

HEGEMONY AMONG CHARACTERS IN *BEKISAR MERAH* NOVEL BY AHMAD TOHARY

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Abstract

The correlation between literature and reality is very close. This situation cannot be separated from the fact that literature figures as literature producers live in middle of society with various problems. *Bekisar Merah*, a novel by Ahmad Tohari is a literature close to society fact. One of the fact is the interaction among characters which represented the real situation in the society. The interaction patterns which were formed in *Bekisar Merah* have their own unique characteristics, depending on who are having the interaction. Using the Socio-Literature approach and Hegemony concept by Antonio Gramsci, this article tries to discuss and analyze the interaction happened among characters, especially those which resulted in the existence of social inequality. Furthermore, this article means to analyze and discuss the pattern of relationship among characters in the *Bekisar Merah* Novel.

Keywords: *Bekisar Merah*, hegemony, novel

Introduction

Literature is a media used by authors, as the representatives of the society, to express themselves and articulate their world. Through the characters, background, and story plot, all the complexity of human's live can be interpreted into a touching story, and sometimes make the reader angry. Literature can also be understood as a form of afford by author to connect with the world around. The relationship between the author and the world is represented through various elements in the story, such as; characters, story background, moral and values contain in the story.

Correlation between literature and real live has long been discussed by experts of literature. Some even stated that literature is the mirror of live or society. However, its function as the mirror of the society is still somewhat vague due to some reasons such as: (1) some of the specific characteristics of the society which presented in the literature may no longer exist at the time of the literature was made; (2) There are some selections of social fact done by the author; (3) What is written by the author mostly representing some group of society but not

the whole society members, 4) author subjectivity is very strong in the literature which he/she created (Wellek and Warren in Damono, 1989, p. 4). Despite its vagueness, the fact that literature is representing the situation of a certain society is not totally failed.

The characters in *Bekisar Merah* with their own identity are interacting in a way that they create the specific interaction pattern. The interaction among coconut sap workers seems to happen smoothly. The interaction patterns among characters in *Bekisar Merah* have their own characteristics, depending on who are having the interaction. This article tries to discuss and analyze the interaction among characters, especially those which resulted in social inequality. Furthermore, this article analyzes the relationship pattern among characters of the *Bekisar Merah* Novel.

This article assumes that the interaction among characters in a certain phenomena shows a pattern of superiority-inferiority. This means that in that interaction one party is superior to the others. This kind of interaction pattern is the subject of this article. Using the theory of hegemony by

Antonio Gramsci, this article believes that an unequal interaction always signals that some powers are involved. Those powers are not always openly seen, but sometimes also cannot be felt and unaware.

The characters in *Bekisar Merah* have their own way of seeing the world and ideology. Through their ideology and using their capital, the characters do their social practice, which indirectly position themselves in some social classes. The interactions that happened among characters also involve their ideology and capital. In this article, ideology means all that situated around the individual consciousness, and become their reason of action and demeanor. This can also include religion, belief, view of the world, and other life principals. On the other hand, capital can be defined as materials (those with symbolic value), and various attributes which untouched, and authority (symbolic capital) as well as cultural capital (Harker, 2009, p. 16).

This article uses literary sociology as an approach model. Scientifically, the sociology of literature has become a model of an appropriate approach in discussing and measuring the extent to which literature is related to life or society. In the sociology of literature, literature is seen as having an association with life and society with several benchmarks, such as: (1) The relation between literary works and society; (2) The author's relationship with the society; (3) The relation between literary works and the reader's society (Ratna, 2003, p. 2; Wellek and Warren 1990, p. 111). In addition, Literature can be viewed as an actual social documentation tool (Teeuw, 1984, p. 236). Thus, social practices and social institutions depicted in literary works can be considered as representations of the actual social facts. Based on the above background then this article has the purpose of knowing how the relationship between the characters in the novel based on the concept of hegemony by Antonio Gramsci.

Methodology

This research is a document analysis practice (text) that can be categorized into qualitative research type. This is based on the view that many qualitative approaches are conducted in literary studies, as well as other social sciences (RochaniAdi, 2011, p. 239). Then the method used in this research is qualitative which is descriptive and interpretative. The data in this research in the form of text or writing in the form of words that exist in the dialogue between characters, the illustration of the situation, events, places or locations, and the thinking way of the characters contained in the novel *Bekisar Merah* by Ahmad Tohari.

Findings and Discussion

The social, cultural and economic capital of each character in the *Bekisar Merah* novel is different. This is what makes the interaction between them imbalanced. There is a superior-inferior relationship that is not visible in the relationship. The superior-inferior relationship indicates the presence of an inferior party, and there is also a superior party. The superior-inferior relationship does not have to be visible. The relationship can take the form of the invisible, if used the concept of Antonio Gramsci, then the relationship is called a hegemonic relationship. The hegemonic relationship involving each character will be reviewed one by one as follow:

1. Eyang Mus

Eyang Mus is an elder and a religious leader in Karangasoga. His wisdom and profound religious knowledge make Eyang Mus become a role model and respected by Karangasoga residents. At every occasion Eyang Mus is always present at crucial moments where a person needs his advice. The ability to hegemonize Eyang Mus is not because he has muscle strength or anything physically able to force people to obey and respect him. The hegemonic power of Eyang Mus, especially to the Karangasoga people, is obtained through his authority as village elders and religious leaders.

The wisdom possessed by Eyang Mus makes Karangsoa residents always come to him every time they have problem and requires enlightenment. The time when giving his advice is the time that Eyang Mus has indirectly indicated that he has hegemonic powers. That means, without the act of repression or violence, Eyang Mus has made people submit and obey him.

The hegemony performed by Eyang Mus can also be seen in the following conversation:

Eyang Mus laughed again.
 But Darsa kept his head down.
 “If you believe in all the goodness of *Gusti* and it is difficult to come from yourself, only to *Gusti* you also ask for help to get a way out. So do repentance then pray and pray. If you are meant to be, Lacy will not get out of your hands. Believe me.” (Tohari, 2016, p. 86)

In the conversation between Darsa and Eyang Mus above, it can be seen how Eyang Mus tried to convince Darsa to follow his suggestions. Eyang Mus with his understanding and knowledge tried to instill his view to Darsa. Darsa also unconsciously accept Eyang Mus’ advice without coercion or violence, and this is called Eyang Mus has used his hegemony to Darsa. Darsa’s reaction which illustrates that he was subconsciously hegemonic can be seen in the following quotation:

Darsa gave a long sigh. A smile came from his dull face. Nevertheless, the last words of Eyang Mus are a speck of hope, though faint and feels like very far away (Tohari, 2016, pp. 86-87).

2. Bu Koneng

Bu Koneng is also a character in the *Bekisar Merah* novel that has the ability to hegemony, albeit at a lower level. In the *Bekisar Merah* novel, it has been illustrated how Bu Koneng used her hegemony to Lasi. Bu Koneng implanted insight into Lasi’s head to join Bu Lanting. In the end Lasi was influenced by the promises and lire given by Bu Koneng. Bu Koneng’s ability to influence

Lasi in the absence of repressive actions is what can be said of Bu Koneng’s ability to hegemony. The following conversation quotes can show how Bu Koneng hegemonizes Lasi:

“Lasi, look, isn’t it beautiful?”
 “Very beautiful. In my village, only the wife of the village head or Mr. Tir’s wife can have a ring like this.” Lasi looks with amusement. “how much is it, madam?”
 “I think it can be hundreds of thousands. Maybe even millions, but I didn’t buy it Las. Bu Lanting gave it to me as a gift. She really is very rich and nice.”
 Lasi’s eyes Bulged.
 “That madam?”
 “Yes”
 “She also cares to greet me, doesn’t she? Of course she is nice.”
 “Of course. Therefore, I believe tomorrow or the day after, you will receive the gift from her. Or ask you to go for a walk.” (Tohari, 2016, p. 103)

From the above quotes can be seen how Bu Koneng began to influence Lasi by saying that Lasi will also get a gift from Bu Lanting. Lasi as an innocent girl is tried to be influenced by Bu Koneng. The above quote is also the beginning of Bu Koneng’s step to direct Lasi to ultimately willing to follow her advice or request to come with Bu Lanting

In addition to imposing her hegemony to Lasi by luring her with material, Bu Koneng also imposing her hegemony to Lasi by providing new views on how the ordinance of living in big cities. This can be seen in the following quotation:

“Madam, I cannot wear this kind of clothes. I usually wear *kebaya*.”
 “If you live in village, you can wear *kebaya*. But Las, this is Jakarta. Look around you. There is no young woman like you wearing *kebaya*, is there?”
 Lasi looks doubtful
 “Well, don’t consider too much. go inside and change your old *kebaya*.”
 Lasi do just as she was told and gave alight laugh(Tohari, 2016, p. 105)

It can be seen that by advising without the need for coercion or the threat of violence, Lasi also follow Bu koneng's request to wear clothes provided by Bu Lanting. The innocent Lasi is successfully influenced by Bu Koneng. Bu Koneng's understanding and thinking successfully entered into Lasi's common sense. In Gramsci, Bu Koneng managed to negotiate his way of thinking into the common sense of Lasi.

When the perspective and advice of Bu Koneng went into Lasi's head, Lasi then followed Bu Koneng's advice to join Bu Lanting. This indicates that Bu Koneng successfully hegemonized Lasi. Without coercion, what more violence Bu Koneng managed to persuade Lasi. All the advice and suggestions of Bu Koneng can be understood by Lasi as a fact that have to be accepted and undertaken.

3. Bu Lanting

In *Bekisar Merah* novel, Bu Lanting is one of the important figures that changed the life path of the main character, Lasi. Bu Lanting became the bridge of Lasi's life, from a simple and innocent villager to a modern woman with all the things that signify her modernity. Bu Lanting that plunged Lasi into the hands of a masher. His ability to influence others to follow what he wants is great.

Bu Lanting does not have to resort to physical violence, or mobilize people to threaten people to follow her will. In this context, Bu Lanting is a figure who has the ability to hegemonize others. Bu Lanting managed to implant her views on the 'prey' she was after, in this case, Lasi is the person. Here is an example of a conversation about Bu Lanting launching her hegemony against Lasi:

“Las”
 “yes, Madam”
 “It is a pleasure. To be a beautiful lady”
 “Pleasure? How, madam?”
 “with your beauty. Young lady like you can get everything.”

“I don't understand, madam. And , am I really beautiful?”

“well, look at that photograph. Now, you are more suitable to be called Japanese lady.... (Tohari, 2016, p. 111)

The above conversation between Bu Lanting and Lasi shows very clear that Bu Lanting is trying to implant her views on an innocent Lasi. Flattering and praising, Bu Lanting is trying to influence Lasi. It is done without threat or violence. Lasi's simple way of thinking is tried to be negotiated with Bu Lanting's way of thinking to her interests.

“Las, what I mean is, aren't you regret has ever been the wife of coconut sapper? It is good if he is loyal, your husband betrayed and hurt you, isn't he?”

Lasi looks up for a while and then look down again. Her smile is rigid. She then gave a long sigh.

“Las, what I mean is, You are still young and attractive. What if someday, there is a man who interested in you? Or, are you still intend to go back to your husband? (Tohari, 2016, p. 111)

The quotation above shows how Bu Lanting is good at influencing people. Her choice of words made her interlocutors soar. After that, Bu Lanting continue to stuff his opponent's thoughts with things that relatedto her interests. Once again, Bu Lanting tries to negotiate her way of thinking with Lasi's innocent way of thinking. Lasi who used to think simple and accept what has become his fate seemed resigned to be showered with advice from Bu Lanting is loaded with her own interests to earn a profit.

Lasi quickly shook her head. And her tears quickly float.

“You are right. Why should I go back to a bastard husband. If you don't want to go back, this means that you really love yourself. And believe me, you will get a new husband soon. Who knows, your new husband might be a very rich man. It is not strange, Las, you deserve to have a rich husband.” (Tohari, 2016, p. 111)

Bu Lanting is actually the one who hegemonize Lasi most with all her advice that hide a certain intentions, to make Lasi willing to marry Handarbeni. At first Lasi refused, because she felt inappropriate to talk about marriage with Handarbeni, as on the other hand she is still Darsa's wife. However, Bu Lanting continues to provide insights which gradually bringing Lasi into a situation that cannot be denied anymore.

Lasi didn't answer, she keeps looking down. Her hand shook and started to wipe her eyes.

"Las, if I were you, I will accept Pak Han's wishes as my luck. I know that Pak Han is no longer young. In fact, I think he already has one or two wives. But he has many excesses. He will be able to fulfill all your needs." (Tohari, 2016, p. 143)

The above quote shows Bu Lanting constantly trying to persuade Lasi. Bu Lanting even considered something reasonable that Pak. Han had already had one or two wives. Lasi may be very surprised by the fact revealed by Bu Lanting, but with her skill in speaking Bu Lanting makes everything feel very natural and need not to be worry about by Lasi.

4. Handarbeni

Handarbeni is one of the characters in *Bekisar Merah* novel which can be said to have the ability to hegemony others. This cannot be separated from the fact that Handarbeni has enough social and economic capital to be superior in an interaction with others. Although in fact in the story of *Bekisar Merah* he was hegemonized by Bu Lanting and Bambang, but Handarbeni able to become the ruling party over Lasi.

In his interaction with Lasi, Handarbeni is in a superior position. Lasi who comes from the village and has a plain way of thinking can be easily mastered by Handarbeni. Without the need of violence and coercion, Handarbeni can control and influence the way of Lasi's thinking. Lasi is indeed from the beginning has been

hegemonized by Bu Lanting is unable to avoid to obey what become the desire of Handarbeni.

The following quotation will show how Lasi becomes unable to move when facing Handarbeni. Hegemony takes its most obvious form when one party can rule over the other without being supported by coercion and violence.

"Las, I want to talk more, but not in this place. What if we go out for dinner. You want, won't you?"

Lasi keeps silent and looks doubtful

"I am shy".

"Do not need to be shy, Las. You have been long become Jakarta Girl. Become Bu Lanting child. If you want to live in this city, don't be shy too much. come on."

Finally Lasi nods. Lasi feels that she has no more room to hide. Handarbeni smile. His eyes shone (Tohari, 2016, p. 155-156)

In the above quotation it appears that Lasi cannot avoid anymore following what the wishes of Handarbeni. Only with a slight emphasis in his words, Handarbeni can influence Lasi. At first Lasi only stay silent, but after continuously being urged by Handarbeni, Lasi finally melted. On the next quotation will be shown more clearly seen hegemonic power owned by Handarbeni against Lasi.

"Las, I want to hear your voice."

"Yes Pak" lasi's voice is soft after she stayed silent for a long time.

"Ah, although I already old, I like you to call me 'mas' rather than 'pak', how?"

"Yes, pak, eh, Mas." Lasi's voice was very soft and sounded constrained.

"Nah, that's it. Now, get a warm clothes, as the weather outside is cold."

Like a puppet moves in the hand of the Dalang, Lasi stood up. However, Handarbeni suddenly stoped het (Tohari, 2016, p. 156)

As there is an invisible force that moves Lasi. The hegemonic power does not take form in a visible form. Instead it takes on an invisible form. This power is not

visible to the naked eye, for it is the power to lead morally and intellectually. The hegemony-dominated parties are sometimes unaware that they are being controlled, because the way of thinking and the ideology of the controller has been negotiated into the common sense of the people being controlled.

Conclusions

The interaction between characters in the *Bekisar Merah* novel shows that there is inequality. That is, there are parties who are superior to other parties, or there are parties who control and there are parties who being controlled. In this context, the unequal relationship is a hegemonic relationship. The hegemonic power possessed by some of the characters in the *Bekisar Merah* novel can be seen from the interaction between them. Through the narrative constructed by the author and also the dialogue contained in the novel, the hegemonic relationship is obvious. People who have hegemonic power over other figures acquire the hegemony in simple ways without involving patterns of violence and coercion, such as authority, speech ability, and material possessions.

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