

**ECONOMIC DETERMINATION TOWARD RELIGION  
AS SEEN IN SHAKESPEARE'S PLAY  
THE MERCHANT OF VENICE**

**A THESIS**

*Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement For the Degree of  
Sarjana Sastra*



**YENNY FITRIA**

04 985 023

**ENGLISH DEPARTMENT - FACULTY OF LETTERS  
ANDALAS UNIVERSITY**

**PADANG**

**2009**

## ABSTRAK

Skripsi ini membahas tentang kehidupan sosial masyarakat Yahudi dan Kristen dalam karya Shakespeare yang berjudul The Merchant of Venice. Shakespeare menceritakan bagaimana seseorang atau suatu kelompok bisa diposisikan sebagai penguasa sementara yang lain bertindak sebagai buruh. Selain itu, digambarkan pula bagaimana usaha masing - masing karakter dalam mempertahankan serta memperjuangkan hidup mereka.

Penulis menggunakan pendekatan mimetik dalam menganalisa karya tersebut, artinya penulis memerlukan data yang bersumber dari sejarah Yahudi dan Kristen khususnya di wilayah Eropa. Kemudian penulis menganalisa keadaan masyarakat Yahudi dan Kristen pada abad ke-15 dengan menerapkan teori yang berasal dari pemikiran Karl Marx yaitu determinasi ekonomi.

Dari analisa tersebut, penulis menemukan bahwa faktor yang melatar belakangi permasalahan dalam karya ini adalah adanya faktor uang yang memegang peran sangat penting. *Sering kali dengan tanpa disadari, keadaan ekonomi merupakan salah satu hal yang akan selalu dipertimbangkan ketika memulai menjalin hubungan dengan orang lain.* Adanya perbedaan tingkatan strata dalam masyarakat juga mempengaruhi cara berhubungan antar sesama. Secara tidak langsung bisa dikatakan bahwa faktor ekonomi sangat menentukan bagaimana cara seseorang berlaku, bertutur kata atau bersikap kepada orang lain. Bahkan uang juga mampu mempengaruhi hak azasi manusia yang sangat mendasar sekalipun, yaitu hak beragama.

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1. 1. The Background of the study

"We use the word Literature, in a broad sense, to mean compositions that tell stories, dramatize situations, express emotions, and analyze and advocate ideas" (1999; 2). From the quotation, we know that literature links us with the culture and enables us to recognize human dreams in different place and times that present in literature. Actually, most of literary works come from the real phenomenon that happens in life. Literature is divided into some genres, one of them is play. As Reaske states in his book about the description of play or is also called a drama, "A drama is a work of literature or a comparison which delineates life and human activity by means of presenting various actions of – and dialogues between – a group of characters" (1996; 5).

We live in the capitalist society, so we could see the struggle in socioeconomic life between bourgeois (dominant class) and proletariat (dominated class). As Bressler say in his book,

In the capitalism society, Marx claims people action and believe will be determined by economical conditions. If there are few people whom rich (bourgeois) and the others are the working class, the individualism will be dominated. People will not think about the others, in this case low social class or working class will be the object because the bourgeois are concern with their property and benefit. In this system, the rich become

richer while the poor become poorer and more oppressed (1999; 213).

The writer analyzes one of the best works from the great name, Shakespeare. It is a play entitled The Merchant of Venice. The writer uses theory of Marxist. Since 20<sup>th</sup> century until right now, many authors and critics put their attention in class conflict as the effect of capitalist system. It makes Marxist Criticism has branched off into various schools of thought, but the writer takes the simplest Marxist model of society which sees it as constituted by a base and superstructure. It becomes the principle of economics determination concept. Base determines superstructure and will not on the contrary. The material production, money, object, the relations of production, and the stage of development of productive forces compose base. Superstructure is where we can find the political and ideological institutions, our social relations, ideas, cultures, hopes, dreams, and spirit. It also consists of law, politics, philosophy, religion, and art.

Because superstructure indicates of means of production and function as the ideologies that reflects the interests of the dominant class, it makes a domination of bourgeois to proletariat in the society automatically. Then it is familiar as capitalism, a system in which the majority of people works to produce goods and services but do not share equally in the benefits of their labor with the ruling class who own the means of production. The writer sees Capitalism is shown clearly in The Merchant of Venice. Besides that, this work also describes a great commentary on the nature of racial and religious interactions.

The Merchant of Venice shows us about two religions that exist in capitalist society. The struggle of the Jews as working class in achieving their equality prevented hardly by Christian. As the ruling class who has full authority

to the dominated class, Christian does not aware that someday they will need Jew's help. This phenomenon changes how they do their relationship among them in the society. Therefore, the writer takes the social class and class relations as major topics of the analysis.

The writer is very interested to apply Marxist criticism because the writer sees that capitalism keeps the exploited working class from rising up, not through brutality, but even rather by institutional naturalization of the process, one of them via religion. For the reasons above, the writer admits to gives the title for this research "Economics Determination toward Religion as Seen in Shakespeare's Play The Merchant of Venice".

## **1. 2. Statement of Problem**

If we want to analyze the society through economic determination, we need to pay attention on someone's attitude which is influenced by the role of money. They will treat the other different among them, but they sometimes do not realize that everything in life is determined by the Capital.

In The Merchant of Venice, there are two characters whose coming from different religion. The flow of money really affects their relationship and even makes them being dominate each other. In other words, there is no good relationship since they come from two different social classes. Though this analysis, the writer can see directly that money can make people do what someone want through sheer force and happens to religion.

## CONCLUSION

There are two religions who is significant when we read the play of The Merchant of Venice; Jew and Christian. After the writer analyzes the problem in this play, the writer sees that the first problem that causes their bad relationship is their religion. They regard their religion better than another. Moreover, sometimes they mock each other outspokenly in order to hurt each other.

This situation becomes worst after they involve to the economics factor. The difference of wealth emerges two classes in their society; ruling class (dominant class) who controls the working class's means of production and working class (dominated class) who become the slave of the dominant class. Even in history or in the work itself similar thing happen, Christian is described as people who always take a control and Jew as a dominated class. In other word, people who have money can make the other do what they want without sheer force. At the time, most of Christian has a job as merchant who have many ships and sail in the ocean. Unfortunately, for a long time Jew always become the object of Christian's domination.

In conclusion,

- a. A Christian Antonio could dominate the Jew Shylock because at the time Jews are dominated by Christian.
- b. When Shylock asks Antonio 'a pound of flesh' as the agreement, Antonio cannot do anything and just accept it. Even though Shylock has a bad intend here for the reason that he only wants to revenge for all the time he

treat badly by Antonio. Nevertheless, in the end of the play Shylock fails to do it.

- c. Shylock is sued back by Portia who disguises as a young Doctor. In addition, Antonio just forgives him by asking him to be a Christian in the court. Shylock cannot do anything else, but just accept it.

From the points above, the writer concludes that someone who has money or authority will get special treatment in the state and law. It happens on the contrary with the slogan which says that we are all equal in the eyes of law.

We see how the ruling class could dominate the working class and how religion determined by money. Besides that, the analysis also purposed to see directly the struggle between socioeconomic classes to achieve equality and fairness among the character in this play. How they build their relationship very influenced by the role of money. In simply, in economic determination we must see all of things in our life from economic point of view and power structural in the society.

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