

The Effects of The Changing Locus on Lasi's Hibridity in *The Red Bekisar* by Ahmad Tohari

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Abstract

This paper deals with Ahmad Tohari's English-translated novel entitled *The Red Bekisar*. The focus is on the effects of the changing locus on the female protagonist's hybridity. To support the analysis, several concepts are used; namely, the concepts of hybridity, mimicry, and cultural identity in postcolonial literature. Using the feminist literary criticism as the frame of analysis, the general research method used is qualitative research method supported by library research method. For the literary analysis, the contextual research method is applied in which by considering the character, conflict, and setting the focus is on the female protagonist's hybridity and how her hybridity is regarded by the people from different locus. The results show that the female character, Lasi, has a different life because of her Javanese-Japanese mixed blood. In the remote village of Karangsoaga, her hybridity is scorned but in the big city of Jakarta her hybridity is highly appreciated. However, she is treated like an object, a valuable doll that can be transferred to different owners. Her resistances indicate that her agency as a human being emerges when she is cornered.

Keywords: hybridity; mimicry; cultural identity; postcolonial literature

Introduction

Ahmad Tohari is a prolific male Indonesian novelist whose novels contains the local color of Central Java village. *The Red Bekisar* is the English-translated version of Tohari's *Bekisar Merah*. It tells about Lasi, the female hybrid of a female Javanese mother and a male Japanese father during the colonization. The beautiful Lasi was scorned by the surrounding people and lived a poor, childless-marriage life in the village of Karangsoaga, Central Java. Unable to accept her husband's betrayal, she ran away to Jakarta. Having a beautiful face with Japanese features which were the popular beauty icon at that time, she finally became the third wife of the wealthy retired officer. Refusing to be transferred to a more powerful and wealthy retired officer who desired her, Lasi decided to leave Jakarta and return to Karangsoaga village. Before going to Sulawesi to avoid the powerful Jakarta officer, she married Kanjat, the local man who became the engineer-lecturer that she loved discreetly since she was a child. However, their running away was discovered and Lasi, being pregnant of Kanjat's child at that time, was taken by force to Jakarta. Finally Lasi could be freed by the help of Kanjat's friend who was a lawyer. Lasi and Kanjat returned to Karangsoaga. Based on this brief summary, the purpose of this paper is to analyze not only on Lasi's various forms of hybridity but also on the influence of various place on her existence as a hybrid covered in the chosen title "The Effect of the Changing Locus on Lasi's Hybridity in *The Red Bekisar* by Ahmad Tohari."

To prove that the chosen topic has not been done yet, a previous study concerning Tohari's *The Red Bekisar* (English version) and *Bekisar Merah* (Indonesian version) is carried out. There are several articles on Tohari's chosen novel. The first is a journal article (2009) by Anhar Widodo in *Jurnal Komunikasi* entitled "Perempuan dalam Narasi Pascakolonial (Novel *Bekisar Merah* Karya Ahmad Tohari) or ("Women in Postcolonial Narratives (Novel *Bekisar Merah* by Ahmad Tohari)"). It analyzes the gender issues, representation of women, and the relation with the social condition (Widodo, 2009). The second is a journal article (2015) in *KEMBARA: Jurnal Keilmuan Bahasa, Sastra, dan Pengajarannya* by Arif Setiawan entitled

“Sikap Hidup Wanita Jawa dalam Novel *Bekisar Merah* dan Novel *Midah Si Manis Bergigi Emas*” (“Javanese Women's Life Attitudes in the Novel *Bekisar Merah* and the Novel *Midah Si Manis Bergigi Emas*”). It compares the attitudes Javanese women in their religious life, the attitudes of Javanese women toward themselves, and the attitudes of Javanese women in their community in the two novels (Setiawan, 2015).

The third is a journal article (2017) in *Jurnal Ilmu Budaya* by Purnamasari, Huidiyono, Rijal from Mulawarman University entitled “Analisis Sosiologi Sastra dalam Novel *Bekisar Merah* karya Ahmad Tohari” (“The Analysis of Sociology of Literature in the Novel Entitled *Bekisar Merah* by Ahmad Tohari”). Using the Sociology of Literature, the article focuses on the social fact, social behavior, and social alteration in the novel (Purnamasari et al., 2017). The fourth is a journal article (2017) in *k@ta Petra* by Christy Maya Uktolseya from Petra Christian University entitled “Destruction of *Bekisar Merah*: Antoine Berman’s Deforming Tendencies in *The Red Bekisar*.” It compares the original work to the translated work using Antoine Berman’s negative analysis (Uktolseya, 2017). The fifth is a proceeding article (2018) in *2nd English Language and Literature International Conference (ELLiC) Proceedings* by Agnibaya, Suyitno, Waluyo from Sebelas Maret University entitled “Hegemony among Characters in *Bekisar Merah* Novel by Ahmad Tohari”. It talks about the interaction among characters resulting in the existence of social inequality, and the pattern of relationship among characters using Gramsci (Agnibaya et al., 2018).

The sixth is a journal article (2021) in *Jurnal Bahasa, Sastra dan Pembelajarannya* by Berbahana Pandu Mau entitled “Perilaku Altruistik Tokoh Utama dalam Novel *Bekisar Merah* Karya Ahmad Tohari” (“Altruistic Behavior of Main Characters in Novel *Bekisar Merah* by Ahmad Tohari”). It discusses the altruistic behavior of the main character in the context of social norms and kinship norms (Mau, 2021). The seventh is a journal article (2021) in *Seloka: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa dan Sastra Indonesia* by Sabrina Rizki Maydita and Teguh Supriyanto entitled “Efforts of Lasi Character in Identity Control in Ahmad Tohari's *Bekisar Merah* Novel”. It discusses the efforts of and reason for Lasi to fight for her identity (Maydita & Supriyanto, 2021). The eighth is a journal article (2022) in *European Journal of Language and Literature Studies* by Suroso, Hartono, and Else Liliani entitled “Nature Representation in Ahmad Tohari’s Works of Fiction”. It examines the forms of nature represented in 7 novels by Tohari (Suroso et al., 2022).

Based on the previous study above, it can be said that no article has analyzed the topic on the different influence as experienced by Lasi, the female protagonist, in various places due to her hybridity. In order to carry out an academic analysis on the mentioned topic, several concepts are borrowed, such as cultural identity, hybridity, mimicry, and agency. An individual, male or female, cannot live outside his/her cultural identity. According to Hall, cultural identities “are subject to the continuous ‘play’ of history, culture and power” (1990: 225). In other words, one’s cultural identity is unconsciously constructed by the intricate network of the surrounding forces. Meanwhile, Richards stated that identity in postcolonial theory has the following characteristics “not as exclusive, static, and pure, but as intercultural, plural, contingent, and constantly negotiated through contact with others” (2010: 20). Richards mentioned that the fluidity and constant construction of cultural identity are inevitable within multilayered and multi connected relations in social life.

The problem of cultural identity is crucial in postcolonial analysis since various identities are possible to mix and blend producing “in-between space” in the forms of hybridity and/or mimicry (Ashcroft et al., 2002: 109). In other words, Ashcroft, et al, shows

that hybridity and/or mimicry are the inevitable results of the continuous mixture of cultural mingle. Hybridity is “a site of transformation and change” (Kuortti & Nyman, 2007: 3) and mimicry as “a ‘blurred copy’ of the colonizer” (Ashcroft et al., 2007: 125). Thus, if hybridity refers to a new different form due to unique mingling, mimicry tends to be an intention to imitate the powerful party. Meanwhile, Huddart, referring to Bhabha, states that mimicry is “an exaggerated copying of language, culture, manners, and ideas. This exaggeration means that mimicry is repetition with difference, and so it is not evidence of the colonized’s servitude” (2006: 29). Adding to Bhabha’s idea of mimicry, Huddart explained that mimicry is not just the colonized imitate the colonizers, it is more like subversively defying the colonizers by giving an over-color to the “language, culture, manners, and ideas” of the colonizers.

Back to the term hybridity, Young stated that hybridity “makes difference into sameness, and sameness into difference, but in a way that makes the same no longer the same, the different no longer simply different” (Young, 2005: 24-25). According to Young in hybridity similarities and differences are uniquely mixed resulting in no clear traces of both elements although both elements still exist. Meanwhile, Ashcroft, et al, stated hybridity as “to the creation of new transcultural forms within the contact zone produced by colonization” (2007: 108). According to Ashcroft, et al, the impact of hybridity is the emergence of new mixed form of culture due to the effect of colonization. Additionally, hybridity, considered as “a metonymy of presence” (Bhabha, 1994: 115), is “manifested in skin colour, hair type, facial features such as eye shape or nose shape, etc.” (Ashcroft et al., 2007: 166). Bhabha refers to the emergence of dual identity in hybridity while Ashcroft, *et al*, refers to the hybrid elements in the physical appearance of a hybrid person.

Talking further about hybridity, there are racial, linguistic, literary, cultural, and religious sub-categories (Singh, 2009: par.13). In other words, hybridity does not only manifest physically but also culturally and religiously. However, according to Kalra, Kaur, and Hutnyk “hybridity is better conceived of as a process rather than a description” (2005: 78) (2005: 78) in which “liaisons between those considered to be of different ‘races’ have not resulted in a ‘happy hybridity’, but rather have provoked extreme forms of racial violence” (2005: 65). Thus, as a process hybridity might result in unexpectedly harmful impact leading to cruelty due to mixed racial elements. Since “the body can be constructed” (Ashcroft et al., 2007: 167), hybrid individuals are not always passive. They may execute their agency “to initiate action in engaging or resisting imperial power” (Ashcroft et al., 2007: 6) in which race, class, and gender intersect. Hybridity is a construct of racial mixture that may initiate the hybrid person to implement his/her agency to defy the imposing power.

Issues of hybridity are a lot in postcolonial literature. The activity of postcolonialism itself can be in the form of “Reading texts produced by writers from countries with a history of colonialism” (McLeod, 2000: 33). McLeod showed that the writer from a country once colonized may produce postcolonial literature containing various topics on colonialism. McLeod’s statement is in line with the statement of Ashcroft, et al (2002: 2). In postcolonial literature, there is a tendency of “Asserting cultural integrity” in which the colonized culture is elevated (*What Is Postcolonial Literature?*, n.d.: par 3). However, there is a tendency, maybe due to the pride of nationalism, to consider the indigenous culture higher than the hybrid one which may results in regarding the hybridity unfavorably.

After doing previous study, deciding on the topic, and talking about the supporting concepts, the chosen title for this article is “The Effect of the Changing Locus on Lasi’s Hybridity in *The Red Bekisar* by Ahmad Tohari.” The discussion is based on each locus where

Lasi lives; namely, Karangsoaga village, Jakarta, and Returning to Karangsoaga village. Lasi's experiences in the various loci is then connected to the hidden purpose of the writer, in this case Ahmad Tohari, in writing *The Red Bekisar*.

Method

Since the focus of the analysis is about the female character, the suitable frame of analysis to be used is feminist literary criticism. According to Humm: "Feminist criticism reads writing and examines its ideology and culture with a woman-centred perspective. Criticism is feminist if it critiques existing disciplines, traditional paradigms about women, nature or social roles, or documents such as work by others, from the point of view of women" (Humm, 1995: 51). Bearing in mind the specific perspective mentioned by Humm, the paper analyzes the life of the female character experiencing extreme treatments in various loci due to her Javanese-Japanese hybrid.

In general, the research method used in the analysis is a qualitative research method which is "a method of investigating and comprehending the meaning that individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human issue" (Creswell, 2014: 78). The comprehension is supported by library research method. According to George, "library research is a method that involves identifying and locating sources that provide factual information as well as personal/expert opinions on research issues" (2008: 6). In other words, the combination of qualitative research method and library research method provides the compact method of finding and interpreting the data and information relevant for the analysis. For the comprehensive literary analysis, the contextual research method is applied. According to Beard: "Context refers to what goes *with* a text, rather than what is *in* it" (Beard, 2004: 6). This means that contextual research method covers the analysis of both the intrinsic and extrinsic elements. In this article, the relevant intrinsic elements for the analysis are about character, conflict, and setting, while the extrinsic elements are about hybridity and mimicry in the postcolonial setting.

Finding

The discussion concerning Lasi's hybridity is based on the different loci that surround Lasi, the hybrid female character. Each different locus brings certain effect, mostly unpleasant, on the Javanese-Japanese hybridity of Lasi.

Locus 1: Karangsoaga village

In the remote village called Karangsoaga, the beautiful hybrid Lasi was born. Her mother is a local woman but her father is a Japanese ex-soldier. They get married by religion after the Japanese ex-soldier becomes a Moslem and changes his name from Misaki into Marjuki (Tohari, 2014: 19). However, young Lasi is still considered as a bastard and her hybrid features are scorned. This can be seen from the verbal bullying from her male elementary school friends:

"Lasi-pang, Lasi the Jap kid," one of them said, pouting his lips and pointing at Lasi. Another boy stuck her tongue out at her.

"Your mom was raped by a Jap. It's no wonder you've got slanted Jap eye" (Tohari, 2014: 16).

Although she is beautiful, nobody wants to marry her due to her distinctive Japanese features especially shown in her slanted eyes, jet-black straight hair, and fair skin: “dark hair and fair skin ... a pretty dimple ... coal black eyes ... almond-shaped eyes ... flawless skin, thick, flowing black hair ... taller ... long, shapely legs” (Tohari, 2014: 3, 4, 18). Her existence as a hybrid, something that she does not expect and want but is unavoidable, is looked down by most villagers of Karangsoaga.

Due to the combination of her parents’ intermarriage, Lasi is like a Bekisar, which is “A fine crossbreed between junglefowl and domestic chicken that often adorns the houses of the wealthy” (Tohari, 2014: 272). Her mother symbolizes the domesticated/ local jungle fowl since she is a native of Karangsoaga village while her biological father symbolizes the wild jungle fowl because he is a foreigner. In particular, Lasi is the Red Bekisar since her biological father is a Japanese. Japan, the Land of the Rising Sun as symbolized by the flag, refers to the red color. As the Red Bekisar, Lasi’s biological hybridity is scorned since historically the Japanese occupation, although it is short, is full of cruelty that is deeply and bitterly ingrained in the memory of the locals. Thus Lasi has to bear the burden of the unwanted hybridity in the remote Karangsoaga village.

Already considered as the old maid by the villagers, Lasi finally marries Darsa, a poor palm sugar climber, when “she was nearly twenty years old” (Tohari, 2014: 21). The poor life does not reduce Lasi’s happiness as a simple village woman. Even the disaster of her husband’s falling from the palm tree does not makes her love and her faithfulness to Darsa wear off although she has to take care of a husband who is impotent and cannot control his bladder for months in poverty (Tohari, 2014: 26). Lasi is still a simple poor village woman whose beauty is not considered as a personal asset in Karangsoaga. In other words, in Karangsoaga village, Lasi’s hybridity becomes her personal burden besides her deep poverty.

Locus 2: Jakarta

Lasi’s domestic, poor life as the wife of crippled Darsa is broken by Darsa’s betrayal. Unable to accept the fact that Darsa, on the process of recovery, impregnates the daughter of the traditional masseur, she blindly runs away without plan, destination, or money. She leaves the remote Karangsoaga village, the only place she has known so far: “She had to keep running, even without direction” (Tohari, 2014: 43). This is the form of Lasi’s resistance as a faithful wife who is deeply hurt and offended by her crippled husband’s betrayal. Not knowing anywhere else, she just asks Pardi, the Karangsoaga palm sugar truck driver, to take her away from the village. Unable to resist Lasi’s strong intention, Pardi, by perforce, takes Lasi to Jakarta where he has to deliver the palm sugar.

Lasi’s life enters a new stage by entering a new locus: Jakarta. At first, she stops at Ibu Koneng’s restaurant, where Pardi often eats and rests, just outside Jakarta. Since Pardi delivers the palm sugar to Jakarta every week Lasi decides to stay at Ibu Koneng’s restaurant to calm herself for a week (Tohari, 2014: 54). Lasi does not know that by staying with Ibu Koneng her fate will change totally. Ibu Koneng is not just a restaurant owner since she is also part of the network supplying women for lustful rich men.

Knowing that Lasi has an unpolished exceptional beauty, Ibu Koneng contacts Mrs. Lanting who has a high-class circle (Tohari, 2014: 74). Mrs. Lanting directly sees Lasi’s hidden potential since she has the Japanese facial features which are the popular icons of beauty for a female escort or mistress of high-ranking officials imitating the Great Leader for political reason (Tohari, 2014: 73). In the eyes of Mrs. Lanting, Lasi is “a piece of valuable merchandize

well hidden” (Tohari, 2014: 75). Thus, in this case, Lasi is a potential object for the benefits of others.

A secret transaction between Ibu Koneng and Mrs. Lanting happens behind Lasi’s back. Lasi gradually feels indebted to Mrs. Lanting who gives her beautiful dress. She who fully realizes that nothing is free in this world (Tohari, 2014: 77) thinks that she can pay it by cleaning Mrs. Lanting’s house (Tohari, 2014: 80). The innocent Lasi is much bewildered when she is expensively pampered. Mrs Lanting “took Lasi to a salon and had her hair washed, trimmed, and styled. Her face was brushed with a mixture of paste and water ... Lasi was dressed in foreign clothes ... called a kimono ... taken to a photo studio” (Tohari, 2014: 81). Here, Lasi is being modelled like a Japanese woman. She is like a doll in the hands of Mrs. Lanting, a beautiful doll that will become a very expensive merchandise.

Lasi at this stage is entering a cultural hybridity. Her biological hybridity, scorned in the remote Karangsoja village, is a valuable asset in Jakarta. Her biological hybridity becomes the foundation of her cultural hybridity. Lasi is taught to imitate a real Japanese woman. She is a “blurred copy” of a Japanese woman. She is flattered when she finally realizes that she is as beautiful as said by Mrs. Lanting: “Lasi felt awkward using cosmetics at first. Mrs. Lanting kept encouraging her, and when Lasi noticed the cosmetics made her more beautiful, she happily, even excitedly, applied her own make up. She was also motivated by Mrs. Lanting’s question, “You’re beautiful. Don’t you regret being the wife of a tapper?” (Tohari, 2014: 83). She does not realize that Mrs. Lanting is preparing her to be a mistress of a high-ranking official. The innocent Lasi is just wondering why Mrs. Lanting is so kind to her.

Without Lasi’s knowledge, Mrs. Lanting is offering Lasi to the very rich, retired high-ranking officer by the name of Handarbeni. An expert in male’s lust and pride, Mrs. Lanting symbolizes Lasi as a *bekisar* “A showbird that’s a cross-breed between wild and domestic chickens and used as decoration by the wealthy” (Tohari, 2014: 88). To support her statement she shows Lasi’s photographs “One was of her full body, another showed her upper half and face, and the third was a close-up of her face” (Thohari, 2014: 89). The photographs represent Lasi’s objectification in the hands of those keen to see an opportunity to get financial profit. Lasi is just an object.

Handarbeni is soon captivated by Lasi’s biological and cultural hybridity and wants to possess her as soon as possible, however Mrs. Lanting says that Lasi is not ready yet (Tohari, 2014: 91). The experienced Mrs. Lanting wants to be careful in handling Lasi and she wants to prepare Lasi completely. Lasi still needs to be polished further to master the class hybridity. In order to teach Lasi the class hybridity, Mrs. Lanting: “took Lasi out more often. They ate in restaurant, shopped at Pasaraya, visited one of her friends, and attended wedding reception in lavish banquet halls”. Lasi “grew more accustomed to wearing shoes and watches, talked on the telephone, and turned on the television” (Tohari, 2014: 90). Gradually, all Mrs. Lanting’s patient efforts begin to show:

Lasi’s fair skin appeared more radiant. Her hair shone and when she smiled, her teeth were white and beautiful. Her heels, once flat and cracked, were as round and as smooth as an egg. Lasi’s old awkwardness was only visible when she met someone for the first time. Mrs. Lanting listened to her sing along with a musician on television, and said to herself, “My *bekisar* has been tamed and is content in the city” (Tohari, 2014: 91).

Lasi now is a sophisticated mixture of the biological-cultural-class hybridity. In the eyes of Mrs. Lanting, she is ready to be introduced to the rich Handarbeni. The time has come for the transaction.

From her experience of living in Mrs. Lanting's house and her first meeting with Handarbeni, Lasi learns that: "In Karangsoaga, it made her uncomfortable, annoyed even, to be called part Japanese, but Handarbeni made his reference sound refreshing. Mrs. Lanting and Handarbeni used as a compliment what the people of Karangsoaga used as an insult" (Tohari, 2014: 99). Lasi realizes that different locus has different perspective on her hybridity and now she is being praised because of her mixed blood and Japanese appearance. In the eyes of Handarbeni, Lasi serves as a token of wealth, pride, and high taste that he wants to keep in "the cage I've prepared in Slipi" (Tohari, 2014: 101).

Feeling "trapped and caged" (Tohari, 2014: 111) by Mrs. Lanting's kindness and generosity and Handarbeni's lavish gifts, Lasi accepts Handarbeni's intention of making her his third wife. The experienced Mrs. Lanting expertly teaches the male's secrets to the inexperienced Lasi:

"Oh, you simple country girl. You have what all men want: a beautiful face and a nice body. Women who are too smart, especially those with a higher education, repulse men. For a man, a woman can be uneducated or poor as long as she's beautiful. They like compliant women even more. Men are bastards. Do you hear me? Now you know why pak Han likes you. He sees in you a doll to decorate his house and his bedroom. Believe me, you will always be pampered and catered to, as long as you remain a doll." Mrs. Lanting broke out into laughter (Tohari, 2014: 109).

Before she moves to Handarbeni's house in Slipi, Lasi wants to have a proper divorce from Darsa and it happens quickly and smoothly due to the presence of "a "sanctified letter" from a retired government officer in Jakarta" (Tohari, 2014: 131).

Lasi's next stage is to become Handarbeni's third wife. Handarbeni is so proud of the beautiful Lasi who becomes the centre of attention since he needs Lasi "for show and prestige (Tohari, 2014: 145). As Handarbeni's third wife, Lasi's mimicry as a high-class wife with enviable Japanese features is successful. However, their marriage is just "a play marriage" (Tohari, 2014: 155) because Handarbeni is an almost impotent old man. He always compensates his weak virility by giving priceless gifts to Lasi and even asks Lasi to take a lover as long as she does this discreetly (Tohari, 2014: 145). Lasi's strong refusal shows that basically Lasi is a faithful partner in a marriage in whatever condition.

Lasi's position as Handarbeni's faithful third wife is disturbed by the intention of Bambang to borrow Lasi for the weekend. Handarbeni is unable to resist Bambang's intention since he is more powerful than Handarbeni and can cause Handarbeni to lose his current position. Handarbeni is so regretful that Bambang has seen his "special bekisar" when they go to a Japanese restaurant (Tohari, 2014: 171). In his desperation Handarbeni asks Mrs. Lanting to arrange a meeting between Lasi and Bambang. To camouflage her real intention, Mrs. Lanting invites Lasi to go to Singapore to relax and shop (Tohari, 2014: 184).

In Singapore, Mrs. Lanting persuade Lasi to accompany Bambang to a dinner party with foreign guests. Everything that Lasi needs to look stunning has been prepared and paid by Bambang. Eventhough Lasi does not feel comfortable because she is Handarbeni's wife, she cannot refuse Mrs. Lanting's persuasion (Tohari, 2014: 191). Standing next to Bambang, Lasi's appearance is dazzling: "The dress clinging to her body was the finest she had ever worn, comfortable and exceedingly elegant. Her hair had been done up in a style that made her

seem almost fully Japanese. What made her different were the exotic features of her face, particularly her eyes ... the necklace worth billions of rupiah” (Tohari, 2014: 193). Lasi’s biological-cultural-class hybridity plus Bambang’s money support her successful role as a companion of Bambang. She makes the other male guests envy Bambang, the other female guests jealous of her, and Bambang himself is so proud because of Lasi’s Japanese appearance.

In the eyes of Mrs. Lanting, Handarbeni, and Bambang, Lasi is just an object, a beautiful *bekisar*, an alluring doll, that is modelled like a real Japanese female. She is a constructed existence to support male’s pride and position. She is considered as an object that can be bought and transferred to another owner. Bambang, one of the top people in politics, now positions himself as the owner of Lasi. He is really enchanted by Lasi’s appearance: “Her charm was magnetic; its strength was apparent, but it was difficult to say where it come from. If only Lasi consented, Bambang would truly feel like a king being pampered by his new concubine” (Tohari, 2014: 202). At this stage, Bambang has not owned Lasi yet since Lasi still insists that she is Handarbeni’s third wife.

Lasi is shocked when Mrs. Lanting tells her that she has been transferred to Bambang by Handarbeni: “He decided to let you go with Pak Bambang. A divorce certificate from Pak Han and a marriage certificate from Pak Bambang can be issued as quickly as you want” (Tohari, 2014: 208). Her shock increases when she knows that Handarbeni gets a good compensation from Bambang: “he’ll be compensated by becoming the director of a large shipping company. He might even be a minister” (Tohari, 2014: 208). Lasi, too innocent of the male world and the political game of the high class, is bewildered of her present existence: “She felt like a piece of trash that had been thrown into the bin. “So be it. I’m only a woman”” (Tohari, 2014: 208). Lasi feels so insulted of her being considered as a sexual object only, what is more she is just regarded as a transferrable sexual object for the safety and benefit of her husband, Handarbeni. Mrs. Lanting’s advice that implies threat makes Lasi feel entrapped from one powerful man to another more powerful man: “Pak Bambang is a Javanese nobleman. His softness hides a hard edge, a vengefulness, and even cruelty. Follow my advice or you’ll have a lot of trouble. Pak Bambang can have the police arrest you. I’m not joking” (Tohari, 2014: 210). Lasi, now a sophisticated Javanese-Japanese hybrid, again experiences being betrayed, although in a different mode, by her husband. Whatever the form of the betrayal, Lasi is the powerless object.

Locus 3: Returning to Karangsoaga village

Facing almost the same situation, Lasi also reacts the same. When her first husband betrayed her, she ran away from Karangsoaga to Jakarta. Now when her second husband has transferred her to another powerful man without her knowing, she also runs away. She leaves Jakarta to avoid the powerful Bambang and runs away to Karangsoaga, the familiar, peaceful place that she knows and longs so much (Tohari, 2014: 193). This is Lasi’s model of resistance as a woman.

In Karangsoaga Lasi asks advice to Grandfather Mus, the much-respected religious leader in the village (Tohari, 2014: 218). He can calm Lasi’s mind but not yet Lasi’s problem. As an elder of Karangsoaga, Grandfather Mus wisely knows that Lasi and Kanjat like each other since childhood. Kanjat, the only son of the richest man in Karangsoaga, is an engineer who works as a lecturer in Purwokerto, the city near Karangsoaga. Grandfather Mus asks Kanjat to talk to Lasi in order to find a way out to her present problem. Kanjat, knowing that Lasi is

running away from Bambang's power, proposes Lasi to be his wife. Although Lasi still likes Kanjat, she refuses Kanjat's intention because she realizes her condition and does not want to share her problem with Kanjat:

"I'm unworthy of being your wife. Maybe I'm beautiful, but I'm twice divorced. You're clean, a bachelor. In the end, I'm the former wife of a tapper, and I was a rich man's plaything in Jakarta. What will the people in the village say if I became your wife? I don't want to make you an object of ridicule. I don't want to dirty your name. I ..."

However, she asks Kanjat to accompany her to go to Central Sulawesi, hiding in her uncle's house who is a transmigrator there (Tohari, 2014: 227).

When Grandfather Mus hears the plan, he does not agree if the two of them go alone because it may lead to a sexual affair. His proposal as a religious leader surprises everyone: "'I want the two of you go, but in a proper manner. In order to accomplish this, it's best that you and Lasi are married" ... "Once they get to Sulawesi," the old man said, "they can decide whether to continue the marriage"' (Tohari, 2014: 231). Kanjat himself is happy with Grandfather Mus' idea. Lasi's parents also agree and Lasi has no reason to refuse because deep down her heart she likes Kanjat so much. Thus, a marriage by religious ceremony is held straight away that night: "'May Allah bless you both. Amen.'" Grandfather Mus said at the end of the prayer that marked the conclusion of the brief ceremony" (Tohari, 2014: 234). However, Lasi and Kanjat's effort to hide in Sulawesi is futile. They underestimate Bambang's power. Soon they are discovered in Surabaya on their way to Sulawesi. Lasi, already in the early pregnancy with Kanjat's child, is taken by force back to Jakarta, leaving Kanjat with bloody lips in the guesthouse where they stay while waiting for the departure of the boat to Palu (Tohari, 2014: 238).

A new episode is waiting for Lasi in Jakarta. Her status is now Kanjat's wife and she is pregnant. She is placed in one of Bambang's big houses. Mrs. Lanting, again, tries to persuade Lasi to be Bambang's wife (Tohari, 2014: 240). This time, Lasi is determined to refuse all the persuasion and gift. She even decides to ruin herself or to take her own life. She tries to commit suicide and refuse to eat (Tohari, 2014: 240). Lasi is now a different person. She knows what she wants and she dares to utter it even in front of the most powerful Bambang: "If you want a doctor to confirm I'm pregnant, that's fine. I'd be very grateful, but I will never consent to an abortion. I'm pregnant and will look after my child as best as I can. This is what I want" (Tohari, 2014: 248). Lasi's pregnancy makes Bambang furious because he hates pregnant women, however he still keeps Lasi in the big house of his because Lasi is a rare "property" that can uplift his name.

On the other side, Kanjat, feeling helpless to save Lasi against one of Jakarta's most powerful men, keeps looking for information about Lasi's existence. A recent news in the newspaper gives him hope: "The next day, every newspaper in the country reported the story of Bambang. An influential daily reported the attorney general investigating possible corruption had arrested him" (Tohari, 2014: 260). With the help of an old friend whose profession is a lawyer in Jakarta, they can track Lasi's existence. She is being interrogated for days in relation to Bambang's case. To Kanjat's relief, his lawyer friend accompanies the innocent and low-educated Lasi during the investigation. Finally: "The sixteenth day was a big day. The police declared they were finished questioning Lasi. They released her ..." (Tohari, 2014: 266). Because she is in one of Bambang's houses and rumored as his mistress, Lasi is interrogated; however since there is no proof of her involvement in Bambang's corruption, she is freed from all accusations.

The unpleasant episode in Jakarta with Mrs. Lanting and Bambang ends happily for Lasi and Kanjat. Again they are united after temporarily separated. Both of them decide to return to Karangsoga. Both choose to ride with the sugar truck owned by Kanjat's parents. It is the same truck that Lasi rode while running away from Karangsoga three years ago, however it feels different now for Lasi: "The first time she felt she was inside a locked metal box that hurtled toward an unknown destination. This time, the truck was still a metal box, but it felt like riding in a carriage, gliding and swaying to a familiar and beautiful destination: home. Ah, to be home and oneself again and walk the earth of Karangsoga with Kanjat" (Tohari, 2014: 268). Lasi and Kanjat will begin their peaceful life in Karangsoga. Lasi's shortcomings; namely, her twice divorce, her being older than Kanjat, and her low education are redeemed by her biological-cultural-class hybridity. Her sophistication due to Mrs. Lanting's expertise is not disappeared although she loses all her priceless jewelry. Lasi's sophisticated appearance becomes her asset to be the wife of Kanjat who is an engineer-lecturer.

The Writer's Implied Purposes

The analysis on *The Red Bekisar* written by Ahmad Tohari that has been done above gives insights of the implied purposes of the writer. The first one is the pride of returning to the native land. This is one of the characteristics of postcolonial literature. Lasi, after running away from Karangsoga and experiencing bewildering experience in Jakarta, decides to return to her native land, Karangsoga, to live peacefully and to build a happy family with Kanjat, the local man that she secretly loves since childhood. Kanjat himself dedicates his knowledge as an engineer to improve the life of the poor tappers of palm sugar in Karangsoga. Both can be seen as symbols of young generation that does not forget their native land after living outside Karangsoga.

It is also implied in the novel that changing locus means changing appreciation for hybridity. In the remote Karangsoga, Lasi's mixed blood reflected in her hybridized appearance is scorned but in the big city like Jakarta it is a priceless asset. In Karangsoga, the hybrid Lasi is poor, bullied, gossiped, and isolated. In Jakarta after the biological hybridity is supported with cultural hybridity and class hybridity, Lasi enjoys a life in luxury in which she becomes the center of attention, admiration, and jealousy.

The last implication derived from the novel is that a female agency can emerge even from a powerless female, whatever the forms of the female agency are. The previous Lasi, poor, powerless, almost uneducated, and without experience outside Karangsoga, has the courage to resist the unacceptable betrayal of her husband by running away from Karangsoga. The sophisticated Lasi also resists her being transferred like an expensive doll from one powerful male to another more powerful male for the sake, benefit, and pride of the males. Her resistance is typical, running away from Jakarta to the only place she knows, Karangsoga. When she has to face another trial of life in the hands of the most powerful man, she decides to commit suicide if she has to in order to refuse the idea of abortion. In short, Lasi transforms from an object into a self. From a constructed doll, a red bekisar, a presence of mimicry, Lasi changes into an individual who is in charge of her own self and wants.

Conclusion

Being a woman is not easy because she is always constructed by the society if she lets it. Lasi in *The Red Bekisar*, an English translated version of Tohari's *Bekisar Merah*, is a good

representation of it. She leads a different life of other women because of her Javanese-Japanese mixed blood that appears in her appearance. However, different locus constructs different appreciation concerning her hybridity. In the remote village of Karangsoaga in the Central Java, Lasi is scorned and underestimated, she lives in poverty, and has to work hard to survive. She accepts her condition but not her husband's betrayal. In Jakarta, because of the current trend of having a mistress with Japanese look among the high-ranking officers, Lasi is much appreciated and lives in luxury. However, she is treated like a doll, a valuable merchandise that can be transferred if necessary. Lasi's responses by running away and threatening to end her own life indicate that she tries to struggle against her objectification. Her agency emerges when she is cornered.

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