



# A “Novel” Analysis of the Challenges and Resilience of Indigenous Children’s Career Choices during the Colonial Period: “Bocah Mangkunegaran”

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**Abstract** This study examines the resilience and challenges faced by indigenous children in pursuing their career aspirations in 1930s colonial Java through the children’s novel “Bocah Mangkunegaran”. Using a descriptive-qualitative method and drawing from postcolonial theory and reader-response perspectives, it explores the impact of colonial contexts on their career ambitions across various sectors. Their career choices in trade, agriculture, craftsmanship, palace guards, and the arts reflect their ability to overcome challenges and demonstrate unique resilience. For instance, in trade, they leaned toward entrepreneurial roles, seeking independence from colonial influence. Similarly, in agriculture, they aspired to roles like water custodians, emphasizing the importance of these positions. Their career paths often mirrored parental influences, integrating cultural heritage. Their roles as palace guards highlighted the complexities of indigenous children within the colonial structure.

**Keywords:** *Children's Literature, Colonial period, Culture, Language, Career aspirations*

## 1. Introduction

The Dutch colonial era in Java provides a unique perspective into the historical experiences of the indigenous population, particularly through various mediums such as children’s literature (Masjid et al., 2023; Suprpto et al., 2023). Within the narratives of children’s literature, the social, economic, and cultural realities of the indigenous society during that period are vividly portrayed, offering a reflection of their lived experiences (Quinn, 2021). This study delves into examining and analyzing the career aspirations of indigenous children in the Vorstenlanden region of Java during the 1930s Dutch colonial period. It specifically highlights the exploration of cultural nuances and socio-economic contexts prevalent during that era, shedding light on broader, globally relevant issues surrounding the resilience and challenges faced by indigenous communities in their pursuit of career aspirations amid historical colonial structures.

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Vorstenlanden, a significant hub of intellectual activity within Dutch colonial Java, held a pivotal role in fostering a wealth of literary endeavors (Atmojo et al., 2021; Bonaventura & Kusumawati, 2022). This cultural landscape encompassed the territories of Gubernemen Jogjakarta and Gubernemen Soerakarta, designating regions governed by four royal lineages tracing their descent from the Mataram Islamic Dynasty: Kasunanan Surakarta, Kasultanan Yogyakarta, Kadipaten Mangkunegaran, and Kadipaten Pakualaman (Rouffaer, 1950). However, indigenous communities faced considerable constraints in accessing education and employment opportunities during the colonial period, which exacerbated their challenges in pursuing their desired careers. This struggle is poignantly depicted in the children’s literature of that era (Alexander, 2016; Bradford, 1999; Fergusson et al., 2017), reflecting the societal and cultural repercussions of limited access to education and employment among indigenous populations within the colonial context.

The study aims to delve into children’s literature novels, particularly “Bocah Mangkunegaran (The Child of Mangkunegaran)” published in the 1930s in the Vorstenlanden region, to explore the career aspirations of indigenous children. With a focus on realistic events, the novel was chosen due to author Jasawidagda’s profound insights from active engagement in educational, social, and political spheres during Dutch colonial rule. Through meticulous literary analysis, this research seeks to deepen understanding of the role of children’s literature in documenting the social and cultural history of indigenous communities in that era. This investigation into Javanese literature from the 1930s is critical to comprehending the intellectual climate and its interrelation with the societal and political transformations at the time (Abidin et al., 2023; Dascomb, 2019; Priyatmoko, 2018).

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

### **2.1. Educational Transformations in the Historical Narrative of Java**

Java, known for its strategic positioning and rich natural resources, has been a subject of global interest and colonization throughout its history. European powers, particularly the Netherlands, initiated colonial control and restructuring of Java in the 17th century, exploiting its abundant resources. They set up governmental centers, trade hubs, plantations, and transportation infrastructure to export goods primarily to European nations (Kamphuis, 2020; Nuryadi, 2017). The reasoning behind the 19th-century colonization is elaborated in William Basil Worsfold’s “Travel Writing: A Visit to Java”. This period of colonization significantly impacted the indigenous population in Java, especially in terms of education, which suffered adverse consequences (Nuryadi, 2017).

From the 17th to the 19th century, formal education was largely unavailable within Javanese society. The transition commenced with the Ethical Policy that aimed at introducing Western cultural elements into the education system (Nuryadi, 2017; Priyatmoko, 2018). An article called “Een Eereschuld (Honor Debt)” by C. Th van Deventer, published in *De Gids* magazine in 1899, largely influenced the advent of the Ethical Policy, officially proclaimed by the Queen of the Netherlands in 1901. The fundamental motivation behind this policy was the Dutch government’s acknowledgment of a moral obligation to improve the welfare of the Indonesian indigenous population, encompassing three essential programs—irrigation, transmigration, and education (Fakhriansyah & Patoni, 2019; Nuryadi, 2017).

However, colonial education was never intended to enhance the well-being of the indigenous population. It was limited to the Priyayi class, the high caste connected to the Javanese royal family or the Dutch offices (Fakhriansyah & Patoni, 2019; Susilo & Isbandiyah, 2018). The majority of the indigenous population still faced a dearth of educational access (Abidin et al., 2023; Ting & Ting, 2020). The education provided was basic and vocational, directed towards fulfilling the Dutch colonial government’s labor needs. Investigations into the state of education within colonized communities revealed that colonial practices marginalized indigenous communities and students, leading to discrimination and prejudice within an education system that disregarded their ways of life and knowledge. It was emphasized that the decolonization of education is a lengthy process that necessitates steadfast commitment (Schnellert et al., 2022).

The limited educational access for most indigenous communities in Indonesia sparked the concept of indigenous education as a means of survival. Indigenous education, conducted in village schools

(pamulangan), raised awareness among indigenous communities regarding their plight. These educational initiatives were effective in overcoming the restrictions imposed by colonizers. For instance, the mobilization of Javanese children through the Javaansche Padvindere Organisatie (JPO), similar to the Boy or Girl Scouts, was established by the Javanese ruler to educate indigenous children about unity and resistance against the colonizers. These educational practices not only enabled survival but also spurred intellectual resistance against the colonizers (Priyatmoko, 2018).

The Javanese community possessed extensive indigenous knowledge in agriculture, arts, music, and culture. Despite their involvement in education through the Ethical Policy, the Dutch-implemented education was distinct from their traditions. Consequently, Western-style education was adjusted to the cultural context, adopting local languages like Sundanese and Javanese instead of the Dutch language (Vikasari, 2012). Indigenous education emerged following the Ethical Policy implementation, leading to the inception of private schools like Muhammadiyah, established by Kyai Haji Ahmad Dahlan in 1912, and Taman Siswa (1922), founded by Ki Hajar Dewantara, integrating Western educational approaches with Javanese customs for a blended education (Syarif, 2019).

## 2.2. Exploring Children's Literature in Vorstenlanden during the 1930s

Investigating the landscape of children's literature in Indonesia remains a field restricted by limited scope, predominantly concentrating on formal elements and specific time frames. The evaluations by Soewargana and Sutiasumarga provide only partial insights, addressing genre characteristics and the role of Balai Pustaka without engaging deeply with the developmental history of children's reading materials in Indonesia (Soewargana, 1973; Sutiasumarga, 1973).

The scarce exploration of Indonesian children's literature during the 1930s can be linked to the dismissive perspective prevalent among Javanese intellectuals, who largely perceived these literary works as of low quality and unsuitable for formal literary categorization (Mardianto, 2018; Quinn, 1992). These works, typically compact and straightforward, predominantly conveyed moral teachings and were considered more didactic educational tools than literary pieces. Internationally, the exploration of children's literature has been more extensive, considering various aspects, genres, and ideological dimensions. However, the context of Indonesia, especially during the 1930s, lacked considerable scholarly attention within the realm of children's literature (Mardianto, 2018; Quinn, 1992; Suprpto et al., 2023).

In that period, the children's literary landscape in Vorstenlanden was disregarded due to its simplicity and the perceived lack of substantial literary merit. Works from Balai Pustaka mainly focused on moral anecdotes, and specific narratives were considered novels due to their length and incorporation of Western storytelling elements (Lestari et al., 2018). While there were literary works catering to children's educational needs, these children's literary pieces were largely overlooked in comparison to adult literature. Consequently, classic children's literature books from this time are challenging to find in good condition (Christiantiwati, 1996; Sutiasumarga, 1973).

## 2.3. Postcolonial Theory

Postcolonial theory provides a vital framework for comprehending the complexities of colonial legacies and their implications on indigenous populations. It emerges from critical theory and explores the cultural, social, political, and economic consequences of colonial rule, focusing on the power dynamics and resistance inherent in the postcolonial experience (Fanon, 2022; Said, 2023). Key figures in this field, such as Said (2023) and Fanon (2022), have contributed significantly to this discourse. Said's "Orientalism" highlights the role of colonial powers in constructing stereotypes and representations of colonized peoples, which perpetuates the devaluation of their cultures and identities (Said, 2023). Fanon's work emphasizes the psychological effects of colonization on both the colonizers and the colonized, revealing the dehumanization, violence, and alienation faced by the oppressed (Fanon, 2022). These perspectives offer critical insights into understanding the impact of colonialism on indigenous groups and their aspirations.

In the context of the study, postcolonial theory becomes a powerful tool to comprehend how Dutch colonialism in Java influenced the lives, opportunities, and aspirations of the indigenous population,

specifically children (Fanon, 2022; Nodelman, 1992; Said, 2023). By employing postcolonial perspectives, this research aims to unveil the power imbalances, structural inequalities, and cultural dynamics that molded the career aspirations of indigenous children in Java during the colonial era (Nodelman, 1992). Furthermore, it explores how children’s literature both mirrored and resisted the colonial experience, potentially providing a platform for these marginalized voices to be heard and understood. This postcolonial lens contributes a nuanced understanding of the enduring impact of colonialism on indigenous communities, further emphasizing the importance of such investigations in the broader context of postcolonial studies (Fanon, 2022; Nodelman, 1992).

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1. Materials

The methodology commenced by meticulously selecting children’s literary texts, focusing specifically on the novel “Bocah Mangkunegaran”, renowned for its vivid portrayal of the career aspirations and challenges faced by indigenous children in 1930s Java during the Dutch colonial period. The novel’s selection was based on various considerations, notably the author’s, Jasawidagda, extensive expertise in education, offering valuable insights into indigenous educational practices depicted within the text (Anis, 2017; Purwadi, 2016; Soeprapto, 1991). “Bocah Mangkunegaran” is presented in a journalistic narrative in Javanese, vividly capturing real-world elements within Vorstenlanden from 1910 to 1930 (Soeprapto, 1991). It unfolds the narrative of children attending a local village school, *pamulangan*, managed by the community, showcasing their education and practical engagement guided by a knowledgeable teacher (Priyatmoko, 2018). Furthermore, the novel depicts various facets of Javanese society, encompassing the management of village thieves, traditional ceremonies, and the challenges encountered by the lower-class community (Rahayu, 1997; Suastra et al., 2021). Through this novel, the aspirations and struggles of indigenous children in 1930s Java are vividly portrayed.

#### 3.2. Procedure

The aim of this study was to delve into the career aspirations of indigenous children during the colonial period, specifically within the context of the selected novel. The analytical approach employed comprised four primary steps, adapted and modified from various postcolonial theories and prior literary perspectives (Fanon, 2022; Iser, 2014; Miles, 1990; Said, 2023). These steps were meticulously crafted to offer a comprehensive understanding of the experiences of indigenous children during that era, integrating a range of relevant postcolonial theories and literary approaches.

- a. **Analysis of Texts and Historical Context:** The initial step in the analytical method involved the scrutiny of the chosen text and the relevant historical context. This encompassed an examination of the narrative structure, character portrayals, and implicit messages to identify key elements reflecting the career aspirations of indigenous children, aligning with the Reader-Response approach (Iser, 2014). Subsequently, the next stage involved an analysis of the social, economic, and cultural context during the historical period described in the novel (Fanon, 2022). It involved an in-depth investigation into societal conditions, economic challenges, and conflicts prevalent during the colonial period (Said, 2023). The analysis focused on comparing the career aspirations depicted in the text with the historical context to comprehend the relationship between the text’s representations and the experiences of indigenous children within the colonial environment.
- b. **Data Reduction Process:** The subsequent stage involved the reduction or condensation of data (Miles, 1990). It focused on filtering and simplifying pertinent information derived from the analysis of the text and historical context. The goal was to maintain pertinent information considered significant while minimizing irrelevant or redundant data, aiming to concentrate on the significant information influencing the career aspirations of indigenous children.
- c. **Data Presentation and Display:** The streamlined data was then presented through tables, visuals, and possibly a narrative summary. The objective of this presentation was to enhance clarity and facilitate a better understanding. Tables, visuals, and a narrative summary were employed to

elucidate the findings from the data analysis, making it easier for readers to perceive and comprehend these findings (Miles, 1990).

- d. **Conclusion Drawing and Data Verification:** The final phase involved the interpretation of data, drawing conclusions, and verifying the accuracy and validity of the data obtained from the analysis of the text and historical context (Fanon, 2022; Said, 2023). This encompassed interpreting the findings and ensuring that the data used in the study was verified and appropriate. This stage provided assurance of the research outcomes, confirming the alignment of the findings with the study's objectives and methodology used in the research (Miles, 1990).

This methodology was employed with the aim of exploring the career aspirations of indigenous children under the influence of colonialism, all the while considering critical theories and a meticulous analysis methodology.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Aspirations and Careers of Indigenous Children in the Field of Trade

The data illustrates that one of the aspirations instilled by teachers in the village school (pamulangan) is to work in the trading sector. Children are asked to observe the market as a local economic hub. They are introduced to various types of jobs, but the majority of them are considered low-skilled labor. Furthermore, children are offered roles such as market sanitation workers and porters at the market. However, in the context of that time, the teacher's efforts aimed to equip children with skills to survive or cope with the hardships of life during the colonial era they might encounter. Additionally, the examination of this situation through the lens of Orientalism highlights how the educational endeavors and career direction guided within the village school may have been a reflection of the colonial mindset imposing particular roles and limitations upon the indigenous population (Said, 2023). This situation is reflected in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*Aspirations and Careers of Indigenous Children in the Field of Trade*

No	The aspirations of indigenous children	The quote from the novel "Bocah Mangkunegaran"	Translate quotes
1.	Traders engaging in various roles in the market	<i>Guru: Warna-warnaning pangupajiwa, satitèkna nèk kowe padha mênayang pasar. Ana wong sing adol pamêtuning têtanèn. Ana sing kulakan, didol manèh golèk bathi. Ana sing dadi jagal adol iwak. Ana sing dadi blantik pitik. Ana sing dadi bakul gêrèh, lurik, sêmbagi sapêpadhane. Ing pasar ana jinêman sing jaga katêntreman, olèh blanja saka nagara. Ana sing dadi tukang nyapu. Ana sing dadi buruh anggawakake barang dagangan, trêkadhang nganggo anggawa jaran momotan, grobag, andhong sapiturute. Kabèh pagawean sing kaya mangkono kuwi pilihên. Êndi sing kok sênêngi, satitèkna lan sinaunên. ("Bocah Mangkunegaran", 1937, p. 52)</i>	The teacher said, "There are various types of occupations; take notice when you go to the market. There are those who sell agricultural produce. There are middlemen who buy and resell goods for profit. There are butchers. Some work as chicken brokers. Others sell dried fish, traditional Javanese woven fabric ( <i>kain lurik</i> ), and so on. In the market, there are also security personnel paid by the state. Some work as street sweepers. Others work as laborers transporting goods, sometimes using horses, carts, and horse-drawn carriages. Among these various occupations, choose one. Observe and learn about the one that interests you the most." ("Bocah Mangkunegaran", 1937, p. 54)
2.	A "blantik" or a chicken broker	<i>Palapuraniipun Saridin bab blantik ayam. Enjing umum-umun Pak Suta, blantik, kalihan ingkang èstri, sampun wontên pèkên.</i>	Saridin's report on chicken brokers. Early in the morning, Mr. Suta, along with his wife, was already at the market. Vendors started to increase. Mr. and Mrs. Suta were busy buying the chickens being sold to them. Around eight

*Tiyang sadean wiwit kathah. Pak Suta, Bok Suta, ribut anggènipun numbasi. Watawis jam wolu, angsal ayam tigang dasa. Wontèn sawungipun règi 4 kèthip, ayam kumanggung 12 sèn. Kula petang têlas f 3.50. Jam sadasa pêkên mèh bibar. Ayamipun Pak Suta taksih jangkêp 30. Wontèn bakul saking Wanagiri. Punika rêmbagipun radi dangu. Ayam 30 lajêng dipun gêbag radin katumbas f 5.-. Lurah guru: Kajaba Pak Suta, apa ora ana blantik liyane. Saridin: Botên wontên. Lurah guru: Bêgjane Pak Suta. Adate anggêr akèh blantik, ênggone nganyang jor-joran, dadi sing adol pitik rada payu. Saridin: Sagêdhagan punika kok ayam botên patos kathah. Lurah guru: Lah wong bubar panèn. Kānca padesan ora kakurangan, eman-eman ngêdol pitike. Wis, Saridin, plapuramu tak anggêp cukup, tak bijèni 7. (“Bocah Mangkunegaran”, 1937, p. 96)*

o’clock, they acquired thirty chickens. Some were priced at 4 *kethip*, while others were priced at 12 cents. I calculated that it cost about f 3.50. The market would close or finish around ten o’clock. Mr. Suta’s chickens were still a full 30. Then, there were traders from Wanagiri. They negotiated the price. The 30 chickens were then purchased for f 5.00. Mr. Teacher: Aside from Mr. Suta, weren’t there any other chicken brokers? Saridin: There were none. Mr. Teacher: Mr. Suta was quite lucky this time. Usually, there are many chicken brokers there, and the price competition becomes fierce, so chicken sellers usually prefer brokers. Saridin: Yesterday, there weren’t too many chickens being sold. Mr. Teacher: The villagers have just harvested rice; they aren’t short on money, so they don’t have to sell their chickens. Alright, Saridin, I consider your observation report sufficient. I’ll give it a score of 7. (“Bocah Mangkunegaran”, 1937, p. 96)

The provided data and extracts illustrate an intriguing exploration into the educational endeavors focused on children’s exposure to the trading sector within the village school environment. Teachers guide children in observing the market and offer a comprehensive insight into various roles within it, ranging from selling agricultural produce to being a chicken broker or involved in other goods reselling. They are exposed to the diversity of work available at the local market, some requiring more specific skills, while others appear to be more labor-intensive and lower-skilled roles such as market sanitation work and manual portering. Through this, the teacher seems to emphasize the diversity of options and experiences available, prompting children to take notice and learn about the occupations that pique their interest the most.

The teacher’s dialogue with Saridin in the reading material, specifically the conversation regarding the chicken brokers, gives us a glimpse into the market dynamics and the intricacies of economic transactions. It reveals a key aspect of the trading sector where there is competition, negotiations, and variance in chicken prices, thereby exposing children to the fluctuating nature of markets. The feedback and evaluation by the teacher on Saridin’s observation report suggest an educational approach that encourages exploration and understanding of real-world situations. Additionally, the teacher evaluates Saridin’s report as sufficient, perhaps indicating an appreciation for the comprehension and detail conveyed, fostering skills in observation and interpretation relevant to economic activities.

#### 4.2. Aspirations and Careers of Indigenous Children in Livestock Farming

Despite students from non-priyayi backgrounds lacking access to achieve membership in the priyayi class, they are nevertheless provided with opportunities to pursue economic advancement through endeavors such as duck farming. The lucidity of this simple idea is evidenced when a teacher in a village simulation delineates the income derived from duck farming. The crux of this transformation is centered around the promotion of self-sufficient entrepreneurship, empowering lower economic strata to reconfigure their economic circumstances. By fostering a grassroots economy propelled by entrepreneurial spirit, they actively challenge the existing social structure, grounded in hereditary

privileges (priyayi) (Elson, 1995; Kamphuis, 2020), Dutch aristocracy, and land ownership. This economic concept also applies to non-priyayi students, who, despite their inability to ascend to the priyayi class, still possess the potential to advance their economic status through initiatives such as duck farming. These basic principles are distinctly observed within the village simulation, where an instructor calculates the income generated from duck farming activities.

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Furthermore, viewing this context through the lens of colonialism underscores the underlying power dynamics that dictate such educational initiatives. The encouragement of self-sufficient economic ventures, like duck farming, albeit providing an avenue for economic upliftment, also acts as a guide to reinforce existing colonial hierarchies, maintaining certain social classes in their prescribed positions. The educational approach, therefore, reflects not only the facilitation of economic progress but also the covert preservation of colonial power structures within the indigenous communities (Fanon, 1994, 2022, 2023). This situation is reflected in Table 2.

**Table 2***Aspirations and Careers of Indigenous Children in Livestock Farming*

The aspirations of indigenous children	The quote from the novel "Bocah Mangkunegaran"	Translate quotes
Duck farming	<p><i>Guru: Saiki kowe, Gabèr, bapakmu nyambutgawe apa.</i></p> <p><i>Gabèr: Dados narakarya.</i></p> <p><i>Kadar nyambungi: Sambènipun ngingah kambangan. Kala wau Gabèr ambêktakakên tigan satompo, badhe dipun sade êmbokipun dhatêng pêkên, Gabèr punika damêlipun ngulêg-ulêg mèri kemawon.</i></p> <p><i>Guru: Iya, Bèr. Kowe dhêmên bèbèk.</i></p> <p><i>Gabèr: Rêmên.</i></p> <p><i>Coba, tak petungake grambyangan pamêtune wong ngingu bèbèk. Kowe kuwat angon bèbèk 60. Watake bèbèk kuwi sêsasi têrus ngêndhog, sêsasi ora, dadi racake kowe sadina olèh êndhog 30. Êndhog siji tak gawe rêga 2 sèn, dadi 30 rêga 6 kêtchip. Kanggo ragad ingon jagung, dhêdhak, 1 kêtchip. Dadi kowe sadina rak duwe pamêtu satêngah rupiyah, sêsasi 15 rupiyah, mèn padha karo blanjaku. ("Bocah Mangkunegaran", 1937, p. 54)</i></p>	<p>Teacher: Now, Gaber, what does your father do for a living? Gaber: He works as a laborer. Kadar: On the side, he raises ducks. Just earlier, Gaber brought a box of duck eggs to sell at the market. He thoroughly enjoys taking care of ducklings. Teacher: I see. Ber, do you like ducks? Gaber: Yes, Sir.</p> <p>"Let's attempt to estimate the earnings of individuals involved in duck farming. Suppose you are raising 60 ducks. Ducks typically lay 30 eggs per month. If you sell each egg for 2 cents, the total from 30 eggs amounts to 6 kethip. The expenses for purchasing their food are 1 kethip. Consequently, on a daily basis, your income would be around half a rupiah, which totals to approximately 15 rupiah in a month. This is a comparable income level to that of a teacher." ("Bocah Mangkunegaran", 1937, p. 54)</p>

The excerpt showcases the opportunity for non-priyayi students in duck farming, providing economic progress despite their class limitations. Through a simulated village exercise, the teacher illustrates the financial potential of duck farming, aiming to empower students practically. This initiative emphasizes self-sufficient entrepreneurship, challenging entrenched societal structures. Despite social constraints, it highlights students' potential for economic advancement outside traditional paths.

The teacher's guidance and the simulated scenario underscore the simplicity and effectiveness of this approach. The dialogue illustrates the practicality of duck farming, offering an alternate route for financial progress compared to traditional paths, such as entering the priyayi class. By illustrating the comparative income levels achievable through duck farming—equivalent to a teacher's salary—the simulation aims to empower the students with the idea that success and economic advancement can be found outside the confines of conventional social hierarchies. The emphasis on this practical training in duck farming implies a reconfiguration of social norms, advocating for economic self-reliance and an alternative route to financial stability.

### 4.3. Aspirations and Careers of Indigenous Children in Agricultural Labor

The context of children in the novel “Bocah Mangkunegaran” portrays them coming from non-priyayi or lower social class backgrounds, where their parents do not own agricultural land. As an alternative, teachers in village schools introduce various significant job opportunities in the agricultural sector, such as the role of Jagatirta, the water custodian. The novel precisely defines specific roles such as Karyadrana and Jagatirta, emphasizing their responsibilities in managing and equitably distributing water resources to local farmers, as well as their vigilance in identifying potential disruptions in the flow of water resources. Although categorized as low-level agricultural work, water custodians play a significant role in ensuring the success of agricultural processes. This situation is reflected in Table 3.

**Table 3**  
*Aspirations and Careers of Indigenous Children in Agricultural Labor*

The aspirations of indigenous children	The quote from the novel “ <i>Bocah Mangkunegaran</i> ”	Translate quotes
Karyadrana or Jagatirta (caretakers of fields and irrigation systems)	<i>Inggih Jagatirta. Dudu, jênênge Karyadrana. Jagatirta kuwi pagaweane. Jaga têngêse iya anjaga, tirta: banyu. Dadi jagatirta têngêse anjaga banyu. Ora mung tètèg bae, iya ambage-bage banyu barang, anjaga manawa ana rusake wangan sapiturute. Manawa ana bëndungan dhadhal, tanggul rusak, enggal lapur marang nagara. (“Bocah Mangkunegaran”, 1937, p. 24)</i>	Indeed, it is Jagatirta. No, his occupation is Karyadrana. Jagatirta is his duty. Jaga means to safeguard, and tirta means water. Therefore, Jagatirta can be defined as the guardian of water. His responsibilities extend beyond safeguarding; they also include the equitable distribution of water to farmers, vigilance to detect any disruptions in water flow, and other related tasks. In the event of the dam or embankment damage, it is his responsibility to report it to the government.” (“Bocah Mangkunegaran”, 1937, p. 24)

The excerpt illustrates the emphasis on the vital role of Jagatirta as the water custodian, highlighting his responsibility as a guardian of water and an equitable distributor of this vital resource to local farmers. The clear distinction between the role of Karyadrana and Jagatirta is evident, where Jagatirta’s responsibilities are underscored beyond mere water safeguarding, extending to the supervision of water distribution, vigilance in monitoring potential water flow disruptions and reporting infrastructure damage to the government. This distinction elucidates the significance of water custodians, demonstrating their pivotal contribution to the agricultural process and their role as overseers and distributors of an essential resource within the community, underscoring the broader societal value and responsibility they hold in ensuring the success and stability of local agriculture.

### 4.4. Aspirations and Careers of Indigenous Children in Craftsmanship

The island of Java is rich in minerals. This novel serves as an inspiration regarding the management of these natural resources by the community, even in the realm of simple productions such as transforming natural stones into rings and other jewelry. This depiction signifies the gradual awakening of the public’s consciousness about the natural wealth traditionally under the control of the colonial government. Teachers in village schools provide information to children regarding careers in the craft industry. The text emphasizes the coordinated effort of educators in aligning the career aspirations of children with the professions held by their parents as a means of survival during the colonial era. This is exemplified in the story of Besi, where a teacher encourages him to follow the professional path of his skilled blacksmith father, emphasizing the profound influence of parental occupations on the determination of children’s career paths. The impact of colonialism is reflected in the control exercised by the colonial government over natural resources, including minerals, in the Java region. This



illustrates a gradual awakening within the community regarding the natural wealth traditionally under the control of the colonial government (Said, 1990). This situation is reflected in Table 4.

**Table 4**  
*Aspirations and Careers of Indigenous Children in Craftsmanship*

No	The aspirations of indigenous children	The quote from the novel "Bocah Mangkunegaran"	Translate quotes
1.	Stonemasonry	<p><i>Ing Wuryantara. Akèh padhase putih, bècik, kèna digawe jobin, pot, kijing sapèpadhane.</i></p> <p><i>Ing Baturêtna. Sisih kidul: pagunungan gamping, padha didhudhuki diusung mênyang Baturêtna, dikirimake marang liya panggonan mêtù sèpur. Sisih wetan: watune warna-warna, mulane ana kapanewon aran, Batuwarna. Watu mau sing cilik-cilik kèna digosok kanggo kalung, mata ali-ali, bènik, warnane ana sing biru, kuning, abang, wungu, kaya akik. Malah ing bawah Tirtamaya ana gunung sing isi têngbaga, tau dipèlik bangsa Jèpang. ("Bocah Mangkunegaran", 1937, p. 37)</i></p>	<p>In Wuryantara, there are abundant white quartz stones that can be used for flooring, flower pots, gravestones, and more. In Baturetna, to the south, there are limestone mountains that are excavated and transported elsewhere via railway. To the east, the stones exhibit a variety of colors; hence, the village is named Batuwarna, which translates to 'colored stone.' The small stones can be polished and used as necklace pendants, ring gems, and button fasteners, coming in shades of blue, yellow, purple, and red. In the Tirtamaya region, there is also a copper mountain under the control of the Japanese. ("Bocah Mangkunegaran", 1937, p. 37)</p>
2.	Blacksmiths	<p><i>Hara, saiki aku takon Si Bèsi. Jênêngne bae: Bèsi, patute anak pandhe. Rak iya, ta. Bèsi: Inggih. Kadar nyambung, garapanipun sae. Laris. Bapakipun dados tiyang cêkap. Guru: Iya, Bèsi.</i></p> <p><i>Bèsi: Inggih, nanging rumiyin. Sapunika botên patos pajêng. Damêlanipun bapak dipun wada kawon sae kalihan damêlanipun Mas Marta kilèn lèpèn.</i></p> <p><i>Guru: Marta kulon kali kuwi iya bocah wêton pamulangan desa bae, nanging dhèwèke wis tau nyambutgawe ana Kartisana. Lah saiki kowe: Bèsi, rasanana karo bapakmu. Tamat saka kene, kowe tak lèbokake pamulangan pèrpolèh. Besuk bisa klèbu pamulangan patukangan (ambah sêkul) ing Calamadu, apa ing Tasikmadu, apa ambah sêkul guprêmèn ing Surakarta. Satamatmu saka kono, banjur ngrewangana bapakmu dadi pandhe, masthi pangupajiwamu bakal mumbul manèh. Tutura bapakmu, ya, Bèsi. ("Bocah Mangkunegaran", 1937, p. 52)</i></p>	<p>Now, I'll ask Besi. His name is Besi (Iron), and his father is a skilled blacksmith, isn't that correct? Besi: That's correct, sir. Teacher: The results of his father's work are good, and it's in demand. His father has become well-off. Teacher: Yes, Besi? Besi: Yes, but that was in the past. It's not in high demand now. His father's work is compared to the work of Mas Marta, who is located across the river. Teacher: Marta across the river is also a graduate of the <i>pamulangan</i> school, but he used to work in Kartisana. So, now, Besi, discuss this with your father. After you finish school here, I will enroll you in the <i>pamulangan</i> school for craftsmen. Tomorrow, you can enter the carpentry <i>pamulangan</i> school in Calamadu, or perhaps in Tasikmadu, or the Gupremen school in Surakarta. After you complete your studies there, you can assist your father in becoming a skilled blacksmith. It will surely become in demand again. Please convey this to your father, Besi. ("Bocah Mangkunegaran", 1937, p. 52)</p>

The cited passage provides an insight into the local mineral resources and their versatile use in crafting various items like flooring, jewelry, and ornaments. The regions are distinctively known for specific stone types, colors, and their respective usability. Furthermore, the dialogue involving Besi and his teacher points to the evolving market dynamics and the fluctuating demand for certain skilled trades.

Besi’s prospective career direction, steered by his teacher, highlights the adaptability required in response to changing market forces. The teacher’s proactive approach, suggesting enrollment in various pamulangan schools specializing in different trades, demonstrates an understanding of the importance of education and adaptation to economic changes in ensuring the sustainability of professions, notably, the resurgence of the demand for blacksmithing skills. This interaction underlines the importance of aligning education with market needs for future career success.

#### 4.5. Aspirations and Careers of Indigenous Children in Palace Guards

Being the only feasible career for indigenous children within the narrative context, serving as low-ranking soldiers within the royal establishment highlights the restricted career options influenced by the colonial authority’s power structure. These roles indoctrinate soldiers, emphasizing allegiance to the colonial government and the Javanese priyayi class, solidifying the existing social hierarchy and preserving the status quo. This approach prioritizes physical strength over intellectual acumen, symbolizing inherent limitations and social disparities imposed upon indigenous individuals. The forced involvement of these soldiers in conflicts against their own people emphasizes the intricate and conflicted position of indigenous individuals within the colonial structure, revealing the suppression of their cultural identity and the imposition of a subservient role within the colonial system. This situation underscores the entrapment of indigenous children in a system designed to maintain the colonial regime’s control and the hierarchical dominance of the priyayi class, severely constraining their career aspirations and reinforcing their subjugation within the colonial social order. The following excerpt illustrates the portrayal of indigenous children’s careers as soldiers.

**Table 5**  
*Aspirations and Careers of Indigenous Children in Palace Guards*

The aspirations of indigenous children	The quote from the novel “ <i>Bocah Mangkunegaran</i> ”	Translate quotes
Palace guards	<p><i>Gurune takon: Bocah-bocah kuwi besuk padha kêpengin nyambutgawe apa.</i></p> <p><i>Sudarka cukat amangsuli: Dados prajurit Mangkunagaran.</i></p> <p><i>Guru: Patut, awakmu gothot, dèdèg pangadègmu sèmbada. Mas Rangka, bapakmu, sugih sanak ana Sala. Sajrone kowe isih magang prajurit, gampang olèhmu pondhokan. (“Bocah Mangkunegaran”, 1937, 51)</i></p>	<p>The teacher asked, “Children, what do you want to be when you grow up?” Sudarka quickly responded, “I want to become a Mangkunegaran warrior.” The teacher said, “That suits you well; you have a robust physique, a strong and dignified posture. Mas Rangka, your father has many relatives in Solo (<i>Vorstenlanden</i>). When you apprentice as a warrior, you won’t have difficulties finding a place to stay.” (“Bocah Mangkunegaran”, 1937, 51)</p>

The quote from the text exemplifies how the career aspirations of indigenous children are significantly influenced by societal perceptions and institutional indoctrination. Sudarka’s quick response of aspiring to become a Mangkunegaran warrior portrays the impact of societal norms and expectations on the career aspirations of these children. The teacher’s subsequent acknowledgment, praising Sudarka’s physique and making a direct association between physical attributes and the role of a warrior, underlines how these children are subtly nudged toward certain roles within the society. This snippet reflects the narrative’s emphasis on aligning the career paths of indigenous children with predetermined societal roles, indicative of a limited range of aspirations due to societal expectations and structural norms.

#### 4.6. Aspirations and Careers of Indigenous Children in Artists (Puppeteers)

In the context of shadow puppet performances, embodying aspirations as a dalang, or puppeteer, carries profound significance in the struggle against colonization. Shadow puppetry, beyond its role as a tool

for imparting philosophical and life lessons, holds substantial historical importance in resistance against colonial authority. The portrayal of a dalang's aspirations, as illustrated in the interaction between Marija and Sudarka, reflects a steadfast desire to comprehend and master this traditional Javanese art. For indigenous children, assuming the role of a dalang can serve as a means of expressing their culture and resistance against oppression. Proficiency in the art of shadow puppetry not only becomes a matter of personal pride but also a form of resistance against colonial subjugation. Within this knowledge and skill lies the strength of indigenous children to uphold their culture and utilize art as a medium to resist colonial oppression. This is evident in the following excerpt, depicting Marija's determination in training to become a dalang.

**Table 6**  
*Aspirations and Careers of Indigenous Children in Artists (Puppeteers)*

The aspirations of indigenous children	The quote from the novel "Bocah Mangkunegaran"	Translate quotes
Dalang (puppeteer)	<p><i>Marija pancèn dhèmèn wayang, ènggone kêklumpuk wayang dluwang, rada pêpak, diwadhahi kothakan. Sore-sore Marija linggih sila tumpang ngadhêpake gèdhèg ing pandhapa, kaya caraning dalang ngadhêpake kêlir. Tangane kiwa nyêmpala kothakan, tangane têngên nancêpake wayang: Radèn Wrêkudara, cangkême andrêmimil nirokake pocapaning dalang ("Bocah Mangkunegaran", 1937, p. 79)</i></p> <p><i>Sudarka: Mulane iya mèmêng olèhmu ajar andalang. Anggêr krungu gamêlan, adoh-adoh kok parani, prêlune mung bisa amèlu nabuh. Aku anjuring puji, kèlakona ènggonmu arêp dadi dalang.</i></p> <p><i>Marija: Iya ora mung tumrap aku bae, kowe kabèh iya sing santosa budimu, cikbèn banjur tamat sinaumu.</i></p> <p><i>("Bocah Mangkunegaran", 1937, p. 83)</i></p>	<p>Marija is truly passionate about shadow puppets. She has a complete collection of paper shadow puppets neatly stored in a box. In the evenings, Marija sits cross-legged, facing the bamboo wall in the pavilion. She sits as if she were the puppeteer (<i>dalang</i>) facing the cloth screen (<i>kelir</i>). Her left hand holds the <i>cempala</i> (an instrument for marking dialogue intervals like percussion sounds), while her right hand holds a puppet: Raden Wrekudara, with its mouth moving to mimic the puppeteer's dialogue. ("Bocah Mangkunegaran", 1937, p. 79)</p> <p>Sudarka: That's why you are so dedicated to learning puppetry. Every time you hear the <i>gamelan</i> music (Javanese music accompanying the puppet show), even from a distance, you go to it so that you can learn to play it. I pray that your dream of becoming a puppeteer comes true.</p> <p>Marija: Not just for me, but all of you will succeed and find happiness after you finish your studies. ("Bocah Mangkunegaran", 1937, p. 83)</p>

Marija, one of the central characters, exhibits an unwavering passion for shadow puppets. She maintains an extensive collection of paper shadow puppets, meticulously stored in an orderly fashion within a box. As the evening descends, Marija takes her place, sitting cross-legged in front of the bamboo wall in the pavilion. Her posture resembles that of a dalang, the puppeteer, who traditionally faces the cloth screen, known as *kelir*. In this scene, Marija not only embodies the physicality of a dalang but also becomes the storyteller who breathes life into the puppet, Raden Wrekudara, manipulating its mouth movements to synchronize with the dalang's dialogues.

Sudarka, in a conversation with Marija, underscores the seriousness with which she is pursuing the art of puppetry. She encourages Marija to attend any *gamelan* performances, even if they are at a distance, in her quest to learn and master this traditional Javanese art form. Sudarka's hopes are fervent, praying for the realization of Marija's dream to become a proficient dalang.

## 5. Discussion

The research aims to deeply examine the intricate dreams and career pathways of indigenous children during the past colonial era, intricately interwoven into the diverse occupational landscape chronicled within the vivid narrative of “Bocah Mangkunegaran”. In this multifaceted investigation, the study unravels a fabric of complex findings, highlighting the intricate interplay between the educational structure influencing the aspirations of these indigenous children and the complex web of socio-political pressures they encountered. While seemingly unassuming, the career trajectories these children pursued stand as a manifestation of their resistance strategies against the repressive grip of colonialism. These approaches encompass ingenious life strategies, such as employing the symbolic power of shadow puppetry for propagandistic purposes, acknowledging the critical importance of water as a survival cornerstone, advocating the vital need to protect natural resources from colonial exploitation, and strengthening the economic autonomy of the indigenous community. In the compelling narrative of “Bocah Mangkunegaran”, indigenous children emanate spirited defiance against the colonial dominance, epitomizing their courage and unwavering resilience in the face of the hegemonic colonial rule.

The research findings uncover the multifaceted impact of social contexts during the colonial era on the career aspirations of indigenous children across various sectors such as trading, farming, agriculture, craftsmanship, palace guard, and the arts. Their choices in each sector are distinctly shaped by the challenges prevailing at that time and demonstrate their unique resilience amidst these adversities. For instance, within the trading sector, their inclinations toward low-skilled jobs mirror the social limitations and inequalities rampant during the colonial period (Lestari et al., 2018). In the agricultural realm, despite their non-priyayi backgrounds, the introduction to roles perceived as mundane, like water custodians, underscores the significance of such positions. In the realm of craftsmanship, their career choices reflect the influence of their parental professions, showcasing the integration of their cultural heritage into their aspirations. On the contrary, their roles in the military as palace guards unveil a complex and intricate position held within the colonial structure for these indigenous children.

Viewed through the lens of Orientalism theory and the psychological impacts of colonialism, the constrained career pathways imposed on indigenous children within the colonial power structure signify a deliberate control mechanism (Fanon, 2022; Nodelman, 1992; Said, 2023). The severe limitations and suppression of their cultural identity depict the systemic imposition of the dominant colonial narrative. Furthermore, the oppressive nature of colonialism echoes through the career options highlighted by the emphasis on physical strength rather than intellectual prowess, serving as a stark representation of the inherent restrictions placed on the indigenous population by the colonial authorities (Buandoh, 2016; Fanon, 1994, 2022). The children’s unwavering determination to pursue their career aspirations, notably their involvement in shadow puppetry, signifies a mode of resistance through cultural expression, in line with the idea of challenging colonial oppression by means of cultural assertion and self-empowerment (Abidin et al., 2023; Fanon, 2022; Masjid et al., 2023). Their resilience in holding onto and expressing their cultural heritage and traditional art forms becomes a mode of resistance, countering the suppression and domination perpetuated by the colonial power structure.

The subsequent research recommendations will aim to uncover broader insights into the lives of indigenous children influenced by colonialism. Firstly, there will be an exploration into how colonialism molds self-identity and career aspirations among indigenous children. Key factors, such as feelings of inferiority arising from colonial cultural dominance and limitations on career aspirations from a colonial perspective, will be central in this analysis. Secondly, there will be a more comprehensive investigation into the economic disparities stemming from exploitation within indigenous communities. This in-depth inquiry will focus on understanding how economic inequality restricts the career choices of indigenous children, compelling them towards low-income occupations. By exploring these aspects, this research will offer a nuanced understanding of the influence of colonialism on the aspirations and career pathways of indigenous children. Additionally, it will contribute to insights that transcend specific geographic and cultural boundaries, providing a broader perspective on the socio-economic implications within various communities affected by colonial rule.

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