



SIE DJIN KOEI, INDONESIAN MARTIAL ARTS COMIC EARLY GENERATION

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Abstract- In 1952, when Indonesia had recently become independent, the Sie Djin Koei martial arts comic was published, which was created by a famous painter named Siau Tik Kwie. The comic was so successful that it increased the weekly circulation of Star Weekly, the publisher, to 45,000 copies, a very large number at the time. The comic Sie Djin Koei is the first local comic produced in the Chinese martial arts style. And became the inspiration for Indonesian martial arts style comics in the years that followed. Although the comic Sie Djin Koei is very famous, it has not been scholarly analyzed. This paper wants to discuss how Siau Tik Kwie's strategy to create such a beautiful comic so that it becomes an icon for the generation of the 50s and after.

Keywords: WayangPotehi (Potehi Puppet), CinaPeranakan (Chinese Blood), Mask Effect, Sie Djin Koei, Si JinKui, IndischeStaatsregeling, Yin Hua, PKI.

I. INTRODUCTION

"Based on invitation of CiuCeng, his old friend, Si JinKui enlisted in the army and left his wife for 3 years. However, Si JinKui's enlistment in the army at Cong Hu Ge was thwarted by ThioSuKui, who was in charge of being an army envoy for recruitment. On the way home, disappointed to be refused to become a soldier, Si JinKui stayed at the house of Hoan Hong Hoai who was in trouble because his only daughter was threatened with being taken by 3 robbers from Hong Hwe San Mountain. The three robbers were defeated by Si JinKui, his base was burned and his men ran helter-skelter. Then they asked for forgiveness and Si JinKui invited him to repent and took them to become adopted brothers. Hoan Hong Hoai was very grateful for Si JinKui and married his only daughter to Si JinKui."

("Sie Djin Koei Tjeng Tang", vol. 1, p. 19-23).

For the generation who are teenagers and adults in the 50s, Sie Djin Koei's story cannot be separated from their lives because Star Weekly magazine has been publishing this comic for 9 years (1952-1961). At that time the WayangPotehi (Potehi puppet) still dominated celebrations in temples and the figure of General Si JinKui never escaped attention of the audience. Siau Tik Kwie as a comic painter became famous based on the story, assisted by Oey Kim Tiang (OKT) as a story writer (Hay, 2013). Si JinKui figures do exist and are recorded in the history of the Tang dynasty (618-907). The Tang dynasty had its capital in Luoyang which is now called Xi'an, a tourist city that has a heritage of clay statues of soldiers buried in the ground. This paper will discuss how Siau Tik Kwie's strategy can create the beautiful Sie Djin Koei comic without ever having previously pay a visit to China.

1. Si JinKui Character Building

Comics are pools of pictures and text in which we swim after stripping. Those of us who are naked then find the identity of the character who becomes an idol. With this new character, we take a dip in the natural world in the comic strip. This is the mechanism of the comic world which always invites readers to be involved and identify themselves with one of the characters who matches their personality. Characters created by comics are not figures drawn realistically, but simplified in such a way as to conform the standard "realism" of comics.

Tintin comic character, for example, is depicted as a man with a round head like a watermelon with ponytail hair on his tuft. Tintin's eyes are just a pair of dot accompanied by eyebrows which are crescent-shaped lines. In depicting the nose, Herge only gives a curvature like the letter U which is placed horizontally to the left. But why, this apparently simple character is so loved by fans all over the world?

The opposite happens when Hergedescribe the background, his depiction is made in such a realistic way, very different from the image of his character which is so simple. The forest that surrounds Tintin is quite detailed, complete with lush green leaves and brown tree trunks. (Herge: 49).

In an effort to help the reader's self-identification with the comic characters, the separation of the less realist (in the characters) from the fairly realist (in the background) images become very prominent. Because the combination of realist - less realist is what causes readers to hide behind the mask of a character, and gives a sense of security when readers swim in the fictional world created by comics. This phenomenon is known as the mask effect. This mask effect has also been the formula for decades of Disney films (McCloud: 42).



Plate 1 – Herge, “The Secret of the Unicorn”, p. 49.

Likewise, depiction of Si JinKu character that is described by Siau Tik Kwie, he is described as a tall, mighty man with an oval face and a wide chin accompanied by curled hair and given a white ribbon. The eyebrows with almost split ends are placed by Tik Kwie straight up at a 45degree angle, indicating that Si JinKui is a kind, serious, but naive person in looking at other people who pretend to be good. (Kwie: 1983, vol. 1, 17).



Plate 2 - Siau Tik Kwie, “Sie Djin Koei Tjeng Tang”, vol. 1, p. 17.

Tik Kwie's simple protagonist facial character is intended to help identify Si JinKui with his readers. This formulation has successfully attracted Star Weekly readers, thus contributing to the magazine's sales increase to 45,000 copies. The characters in the stories of Sie Djin Koei Tjeng Tang (Si JinKui conquered countries in the East) and Sie Djin Koei Tjeng See (Si JinKui conquered countries in the West) were obtained by Tik Kwie through his hobby since childhood collecting pictures of Chinese hero characters in a cigarette pack. He enlarged pictures of Chinese mythological figures such as Kuan Kong, Sun Go Kong, Lo Cia and Si JinKui himself, to be distributed to his friends who were interested. (Kwie: 1983, vol. 2, i).



Plate 3 –Star Weekly last edition, 7 October 1961, listed circulation 45,000 copies info on the top right of magazine cover.

In his interview with Tempo magazine on July 1980, Tik Kwie admitted that he was inspired by the Chinese Wayang (puppet), which in the 1930s he regularly watched with his mother in Solo, plus the ancient Chinese books he studied. “Chinese books make pictures of Si JinKui but they are ugly. I think that Indonesian readers will not like it. The Si JinKui character should be cute, handsome, strong, but tough,” he said at that time. Finally, he made the figure of Si JinKui based on his imagination (Tempo, 2011). However, the character formation of Si JinKui was built by Tik Kwie through a neat fabric of pictures and stories. The transformation from Si JinKui who likes to waste his parents' money for his love of studying martial arts, to being poor and wanting to commit suicide because of despair, then willing to work hard so he can eat, is described smoothly (Kwie: 1983, vol. 1, 7-9).



Plate4 - Siauw Tik Kwie, "Sie Djin Koei Tjeng Tang", vol.1, h. 7.

Similarly, Si JinKui easy to forgive the bad guy and then he beat him back as good people and adopted brother (Kwie: 1983, vol. 1, 22-23), as formation foundation of the hero characters captivate readers. Si JinKui's selfless helper was shown when he defeated the tiger who wanted to attack Grand DukeThia Kau Kim (Kwie: 1983, vol. 1, 25), willing to volunteer to enter a dark hole as deep as 108 meters (Kwie: 1983, vol.2, 7), and his leadership spirit was shown when arranging the soldiers on the signal of the flag so that the Liong Bun Tin line (line of dragon doors) was formed in accordance with the King's will (Kwie: 1983, vol.2, 11). Si JinKui's good qualities have been built up since the beginning of the story, causing readers to always be enthusiastic about following the next story.

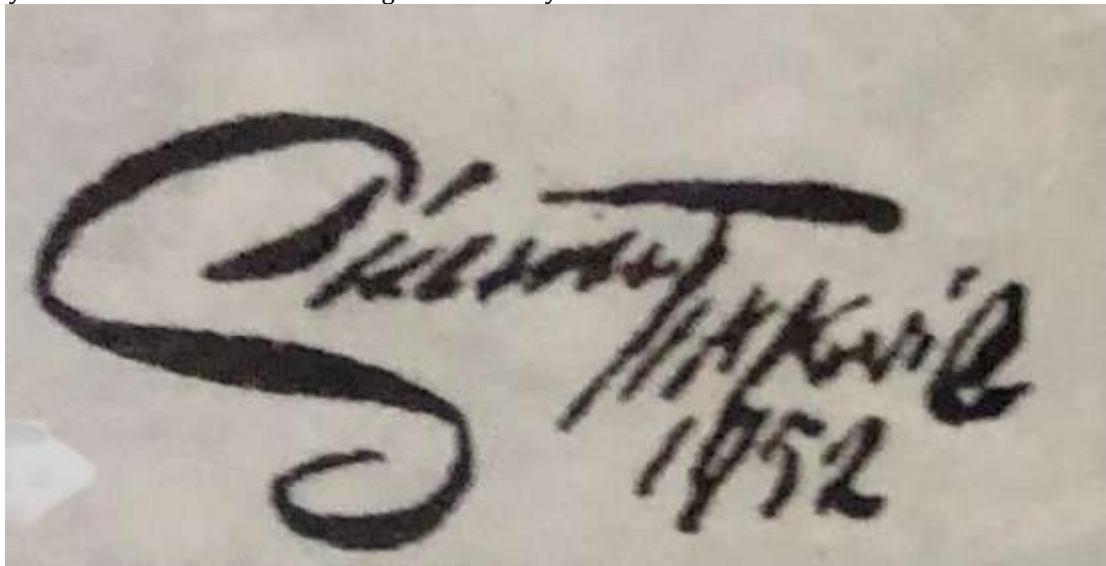


Plate 5 -Siauw Tik Kwiesignature on "Sie Djin Koei Tjeng Tang", vol. 1, p. 7 - year 1952.

The readers' enthusiasm lasted for 9 years so that 6 volumes of Sie Djin Koei Tjeng Tang's stories and 9 volumes of Sie Djin Koei Tjeng See's stories were recorded. The number of pages produced since 1952 has almost reached 400 pages. This job has made Tik Kwie's life quite prosperous because Aujjong Peng Koen as the leader of Star Weekly has provided adequate fees in terms of the needs of life at that time. However, in the early 1960s, when there was a campaign against Chinese culture, the publication of the

comic *Sie Djin Koei* had to be stopped. Even though *Siauw* was ready with the sequel, the story about *Sie Djin Koei's* children (Tempo, 2011).

The way of life of *Si JinKui* which is described as compassionate, forgiving and not wanting to conflict is actually a reflection of *Siauw Tik Kwie's* own view of life, which has long studied the thoughts of *Ki AgengSuryomentaram*, a spiritual teacher who lives in Solo. *Tik Kwie* is known as the translator of *Ki Ageng's* Javanese lectures into Indonesian. "War or strife is caused by people not understanding other people's feelings in the relationship. When people understand the feelings of others, war will disappear. Eradication of war must understand the feelings of others." That is what *Ki Ageng* said in the translation made by *Tik Kwie* (Kwie: 1985, 69).

2. Compelling Storyline

According to *WoroRetnoMastuti* from the Faculty of Cultural Sciences, University of Indonesia, in the archipelago there have been many transformations of Chinese stories, as part of the acculturation process of Chinese culture in Java. *Woro* himself has been involved in researching these Chinese-Javanese literary stories for 10 years. "*Sie Djin Koei* has various titles. So far there are 53 manuscripts, and 90 percent of them are anonymous without the author's name. Nor do they have a published date or adapters' names," she said. She suspects, the first time this story was heard orally from generation to generation, then it was written into a script (National Geographic, 2011).



Plate 6 – *Si JinKui* in *Potehi* Puppet version (Sulistyo, 2015).

However, the Javanese - Chinese version of *Sie Djin Koei's* stories actually originated or was adapted from a manuscript by a Chinese writer during the Yuan dynasty called *Tiokengjian*, 14th century, then edited during the Ming dynasty by *Lokoanchung* (Jodhi, 2010). The essence of *Sie Djin Koei's* story from the various versions can be summarized as follows (Jian, 2012).

After going through tortuous obstacles, finally *Si JinKui* was able to enter the army and became a general. *Si JinKui*, who was the incarnation of the White Tiger, received 5 wills from Goddess *Li KuaNioNio* who lived in the palace at the end of the cave from the abyss which from above looked dark. The five wills are the book of *Bu Ji Thian Si*, a book in which *Si JinKui* asked if he was having a difficult problem. The remaining four wills were weapons for fighting and self-defense, namely the *Pek Hou Pian* cudgel, *CinThianKiong's* bow, *Coan In Chian's* arrows, and *Sui Ho Pou's* robe. With these five wills plus *Si JinKui's* skills in martial arts, it has led him to success in conquering enemy cities in the East and at its peak *Si JinKui* can conquer the country of *Ko Le Kok* (Korea). Before becoming a general, the existence of *Si JinKui*, who played a role in the wars in the East, was kept under cover by the head of the pioneering force,

ThioSuKui. Because ThioSuKui wanted his stupid son-in-law to be appointed by King Thong Tai Cong to be General. But in the end his lies were exposed and ThioSuKui and his son-in-law were beheaded. After successfully conquering the East, Si JinKui continued his exploration of the West.

The creation of the twisting story so as to get a flowing story is inseparable from the services of Oey Kim Tiang, an expert Chinese story writer and translator. The work sequence of the comic Sie Djin Koei started with the text that Kim Tiang delivered every week to be translated into an image by Tik Kwie. Watch how Si JinKui's battle with Souw Poo Tong ends with Poo Tong running away, but in the next comic box there is a troop-reinforcements from Queen Souw Hong Hoo who is Souw Poo Tong's older sister (Kwie: 1959, vol. 3, 18). The ending of the comic Star Weekly sheet that week aroused the readers' curiosity as to what the next story will be next week.

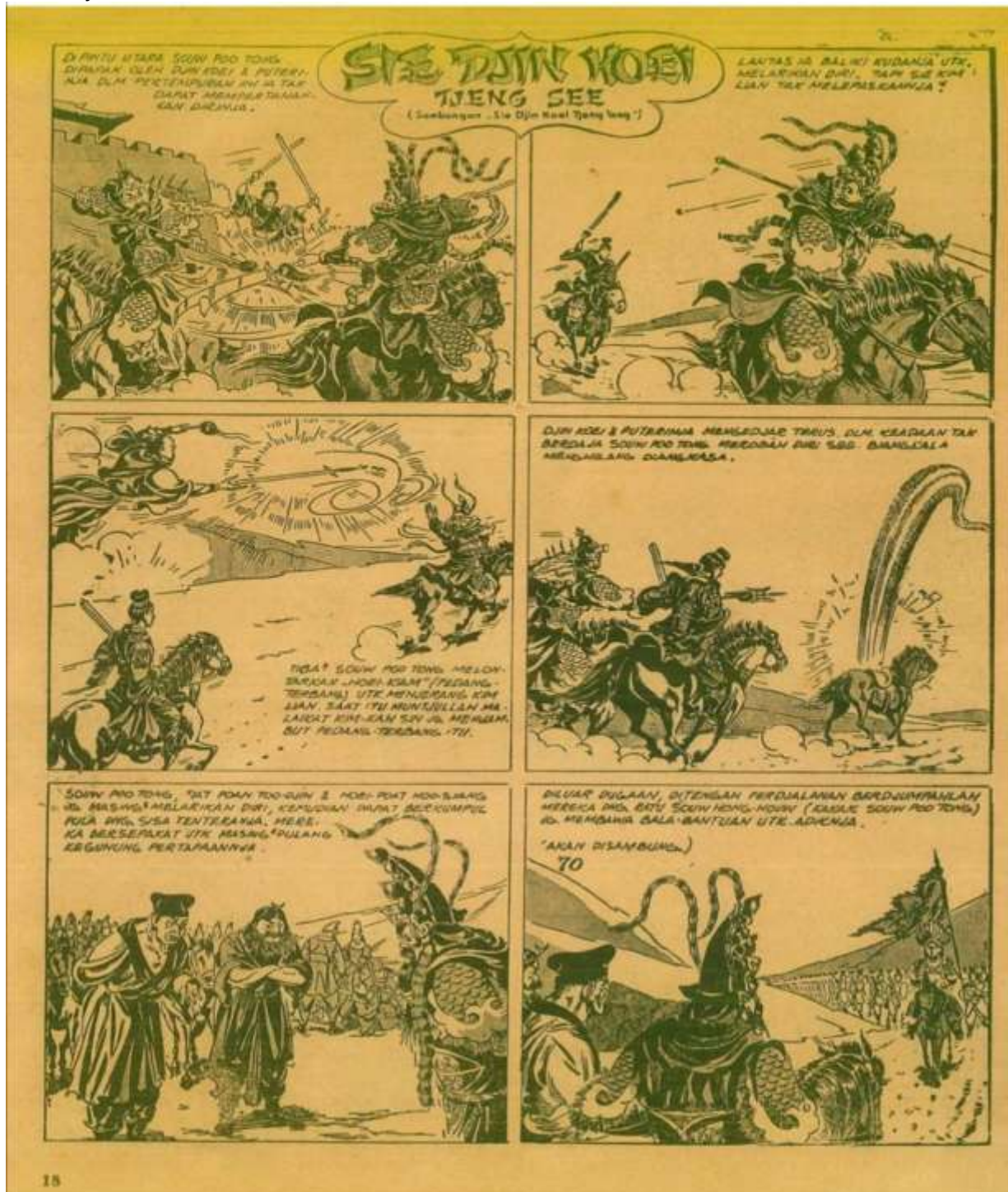


Plate 7 - Siauw Tik Kwie, "Sie Djin Koei TjengSee", vol. 3, p. 18.

3. Beautiful Comic Painting

Apart from the compelling storyline and the beautifully interwoven combination of text and images, the quality of the panels displayed by Siau Tik Kwie is also very detailed and accurate. Because basically Tik Kwie is a painter. Watch the scene of the battle on horseback between Thio Ci Liong, son of ThioSuKui, and the head robber Tang Kui (Kwie: Kinta, vol. 2, p. 5).



Plate 8 - Siau Tik Kwie, "Sie Djin Koei Tjeng Tang", vol.2, p. 5.

It can be seen that the movements of the two horses are so charming, as well as the gestures of Thio Ci Liong and Tang Kui who are fighting spears very much alive. We feel the spearfighting incident as an exciting scene. Tik Kwie's skill in painting horses is inseparable from his diligent observation of the horses at SatriaKinayungan, a horse racing venue in the WarungBuncit area, South Jakarta.

Likewise, the scene where the line of King Tong Thai Cong's soldiers neatly lined up (Kwie: Kinta, vol. 2, p. 4) and the scene of the King entering a sailboat (Kwie: Kinta, vol. 2, p. 15), are depicted in such detail, in full. with a picture of boats that appear small in the distance.



Plate 9 - Siauw Tik Kwie, "Sie Djin Koei Tjeng Tang", vol. 2, p. 4.



Plate 10 - Siauw Tik Kwie, "Sie Djin Koei Tjeng Tang", vol. 2, p. 15.

There are no anatomical errors in Tik Kwie's drawings, as he is a painting teacher who teaches how to draw body details on a nude model.



Plate 11 - Siauw Tik Kwie, "Ancol Girl", year 1970s.

Likewise, in drawing with a pencil, Tik Kwie pays close attention to shading in order to show the dark side of the light. Look at the drawing "County Boy" in Plate 12. The year shown in the drawing is interesting to note. There it was written the year in the drawing 2605, which means that year follows the Japanese calendar system – on that time Indonesia is under Japanese occupation - which when converted to our year 1945. Tik Kwie is also proficient in painting boats, seen in the watercolor painting in Plate 13. No wonder Tik Kwie can be so alive in drawing boat in the comic Sie Djin Koei. In the 50s and even now, Sie Djin Koei's works are comic works with the most beautiful paintings ever in Indonesia.

Siauw Tik Kwie, who was born in Solo, June 21, 1913, since he was a child, has been trained in mastering shapes and the characteristics of objects, his sensibility in arranging space, his sensitivity to volume, calculation of perspective and skillful lines (Dermawan, 3).



Plate 12 - Siauw Tik Kwie, "Village Boy", 1945.



Plate 13 - Siauw Tik Kwie, "Boats", 1968.

In 1931 Tik Kwie moved to Jakarta because of an invitation from Kwee Tek Hoay, the editor-in-chief of "Moestika Dharma" magazine, who was impressed by the drawings he made. In Jakarta, Tik Kwie lives at Tek Hoay's house, Mangga Besar Street no. 69, for three years. He used this opportunity to learn to paint with Henry van Velthuysen and Jan Frank from Batavia Kunstkring, a gallery and exhibition venue managed by the Dutch Government in Indonesia (Kwie: 1983, vol. 2, ii). However, Tik Kwie painting activity with oil was stopped because in 1967 he suffered from Anemia Plastic, a blood disorder caused by dealing too much with oil paint. Tik Kwie has just recovered from his illness in the mid-70s so he can paint with oil again (Kwie: 1983, vol. 5, ii). During his illness of about 6 years, Tik Kwie continued his old habit of sketching village corners, old buildings and the daily life of Jakarta using pencils, Chinese ink and watercolors. His skill in capturing the atmosphere of the city has helped him paint the city of Kuilin in the comic *Sie Djin Kwie* based on his imagination, even though at that time he had never visited China (Tempo, 2011).

4. Sie Djin Kwei's Contribution to the History of Indonesian Comics and Art

The comic *Sie Djin Kwei* will be easily understood and liked by Indonesians of Chinese descent. Besides Siauw Tik Kwie's Chinese descent, the weekly publisher *Star Weekly*, along with the comic publisher *Kinta* and *Kengpo* as the comic publisher *Sie Djin Kwei* is part of the Chinese Indonesian community. Through the *Indische Staatsregeling* (IS) article 131 of 1926, the Netherlands has divided Indonesian society into three major parts: namely the European nation as the holder of the highest legal privileges, after that in the middle are the Foreign Eastern group consisting of Chinese and Arab descent, the last is the *pribumi* or indigenous groups with the lowest rights (Priyanti, 231-232).

The 1950's was an important post-colonial period for Indonesia after passing through the 1945-1949 independence revolution. During this period Indonesia entered a new phase as an independent state with the aim of dismantling its colonial heritage. Questions that arose at that time included the definition of being Indonesian and how to become an independent country. To answer this question, the issue of Indonesian identity becomes important. For Chinese people, this is a complex issue because in their history they have been positioned as foreigners, as the foreign East (Isabella, 1).



Plate 14 – Three Yin Hua magnate, SauwSwie Ching (left), Lee Manfong (center) and Siau Tik Kwie (right), doc. The Jakarta Encyclopedia.

In that context, in April 1955, the Chinese artists founded the Yin Hua artist association, because of the need for these artists to strengthen their “Chinese Indonesian” identity. The association is chaired by Lee Manfong with Siau Tik Kwie as a member. The formation of Yin Hua could be because their position was still marginalized and had not yet been represented in the construction of nationalism at that time. (Isabella, 9). Yin Hua is an effort to create a common space in order to formulate the personality of Indonesian modern art that wants to break away from cultural imperialism brought on during the colonial period. However, the relationship between Chinese artists and society and the state experienced ups and downs due to various discriminatory policies and race-based social sentiments (Isabela, 27). This can be seen in the discontinuation of Sie Djin Koei's story because Star Weekly was closed when there was an anti-Chinese demonstration in 1961. Thenceforth Tik Kwie has never made comics again until the end of his life. Likewise, Yin Hua disbanded in 1965 when the PKI (Indonesia Communist Party) rebellion occurred in Jakarta.



Plate 15 - Kho Wan Gie, “Put On”, 1956.

The appearance of Sie Djien Koei comic in 1952 is something special. Because at that time in Indonesia there were only translated comics, such as the children's comic by ClingeDoorenbos entitled "FlippieFlink" published by the daily De Java Bode (1938), and "Flash Gordon" published by De Orient magazine. There is also a locally made humor comic by Kho Wan Gie entitled "Komik Timur (Eastern Comic)" (1930) published by Sin Po newspaper, a newspaper owned by the Chinese Peranakan (Chinese Blood) community. Kho Wan Gie in the same newspaper created another humorous comic called "Put On" (1931). Then Keng Po, another Chinese Peranakan media group, tried to make a comic against Put On entitled "Si Tolol (The Fool)" (1939). Furthermore, Star Weekly tried to create a Put On-style comic, namely "Oh Koen" (1950), but none of them managed to surpass Put On's popularity. In 1947, Indonesia began to be flooded with American comics such as Tarzan, Rip Kirby and Phantom (Bonneff, 21-22).

Star Weekly boldly changes the trend of American imported comics with locally made martial arts comics. And at that time Sie Djien Koei was the only martial arts-style comic, and the only comic with a Chinese cultural background. After the PKI coup event subsided, namely in 1968, the trend of making silat comics started again. This time the silat was in a local Javanese style with famous comic artists including Ganes TH, one of Siau Tik Kwie's painting student.

II. Conclusion

Siau Tik Kwie breathed his last on April 16, 1988, leaving 300 works of oil paintings and hundreds of sketches, pencils, Chinese ink and watercolors that were collected by Indonesian art lovers. The comic works of Sie Djien Koei Tjeng Tang and Sie Djien Koei Tjeng See with their hero character Si JinKui, can never be forgotten by the generation of the 50s and beyond. Sie Djien Koei was reprinted many times until the 1980s by Kinta, Keng Po and more recent publishers. Until now, there has been no Indonesian comic that has same quality as Sie Djien Koei in terms of beautiful pictures and storylines. With that, Sie Djien Koei is an early Indonesian silat comic that has become immortal in the history of Indonesian comics.

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