ISSN:2356-0770
E-ISSN: 2685-2705
SEUNEUBOK LADA: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Sejarah, Sosial, Budaya dan Pendidikan
Vol. 13 No. 1 (2026): 59-74 ; DOI. **https://doi.org/10.33059/jsnbl.v13i1.14085**
Received: 02/01/2026 Revised: 03/16/2026 Accepted: 03/30/2026

CORRUPTION IN THE COLONIAL PERIOD: SOCIAL CRITICISM OF THE INDIGENOUS ELITE IN *MAX HAVELAAR (1976)*

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the representation of corruption in the film *Max Havelaar* (1976) directed by Fons Rademakers as a form of social criticism toward the colonial power structure in the Dutch East Indies. The study is based on the perspective that corruption is not merely an individual moral deviation, but a practice embedded within a system of power relations involving colonial authorities and indigenous elites. The objective of this research is to analyze how the film *Max Havelaar* represents corrupt practices among indigenous elites and how such representations function as a critique of the exploitative colonial system. This research employs a qualitative approach using film text analysis within the framework of cultural studies. The analysis applies representation theory, the concept of hegemony, and postcolonial perspectives to interpret scenes, dialogues, and characters presented in the film. The findings reveal that the film portrays corruption as an institutionalized practice within the colonial power structure, particularly through the involvement of indigenous elites acting as intermediaries of colonial authority. The film also illustrates how social legitimacy, customary norms, and patronage relations are used to normalize abuses of power against local communities. Beyond depicting the colonial context of the nineteenth century, the film's critique remains relevant for understanding contemporary corruption issues in Indonesia. This research contributes to cultural history and film studies by demonstrating that film functions as a cultural text that represents and critiques colonial power relations and the historical roots of corruption in Indonesia.

Keywords: *History of Corruption, Indigenous Elite, Film, Max Havelaar*

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini membahas representasi korupsi dalam film *Max Havelaar* (1976) karya Fons Rademakers sebagai bentuk kritik sosial terhadap struktur kekuasaan kolonial di Hindia Belanda. Kajian ini muncul dari pandangan bahwa korupsi tidak hanya merupakan penyimpangan moral individu, tetapi juga praktik yang terbentuk dalam sistem kekuasaan yang melibatkan relasi antara pemerintah kolonial dan elite pribumi. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis bagaimana film *Max Havelaar* merepresentasikan praktik korupsi elite pribumi serta bagaimana representasi tersebut berfungsi sebagai kritik terhadap sistem kolonial yang eksploitatif. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode analisis teks film dalam kerangka kajian budaya. Analisis dilakukan dengan memanfaatkan teori representasi, konsep hegemoni, dan perspektif poskolonial untuk menafsirkan adegan,

dialog, dan karakter dalam film. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa film *Max Havelaar* merepresentasikan korupsi sebagai praktik yang dilembagakan dalam struktur kekuasaan kolonial melalui keterlibatan elite pribumi sebagai perantara kekuasaan. Film ini juga memperlihatkan bagaimana legitimasi sosial, adat, dan relasi patronase digunakan untuk menormalisasi penyalahgunaan kekuasaan terhadap masyarakat. Selain menggambarkan kondisi kolonial abad ke-19, kritik yang disampaikan film ini juga memiliki relevansi dengan persoalan korupsi di Indonesia kontemporer. Penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi pada kajian sejarah budaya dan studi film dengan menunjukkan bahwa film dapat berfungsi sebagai teks budaya yang merepresentasikan sekaligus mengkritik relasi kekuasaan kolonial dan warisan historis praktik korupsi di Indonesia.

Kata Kunci: Sejarah Korupsi, Elite Pribumi, Film, Max Havelaar

INTRODUCTION

The film *Max Havelaar* (1976) directed by Fons Rademakers is an adaptation of the novel *Max Havelaar* by Multatuli which strongly criticizes the practice of Dutch colonialism in Java. The film not only depicts the economic exploitation and injustice of the colonial system of government, but also showcases the active role of indigenous elites in maintaining and running the system. Through its characters, this film shows how corruption and abuse of power are part of daily life in colonial structures.

Corruption is a social and political problem that cannot be separated from the power relations and the historical course of a country. In recent studies, corruption is no longer understood solely as an individual moral fault, but as a practice that grows and persists in a certain system of government. This practice continues because of unbalanced power relations, weak supervision, and normalization of abuse of authority in the power structure itself (Wibowo et al., 2025). Thus, corruption must be understood as a structural problem rooted in systems and history, not simply individual deviant behavior.

In Indonesia, corruption is often considered a post-independence problem, especially related to the modern bureaucracy, weak law enforcement, and contemporary political practices. However, this view tends to ignore the historical fact that corrupt practices have developed long before Indonesia's independence. A number of historical studies show that during the colonial period, corruption had become part of the Dutch East Indies system of government and took place systematically (Claudia et al., 2024). This practice does not stand alone, but is closely tied to the way colonial power was exercised in the colonies. Thus, this study views corruption not just as an individual moral deviation, but as a practice that is formed and developed in the

colonial power structure and the historical dynamics that surround it.

The importance of studying corruption in the colonial period becomes increasingly relevant if it is associated with the current condition of Indonesia. Reports (Transparency International., 2023) shows that Indonesia still faces serious problems in efforts to eradicate corruption. This indicates the continuity of the pattern of power and political culture from the colonial period to the present. A number of studies also confirm that colonial legacy has a great influence on the development of corrupt practices in former colonial countries, especially through administrative systems that are hierarchical, exploitative, and lack of accountability (Acemoglu et al., 2001; Lange, 2009). Therefore, understanding the historical roots of corruption is an important step to explain why the practice still persists today.

In conveying history to the wider community, film has a very important role. Movies not only serve as entertainment, but also as a medium that shapes society's perspective on the past. Historical films are able to re-present certain events, figures, and social conditions, while conveying values, moral messages, and social criticism of power (Rosenstone, 2023). Through visual language and narrative, films can show the practices of injustice and abuse of power in a way that is easier for the public to understand.

Previous studies on *Max Havelaar* generally focuses on animal representations as well as stories Love and Sisterhood, and about racial discrimination. Meanwhile, studies on corruption during the colonial period in Indonesia are mostly carried out through an economic and political historical approach using archives, colonial government reports, and administrative policies as the main sources (Booth, 2007). On the other hand, colonial-themed film research often highlights the issue of orientalism and West–East relations, without specifically addressing the corrupt practices of indigenous elites as a form of social criticism (Bignell, 2004). Thus, there has been no study that specifically examines the corrupt representation of indigenous elites in film as a social critique of the colonial system.

The limitation of previous research lies in the lack of studies that link colonial history, corrupt practices, and films at the same time. In fact, movies can be an important source to see how corruption is displayed, criticized, and normalized through stories, characters, and visual symbols. This emptiness is the main basis for this

research to be asserted. Thus, this research is different because it analyzes *the representation of corruption* in film as a cultural text, not just colonial history or literary studies.

Based on this background, this study aims to analyze how corruption in the colonial period was described as a form of social criticism of the indigenous elite in the film *Max Havelaar* (1976). This research is expected to contribute to the study of colonial history and film studies, especially in understanding corruption as a problem that has long roots in Indonesian history. In addition, this research is also expected to be able to help the community revisit the role of local elites in the colonial power system in a more critical and reflective manner.

METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive-analytical type of research. A qualitative approach using film text analysis as part of cultural studies. The film *Max Havelaar* (1976) by Fons Rademakers needs to be positioned methodologically as a cultural text that is analyzed in depth.

This type of descriptive-analytical research is used because this research not only describes the content of the film, but also analyzes the social messages and criticisms conveyed. Through this type of research, film is understood as a medium that conveys a certain view of colonial history, especially regarding the relationship between the colonial government and the indigenous elite. This study uses three main theoretical frameworks to interpret the content of the film. First, representation theory to understand how films construct meaning about corruption and the position of indigenous elites through the scenes, dialogues, and characters shown. Second, the theory of hegemony to explain how colonial power can be maintained through social consent and the role of indigenous elites as power brokers. Third, postcolonial theory to analyze the ambivalent position of indigenous elites who are between colonial interests and local communities. These three theoretical frameworks are used together to understand how films represent corrupt practices and power relations in colonial contexts.

Data collection in this study was carried out through literature studies and film documentation analysis. The primary data in this study is the film *Max Havelaar* (1976). This film is the main source to see how corruption and colonial power relations

are portrayed. Secondary data in this study are books and articles relevant to the research.

DISCUSSION

A. An Overview of Corruption in the Colonial Power System

Corruption in the colonial context cannot be separated from the unbalanced power structure and domination relations that are systematically built. In Indonesian history, the practice of corruption is not a phenomenon that appeared suddenly in the post-independence period, but has taken root since the colonial period, especially when economic and political power was controlled by certain indigenous elites who collaborated with colonial rulers. In the modern sense, corruption can be understood as an act that violates the constitution and the law when leaders no longer act in the public interest, but rather prioritize personal and group gains (Dhohirrobbi, 2024). This depiction of power relations is also represented in Max Havelaar's film, which shows how colonial officials and indigenous elites exercised power in the colonies through practices that were laced with abuse of authority. When viewed through the concept of representation, these scenes show how the film constructs a meaning about corruption not only as an individual act, but as part of a colonial power structure that involves various actors in the system.

In the 17th to 18th centuries, corrupt practices had developed in the Western bureaucracy through the VOC institutions. Although the VOC was known as a Dutch-owned company, most of its employees were not from the Netherlands, but from various European ethnic backgrounds and local indigenous people (Dhohirrobbi, 2024). This condition shows that corruption is not solely inherited by one nation, but grows in a system that provides opportunities for the abuse of power. In the process of colonization, the VOC also introduced Western culture to the archipelago, including the system of government, law, and business ethics which contained corrupt practices that were previously prevalent in Europe (Claudia et al., 2024). This historical context is an important background for understanding how films *Max Havelaar* represents the practice of corruption as part of the colonial power structure that has been formed since the early days of colonialism.

The existence of the VOC not only had an impact on economic and political aspects, but also shaped the way of life and mindset of the people during the colonial period. The corrupt practices carried out by the VOC slowly shaped the mindset and behavior of the local ruling elite, so that corruption became part of the power mechanism that was considered reasonable (Claudia et al., 2024). Even after the VOC was dissolved due to rampant misappropriation and abuse of authority, the practice of corruption did not simply disappear, but continued to be inherent in the colonial government structure and the indigenous elite (Claudia et al., 2024). In the movie *Max Havelaar*, this condition is illustrated through the relationship between colonial officials and local elites who continue to practice power that benefits certain groups, while indigenous people are in a disadvantaged position.

Efforts to eradicate corruption were carried out during the Daendels administration through a centralistic power system. Before Daendels came to power, corruption and bribery were rampant among both company officials and indigenous local elites. To improve this condition, Daendels carried out bureaucratic reforms with the aim of simplifying supervision and reducing the chances of corruption (Raharjo, 2024). The policies he implemented, such as the construction of the 1100 km long Post Highway, the establishment of military fortifications, and the reform of the legal and judicial system in Java, showed that there was an effort to control power centrally (Raharjo, 2024). However, after the VOC was dissolved, the Dutch Colonial Government's policy of expansion and intervention continued. The appointment of Daendels as Governor General was a strategic step to maintain colonial dominance in the archipelago (Arifin, 2021). In practice, the colonial system still involves the indigenous elite as an extension of power, so that the relationship between colonialism and feudalism continues to be intertwined in a mutually beneficial manner (Situmorang et al., 2021). From the perspective of hegemony, the involvement of the indigenous elite can be understood as a form of legitimacy of colonial power with "customary" dahlil. This shows that colonial power was not only maintained through coercion, but also through social agreement formed through cooperation with local elites who produced popular consciousness so that exploitation appeared as a cultural justification.

When colonial powers sought to gain a foothold in the European market, they

took advantage of the fertility of the soil by encouraging landowners to divert some of their labor and time to grow other commodities. To influence the village community to be willing to do so, simple policies are implemented. Because the population tended to obey their leaders, the colonial side had enough influence on these leaders through the promise of profit sharing (Multatuli, 2019). This strategy has also proven effective. Colonialism, in this case, cannot be understood solely as a form of European superiority over the natives. It is a complex system that works through various social structures to maintain power. One of the important relationships in this system is the interdependence relationship between colonialism and local feudalism (Situmorang et al., 2021). Thus, corruption in the colonial context can be understood not only as an individual deviation, but as part of a power system that allows the abuse of authority to occur. Through the medium of film *Max Havelaar*, the practice is represented again as a critique of the colonial power structure involving both colonial rulers and indigenous elites, as well as showing that the problem of corruption in power relations has relevance in the context of modern power.

B. Representation of Corrupt Practices in *Max Havelaar* 's Film (1976)

During the colonial period, the Dutch government implemented an indirect rule system, namely by utilizing indigenous elites as intermediaries of colonial power. Local elites such as regents, patihs, and district officials are given broad authority in regulating their territories, including in tax collection, labor supervision, and management of people's agricultural products. On the one hand, this system made it easier for the colonial government to control the colonies without having to involve many European officials. However, on the other hand, the system opens up a great opportunity for abuse of power, because great authority is not balanced by strict supervision.

In this context, corruption in the colonial period cannot be understood only as the actions of certain individuals, but rather as part of a deliberately formed system of power. Corrupt practices arose from cooperation between colonial officials and indigenous elites who both benefited from the system. Indigenous elites are often in a "dilemmatic" position, i.e. on the one hand they are part of the local community, but on the other hand they act as a tool of colonial power that oppresses its own people.

Criticism of this condition is sharply conveyed by Multatuli through the novel

Max Havelaar (1860). Multatuli's criticism was not only directed at the Dutch colonial elite, but also directed at the natives who served as an extension of colonial power. In the colonial government structure, the regent was a high-ranking indigenous official who had a close relationship with the Dutch government. They have the status of salaried officials and generally come from the local nobility. Through the story of the Regent of Lebak, Multatuli highlighted the practice of abuse of power carried out by the indigenous elite, such as forcing residents to work in rice fields owned by the regent without getting wages (Zaki & Muharram, 2024). In addition to being called regent, the position is also known by various titles, such as Tumenggung, Duduk, and even Prince (Multatuli, 2019). This representation shows that the oppression of the people was not only carried out by the colonial side, but also by the local elite who used their position for personal gain.

The indigenous elite in the colonial system occupies an "ambivalent" position. Movies *Max Havelaar* (1976) represents the practice of corruption in concrete terms through dialogues and scenes that depict the daily life of the people under colonial rule and the intervention of the colonial elite. Corruption is not shown as a covert act, but as a practice that is clearly and considered reasonable. In the film, the community is represented as if they consider it to be something normal (Febrianto & Putra, 2020). The people in the film describe that: I will do anything as long as my leader is happy and happy, without knowing that they have been enslaved on the basis of the concept of superiors with subordinates. The levy to the regent is seen as a "right", not as an irregularity. The people were forced to surrender in the form of coercion in the form of buffaloes which were animals to plunder the people's rice fields. The buffalo was taken from the people with the purpose of being a food menu for the guests of the Regent of Lebak. This is done for the reason of maintaining the image and honor of the Regent of Lebak for guests who come to their area.

Indigenous elites are given certain authority to govern a region in which they are located, but this authority is often abused for personal gain. This condition is clearly illustrated in the mandatory work practices that apply in the Lebak area. These forms of work are such as *"herendienste, desadiensten, dan pancendiensten"* It has no clear restrictions on the time or amount of labor. As a result, local officials can arbitrarily mobilize (rule) the people for their own personal interests (Situmorang et

al., 2021). This practice shows that local power is used as a tool to exploit the people, and this is justified by the colonial system. It can be seen in the film that the Regent of Lebak uses the power of his people to clean the yard of his house without being paid or given food. The Regent of Lebak himself considers this to be a natural thing, because it is a system between leaders and subordinates—where the people must obey all the orders of their leaders.

This kind of thing is sharply conveyed by Multatuli through his novel *Max Havelaar* which he compiled in just about a month in an attic room in Brussels and contained a real picture of the arbitrariness of the Regent of Lebak and his subordinates (Suarta, 2022). However, behind this narrative, there is an implicit deep criticism of colonial political policies that allow structural corruption to occur. Max Havelaar's letter to residents is one of the important parts of the narrative of the criticism. The letter was motivated by the many complaints of the people regarding the arbitrary actions of the Regent of Raden Adipati Karta Natanegara and Demang Parangkujang, who carried out confiscation, mobilized labor for personal interests, and collected excessive amounts of worship levies (Situmorang et al., 2021). Havelaar's lawsuit against the indigenous officials shows that corruption was not only carried out by the colonial rulers, but also by local elites who collaborated with the colonial system.

Pramoedya Ananta Toer said *Max Havelaar* as a "killer book of colonialism" because of its role in raising public awareness and pushing for policy change, such as the discontinuation of "Cultuurstelsel*"* and replaced by "Ethical Politics" (Situmorang et al., 2021). Although the policy carried the idea of progress for the bumiputra, in practice access to colonial education was only enjoyed by the indigenous aristocracy, so that social inequality continued (Situmorang et al., 2021). Multatuli's critical view is different from the perspective *Neerlandosentris* who judged that the practice of colonial violence could not be generalized as the actions of all Dutch people in the East Indies. Through *Max Havelaar*, Multatuli actually shows the existence of European individuals who also opposed colonial injustices (Widyawati & Andalas, 2021). This confirms that colonialism is a system, not just a matter of "individual morality" itself. As a literary work, *Max Havelaar* occupies an important position in the Dutch literary tradition and is often referred to as the first "East Indies novel" (Honings et al., 2021). This kind of literary work was born from the historical journey of a nation which is

often a source of inspiration for authors in representing social reality (Wellek & Warren, 2014; Widyawati & Andalas, 2021).

Movies *Max Havelaar* As an adaptation of the novel, it can be seen as a development of literary works in a visual medium. Although the film is not a literary work, it contains literary elements that are visualized through the script and dialogue (Maharani, 2025). Film is closely related to cultural values and acts as a medium to convey messages of social criticism to the public (Nurbani & Adim, 2024; Sa'diyah & Pramujiono, 2025). The power of film as a medium of criticism can be seen from how power is not only interpreted in the political realm, but also as the ability to influence the way people think or form hegemony (Febrianto & Putra, 2020; Sa'diyah & Pramujiono, 2025). The social criticism presented in the film is able to challenge established norms and encourage society to reflect on social issues more deeply (Auliya et al., 2025).

However, during the New Order period, the state's ideology was strictly implemented through censorship institutions. The Film Censorship Institute (LSF) views films as media that have the potential to threaten morality and political stability, so that political and ideological aspects are the main concerns in censorship policies (Erwantoro, 2011). Movies *Max Havelaar* had been detained by the Film Censorship Agency (BSF) since 1975 and only obtained a distribution permit in 1985, even its screening was banned until it was finally revoked in 1987 because it was considered to contain sharp criticism of the ruling elite and the indigenous nobility ((Erwantoro, 2011; Situmorang et al., 2021). The ban shows that criticism of corruption and power, both in colonial and modern contexts, has always been considered sensitive. Multatuli's sharp criticism of colonial elites, indigenous officials, and people who chose to remain silent was intended as a moral (humanist) foothold to affirm their commitment to the values of justice and humanity (Zaki & Muharram, 2024). Thus, the indigenous elite in *Max Havelaar* It not only serves as an antagonist, but as a symbol of the corrupt and exploitative colonial power system. Multatuli's criticism of colonial elites, indigenous officials, and people who chose to remain silent was intended as a moral foothold to affirm their commitment to the values of justice and humanity (Zaki & Muharram, 2024). This criticism remains relevant today, especially in understanding the historical roots of corruption in Indonesia.

C. The Relevance of Max Havelaar's *Critique of Colonial Corruption* to Contemporary Indonesia

Criticism of corruption presented in *Max Havelaar* does not stop as a portrait of past history, but has a strong relevance in seeing the reality of Indonesia today. This understanding is important because until now corruption is still a structural problem that overshadows the life of the nation and the state (Dhohirrobbi, 2024). In the collective memory of the Indonesian people, colonialism is often understood simply as Dutch colonialism for 350 years. This view has long been rooted and shaped the way society sees the past (Choiruzzad, 2021; Dhohirrobbi, 2024). The statement that Indonesia was colonized by the Dutch for 350 years is not entirely correct because the colonization did not occur simultaneously throughout the region (Lubis, 1984). The Dutch initially only controlled certain areas that were important for trade, such as Ambon which was captured in 1605. Most of the archipelago was only controlled by the Dutch towards the end of the 19th and early 20th centuries. On the island of Java, Dutch rule was only really strong after the capture of Prince Diponegoro in 1829, so that the Java region was colonized for about 113 years until 1942. In Bali, the Kingdom of Badung was still independent until 1906 before it was finally conquered. The Batak land was only completely controlled by the Dutch in 1907, so it only experienced colonization for about 36 years. In Sumatra, the kingdoms of Na Sembilan and Na Sepuluh were only incorporated into the territory of the Dutch East Indies in 1915. In South Sulawesi, local kingdoms still stood outside the rule of the Dutch East Indies until the early 20th century. Even in 1888, a Dutch court in Makassar declared that some areas in South Sulawesi were outside the jurisdiction of the Dutch East Indies. The Dutch East Indies as a complete colonial territory was only really formed around 1910. If calculated since then, the Dutch colonization of Indonesia as a single region only lasted about 32 years, until it ended in 1942 (Lubis, 1984).

Movies *Max Havelaar* invites readers and viewers to see colonialism as a complex system involving various actors, including indigenous elites who cooperate with colonial rulers. The understanding of colonialism as a complex system helps explain why corrupt practices did not necessarily disappear after Indonesia's independence. The legacy of colonial bureaucracy, feudal relations, and exploitative patterns of power continues to be reproduced in various forms. The corrupt practices introduced and institutionalized by the VOC even

showed a long-term impact on Indonesia's political and cultural dynamics (Claudia et al., 2024).

Max Havelaar*'s criticism* of the indigenous elite becomes very relevant when it is associated with the phenomenon of corruption in Indonesia today. Corruption is not uncommon by officials from the community itself and should be a representation of the interests of the people. This condition shows the existence of historical continuity between the practice of colonial power and the practice of postcolonial power. In the realm of literature and culture, the nation's history continues to be a source of inspiration for authors and artists to represent social reality. The dynamics of Indonesian life, both in the colonial and postcolonial periods, encourage the birth of critical and reflective works (Widyawati & Andalas, 2021). *Max Havelaar* is one of the important examples of how history can be used as a medium of criticism.

As a work born from concrete historical experience, *Max Havelaar* shows that literature and film have a social function and not just entertainment. Both are spaces to question power, expose injustices, and build critical public awareness (Wellek & Warren, 2014; Widyawati & Andalas, 2021). Thus, the criticism of colonial corruption practices described in Max Havelaar still has relevance to read the problem of corruption in Indonesia today. In the context of contemporary Indonesia, corruption is still a systemic problem in modern governance. This condition shows that the pattern of power relations that allows corruption to occur has not completely changed, especially through the existence of elite intermediaries who have close ties to power, cultural legitimacy that is often used to justify such actions, and structural neglect in the bureaucratic system. Therefore, the criticism conveyed in Max Havelaar not only reflects the colonial situation in the 19th century, but can also be read as a critical reflection on the practices of power and corruption that are still ongoing in Indonesian social and political life to this day.

CONCLUSION

This research shows that corruption in the colonial period cannot be understood only as an individual moral act, but as a practice that grew within the colonial power structure involving the relationship between the Dutch colonial government and the indigenous elites. The film *Max Havelaar* (1976) represents this practice through local elites who exploit social positions and administrative power for personal gain, while maintaining an exploitative colonial system. This representation shows how social norms, customs, and people's

acceptance of traditional authority function as a legitimacy mechanism that makes corrupt practices seem normal in social life at that time.

Theoretically, this research contributes to the study of cultural and film history by showing that the representation of corruption in film functions not only as a dramatic narrative, but also as a medium of social criticism of colonial power structures. By combining representation theory, the concept of hegemony and the postcolonial perspective, this study confirms that the position of indigenous elites in the colonial system is ambivalent: they are between two structures, namely as part of local society and as an extension of colonial power. The novelty of this research lies in the effort to read *Max Havelaar's film* not only as an adaptation of colonial literary works, but as a visual text that reveals the involvement of local elites in the reproduction of colonial corrupt practices through an integrated framework of representational and postcolonial analysis.

The findings of this study also have contemporary implications, especially in understanding the historical roots of corrupt practices in Indonesia. The film shows that the practice of abuse of power is not solely inherited by the colonial system, but is also reinforced by the pattern of local power relations that take advantage of social and cultural legitimacy. Thus, this study opens up space for reflection that the practice of corruption today can be understood as a phenomenon that has a long historical dimension, where power structures, social legitimacy, and patronage relations play an important role in maintaining these practices.

For further research, the study of the representation of corruption in the colonial context can be developed through several more specific research directions. First, comparative research can be conducted on other colonial-themed films in Indonesia to see the differences in the representation of indigenous and colonial elites in various periods of film production. Second, advanced research can expand methodological approaches by integrating historiographic analysis and visual cultural studies to explore the relationship between film narratives, colonial historical memory, and the construction of national identity. Third, future studies can also explore how film as a popular media plays a role in shaping public awareness about the history of corruption and power relations in Indonesia.

Overall, this study shows that *Max Havelaar* 's film not only serves as a representation of colonial history, but also as a reflective framework to read the continuity of power relations and corrupt practices that still color bureaucratic governance in Indonesia

today.

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