

## A Sociological Analysis of The Main Characters in The Novel The Good Earth

Endah Alamsari Andayani

STKIP PGRI Sidoarjo

Jl. Jenggala Kemiri Sidoarjo60149

Email: [lastiarsitinjak@gmail.com](mailto:lastiarsitinjak@gmail.com)

**Abstract;** *The purpose of the study is to analyze the main characters by collecting and choosing their actions, speech, and thoughts from the point of view of sociology. The approach is analytical (two methods: an extrinsic approach that deals with theories from some books, sociology ones, and an intrinsic approach that deals with elements in the Buck novel "The Good Earth" itself), characterization that explains the analysis in which the data are theories that support the cycle life of the main characters. Studying in libraries is the method. The writer initially finds that Wang Lung and O-lan's marriage gives them happiness. They rise from a position of poverty to one of wealth. By the time the story comes to an ends, the key main characters have all passed away and have all come back to earth. The condition of the earth determines Wang Lung's fate throughout his entire existence, which is an ongoing struggle against the twin spectres of famine and destruction. These facts drive the writer to investigate both their characteristics and how they interact with society as newly wealthy individuals. The conclusion shows that as humans originated from the earth, we will also return to it after death.*

**Keywords:** *Analysis, characters, Sociological*

**Abstrak;** Tujuan penelitian ini adalah menganalisis tokoh utama dengan mengumpulkan dan memilih tindakan, ucapan, dan pemikiran mereka dari sudut pandang sosiologi. Pendekatannya adalah analitis (dua metode: pendekatan ekstrinsik yang berkaitan dengan teori dari beberapa buku, sosiologi, dan pendekatan intrinsik yang berkaitan dengan unsur-unsur dalam novel Pearl S.Buck "The Good Earth"), karakterisasi yang menjelaskan analisis di mana data adalah teori yang mendukung siklus hidup tokoh utama. Studi pustaka di perpustakaan adalah caranya. Penulis awalnya menemukan bahwa pernikahan Wang Lung dan O-lan memberi mereka kebahagiaan. Mereka bangkit dari posisi miskin menjadi kaya. Pada saat cerita berakhir, karakter utama semuanya telah meninggal dan semuanya kembali ke bumi. Kondisi bumi menentukan nasib Wang Lung sepanjang keberadaannya, yang merupakan perjuangan berkelanjutan melawan hantu kembar, kelaparan dan kehancuran. Fakta-fakta ini mendorong penulis untuk menyelidiki karakteristik mereka dan bagaimana mereka berinteraksi dengan masyarakat sebagai individu kaya baru. Kesimpulannya menunjukkan bahwa karena manusia berasal dari bumi, kita juga akan kembali ke sana setelah kematian.

**Kata kunci:** Analisis, Karakter, Sosiologis

### 1. INTRODUCTION

“The Good Earth” novel written by Pearl S. Buck is chosen as she was the only American novelist woman since it was probably the author’s best work published in 1931. This novel was winning a Pulitzer and got a best seller. From the story of a simple Chinese farmer she has created an epic novel, which there is no purposeful progression of events

This novel tells us about Wang Lung’s whole life which is a constant struggle against the twin-spectres of famine and destruction with the condition of the earth as the decider of his fate. He’s a poor farmer who becomes a wealthy landlord, but it is also a parable of the life of man, in his relation to soil that sustains him. In this case, the writer wants to limit by showing how a family can rise from poverty to a position of wealth. This depends on the earth where the main characters live and it can improve their social status.

## **2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

### **2.1 Socialization**

Sociology is a science which studies the relationship among people in their group (Roucek and Warren, 1962 : 3). From the definition, we know that the family the major agency through which socialization takes place. Within the family, the parents and others try deliberately to mold children into conformity with acceptable cultural models. In addition there are effects, often unintended and unrealized, from the pattern of inter personal relations within the family and from the type and intensity of the sentiments expressed in family interaction. Finally, socialization continues throughout life and hence operates through the family on its adults members.

#### **Family function**

The function of family served is population maintenance, since it is through the family that every society motivates people to bear and rear children. Some examples of this motivation are to perpetuate the family line, to provide security in old age, to secure the gratifications of being looked up to by one’s children, or to attain credit from the achievements of children.

#### **Deliberate socialization of the child**

The pattern of deliberate socialization is shaped by the ways children acquire special value to their parents, in which its function to mediate the child’s relations with other agents of socialization. Parents mediate or “stand between” the child and other groups by attempting to control the child’s spontaneous associations, by placing the child in formal groups, by motivating his participation in various association, and by helping to interpret

to him his learning from groups outside the family. The broken home is often unable to perform this function, so that the child is unduly socialized by groups into which he happens by chance

### **Interpersonal relations in the family**

Historically, family relationships were so intricately worked out that the social system and the family system were inseparable. The family unit was at the heart of everything. Every child, every adult had a sense of place. His or her position in Chinese society was directly tied to his unquestioned, unalterable position within the family.

### **Stratification**

It is usually through the family that individuals are located in the stratification system. Husband and wife normally share a common class position; dependent children are known by their parents' position; and in rigid class systems the children may be unable to leave the parents' stratum even on reaching maturity. The family will be examined first as an agent of the stratification. Second, the status seeking aspects of courtship and mate selection will be noted. Finally, the tendency for different social strata to develop distinctive forms of family organization will be explored. It concerns with family as an agent of stratification, status striving in courtship, social class variations in family characteristics

### **Association**

Although the family is a primary group, it is often a participation unit in associations and also has relations with associations of which it is not a part. This aspect of family study is less developed and perhaps less important than those already discussed. It concerns with family as participation unit, relation between family and associations

## 2.2 Characterization

Writers use any or all of several basic means of characterization : a character is revealed by (1) his actions, (2) his speech, (3) his thoughts, (4) his physical appearance, (5) what other characters say or think of him. A flat character is a minor participant in fiction, one who is characterized briefly by only one or two of these basic methods. A round character is one fully developed by four or five of these methods and thus take on such added dimensions that, as readers, we come to know and to understand him as a living, breathing human being (Harry Shaw, 1972 : 71)

Without characterization, no thesis, no plot and no setting can develop genuine interest for a reader or cause him to care what happens, or does not happen, to whom and why.

### **3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

This research is classified as qualitative research (descriptive) by collecting accurate data, analyzing it and interpreting the result well. First, the writer reads the original novel "The Good Earth" several times. Then, she gives signs on each characters' speech which is considered to be the supporting elements. For the last step, she divides the novel based on the plot of the main character that is the major turning points in the life of Wang Lung into three stages.

Stage 1, the introduction deals with Wang Lung's marriage to O-Lan. Stage 2, the climax presents the most important turning point in the life of Wang Lung. Stage 3, the conclusion which deals with the crucial point in the life of Wang Lung.

#### **3.2 Data Collection**

It is done by collecting the data which is essential and relevant to the analysis. It covers all the characters in each stage. The writer collects some books and copies them from some libraries beside the main source, a novel "The Good Earth". It is hoped that she knows easily the characters speech in each stage at the same times

#### **3.3 Data Analysis**

In analyzing the data, the writer used one method, namely by discussing and analyzing the novel based on the theories or review of related literature.

### **4. ANALYSIS**

#### **4.1 Socialization**

The story of the novel began on the wedding of Wang Lung. From being alone in the past made him to marry someone else in order to share his life. In this case, the relationship among people happens here. It is appropriate with the statement said by Roucek and Warren.

In Wang Lung's heart, the wife (O-Lan) that he married was not pretty, moreover, she was a slave in the house of Hwang. That is why he was reluctant to do this. From the statement, we might get the impression that marriage is not important to the Chinese. Seeing this situation, his father had cried out at him

And what will you do with a pretty woman? We must have a woman who will tend the house and bear children as she works in the fields, and will a pretty woman do these things? ...Do you imagine a pretty woman will think your farmer's hand as pleasing as the soft hands of a rich man's son, and your sunblack face as beautiful as the golden skin of the others who have had her for their pleasure (Buck, 1931:6)

Their marriage has brought a child. The birth of their son made them proud. Wang Lung gave the money to O-lan willingly, to express the great love he felt for her and their child. This statement also can be found in this sentence "Society delegates to the family the responsibility for protecting infants and children and caring for their physical needs (Broom and Selznick, 1958 : 372).

On the second day of the new year, the couple went to the house of Hwang (the Old Mistress). They heard that it would be sold and wanted to buy it. It showed the hard working of Wang Lung had changed the situation and his life.

In the middle of Wang Lung's happiness and success, his uncle who was lazy came to his house for lending some money. First of all, he refused to help, but his uncle slapped him when he spoke harshly. From this situation, there is misunderstanding between two generation who debate for lending some money. His uncle threatened him by saying :

I will tell your words to the whole village. Yesterday you attack my house and call aloud in the streets that my daughter is not virgin; today you reproach me, who if your father passes on, must be as your own father to you ....(Buck, 1931:45).

At last Wang Lung went into the house to get the money. There he found his wife had given birth to her third child – it was a girl, in which it is a time of sadness, an evil omen. The girl baby in Chinese life was not considered a blessing, since the family had to support her until she could be married. Then the big problem had aroused when Wang Lung and his family lived in the city in which they were eager to sell their daughter to the rich family as a slave. In this case, it was a flashback of O-lan in the past. Wang Lung's life had become poor. It made his wife steal a bag of jewels from the rich family and wanted to buy the land again.

Everything went well for Wang Lung's family for several years. There had been no famines, because the harvests had been good. But another tragedy happened again when Wang Lung went to town. He wanted to marry Lotus, a girl whose job was to give pleasure to men who were willing to pay for it. The difficult thing for the westerner to understand is the attitude of O-lan faced with her husband's unfaithfulness. She had her inner state, it is apparent that she has no choice but to accept her role as woman in the conventional oriental mold. It usually happens in lower classes families. The family characteristic states that sex norms which are followed is greater sex freedom (Ruth S. Cavan, 1953 : 119-187).

One of Wang Lung's problem is apparently insoluble, that is his difficulty with his uncle, who was a member of a band of robbers. On the other hand, Wang Lung's greatest offense is against his eldest son who was in love with Lotus. Whatever the boy is, Wang Lung is in great part responsible for it. In this case, we see that the father's authority was absolute...system (W.. Stanley, 1979 : 84). O-lan asked that the wedding be performed before she died.

Wang Lung has other problems too. In her old age, Lotus has become very jealous to Wang Lung who paid attention to the young slave, Pear Blossom. When he realized that he might soon die, he asked her to poison the poor fool daughter. Then he told his sons to prepare his coffin so that he would be able to see it before he died. In this way, he could die in peace.

## **4.2 Characterization**

### **Wang Lung**

He is the principal character in this novel. It begins with Wang Lung as a young man and ends with him as an old man near death. It tells about his rise from a poor man to a rich land owner.

He is peasant, but not simple man. He is obsessed with the idea of land; to him this the only real wealth. It is the only thing that can not be stolen from a man and so every time he has any extra silver he buys a nother piece of land. Even when he is starving, he will not sell his security. Instead he goes to the south to try to earn money for seed so that he can return to his land and plant new crops.

Although he is shrewd in his business dealings, he is not a strong character. He works hard on his land, but he doesn't know how to deal with people. The family of Wang Lung seems destined to fall, not because they lose respect for the land, but because Wang Lung fails to assert himself as the strong head. He does not represent a strong authority, and he does not teach his family to love those things which he values.

#### **O-Lan**

She is the second most important character in the story. Although she dies before some of the important action takes place, her influence is felt throughout the entire novel. As opposed to Wang Lung, she is the strong person. Very probably her husband would not have become rich or even survived if it had not been for her.

The mystery of O-lan is her silence when Wang Lung brings Lotus home as his second wife. She was greatly hurt by this, but she said very little to her husband about it. This was not because she was afraid, since O-lan had never been afraid of anything or anyone, including her husband. In spite of all she has contributed towards making the family successful, O-lan, as a woman, has no legal claim to anything.

#### **The old father**

He is important to the mood of the novel as he represents the old China. The presence of the Old Father in the story is as a sign of the Chinese respect for old people. He is the old China which has done nothing to improve itself. In his old age he is still poor and backward. In times of trouble he is a burden to the young. In the same manner, the new China has to bear the burden of the old, backward China. Another aspect of this concept is the fact that the only real disturbance that the old man causes is when he wakes up and finds Lotus. In other words, the old China does not like change.

#### **The eldest son**

Although he comes from a poor and hard-working family, he wants to be a scholar and an aristocrat. He really doesn't care where the money comes from just so long as he does not have to work for it. In this way he is like the old Chinese lords who bled the people for money to satisfy their own shallow desires for pleasure.

#### **The second son**

He is the shrewd old China which took advantage of the needs of the people. He holds the grain until the prices are high. He does not want to spend money unless he has to.

#### **The youngest son**

He is the symbol of the new China. Wang Lung has ignored this son to such an extent that he has no understanding of him. The father simply decided that this son would stay on the land and considered it no further. However, the youngest son had ideas of his own. He wanted to learn and to improve himself. After he learned about his country, he wanted to do something for it. This son is not afraid to act. When his father takes the maid whom he wanted for himself, he runs off and joins the army. The last that is heard of him is that he is some sort of official in the new Chinese government.

#### **The old uncle**

He is an antagonist in the story presenting a conflict for Wang Lung. As a lazy and selfish man, he imposes himself upon the nephew. Wang Lung can do nothing to rid himself of his uncle. Until his death, this character is a constant threat taking every possible advantage of another's weakness. However, his greed contains the seed of his own destruction. He seizes upon the opium which eventually kills him.

#### **The uncle's wife**

She is an evil person. She takes advantage of every situation which she can manipulate. When Wang Lung brings Lotus to his house, the uncle's wife makes friends with her. In this way she can share the good food which Cuckoo prepares for Lotus. However, her greed, like that for her husband, is the cause of her downfall. She too falls victim to the opium habit.

### **The uncle's son**

He also is a lazy and vicious man. Whereas the uncle is mainly interested in food and shelter, his son is interested in all types animalistic pleasures

### **Lotus and cuckoo**

Each is a shallow person who tries to get whatever she can for herself. These are two woman who have never been married; they are on their own. In the China on those times, this was almost impossible situation

### **The Old Lord and the Old Mistress**

They are important in the story only because they are the ones whom Wang Lung envies. As a young man, Wang Lung looks to these people as examples of what he wants to become. By the end of the novel, he has established himself as the head of a great family

## **5. CONCLUSION**

As long as we know the Chinese peasant farmer had no source of wealth except what he could get from his land. Again the farmers, including Wang Lung could do nothing. Since there was no other place for them to get food, they starved and many died. This explains Wang Lung's desire to have as much land as he could. Hearing that the land of Old Mistress was sold, Wang Lung intended to buy it with all his money or property. He knew that it would bring a lot of harvest and it could make him rich (successful peasant). Then the conflict is coming up concerning with the land. Wang Lung treated his wife badly by marrying Lotus, as a second wife and it also made her get sick and die. Beside that his sons intended to sell the land, while Wang Lung himself attempted to defend it. Death was not something Wang Lung feared. When he sees his coffin, it is a reminder to him that he will die but he is resigned to the thought. He knows that he will receive a good burial and be put back into the earth with his ancestors where he can rest peacefully.

## **6. SUGGESTION**

The writer agrees with the idea of Buck about the land. From the book, one gets a feeling of the importance of land to the Chinese peasant. It is true that the land gives life to men, because they need food to live in this world. The Bible also says that God creates man from earth. When he dies, his body will go back into the earth again. We, as human being, should not differentiate among people in the society. It means that we have to realize where we come from and appreciate a person who helps and influences in our life.

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