalisme Barat dan Timur dalam novel *Sang Raja* karya Iksaka Banu dengan menggunakan pemikiran orientalisme kajian postkolonial Edward W. Said kajian, yaitu: (1) imajinasi Timur sebagai pribumi yang sederhana dan inferior, (2) imajinasi Barat sebagai subjek superior dan legitim, dan (3) imajinasi ambivalen dalam relasi kuasa Barat dan Timur. Penelitian dilakukan terhadap novel *Sang Raja* karya Iksaka Banu yang menghadirkan realitas kolonial melalui sudut pandang tokoh, pengalaman historis, dan hubungan sosial antara pihak kolonial dan pribumi dalam kehidupan masyarakat kolonial. Data penelitian berupa kutipan narasi, dialog, dan peristiwa yang mengandung representasi orientalisme Barat dan Timur. Instrumen penelitian menggunakan peneliti sendiri dengan bantuan korpus data untuk memudahkan pengelompokan data sesuai fokus penelitian. Analisis data dilakukan menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif dengan teknik analisis isi melalui tahap pengumpulan, pengelompokan, penafsiran, dan penarikan simpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan adanya stereotip inferioritas Timur yang digambarkan sebagai pihak sederhana dan lemah, konstruksi superioritas Barat sebagai pihak yang rasional dan berkuasa, serta munculnya ambivalensi dalam relasi kuasa antara Barat dan Timur. Temuan ini menegaskan bahwa orientalisme tidak hanya hadir sebagai representasi imajinatif, tetapi juga berfungsi sebagai legitimasi ideologis atas dominasi kolonial.

Kata kunci: imajinasi, orientalisme, Barat dan Timur, novel, kajian postkolonial

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INTRODUCTION

Orientalism developed as an ideological construct within Western discourse, inextricably linked to the power relations between the West and the East. Through Orientalism, the image of the East is constructed as a distinct entity and often positioned as inferior, thus influencing perspectives on the identity, culture, and lives of Eastern societies. In this context, Orientalism not only presents representations but also produces meanings that harbor ideological interests in various fields, including literature.

In Edward W. Said's thinking, Orientalism is understood as a system of discourse used by the West to dominate, restructure, and control the East (Said, 1978). Thus, Orientalism is not only related to knowledge but also closely linked to power and ideology that shape collective consciousness. In literary works, Orientalism is evident through representations that present the East as a simple, irrational, and inferior entity, while the West is positioned as rational and superior. Literature, as a cultural product, cannot be separated from the social and cultural contexts that underlie it (Luxemburg, 1989; Elmustian & Jalil, 2015; Rokhmansyah, 2018), thus becoming a space for the production of meaning that reflects these power relations. This aligns with the view that literary works cannot be separated from the influence of colonialism because the colonial experience left a strong imprint on literary texts, particularly in representing power relations between the dominant and the dominated (Ratnasari et al., 2024; Nurgiantoro, 2018; Croally & Hyde, 2011; Cuddon, 1999; Culler, 2000).

This phenomenon demonstrates that Orientalism is not only present in historical contexts but also continues to be reproduced in various representations, including in literary works. Therefore, studying Orientalism is important to uncover how this construction operates and influences perspectives on the East in social and cultural relations.

Based on this description, the research questions are formulated as follows:

- 1) How is the imagination of the East as a simple and inferior native in Iksaka Banu's novel *Sang Raja*?
- 2) How is the imagination of the West as a superior and legitimate subject in Iksaka Banu's novel *Sang Raja*?
- 3) How is the ambivalent imagination of the power relations between the West and the East in Iksaka Banu's novel *Sang Raja*?

The purpose of this study is to describe the imagination of the East as a simple and inferior native, the imagination of the West as a superior and legitimate subject, and the ambivalent imagination in the power relations between the West and the East in the novel *Sang Raja* by Iksaka Banu based on the orientalist perspective of Edward W. Said.

This research is expected to provide both theoretical and practical benefits. Theoretically, this research is expected to enrich the study of postcolonial literature, particularly regarding Orientalism in Indonesian literary works. Practically, this research is expected to serve as a reference for other researchers in examining the representation of Orientalism and colonial power relations in literary works.

From Edward W. Said's perspective, Orientalism is a system of representation constructed by the West to understand and dominate the East (Said, 1978). Orientalism not only produces knowledge about the East but also forms stereotypes that position the East as inferior and the West as superior. This representation operates through various social, cultural, and literary practices that construct a binary opposition between the West and the East. In literary studies, Orientalism can be seen through the depiction of characters, culture, and social relations that demonstrate the inequality of colonial power.

Research relevant to this study includes that conducted by Lidiana Angraini in 2024, who examined Ayu Utami's novel *Bilangan Fu* using Brian McHale's postmodernist approach. Research findings indicate a duplication of reality and a blurring of the boundaries between the real and



the fictional (Angraini, 2024). Furthermore, Wilda Mardiah Wahab, in 2022, discussed Iksaka Banu's work through Homi K. Bhabha's postcolonial perspective, with findings demonstrating colonial domination, Western superiority, and identity conflicts among indigenous figures (Wahab, 2022). Another study by Wibisono et al. (2017) examined the representation of Orientalism in the film *The Great Wall*, finding that the East is represented as exotic and inferior, while the West is portrayed as a superior subject (Wibisono et al., 2017). Furthermore, Indra Wahyuddin and Syamsu Syauqani, in 2025, examined Orientalism in the study of hadith, finding that hadith are viewed as historical and social products by Orientalists (Wahyuddin & Syauqani, 2025). However, these studies tend to focus on Western representation and domination and have not specifically examined the dynamics of Orientalist imagination, encompassing Eastern inferiority, Western superiority, and the simultaneous ambivalence of power relations in literary works. Therefore, this study focuses on Orientalist imagination in Iksaka Banu's novel *Sang Raja* from the perspective of Edward W. Said, specifically on (1) the imagination of the East as a simple and inferior native, (2) the imagination of the West as a superior and legitimate subject, and (3) the ambivalent imagination in Western-Eastern power relations. This novel was chosen because it represents colonial reality through the interactions of characters that demonstrate the unequal power relations between the West and the native, making it relevant for study from an Orientalist perspective.

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative descriptive method with Edward W. Said's Orientalist approach. Data collection techniques in this study include reading and note-taking. The data collection procedure is a stage carried out to obtain information according to the research objectives of Sugiyono (2013) in (Ningsih & Ratnasari, 2025), Razak (2017), Darusalam & Hussin (2016),

Fraenkel et al. (2012), which includes: a) reading novels, b) noting quotes relevant to the imagination of orientalism, c) grouping and classifying data based on problems, d) coding, e) presenting data in instrument tables.

Furthermore, the data analysis technique used content analysis, namely by a) identifying, b) grouping, and c) interpreting data based on Orientalist theory to draw conclusions.

RESULTS

1. Imagination of the East as a Simple and Inferior Native

The results of the study indicate that Iksaka Banu's novel *Sang Raja* represents the East as a simple and inferior native. This representation is evident through social stereotypes, economic limitations, psychological inferiority, and the depiction of natives as a subordinate group within the colonial structure. This finding is based on data 1, data 8, data 12, data 17, data 24, data 29, data 36, data 53, and data 63.

Data 1 shows the representation of natives through professions such as servants, servants, coachmen, and gardeners, which indicate a subordinate social position in colonial society. Furthermore, the descriptions of "wearing a catapult necklace" and "barefoot" convey the image of native simplicity. Data 29 reveals that indigenous people are represented as a group unable to afford white cigarettes, thus demonstrating economic inferiority. Furthermore, data 36 demonstrates the stereotype of Javanese people as irrational in their actions. Meanwhile, data 53 depicts the depiction of traditional objects as "primitive objects," which constructs an image of Eastern backwardness compared to the West.

Based on the analysis, the accumulated data on the imagination of Eastern inferiority in the novel *Sang Raja* can be classified as follows.

Table 1
The Accumulation of Data on the Eastern Imagination as Simple and Inferior Indigenous People

No.	Event Description	Type of Inferiority Complex
1	Filipus played with the natives using a slingshot. (IO/BT/RP/Dt-1/23)	Social Inferiority
2	The East Indies Army was dominated by barefoot natives. (IO/BT/RP/Dt-8/27)	Military Inferiority
3	The native family failed to manage their business. (IO/BT/RP/Dt-4/24)	Intellectual Inferiority
4	Philip's parents were prouder when he socialized with the Dutch. (IO/BT/RP/Dt-6/26)	Social Inferiority
5	Wirosoeseno felt foolish for being out of the loop. (IO/BT/RP/Dt-12/70-71)	Social Inferiority
6	Indigenous people avoided eating with the Dutch. (IO/BT/RP/Dt-16/149)	Social Inferiority
7	Indigenous people were insulted by being called animals. (IO/BT/RP/Dt-17/149)	Dehumanization
8	Indigenous laborers suffered in Dutch factories.(IO/BT/RP/Dt-24/159)	Social Inferiority
9	Karmain was portrayed as immoral. (IO/BT/RP/Dt-25/170)	Moral Inferiority
10	Many indigenous people became vagrants.(IO/BT/RP/Dt-27/178)	Social Inferiority
11	Children were rented out due to poverty. (IO/BT/RP/Dt-28/178)	Social Inferiority
12	Indigenous people could not afford white cigarettes. (IO/BT/RP/Dt-29/186)	Economic Inferiority
13	Indigenous people are considered dependent. (IO/BT/RP/Dt-31/187)	Psychological Inferiority
14	Europeans fear a rebellion by indigenous workers. (IO/BT/RP/Dt-34/192)	Western Ambivalence
15	Javanese people are considered irrational in their actions.(IO/BT/RP/Dt-36/209)	Psychological Inferiority
16	The Japanese experience is viewed as "primitive fear." (IO/BT/RP/Dt-40/227)	Social Inferiority
17	Traditional objects are called primitive. (IO/BT/RP/Dt-53/306)	Social Inferiority
18	Filipus, who described himself as being like a villager. (IO/BT/RP/Dt-54/316)	Social Inferiority
19	Farmers were forced to hand over their harvest. (IO/BT/RP/Dt-55/320)	Social Inferiority
20	Nitsemito is considered irrational because of tradition. (IO/BT/RP/Dt-63/375)	Psychological Inferiority



2. Imagination of the West as a Superior and Legitimate Subject

The research results show that the novel "Sang Raja" represents the West as a superior and legitimate subject in colonial life. This representation is evident through political domination, control of social space, ideological control, racial hierarchy, and symbolic legitimacy over indigenous communities. This finding is based on data 2, data 3, data 15, data 19, data 33, data 43, data 45, data 49, data 52, and data 60.

Data 3 demonstrates the view that the West is destined to lead the indigenous people. Data 43 finds that European racial identity confers social

advantages in access to colonial education. Furthermore, data 45 demonstrates the involvement of indigenous laborers in colonial ceremonies as a form of legitimacy of Western power in the public sphere. Furthermore, data 49 demonstrates that the West has the authority to assess and control indigenous culture. Meanwhile, data 52 demonstrates the practice of racial discrimination through signs prohibiting indigenous people from entering certain public spaces.

Based on the analysis, the accumulated data on Western imagination as a superior and legitimate subject in the novel Sang Raja can be classified as follows.

Table 2
 The Accumulation of Western Discourse as a Superior and Legitimate Subject

No.	Event Description	Superiority Imagination Type
1	Father Filipus considered knowledge of the natives to be important. (IO/BT/RP/Dt-2/24)	Epistemological Superiority
2	Father Filipus stated that the West was destined to lead the natives. (IO/BT/RP/Dt-3/24)	Ideological Superiority
3	The Dutch army in the East Indies was considered weak. (IO/BT/RP/Dt-7/27)	Structural Superiority
4	Rama is considered unfit to discuss Wiro's future. (IO/BT/RP/Dt-10/41)	Structural Superiority
5	Mr. Poolman believes the West is superior to the indigenous people. (IO/BT/RP/Dt-15/107)	Ideological Superiority
6	Filipus states that the West is better able to read the situation. (IO/BT/RP/Dt-18/154)	Psychological Superiority
7	Dutch companies control the organization's funding. (IO/BT/RP/Dt-19/155)	Economic Superiority
8	The Sarekat Islam movement is monitored by the colonial government. (IO/BT/RP/Dt-20/155)	Political Superiority
9	Indigenous people acknowledge that Mr. Rechterhand knows everything. (IO/BT/RP/Dt-22/157)	Intellectual Superiority
10	The colony was exploited for Western gain. (IO/BT/RP/Dt-26/172)	Economic Superiority

11	Governor-General De Jonge enforced strict colonial control. (IO/BT/RP/Dt-33/189)	Political Superiority
12	The use of the Dutch Queen's symbols was considered sacred. (IO/BT/RP/Dt-35/207)	Symbolic Superiority
13	European clothing became the standard of social prestige. (IO/BT/RP/Dt-38/209)	Cultural Superiority
14	The colonial legal system instilled fear. (IO/BT/RP/Dt-39/227)	Political Superiority
15	Leaders of the national movement were monitored by the West. (IO/BT/RP/Dt-42/234)	Political Superiority
16	Hans was more accepted because of his European racial identity. (IO/BT/RP/Dt-43/237)	Racial Superiority
17	Nitisemito remained looked down upon despite his wealth. (IO/BT/RP/Dt-44/248-249)	Symbolic Social Superiority (Body Hierarchy)
18	Laborers were involved in colonial ceremonies. (IO/BT/RP/Dt-45/252)	Political Superiority
19	The West assessed and controlled indigenous culture. (IO/BT/RP/Dt-49/269)	Cultural Superiority
20	A teacher was dismissed because his teachings were considered dangerous. (IO/BT/RP/Dt-47/264)	Ideological Superiority (Institutional)
21	The West was suspicious of the potential for indigenous resistance. (IO/BT/RP/Dt-50/271)	Psychological Superiority
22	The European Community restricts social interaction. (IO/BT/RP/Dt-51/272-273)	Social Superiority
23	Signs prohibiting discrimination in public spaces. (IO/BT/RP/Dt-52/274)	Racial Superiority-Dehumanization
24	People are required to carry a pass. (IO/BT/RP/Dt-60/355)	Administrative-Political Superiority

3. Ambivalent Imagination in Western-Eastern Power Relations

The research results show that the novel *Sang Raja* also presents an ambivalent imagination in Western-Eastern power relations. This ambivalence is evident through identity conflicts, personal relationships, criticism of colonialism, and changes in the characters' perspectives on indigenous communities. These findings are based on data 5, 9, 13, 14, 30, 46, 59, 61, and 62.

Data 5 demonstrates the experience of alienation experienced by Western characters in the Dutch East Indies. Data 9 and 13 reveal that Filipus's relationship with Walini creates social tension in the relationship between the West and indigenous people. Furthermore, data 30 demonstrates criticism of the injustices perpetrated by the colonial authorities against laborers and indigenous communities. Fur-



thermore, data 46 indicates that the Indo group was not fully accepted into the colonial social structure. Meanwhile, data 59 and 62 demonstrate changes in the perceptions of Western characters after directly encountering colonial realities.

On the analysis, the accumulated data on ambivalent imagery in the power relations between the West and the East in the novel *Sang Raja* can be classified as follows.

Table 3
 Accumulation of Data on Ambivalent Imagery in Power Relations Between the West and the East

No.	Event Description	Ambivalent Imagination Type
1	Filipus felt oppressed and alienated in the Dutch East Indies. (IO/BT/RP/Dt-5/24)	Ambivalensi Psikologis
2	Walini's marriage was used as a colonial protection strategy. (IO/BT/RP/Dt-9/31)	Ambivalensi Relasi Personal
3	Filipus and Walini's relationship faced social pressure. (IO/BT/RP/Dt-11/60)	Ambivalensi Relasi Sosial
4	Philip's love for the indigenous people was questioned. (IO/BT/RP/Dt-13/98)	Ambivalensi Relasi Emosional
5	Philip felt at ease among the indigenous people. (IO/BT/RP/Dt-14/98-99)	Ambivalensi Identitas Kultural
6	The West viewed the indigenous mindset as irrational. (IO/BT/RP/Dt-21/156)	Ambivalensi Representasi Kultural
7	Indigenous people remain subordinate under colonial law. (IO/BT/RP/Dt-23/159)	Ambivalensi Struktur Kuasa
8	Criticism of internal colonial injustice. (IO/BT/RP/Dt-30/187)	Ambivalensi Kritik Kolonial
9	Western-indigenous relations are not always emotional. (IO/BT/RP/Dt-32/188)	Ambivalensi Relasi Personal
10	Indigenous people idealized the West. (IO/BT/RP/Dt-37/209)	Ambivalensi Imajinasi Sosial
11	Ambiguous responsibility in power relations. (IO/BT/RP/Dt-41/232)	Ambivalensi Identitas
12	Indonesians are not fully accepted. (IO/BT/RP/Dt-46/263)	Ambivalensi Identitas Rasial
13	Closeness does not erase social boundaries. (IO/BT/RP/Dt-48/266)	Ambivalensi Relasi Sosial
14	Women in the military racial hierarchy. (IO/BT/RP/Dt-56/335)	Ambivalensi Struktur Sosial

16	Decisions are influenced by Javanese identity. (IO/BT/RP/Dt-57/346)	Ambivalensi Identitas Kultural
17	The colonizers construct a narrative of indigenous incapacity. (IO/BT/RP/Dt-58/347)	Ambivalensi Wacana Kolonial
18	Filipus questions his own identity (IO/BT/RP/Dt-59/350)	Ambivalensi Identitas
19	Reality undermines colonial propaganda.(IO/BT/RP/Dt-61/362)	Ambivalensi Wacana Kolonial
20	Characters' perceptions change after direct experience. (IO/BT/RP/Dt-62/375)	Ambivalensi Perubahan Persepsi

DISCUSSION

Orientalism as a discourse system functions not only as a representation but also as an ideological mechanism that shapes perspectives on the East. Through Orientalism, the East is constructed as something that appears natural, when in fact it is a social and historical construction that simplifies reality. From Edward W. Said's perspective, Orientalism embodies the West's interest in maintaining dominance over the East through various representational practices, including in literary works, thus emphasizing the power relations between the two. These representations include: (1) the imagination of the East as inferior, (2) the imagination of the West as superior, and (3) the ambivalent imagination of the relationship between the two.

The Imagination of the East as a Simple and Inferior Native

The imagination of the East as a simple and inferior native demonstrates that Orientalism shapes the image of the East through simplification. The East is represented as an entity limited in rationality, morality, and civilization, which is actually a discursive construction from a Western perspective. This process reduces and generalizes Eastern identity into stereotypes that are considered universal truths, while also becoming a form of symbolic domination that places natives in a subordinate position.

In the novel *Sang Raja*, this representation appears dominant through the perspective of a character who records the colonial experience, thus reinforcing the position of indigenous people as a subordinate group within the social structure. As shown in the following data:



Figure 1
 Illustration of a Child Playing with a Slingshot

(1) "Unlike most of my Dutch peers, my childhood was filled with rogue adventures with the natives who worked as servants, maids, coachmen, or gardeners at my father's hotel. Wearing a slingshot around my neck and barefoot like most native children, I didn't hesitate to go in and out of the market accompanying Kadir, our servant, shopping for hotel supplies." (IO/BT/RP/Dt-1/23)

The Eastern imagination in this data is demonstrated through the representation of professions such as servants, maids, coachmen, and gardeners, which signify a subordinate position within the colonial structure. The descriptions "wearing

a slingshot around my neck" and "barefoot" reinforce the image of native simplicity, while simultaneously forming generalizations and stereotypes that simplify Eastern identity. These representations demonstrate the social stratification within the colonial structure that placed natives at the bottom (Pradahati & Susanto, 2026). From an Orientalist perspective, this reflects the construction of the East as the Other, understood through simplification and inferiority (Said, 1978).

The imagination of Eastern inferiority is also constructed through depictions of spaces and objects inherent in indigenous life.



Figure 2
Coconut Shell Dipper

Source: <https://www.instagram.com/p/CdmvCnIPr86/>

(17) It is positioned adjacent to a wooden barrel filled with fresh water, equipped with a coconut shell dipper. Behind these primitive objects, a sturdy iron door stands, with a hole a cubit long and the width of a letter envelope. (IO/BT/RP/Dt-53/306)

The imagination of the East as a simple and inferior native is marked through the construction of meanings regarding "primitive objects." Iksaka Banu presents an image of the space and equipment used by the natives as simple and traditional. Philip's mention of this constructs a discourse that positions the Eastern environment in a different image from Western standards of modernity. Seen within the construction of Orientalism, this repre-

sentation demonstrates the opposition between East and West, constructed through differences in space and symbolism. From an Orientalist perspective, this demonstrates the existence of a binary opposition construct that positions the East as inferior and the West as superior (Fauziah, 2024). Based on the research findings, the imagination of Eastern inferiority is dominated by social aspects, indicating that the construction of indigenous subordination is most often represented through social relations within the colonial context.

Imagination of the West as a Superior and Legitimate Subject

The imagination of the West as a superior and legitimate subject in the novel "Sang Raja" is presented through a discourse construct that positions the West as authoritative, rational, and powerful in colonial life. This representation is evident in social relations and practices of domination, such as control of space, the establishment of rules, and the establishment of higher standards of value, including through racial hierarchies that influence access to education. This is evident in the following data:

(16) Although Hans is Indo and fluent in Malay, his overall appearance reflects his father's race. In terms of education, this is clearly advantageous. He was accepted without much difficulty into a Dutch school. (IO/BT/RP/Dt-43/237)

This representation demonstrates that racial identity determines access to education. Proximity to a European identity, such as Hans's, provided social advantages within colonial institutions. Thus, race functioned as a social instrument determining mobility and opportunity within colonial structures.

This finding aligns with Obet's (Sunandar & Wulandari, 2026), who stated that racial hierarchy functioned as a tool of colonial control to limit social mobility and access to certain rights for non-European groups. From an Orientalist perspective,

this condition reflects the construction of the West as a legitimate subject in determining standards and access to social institutions, including education (Said, 1978).

The imagination of the West as a superior and legitimate subject is also represented through ceremonial practices involving symbols of colonial power in public spaces. This is evident in the following data:

(18) We also asked for the willingness of hundreds of factory workers to squat on either side of the road, waving two types of flags. Red, white, and blue represent the Dutch flag, and red, white, and red represent the Kasunan Soerakarta flag. (IO/BT/RP/Dt-45/252)

This scene demonstrates how colonial power was demonstrated through public rituals involving indigenous people as part of symbolic representation. The phrase "we also ask for their willingness" indicates that the workers' participation was not entirely voluntary, but rather part of a mechanism for legitimizing power. The presence of the Dutch flag in public space, waved alongside local flags, reinforced colonial domination while simultaneously demonstrating symbolic control over space and society.

The involvement of indigenous people in these public practices can be understood as an ideological strategy to strengthen the legitimacy of colonial power, so that seemingly collective participation remains essentially within the framework of Western domination (Setiawan & Muhsinin, 2016). From an Orientalist perspective, these practices reflect the construction of the West as a subject with the power to regulate and exploit the East to support the continuation of its power (Said, 19709).

The imagination of the West as a superior and legitimate subject is also evident in the practice of controlling public space, which allows the West to unilaterally establish social boundaries, as in the following data:

(23) "Just like the two of us here, right? Every month we receive a guilder from them. Meanwhile, at the entrance to the swimming pool and several city parks, signs reading 'Natives and Dogs Not Allowed' are still posted," I replied. (IO/BT/RP/Dt-52/274)



Figure 3

Dutch Guilder Notes

Source: <https://id.wikipedia.org/>

The prohibition sign demonstrates the West's authority in determining access to public space, while simultaneously asserting its position as the dominant group within the colonial structure. This practice not only establishes social boundaries but also legitimizes power through the exclusion of indigenous people from spaces deemed representative. The pairing of the words "indigenous" with "dog" reinforces the practice of dehumanization that places Eastern people in an unequal position.

This finding aligns with Yasa's assertion that colonialism stereotyped indigenous people through association with animalistic imagery as a form of legitimacy of domination, thus reinforcing their position as an inferior group within the social order (Yasa, 2013). From an Orientalist perspective, this representation reflects the construction of the West as a powerful subject with the legitimacy to regulate and define the East (Said, 1978).

Based on the research results, the most dominant form of Western superiority was political, indicating that the construction of colonial power

was primarily represented through domination of indigenous people in the political sphere.

Ambivalent Imagination in the Power Relations Between the West and the East

The ambivalent imagination in the power relations between the West and the East in the novel "Sang Raja" is demonstrated through the contradictory experiences of Western characters when confronted directly with colonial realities. This is evident in the following data:

20. "You don't know the pain of being a useless person in the Indies, this inhumane land. Especially since you are an only child. Look at our neighbors, the Dutch, whose behavior and economic circumstances make us ashamed to live among the natives." (IO/BT/RP/Dt-5/24)

The phrase "useless people in the Indies" indicates the experience of alienation experienced by Western characters in the colonial region. Meanwhile, the phrase "this inhumane land" presents an image of the Indies as a harsh and emotionally oppressive space. This representation shows that the presence of the West in the colonial region was not always synonymous with comfort and power, but was also accompanied by anxiety and psychological instability.

This phenomenon reflects that East-West relations are not singular and stable, but rather contain tensions that reveal the contradictory side of colonial practices (Rosidi, 2020). From an Orientalist perspective, this situation demonstrates that direct encounters with the East can shake the discursive construction of Western superiority (Said, 1978).

The ambivalence in East-West power relations is also evident in the following data:

(8) "I will not immediately condemn Sneevliet's followers yesterday. In fact, many white bosses are tyrannical and indifferent to their welfare. Let

alone the natives, these bosses don't even care about their own sailors and railway workers." (IO/BT/RP/Dt-30/187). (Banu, 2017)



Figure 4

Henk Sneevliet

Source: https://id.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henk_Sneevliet

Filipus' statement demonstrates an acknowledgment of the unjust practices perpetrated by the colonial powers. The phrase "despotic white boss" marks a critique of Western domination, which oppressed not only indigenous people but also other groups, including fellow Europeans. This representation demonstrates that colonial power relations were not entirely stable, but rather contained internal contradictions within their practices.

This phenomenon demonstrates that the practice of colonialism was inseparable from conflict and inequality, which also occurred within the dominant group itself, thus demonstrating that East-West relations were shaped by power dynamics that were not entirely homogeneous (Wijaya, 2025). From an Orientalist perspective, this condition indicates that the construction of Western superiority was not always intact, but could experience cracks when faced with the reality of contradictory social practices (Said, 1978).

on the research findings, the most dominant ambivalence emerged in personal aspects, social relations, cultural identity, colonial identity, and

discourse. This suggests that attitudinal tensions within the colonial context were primarily represented through identity struggles, social relations, and the discursive clash between Western and Eastern values.

CONCLUSION

Iksaka Banu's novel "Sang Raja" demonstrates the existence of Orientalist imagination through three main forms: the imagination of the East as a simple and inferior native, the imagination of the West as a superior and legitimate subject, and the imagination of ambivalence in the power relations between the West and the East. Based on the data findings, the dominant tendency was the imagination of the West as a superior and legitimate subject, which appeared most frequently, thus demonstrating the strong construction of Western domination in various aspects of colonial life.

The imagination of the West as a superior and legitimate subject was displayed through various forms of power encompassing knowledge, ideology, economics, politics, and even symbolism. The West was present not only as a structural ruler but also as the party that set the standards of value and truth in colonial life. Meanwhile, the imagination of the East as inferior remains a crucial part of constructing this discourse, particularly through social, economic, and psychological representations that place indigenous people in a subordinate position.

On the other hand, the ambivalent imagination demonstrates that the relationship between the West and the East is not entirely stable and binary, but rather contains complex dynamics. In several instances, Western domination is accompanied by anxiety, internal criticism, and personal relationships that demonstrate the contradictions within colonial practices.

Thus, Orientalism in this novel not only represents Western domination and Eastern inferiority but also presents an ambivalence that demonstrates the dynamic nature of colonial power rela-

tions. These three forms of imagination are interconnected and form a system of discourse that reflects both the ideological construction and the complexity of the relationship between the West and the East.

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