

**POSTCOLONIAL ECOCRITICISM IN TRAVEL MEMOIR:
THE PARADOX OF SOCIO-ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE IN
VLADIMIR ARSENYEV'S NOVEL *DERSU UZALA***

*Kajian Ekokritik Pascakolonial dalam Memoar Perjalanan: Paradoks Keadilan Sosio-
Lingkungan dalam Novel Karya Vladimir Arsenyev Dersu Uzala*

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Abstract

This research aims to reveal the colonial gaze and paradoxical sense of travel memoir on nature expedition conducted during Russian imperial era by explorer and scientist Vladimir Arsenyev. Arsenyev's expedition to the Far East is memorized in his 1923 novel *Dersu Uzala* about Arsenyev's indigenous guide Dersu. In this analysis, the theory used is postcolonial ecocriticism by Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin on the correlation between the effect of colonialism in physical environment and its effect on relation between human and nature. Another theory used is from Reuel K. Wilson's investigation of the motives behind various travel memoirs from the late nineteenth century. The main data of this qualitative research is gathered from relevant passages of the novel and analysed under postcolonial ecocriticism framework. The result shows the author's paradox on disclosure of indigenous tribes as colonial 'other' in Russian Empire, the violation of hunting ethics by Russian explorers and the conflict between nature and urban development in Russia.

Keywords: Vladimir Arsenyev, postcolonial ecocriticism, travel memoir, motives

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan mengungkap pandangan kolonial dan paradoks dari memoar perjalanan ekspedisi alam yang dilakukan pada masa Kekaisaran Rusia oleh penjelajah dan ilmuwan Vladimir Arsenyev. Ekspedisi Arsenyev ke Timur Jauh diabadikan dalam novelnya yang menceritakan pemandu dari suku asli bernama Dersu. Dalam analisis ini, teori yang digunakan adalah kajian ekokritik pascakolonial yang dikemukakan oleh Graham Huggan dan Helen Tiffin mengenai hubungan antara efek kolonialisme pada lingkungan fisik dan efek pada hubungan antara manusia dengan alam. Teori lain yang digunakan berasal dari investigasi oleh Reuel K. Wilson mengenai motif dibalik memoar perjalanan pada akhir abad ke sembilan belas. Data utama pada penelitian kualitatif ini diperoleh dari bagian relevan pada novel dan kemudian dianalisis dengan konsep kajian ekokritik pascakolonial. Hasil analisis mengungkap adanya sikap paradox pengarang pada pandangan 'liyan' masyarakat kekaisaran Rusia terhadap penduduk asli, pelanggaran etika dalam berburu yang dilakukan penjelajah Rusia dan konflik antara alam dan pembangunan kota di Rusia.

Kata-kata kunci: Vladimir Arsenyev, kajian ekokritik pascakolonial, memoar perjalanan, motif

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INTRODUCTION

The reading of postcolonial text cannot be separated from concerning on the existence of colonial legacy found in various forms of hybrid cultures and identities, changes in social values and racial and cultural-based violence. In postcolonial reading the *gaze* makes crucial point in which it determines how values looked upon based on the perspective of the powerful subject toward the weaker ones. In Western colonial context, in which postcolonial phenomenon derives from, the gaze is directed toward the non-Western which considered as the outsiders, exotic and uncivilized. The emphasis of postcolonial discourse is surely anthropocentrism; seeing how through power relation human from different cultural domains interact. However, it turns out that the effect of colonialism itself indeed immense. Not only influences the dynamics and decay of other civilizations and cultures in its anthropocentric view, but it also affects the survival of the nature where the “Other” civilization existed. In other words, there is a link between postcolonial phenomena and environmental issue; the evidence that the legacy of colonialism is bigger than human civilization, it perpetrates physical environment—nature.

The novel *Dersu Uzala* is a travel literature written by Russian explorer Vladimir Arsenyev and first published in 1923. It belongs to the genre of autobiographical fiction due to its partial actual account of Arsenyev’s expedition of the Far East around 1907. The story is set during the last phase of Russian Empire in the beginning of twentieth century with the main mission of Captain Arsenyev to explore the flora and fauna in Far East. During the exploration, he was accompanied by the titular character Dersu, an indigenous Siberian trapper and hunter from a tribe called Nanai. The novel also explores how Dersu struggled to adjust in city life after he moved to an urban area in Russia by the end of the novel.

Russian Empire existed since its establishment in 1721 as the Russian senate transferred a whole authority for the emperor Peter I (Britannica, 2020). The empire thrived for almost three centuries until the abdication of Nicholas II in 1917 which result in the Bolshevik Revolution and dissolve the imperial Russia. By the early twentieth century, the imperial Russia has expanded from the border of Finland to the south in Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan and spread to the east including Vladivostok. Around this period, Russian Empire had conquered many civilizations—which including non-Western ones like Turkic and a small part of Asian civilization in the north and put them under its European authority (Bassin, 1988; Khodarovsky, 2006). The novel *Dersu Uzala* which was set during the imperial era depicts the reality of change of physical environment under the influence of Russian imperialism in the Far East. This area is interesting to be analyzed because it emphasizes on other form of colonialism, which affects not only anthropocentric but also environmental issue which exist beyond Western imperial praxis done, for example, by the British and French in the colonies of Asia and Africa.

The relation between the effect of colonialism and imperialism in environmental domain can be found in the theoretical framework that emerges as the hybrid of both postcolonialism and environmentalism; the postcolonial ecocriticism (Huggan & Tiffin, 2010). Huggan and Tiffin in *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, and Environment* found that the different concerns on human and non-human exploitation can actually found a common ground. This finding is helpful in bridging the gap between a rather anthropocentric emphasis in common discussion of postcolonial framework, in which the effect on colonized human beings is examined and the theoretical framework that focuses on the damage affecting non-human subjects. Using Several postcolonial ecocriticism studies are

shown using Huggan and Tiffin framework as the point of departure. The perspective of postcolonial ecocriticism from Graham and Tiffin is defended by the position of ecocriticism and its compatibility to merge with another anthropocentric subject like postcolonialism (Mason et al., 2013). Defensive take on the underrated study of postcolonial ecocriticism is also followed with emphasis in studying colonial sense in settler culture. Similar notion is also found in a study focusing on the political ecology of race (van Sant et al., 2021). Furthermore, a study examined the existence of environmental colonialism in the narrative of Zimbabwean native culture in Doris Lessing's work *The Grass is Singing* (Iheka, 2018). The study mentions the female character of European descent stands for the disavowal of both human and non-human nature around her which refers to the natural environment of an African country and their native people (p.668). This accentuates the sense of Eurocentric gaze of the character toward the Other which embraces both the 'strange' geographical location and its people. Moreover, another study analyses Indian literature written by Dhruv Bhatt entitled *Oceanside Blues*. The main finding of Paliwal's analysis is to explore the representation of tribal eco-sensibilities and revealing foreign eco-ethnic values (Paliwal, 2020). Beside mentioning how the ecological and postcolonial perspectives can disclose the issues in the novel, it also discusses how environmental damage created by neo-colonial exploiters affect tribal consciousness of the characters. Also, Paliwal's analysis criticizes the way that Eurocentric environmentalism is forced upon tribal societies from non-Western counterparts. This shows that not only the neo-colonialist value that created damage in environment, the existence of forced agenda in Western environmentalism itself reflects neo-colonialism.

Related to the theoretical framework, a study focuses on representing several literary works under postcolonial ecocriticism,

mentions that theoretically postcolonialism does not neglect the existence of environmental issues (Afzal, 2017). Furthermore, Afzal's finding in the dissertation also include literary works that commonly examined under postcolonial theories to be explored more in its relation with environmental issues. For example, Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, is exemplified outside its notion of hybrid identity and Westernization in the character. Afzal disclosed how Achebe's representation of Igbo's culture in comparison between before and after colonization. Tribal societies are never only anthropocentric focused, tribalism include nature, human and animals as part of coexistence. In addition, to relate with the context of the literary work to be analysed in this paper, a dissertation discloses how environment is treated under Imperial Russia and partly during the early years of Soviet Union (Sokolsky, 2016). This research can be used to assist in finding the possibility of abuse or harmony in term of human, animal and landscape relation in the literary work that will be analysed.

The term travel literature refers to a genre which has broad varieties of writing including travel memoirs, nature writing, outdoor literature and guidebooks. The categories of this travel writing can be both fiction and non-fiction. For this particular paper, the work is travel literature which also considered as autobiographical fiction because the author is depicted as the first person in the story along with the actual account of his journey. One study defines the autobiographical fiction in its relation with the production of text and its effect of the reader through an account of reality that is scripted and transformed into fictional world (Erasga, 2014). The study about the nature of autobiographical fiction can be used to bridge the relation between factual account of the author in his journey and how he put it in partial fictionalized narrative.

The general reference of this travel literature is related to how it emphasizes on the story of a journey whether it is the

author's personal experience, fictional characters or a combination of both. As an example, it is necessary to see the influence of Columbus and Marco Polo in the emergence and development of travel literature (Cogeanu-Haraga, 2014). Furthermore, it is also stated how during the Renaissance, two natures of travel literature appeared. The first sticks to the formal journal and account of objective nature and geographical writing and the second is more of subjective narrative based on authors' own journey. Both travel literatures which appeared in Western world brought the sense of mystifying and exotifying cultures which are not familiar to the authors and their perception of society and culture. Another perspective is taken through a study on the existence of modern visual colonialism in Portuguese travel magazine (Brito-Henriques, 2014). The core of the study is in the findings of nostalgic sense for Western imperialism in the biased photographs of African lands (p.321). The study strengthens the notion of colonial legacy attached in travel writings. This is also found in a research which focuses on the legacy of Western colonialism in the tourism of Algeria (Crowley, 2017). This notion is highly connected to postcolonialism in which it is associated with the gaze toward otherness.

Moreover, in defining general notion of travel literature, nature writing actually affects human psychology especially in term of self-identity and mental displacement (Basumatary, 2018). The finding includes the categorization of travel writing as merely non-fictional. This needs to be corrected as writers, not only narrate personal experience in first person point-of-view which refers to themselves, they also add fictional elements in the plot to make the story more captivating to the readers. However, the focus on self-identity and mental displacement which refers to the authors psyche in writing travel stories are significant to discover the motives and perspectives of the authors toward the subjects they encounter during the journey.

More specifically, one account emphasizes on literary travelogue which focuses on the comparative analysis, with specific reference to Russian literature (Wilson, 1973). In this research Wilson mentions names of Russian poets and authors such as Denis Fonvizin, Alexander Radischev, and Alexander Pushkin to point out their literary accounts on the journey they took. It is also mentioned the writings by these figures contains personal statements such as selfdom, social criticism and even notion of anti-slavery. These arguments compiled by Wilson in the analysis of the book describe that behind the colonialist tendency which appears prevalently within travel literature, social criticism also makes contribution.

Related to the author, Vladimir Arsenyev, several studies mentioned his contribution to nature science in Russia (Khisamutdinov, 2020; Slaght, 2020). The studies reveal the actual interaction between Arsenyev and his crew, especially Dersu which whom the depiction in the novel is quite the opposite. This is synonymous with another finding on Arsenyev's works which contributes in the colonial expansion to the Far East (Glebov, 2020). These findings are used to track the actual account and relate it with socio-environmental issues at that time. Another comparative study mentions the significance of Russian landscape in the film adaptations of *Dersu Uzala* (Christensen, 2019). This study also examines the interaction between modern and traditional society. Reflecting Arsenyev's own work as a Russian explorer in the Far East, one study reflects on his own photographic works which embodies the nature representation in novel *Dersu Uzala* (Golovneva & Golovnev, 2020). Previous studies mentioned in this paper have not examine the detailed correlation between travel writing and socio-environmental problem. Thus, the purpose of this research is to reveal the connection between travel memoir and the tendency of colonial gaze in environment and other postcolonial-ecocritical issues related in the text. The result is expected to give insight for

further research on the issue of colonialism in environmental context which results from the creation of the nature and human “otherness.”

Moreover, this research aims to disclose the existence of colonial gaze and paradox in travel literature of Russian imperial era. It particularly underlines how the travel narrative reveal sense of otherness in human and nature inhabitants is displayed under Russian imperialism and how nature is affected by the praxis of imperialism in the Far East region.

METHOD

The method used for this research is qualitative in which its primary data is taken from the relevant passages of the novel *Dersu Uzala* in its English translation version. The secondary data is including definition of scientific theories from books, journal articles and research. The data collection is conducted by reading the novels while taking notes on certain part of the story which indicate the relation with postcolonial-ecocriticism issues and reading the secondary sources of theories from other literatures.

The results of the discussion are divided into three parts related to the types of conflicts and issues regarding the Eurocentric gaze and the paradoxical socio-environmental criticism found in the novel. The analysis is done by mapping the relevant passages found in the novel into each sub-chapter which is formulated based on the research objectives. Each evidence is thoroughly discussed in its correlation with the problem of the research. It is analysed using theoretical framework of postcolonial ecocriticism, mainly theorised by Huggan and Tiffin. Correlate the finding with the structure of travel literature and its theoretical basis by Wilson is also significant to discuss the nature of Arsenyev writing in the novel. To help answering the problems, relevant findings from related studies especially of colonialism and ecology are also used to contextualize the result of analysis. After every evidence is examined under such

circumstances, conclusion of the analysis can be presented.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The novel *Dersu Uzala* (Dersu, The Trapper) is based on actual travel account of the author, Vladimir Arsenyev (1872-1930), Russian explorer who conducted expedition in Russian Far East. The expedition results in the recognition of various Siberian flora and the discovery of ethnic groups. During this expedition, Arsenyev and his team were accompanied by indigenous guide of Nanai tribe (in the novel, the term used is “Gold”) lived in the northeast of China, named Dersu. The novel depicts how the relationship between human with nature and human with other human are ambivalent and paradox. The story is told in the perspective of Russian explorer who worked for Imperial Russia because the timeline of the story is around 1902 to 1908 when it was still Tsarist governmental system before it was transformed into Bolshevism after 1917. Postcolonial-Ecocriticism lens is used to examine in which way the story contains colonial tendency which correlates with the relationship between human and nature. The discussion for this paper is divided into three sub-part to categorize the colonial gaze and authors paradoxical sense in his narrative of socio-environment writing.

The Colonial Perspective on the Russian “Other”

Dersu is depicted as indigenous man who belongs to Nanai tribe. In both postcolonial study and ecocritical study, indigenous people are included as the subject of analysis. In its postcolonial perspective, the relation between indigenous people and the European or Western people are marked by the colonial gaze. The notion of indigenous people as part of ecocritical study is exemplified through concept of dwelling (Garrard, 2004). In Garrard’s view, the dwelling represents the place of in between, or the place where nature and humankind encounter each other through the harmonious

contacts. The nature-centric communities are usually associated with indigenous people. In Orientalism concept, the indigenous people are the one perceived as “the other” by the European dominant figure through the hegemony of Western culture, knowledge, and language (Said, 2003). In this case, Arsenyev who narrated the story reveals his perspective on Dersu, whose identity is being subjected under colonial discourse. This also displays that during colonial period, the acknowledgment on racial, ethnic and cultural differences are emphasized negatively through travel literature (Edwards, 2018). On the other hand, Dersu’s status as a member of indigenous tribe is closely affiliated with his close-to-nature upbringing (Arsenyev, 1950). The coexistence between indigenous people and the nature surrounds them are the concerns of ecocriticism. Thus, Arsenyev’s perspective toward Dersu is also correlated with his association to nature due to Dersu’s indigenous identity. In the novel it is mentioned several times that Arsenyev found Dersu’s belief as bizarre thing.

The wild pig killed by Dersu was a two-year-old sow. I asked him why he had not aimed at the big boar.

“He is old man” he said. “his meat no good to eat. Smell bad.”

I asked why Dersu referred to boars as “men”

“He is same as man” Dersu said “only his shirt is different. He can be cunning, he can be angry, he can be anything! Same as man.”

The woodsman’s views were obviously animalistic. He attributed human features to his environment

(p. 27)

There is no exact negative sentiment in Arsenyev statement on the passage above. Yet his Western concept of human and animals are shown as the opposite of what Dersu’s had. Related to Arsenyev’s historically accurate purpose on his expedition which is to discover the life of ethnic group in Russian Far East, animalistic perception in some subject would be

considered as one of the characteristics of people from Nanai tribe. Arsenyev did not show resentment towards Dersu’s belief but rather an astonishment in Western gaze, which perceived animalistic philosophy as exotic and mystified. There is sense of both curiosity and peculiarity in the European gaze regarding this particular dialogue between Arsenyev and Dersu.

The narrative is told from the first-person viewpoint, which is Arsenyev himself. This explains that everything that happens in the story is narrated based on his perception about certain events and concepts regarding the experience of expediting with tribal guide. The sense of colonial perspective in Arsenyev’s statements on the passage above is subtle in the way he did not show any particular resentment against Dersu, but only that the term ‘animalistic’ is used to exemplify the European gaze to different group of people which accentuates the sense of “otherness.” The animalistic view is surely the opposite of the logical, common-sense based perception, or the logocentrism promoted by Western culture. The connection between the gaze of otherness and the environmental discourse is located in how tribal groups are subject that represent the connection between human and nature. Most of times, colonization destroyed tribal life of the native people which leads to the destruction of the places they inhabited. The colonization of Far East by Russian Empire also results in the similar way. The contact between the European Russian and the Non-European tribes from the east leads to colonial gaze against these tribes as the “other.”

Another evidence of the gaze of otherness in Arsenyev’s writing is seen in a passage where his expedition party ended and he decided to take Dersu to town due to his decreasing health and old age.

“They looked at Dersu with a mingling of curiosity and surprise. He was out of his element and long could not grow accustomed to his new life” (p. 303)

At the last part of the novel, Dersu was finally taken to town by Arsenyev because his sight was blurred and he could no longer shoot properly. The city life seems too strange for Dersu who spent most of his life in the mountain wilderness. As Arsenyev introduced Dersu to his relatives and colleagues, their response is mentioned in the passage above. The European Russian population in the town where Arsenyev lived never saw a member of tribal group, let alone a Non-European one. The town of Khabarovsk which Arsenyev described is modern and urban with most population are of European descents. The gaze of otherness toward Dersu made the tribesman realized he did not belong to such place. He asserted in a passage “Bad people, they don’t burn right,” (Arsenyev, p.304) as an expression of resentment when he found the fireplace in the small room of his apartment did not work properly.

The feeling of alienation which struck Dersu is both a result of stereotypical view on a tribal person and his detachment from nature. The way Arsenyev depicted Dersu’s alienation in the novel is almost an allegory of elements of nature taken from its origins to a strange new place. Like animals taken from their natural habitat, the strangeness and the unwanted encounter with other creatures can result to stressful behaviour and loneliness. The way Dersu felt about moving to city life with Arsenyev is similar. He felt detached from his surrounding because he did not belong there in the first place. Also, the colonial gaze from European people in that town also diminished Dersu’s chance to be fully accepted in his new environment. The colonial gaze in this particular part is seen through the stereotypical tendency which may result from the curiosity and surprise. The image of tribesman in colonizer society is including primitive, uneducated, and ill-mannered. On the other hand, the image of towns people in Dersu’s perspective is also contrasted to his perception about Arsenyev whom he already had known for years. In the expedition, Dersu did not feel objectified like

he did when he came to town. The estrangement due to stereotypical view affected people from colonized counterpart. Their quality as a person is undermined by their appearance as a part of “the other” which is prone to be subjected based on their typical characteristics, which is rather racist. Moreover, Dersu’s association to tribalism culture in the novel represents him as a connector between human and nature and makes him an element of nature.

Despite the colonial gaze perpetrated by European and somehow Arsenyev himself toward the “other,” Arsenyev’s writing which is considered as travel memoir also contains social criticism. This actually put Arsenyev both as the character of the story and the author in a sense of being ambivalent. An example of his concern on social justice is exemplified in this following passage.

“Five minutes later the police officer came up to me. He looked revoltingly happy and self-satisfied. Perhaps he handled many such corpses in his day and was inured to it; and perhaps the corpse of an unknown “native” was of little consequence. At any rate, I could see by the expression in his face that he would not trouble himself with looking for the murderers and would merely draw upon a death certificate” (p. 309).

The passage is from the end of the last chapter when Arsenyev found Dersu was murdered not long after he decided to leave the city life. Arsenyev mentioned his sentiment about the police being unbothered to find justice for Dersu. The criticism from Arsenyev can be seen in how he put satirical notion “the corpse of an unknown native” to accentuate the degree of significance that the police revealed through that passage. Dersu was an indigenous person of Nanai tribe whose identity was not recorded by Russian authority. Thus, the passage reveals how his death would not bother the authority.

The sense of racial injustice is shown by the passage above. Despite the colonization which conquered many tribal

groups, the acknowledgement of indigenous rights by the Russian government was minimum. The travel writing of Arsenyev reveals his experience of going through dangers in the untamed wilderness of Far East which enabled him to encounter many indigenous groups and minorities. The psyche of the author is somehow influenced by his own account during his journey. In travel writing, the moralizing tone will likely appear due to the author's detachment from his familiar geographical location, resulting in the change of value judgment (Wilson, p. ix). Apart from Arsenyev's unconscious tendency to view Dersu's as rather animalistic, his judgment toward him never resulted in actual racial or colonial negative sentiment. Seeing how significant the role of indigenous people in helping government expedition, Arsenyev expressed his resentment against Russian authority which failed to acknowledge the rights of indigenous people in Russia because of their obscure identity. The nature of colonialism is closely associated to the subjugation and the rightless condition of the colonized. The sense of socio-environmental concern in Arsenyev is actually paradoxical, but in this certain issue, he used his platform as an explorer and autobiographical fiction author to express his disappointment in how the imperial authority did not treat its people equally. Despite Dersu's obscure identity, he lived in the region colonized by Russia and it is supposed to make him a citizen of the empire. Yet the nature of colonization is proved to be only beneficial to those who have certain characteristics supported by the system, in this case is being white European.

Furthermore, the core of Eurocentric entitlement itself is to dichotomize the modern logical human and the animalistic Non-European figures like the indigenous people. The standard of human civility requires the repression of the animalistic ones, or the "other" based on the colonial viewpoint (Huggan and Tiffin, p. 135). The early passages in the story reveals by Arsenyev himself, even though without

intentional negativity, that Dersu's understanding that animals are humanlike is animalistic way of thinking. The repression of such animalistic trait in Dersu, as a representation of Nanai tribes is not constantly done by the disagreement from Arsenyev, who throughout the story seems to be very understanding of him. It was through the contrast life and humankind he encountered when he reached the city. His animalistic traits are repressed to certain degree that he felt extremely estranged and begged to return to the mountains. The repression is also reflected through the gaze of otherness by the townspeople and the police officer who found his dead body but because he was no worthy of justice based on his obscure identity as unknown native person, Dersu's rights as human being was diminished by the power of colonialism.

The Expedition and Ethics of Hunting

Despite Arsenyev and Dersu's relationship in the story which is harmonious according to Arsenyev's account, the fact that the expedition which purpose is to discover flora and ethnic group include unnecessary hunting is an area to be analysed within postcolonial ecocritical framework. The story mentions animal hunting as part of survival during the long journey in cold Far East which can be justified due to its necessity to thrive. However, Arsenyev also recorded several occasions in which he and his team including Dersu killed animals which they called "specimen." This has something to do with biology work ethic at that time which still justify killing their research object.

The bulky trunk of a fallen tree lay in our way. Olentyev was on the point of climbing over it, but, forestalling him, the wounded animal broke cover and hurled itself headlong over the trunk. The hunter fired point blank, without so much as raising the rifle to his shoulder—and with excellent result. (p. 11)

Hunting in colonial Western represents domination, not only towards nature but also

natives. In this story, Dersu himself is a traditional trapper and hunter. Yet, the context in the passage above is imperial subject who went to the expedition, who was Olentyev, a part of Arsenyev team. At this point alone, Dersu's character was not introduced yet. This conduct which is hunting animals on science expedition is needed to be examined. It is related to the possible ethical rules which was governed by Imperial Russia tsarist government at that era. The previous passages did not mention that the animals, who turned out to be Manchurian panther, attacked these convoy first. It is this group that saw the animal running and aimed their rifle at it. The numbers of hunting in the story are mentioned several times, including the team caught a snake for specimen collection (p. 64), Dersu had to kill a tiger (p. 128) and the desire to shoot sea lion (p. 160).

To begin with, the purpose of Arsenyev's expedition to the Far East is to collect specimen of flora and the study of indigenous tribes. The expedition was sponsored by the Russian Tsarist government at that time which was still under the policy of Green Civilizing Mission. The government was concerned with the decreasing numbers of animals in certain parts of the regions, but Arsenyev and his team also contributed to eliminating several numbers of animals by hunting them down during the expedition. The colonial power of Russian Empire aimed to prevent such population loss by also pointed out that such problem was perpetrated exclusively by the numbers of indigenous hunters such as the Nanai tribes and East Asian migrants like the Chinese and Koreans. This finding in ethnic groups blaming is seen to be related to a study on political ecologies of race by van Sant et.al (2020). The study focuses on the case of modern form of settler colonialism in North America which diminishes the rights of minorities and indigenous groups over the land. When compared to this analysis of Arsenyev's writing, central government is found in lessening ethnic group's opportunity to thrive with European settler colonies in Far

East competed in animal hunting. Moreover, the sense of double standards is reflected in this travel literature even though the author himself was not fully aware that the decreasing population of leopard, birds, tigers, and other animal shot down for his purpose in the story would be blamed to the ethnic minorities and the indigenous tribes from that Area.

The depiction of hunting in the story reveals that the existence of colonial power perpetrated and damaged nature. The ambivalent sense is seen through the representation of Dersu as both an indigenous man and a guide working for government-sponsored expedition. However, several acts of hunting in the story were conducted, not by Dersu himself but by Arsenyev's riflemen who were Cossacks. Besides the Nanai tribes which attributed to the hunting culture, Cossacks are known for their bear hunting which is also a common tradition in European Russia.

"In European Russia, hunting bears single-handed is regarded as a special feat of daring. Here each youth hunted bears on his own. Nekrasov, the great Russian poet, dedicated a song to a peasant who killed forty bears, while here the brothers Pyatshkins and Myakishevs had each killed more than seventy." (p. 100).

The tradition of European Russia, or most Slavic community is including single-handed bear hunt. The sense of conquering nature in the Russian culture is as strong as the sense of conquering geopolitical areas for the Russian Empire. The passage mentioned hunting tradition of the European Russian in celebrating tone. Also, the brothers mentioned are European migrants in the Far East. The negative sentiment against tribal community and ethnic minorities in Russian Far East is widely associated with their involvement in animal overhunt, while European migrants also conducted the same.

Moreover, the Russian tradition of bear hunt is mentioned again by the author in the

same exciting tone such as in the following passage.

"I've always wanted to shoot a bear. Others did it single-handed, I said to myself, so why not I? It was a hunter's vainglory speaking in me, I could not resist its call." (p.154-55)

The author who is also the character of the story reveals his passion as European Russian in bear hunt. Based on Arsenyev's account, both European and the Non-European culture have hunting tradition. However, one of Arsenyev's character intention is finally revealed in the passage above. Regarding Arsenyev's contribution in travel writing, his cultural tendency is far from socio-environmental criticism. On the several other parts in the story he mentioned the wickedness of Westernized Russian city but he also supported bear hunt on the other side.

In term of hunting, Arsenyev as an explorer and scientist did not express any disagreement. He displayed his excitement in listening to the Cossack's storytelling of bear hunt and the European settler's legendary tiger catch. Also, the Cossacks themselves are not the native inhabitants of Far East. Many of them are associated with Russia by working for imperial government, just like the Cossacks who worked for Arsenyev as riflemen during the expedition. The Cossacks in the novel are depicted as very fond of hunting. It can be found in their excitement to shoot any animals that they saw during the expedition. The Cossacks represent the imperial tools who disregard the importance of sustainability. They are depicted as the opposite of Dersu who shot animals only if necessary. In the perspective of travel writing, sentimentalism plays important role in the creation of narrative. Conventional travel memoir is characterized by its sentimentalism in form of its notion of feeling, emotion, and subconscious mind (Wilson, p.20). The sentiment toward animal hunting is represented positively by Arsenyev who was even eager to try killing a

bear because his crew already experienced the satisfaction of conquering bestial creature. The excitement could come from Arsenyev's subconscious state that does not perceive animal hunting for fun is necessarily wrong. The colonial custom of European Russia allows him to express it as a positive and interesting kind of sport. The feeling of being excited and anticipated attribute in Arsenyev's writing. It was paradoxical compared to his rejection towards racial bias from white Russian police against Dersu as indigenous person. The connection between two variables may seem vague but the main point is located in how Arsenyev's projection of understanding and emotion is based on his rather anthropocentric tendency, even though he later confessed his concern on the industrial development which threatened the continuity of wild nature. The sense of socio-environmental ambivalence in the European character is examined in research by Iheka (2018) on the white character who run a farm in Zimbabwe and supposed to be environmentally aware but at the same time the animal trade he did was for capitalistic profit.

Zoo criticism in this particular part will put Arsenyev into the guilty side of writing narrative which support the killing of animals based on his colonial culture subjectivity. The representation of animals is closely associated to the subjective perception of colonial power toward such animals (Huggan and Tiffin, p. 139). It is mentioned by Huggan and Tiffin in the studies by Paddle (2000) and Freeman (2005) that representation of animals can leads to their destruction. An example is taken from *thylacine* or Tasmanian tigers which were small carnivorous marsupial which were represented as frightening carnivores which associated with wolf-like or tiger-like creatures. This species of animals finally went extinct because of their representation as frightening and dangerous creatures. In the story context, the bear is represented as a beast with strong and powerful physical strength. In the European Russian tradition,

for a man to be able to kill such powerful animals will strengthen their entitlement as stronger creature, especially if he is capable to take the animal down single-handedly. The representation of bear as a beast with ferocious power leads to its decline by time Russia was transformed into socialist country of U.S.S.R which led the government to ban bear hunt (Sokolsky, 2016). Based on the reading of the novel, the expedition often allows killing animals for no reason as mentioned in one passage about the Cossack rifleman Olentyev shot down a Manchurian leopard which did not even harm them (Arsenyev, p. 11). It was the opposite of Dersu's act on one occasion where Arsenyev spotted a tiger and aimed to shoot it. Dersu snapped and said, "I never shoot Amba in company, if you shoot, I am no longer your friend." (p. 130). Amba is a folklore conception of tiger as mythical creature of the forest. The novel mentioned Dersu is against killing tigers because it would lead to misfortune. The contrast action between the foreigners and the native people indicates the different sense of ethic in term of animal hunting. The native people, represented in Dersu's character, never aimed to shoot for personal desire. He would shoot, when necessary, unlike Arsenyev and his Cossack crew who were led by primal desire to conquer other creatures by shooting them down.

The Clash between Civilization and Nature

In history, the colonization of Far East by Russian Empire results in the land and community conflicts. However, the nature conflict also emerges as human conflict escalated by the colonial power to segregate the European Russian and the indigenous ethnic groups and minorities living in the land. The culture clash is the term referring the conflict between the influence of European colonialism with its Eurocentric view in the tribal and eccentric culture of the indigenous people in the Far East. Human and wildlife conflict which escalated with the

imperial regulation is reflected in several different ways throughout the story.

"There were men among the peasants who brought back living tigers. They never made use of cages or trapes, and caught them with their bare hands, binding them with ropes. On spotting the tracks of a tigress with yearling cubs, they let loose their dogs and fired their rifles into the air, yelling at the top of their voices." (p. 101)

The passage above is taken from the part where Arsenyev's expeditionary party arrived in a migrant settlement around the Sikhote-Alin area, Futsing. The previous passages explained these migrants were European who came to the Far East due to immigration law (p. 99). The settlement in the middle of wilderness attracts wild animals like tigers. Thus, the conflict between human and animals escalated.

The notion of colonial intention in the immigration policy to move European migrants to the wilderness in the Far East results in wildlife conflict which ends with the overhunt of certain species such as bears and tigers. The novel mentioned the numbers of tigers caught by 'peasants' which not referring to ethnic minorities, but to European settlers (Arsenyev, p.101). The newcomers in the wilderness where many animals hunt their preys are guilty in decreasing the numbers of predator population in that area. However, the intention of imperial colonization in the east creates more problem than what it actually supposed to solve. The colonial settlements in the outback will result, not only in the declining numbers of wild animals due to overhunt but also the loss of tribal hunters' chance to live their traditional life. This can be seen in when Dersu who lived most of his life in the wilderness to hunt finally had to move to city life.

"What!" he shouted again. "Must also pay for water? Look at the river." He pointed to the Amur. "Plenty of water there. Earth, water, air—God granted free of charge. How can?"

"Captain, please let me go to the mountains. I cannot live in city; wood must buy, water must buy, people very angry if I cut trees." (p. 306-7)

Dersu expressed his stressful and confused feeling about city life. He was shocked when he found out people need to pay for water and wood in order to stay alive. All his life he knew how free those were when he stayed in the wilderness. Dersu's bewilderment and estrangement makes him beg to go back to the mountains where he could find his peace. With Dersu as symbolism of the connection between nature and humankind, Arsenyev depicted Dersu's alienation in similar way as wild animals getting captured to be put in a city zoo, the things that they only want is to go back to their habitat.

Throughout the story, Arsenyev's narrative is full of paradox, in which on one hand he was excited with trophy hunting during his expedition in the wild but when he came back to town, his sense of socio-environmental criticism emerges.

"I made several futile attempts to find Dersu's grave. The cedars that I had memories as landmarks were gone. There were new roads, new embankments, puts, mounds, ravines and craters" (p. 310)

The passage above is the last one from the book. It marks the ending of Arsenyev's narrative about Dersu, the trapper. The event took place two years after Dersu's death in the same location Arsenyev's made a burial for his friend. However, after he returned, he realized how much changed the town of Khabarovsk was. He found industrial development in that area, the same place where the nature grave for Dersu was located. The grave was gone already, along with the trees, replaced by new infrastructures.

The paradox in the novel found mostly in Arsenyev's character who was in between his excitement of hunting animals and his resentment of modern development which declines the natural environment around him.

The infrastructure development under the imperial governance was aimed to enable more people to inhabit vacant spaces in nature. On the other hand, hunting in the wilderness which caused by the new imperial settlements itself also contributes to the decrease of animal population. The clash between human civilization and nature cannot be avoided. The main cause of this problem comes out from the central government of Russian Empire with the policies to expand their imperial territory through wilderness. The paradox in this case is found in how Arsenyev did not resent the European settlers of Futsing for their tiger hunting hobbies as much as he criticized the infrastructure development in the city.

However, the clash between civilization and nature which contradictorily represented by Arsenyev through his disfavour of environmental changing is related to postcolonial ecocriticism notion of development. The concept of developmentalism postcolonial society is western-centrist and it is a disguised form of neo-colonialism which enriching the interest of the West, rather than helping the economics of Third World country (Huggan and Tiffin, p. 27). The political timeline of *Dersu Uzala* was during the hegemony of Russian imperialism in the early twentieth century. However, by the end of the story, it is revealed how development already took place in several urban communities in Russia. The sense of developmentalism is embodied in the transformation of nature landscape into infrastructure like roads which were possibly aimed to enable better means of transportation. The establishment of settler communities in the mountains which started in earlier decades is also considered as a beginning of developing bigger Russian communities, which consist of European inhabitants in the Far East to gain better control of the regions. This finding is similar to a study on Arsenyev's lament on the decline of wilderness in his non-fiction travelogue, the basis for *Dersu Uzala* novel, *Across the Ussuri Kray* (1921) (Slaght,

2020). Slaughter's emphasis on how Arsenyev deploring the taming of wilderness in his non-fiction writing is reflected in *Dersu Uzala* as well.

Discussing Arsenyev's role in his own narrative, he used his platform as an author to express his uneasiness in the developmental progress in Russia which decrease natural landscape. In the previous period of Russian literature, travel memoir writers used their platform as a vehicle to display their sensibilities and ideologies in writing about the events they encountered during their journey (Wilson, p. 123). Arsenyev followed these variants of travel writing in which he stated his concern on the inequality of rights toward native people and the consideration that encountering nature with civilization can result in negative income. He realized through his own action by taking Dersu out of his mountain life which ended up in tragedy for the Indigenous man and by himself witnessing the rapid progress of imperial civilization degrade natural environment and potentially damage it. Yet, with his platform as travel writer used as a space for him to express his disagreement, he remained silent on the fact that he was not against the outback settlements in the Far East in which the European settlers decreased the wild animals population and pushed indigenous hunter to give up their old way of living. This particular issue marks Arsenyev's paradox in expressing his concern on socio-environmental justice through his autobiographical novel, *Dersu Uzala*.

CONCLUSION

The colonial gaze in *Dersu Uzala* is reflected through the sense of "otherness" from Eurocentric view mainly brought by Russian members of expedition which generalize Russia as European cultured. This occurred because the lack of acknowledgement of the existing indigenous people, in this particular case is the Nanai to which Dersu belonged, who lived in wilderness region conquered by Russian

Empire. The colonial stereotype of indigenous people in the novel symbolizes the colonial power in its indifference to the sustainability of nature to strengthen imperialist geopolitical status. The colonial gaze is also reflected in the subconscious state of Arsenyev in his narrative. He stated paradoxical notions of his concern about socio-environmental justice under the hegemony of imperial Russia in between his indifference to wildlife conflict created by colonial policy and resentment against rapid development of modern infrastructure which damaging natural environment. The specific characteristic of travel memoir is to be a vehicle for the author, who is also the sojourner of his own experience to express his sensibility and his ideological statement through his writing. The finding of this particular issue is that in *Dersu Uzala*, Arsenyev positioned himself as ambivalent, in which his narrative, either conscious or unconscious for his cultural tendency, shows a contradiction while advocating the sense of socio-environmental justice under the dominant power of imperial state.

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