

Broadening History; The Use of Psychohistory in Attempt to Provide Historical Explanation

Dinar Rizky Listyaputri^{1*}, Nasution², Sumarno³, Wisnu⁴

¹²³⁴History Department, Faculty of Social Science and Law, State University of Surabaya, Indonesia

Abstract. For decades, historians have been divided and stood on different polarities of history. Half of them described history as it consists of facts and a series of scientifically proven events and some were insisting that history has a special relationship with human life that could be explained from various perspectives. Ranke emphasized the importance of preventing historians from including their prevailing theories and relying on primary sources. Meanwhile, Robinson and *Annales* historians were against the dominance. They proposed the use of social science and other points of view to define histories differently from what Ranke did (which mostly is dominated by political factors). This paper aims to explain historiography's development and to introduce the psychological factor as one of the aspects of historical explanation. The research is a kind of qualitative research that uses the literature study. The research found that historiography has been developed from a single-factor style to multi-view historiography. Psychohistory is one of the rising fields to be studied.

Keywords: Historiography's, Psychohistory, Historical explanatio

1 Introduction

For decades, historians have been divided and stood on different polarities of history. Half of them described history as it consists of facts and a series of scientifically proven events. Leopold van Ranke drew a perspective of history with an attempt to put aside any prevailing theories or prejudices by the assiduous use of primary sources in the historiography process. His opinion plays an excellent role in initiating narrative writing of history. However, he pointed out the political factor as the most significant historical agent. Hence, his explanation usually weighed on the king's deeds and discarded social or economic factors. This historiography focuses on significant events with major dramatic turns and building a historical figure. His way of writing history is adopted widely and remarked as the scientific history which values objectivity. Usually, national historiography uses this perspective.

In 1912, in his essay *The New History*, James Harvey Robinson proposed using social science to enrich history analysis. Old history focuses on chronicles intending to tell the readers about how the past events happened. History, as Robinson claimed to have the students view it, is a series of dramas with each episode exclusively talking about a few men who lead the rest of the others. Considering how the chronicles do not spare space for other factors than a few actors, Robinson said it is unavoidably in contrast to the aim of

education, which is nurturing students into better men or citizens. There is nothing to reap from history if it merely talks about the sequence of events without connecting every dot by analyzing other factors. Therefore, a historian has to be critically and creatively convincing about what could be the causes behind the story. For that particular reason, history needs social science to explain how and why the events happened in the first place.

Years later, in 1920, France historians showed attention to reforming their historiography from political history to 'wider and more human history. By that intention, Febvre and Bloch were against the dominance of political explanation or historical figures that had been glorified through old history. Febvre and Bloch's movement breaking the exclusivity of historiography by including ordinary people's history is widely known as *Annales* history.

The development of historiography that has been stated above emphasizes how other disciplines are necessarily involved in constructing a comprehensive explanation. As a consequence, historians shall start comprehending other disciplines to provide a new kind of historical interpretation. Meanwhile, sociology, economy, and geology might be widely applied in writing historiography; psychology has not been utilized yet. This paper attempts to introduce the psychological factor as one of the aspects of historical explanation.

* Corresponding author : dinarlistyaputri@unesa.ac.id

2 Research Methods

This research is descriptive qualitative research. It is devoted to understanding the research subject thoroughly and descriptively to be described in a narrative of words. The research uses literature study as its method (Moleong, 2007). A literature study is a method that allows a researcher to conduct a report based on facts and research results after compiling them from various relevant written sources such as scientific journals, research articles, unpublished research, books, and other documents (Creswell, 1994). The written documents are taken after considering their correlation with the research theme.

3 Result and Discussion

3.1 Historiography Development

Passmore defined *history explanation* as the way a historian makes something explained intelligibly. It is done by providing a familiar connection. A historian shall be able to help readers understand how the change process occurred and shows a natural connection between events and the reasons behind. An explanation is considered intelligible when the link does not need any defense. By that means, the connection is naturally seen as usual and approved by most people's logic (Passmore, 1962). How do people distinguish between intelligible and non-intelligible explanations? Such as when we talk about why Kasan Mukmin's uprising in 1904 happened. Instead of using the reason 'open door policy caused the uprising', 'the social and economic gap between land owners and labors', or 'land possession's problem' is way more familiar and understandable.

When Passmore talked about familiarity, Hexter weighed history on the credibility. Like Passmore, he argues about the credibility of a story, and the philosopher is unwilling to use processive narrative. The processive narrative means when history is being explained dramatically instead of chronologically. Hexter accepts narrative explanation occasionally, but he defines nothing about credibility in history (Roberts, 1995).

Understanding history explanation determines the historiography itself because one builds another. History explanations are part of historiography and the historiography is evolving. Historiography develops from Ranke's perspective to Annales history. Until the third quarter of the nineteenth century, Ranke's perspective on historiography was widely adopted by historians. Ranke defined the narrative history, which elaborated the history by showing the process that occurred. He underlined that history should show how an event happened, and a historian must put aside any prevailing theories or prejudices by the assiduous use of primary sources in the historiography process (von Ranke, 2010). Putting aside any prevailing ideas means historians write only about facts of the change that occurred and prevent themselves from enriching the historiography with their color, perspective, as well as analysis. Ranke's perspective on history puts a

borderline between history and social sciences. To Ranke, social science talks about the general explanations. Meanwhile, history works oppositely. Ranke believed a historian must stand on objectivity when they portray past events. Restraining from prevailing theories or prejudices is one law they must abide by.

Ranke also meticulously used primary sources to write history. However, he did not explicitly describe what he considered primary sources. Considering his writing, which mostly put the political and monarch's factors in a significant spot, we can conclude that the primary sources he meant are the written source; the monarch or government institutions provided written sources, either documents or inscriptions. Ranke aimed to write history scientifically by confining the facts from prevailing theories and meticulously using primary sources from the government with consequences; explanation only provides political factors and declines others. Ricklefs's work, 'A History of Modern Indonesia', uses this perspective. The book chronologically talks about Indonesia's history with detailed descriptions as the primary explanations (Kuntowijoyo, 2008) (Ricklefs, 2008).

Later, in 1912, historian James Harvey Robinson started proposing using social science to explain history. Robinson questioned the traditional type of historical writing, which aims at story tell past events. To him, explaining history by introducing some prominent actors who lead other men is not capturing the whole history itself (Robinson, 1911). He adopted Lord Bolingbroke's writing about the application of history. Bolingbroke underlined that the application of any study aims to nurture better men or citizens. However, contrary to that, he found nothing knowledgeable people could reap from the usual history they had been reading because it was merely talking about the sequence of past events.

Robinson stated that giving a personal interpretation of past events is not a sin historian should avoid (this opinion is against Ranke's state of putting aside any prejudice to write history). He obviously suggested rewriting the history to accommodate the natural question that may be brought up regarding the past events. The sequence (historians are working hard on - putting the fragmental sources together into one timeline) must be explained logically and naturally without neglecting any historical background or knowledge of past events. Hence, social science is greatly needed to help historians build logical explanations out of the narrative history. Peter Burke considered the same pattern that Robinson had as well. Sejarah Nasional Jilid I-VI, we all know as the most cited national-history book, has been explaining Indonesia's history with some touches of social science.

In 1920, Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre offered a groundbreaking approach to history through their concept of *Annales* history. Their study of conventional history showed that history is like a big pictorial built by fragments. Historians gather their sources and assess their credibility, but they do not really find a direct connection between them. Simply speaking, historians only know the fragmented history, and it is their job to

explain the correlation between each source. Thus, Bloch called it reintegration (Bloch, Strayer, Joseph R., Putnam, Peter., 1953).

Bloch and Febvre reckon the process of reintegration does not come after analysis. They value interrelationship between factors because everything is mutually related and connected in civilization. Talking about civilization history means we have to understand the political state, economy, social state, and even the most fundamental as well as the subtlest manifestations people have in mind (Bloch, Strayer, Joseph R., Putnam, Peter., 1953). This concept declines any dominating factor of history. Rather than that, Bloch and Febvre ask us to see history from multi-views and perspectives.

Annales history has enlightened historians that even the microscale event is worth to be analyzed as part of a macroscale event or history. Sartono Kartodirdjo, with his writing of *The Peasants' Revolt of Banten in 1888* is the perfect example of how a subtle event (people did not give any attention to it, because it was merely a five days revolt by the peasants) can be analyzed through the social science. The dissertation itself becomes one of the most important historical studies about economic and social development in the Dutch East Indies (KARTODIRDJO, 1966).

Annales school brings history to a new direction of endeavors. Starting the multidisciplinary historical explanation with the help of sociology, economy, and even psychology. Contemplating how social sciences and history used to have a fine line between them, this is such a huge leap. Psychohistory is one of *Annales's* branches.

3.2 Psychohistory

Years ago, simultaneously with the rising of *Annales* school, historians began to plan the new map of history by including more subtle matters. One of the fields they were working in was intellectual history. The phrase was popularly known amongst French historians as the history of mentalities which briefly talked about people's attitudes in their daily life. The ideas concerning childhood, sexuality, family, and death, as they have developed in European civilization as an attempt to write history 'totally' (Hutton, 1981).

The history of mentalities thus attempts to remedy the limitations of the idealist tradition of cultural history by studying the domain of culture which seemed so remote from the work of the idealist historians: the culture of the commoner. Historians are shifting their focus on studying history from the world-view culture problem or common idealism to the structures through which such conceptions are conveyed. By the structures, historians refer to all forms that regularize mental activity, whether aesthetic images, linguistic codes, expressive gestures, religious rituals, or social customs. Knowing those particular forms will help historians to identify how man's rationale and changes in his life may change the shape of human nature. Straightforwardly speaking, the history of mentalities tries to find the string between human psychology to history and vice versa (Hutton, 1981).

Founders of *Annales* history, Lucien Febvre and Marc Bloch, both had an interest in analyzing human mentality. Both were expressing their interest in different cases. Febvre thought it was untenable to present Rabelais as the first in a succession of freethinkers engaged in a long-term crusade to advance a timeless idea. His thought was based on his knowledge of the environment of the sixteenth-century period. He argued that man requires coherence (vision) in, as well as forms (structure) for, his ideas. In their coherence, prevailing conceptions of the world provide fixed points of his orientation. However, no matter how intelligent a man was (in the sixteenth century), they would always need religious schemes because they had the prevailing ideas already (Hutton, 1981).

Meanwhile, Bloch explained why people in the Medieval century did believe in miracles ascribed to medieval kings to cure skin disease and scrofula. He compared the psychology of historical figures from the Medieval and modern. The medieval world was a 'marvel', in which most phenomena were explained in terms of supernatural causes. The 'sacred' (that which is explicable only in metaphysical terms) had broad boundaries. According to the existence of the supernatural aspects, kings had been worshipped as individuals with many miracle powers (Hutton, 1981). The lack of critical and rational thinking was also the reason.

3.3 The Needs of Psychohistory to Provide Historical Analysis

Historians and sociologists do not speak the same language. Therefore, Braudel, as Peter Burke has quoted it, the relationship between the two is like a dialogue between the deaf. However, Durkheim urged the rapprochement of social science and history. He stated that a social phenomenon could not be explained without returning to its origins. Thus, a sociologist shall consider fathoming the history or process of the phenomenon to explain it better (Burke, 1992). Meanwhile, a historian shall explain the history, by that means the changes that happen in society, with the theories of social science. Following Durkheim's thought, Peter Burke also suggested the rapprochement, which is linking history with sociology, geography, economy, or psychology.

In the United States, the term psychohistory has been famous since 1950 after a study of Martin Luther was published by the psychoanalyst Erik Erikson (Burke, 1992). Erikson wrote a psychobiography of Martin Luther, the leader of the Christian movement in Europe. He studied him thoroughly and found the identity crisis that Luther experienced in his youth, which led him to manifest his rebel thoughts into rebellion against Pope (Erikson, 1958) (Erikson, 1968). It is such a new perspective of history. The Christian movement is not explained merely by religious and political aspects, but Erikson underlined the psychological crisis inside Luther.

Psychological theories can be helps in building historical explanations in at least three ways. First, in freeing them from prejudice and 'common sense'

assumption about human nature, assumption all the more powerful for being unacknowledged, if not unconscious in the Freudian sense of term. Psychological theories may reveal the rational roots of apparently irrational behaviors or vice versa. Understanding the psychological condition will prevent historians from labeling one individual or group for acting recklessly and irrationally (superstitious, fanatic, lunatic, and so on) while comparing it to another individual or group they consider acting rationally (Burke, 1992).

Secondly, psychological theories contribute in the process of source criticism. To make proper use of an autobiography or diary as historical evidence -the memoirs of Saint Simon for instance-, it is necessary to consider not only the culture in which the text was written and the literary conventions of the genre, but also the age of the author, his or her position in the life-cycle (Burke, 1992). The theories are also applicable when historians work on past events with the help of oral sources. There might be some sources that contain specific fantasies. Psychological theories are absolutely needed to distinguish between credible sources and fantasies.

In the third place, psychological theories have a contribution to make to the debate on the relationship between the individual and society. For example, they have considered the psychology of followers as well as that of leaders about the need for an exemplary father figure (Burke, 1992). The last case is also commonly known as patron and client. Furthermore, that relationship can be found in societies.

Another way in which psychology helps to provide explanation is the relation between the individual and society by discussing child-rearing in different cultures, and this discussion too may rationalize historical problems (Burke, 1992). Erikson found how childhood can affect someone and his/her decision in the nearer future. Their decisions will create history, and what happens in their lives will shape their psychological circumstances (Erikson, 1975).

Indonesia's history is painted by various actions. Some source of history, primarily oral or folklore, has some superstitious ambiances. The most common detail we are familiar with is the existence of Ratu Adil. This detail is adopted from Ramalan Jayabaya from the seventh century. And the details have been part of the narration of regional rebellions in Indonesia from 1945 to 1950. Unfortunately, no studies would portray this phenomenon from a psychohistory perspective. Therefore, psychohistory is highly necessary to be applied in writing the explanations of Indonesia's history.

4 Conclusion

History explanation is the way a historian makes something explained intelligibly. History explanations are part of historiography and the historiography is evolving. Historiography develops from Ranke's perspective to Annales history. Ranke underlined that history should show how an event happened, and a

historian must put aside any prevailing theories or prejudices by the assiduous use of primary sources in the historiography process. Thus, he often underlined his explanation from political perspectives. Meanwhile, Robinson stated that historians shall try to explain the linkage between past events with the use of social science. And *Annales* historian are shifting their focuses from political point of view to social, economical, and even psychological analysis of histories.

Years ago, simultaneously with the rising of *Annales* school, historians began to plan the new map of history by including more subtle matters. One of the fields they were working in was intellectual history. The phrase was popularly known amongst French historians as the history of mentalities which briefly talked about people's attitudes in their daily life. The ideas concerning childhood, sexuality, family, and death, as they have developed in European civilization as an attempt to write history 'totally'.

Psychological theories can be a help to explain history from different perspectives. It fills the empty spots we leave in social or economy history. This will also help us to understand the reason people behave in the past.

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