

## Subalternity in Kumala Ratih's *Gadis Kretek: Postcolonial Study*

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**Abstract.** The tactic of using the might of another nation to subjugate the citizens of a nation is often associated with the colonial era. The impact of colonization on cultures and communities is addressed in post-colonialism. The ideology of postcolonialism arose following mostly to the independent colonized nations with the object of study is everything including aspects that have experienced imperial rule during colonization until its death, as well as various effects related to the former colonies. They are all lower levels of colonial and postcolonial societies with the condition of unemployed, homeless, subsistence farmers, etc. This study aimed to investigate subalternity as a part of post-colonialism in a novel, *Gadis Kretek* written by Ratih Kumala. This study used qualitative research design with a textual analysis method grounded in postcolonial literary theory. The data was taken from a novel, Ratih Kumala's *Gadis Kretek*, written in 2012. Some research procedures was done using several steps; intensive close reading, thematic coding (content analysis), literary criticism, and historical-contextual research. The results showed that the effects of colonialization and struggles of oppressed subaltern, especially for women. Those are all can be divided into two types subalternity, namely employer-subordinates and women oppression. To sum up, the effects of colonialization comprise fear, depression, and traumatic events. The struggles of oppressed subaltern include defending the right, protection, voicing even not listened, survival by keep working, and forgetting any kinds of effect of colonialization that make sadness.

**Keyword:** Hybridity; Mimicry; Post-colonialism; Subalternity

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### INTRODUCTION

Literature is a place where transculturation occurs in all its complexity. Literary work is a reflection of the reality of people's lives (Hardiyanti & Nugraheni, 2018; Khalida, 2022) as well as lyric of song (Fazhira et al., 2024). Through literary works, authors try to capture and present reflections of society's life itself. Due to the author himself is a literary work, an inseparable part between the author and society. A writer and another writer have different concepts in creating literary works. Every fictional character created by an author usually struggles with the realities of social life.

Literary texts not only reflect the dominant ideology, but encode tension, complexity and nuances in colonial culture (Griffin, 2006). In fact, the authors of literary works do not hesitate to propose the role of the main character in the order of life which is the terms and conditions that apply to society, such as customs, culture and background, in his view, are not in line with the principles of idealism and philosophical values, how a writer maintains the truth believed in through the imaginary characters.

Literary works are influenced by the author's opinions on human problems and their background as well as the society in which they are produced (Nurhamidah et al., 2019). Literary works by various writers with varying sociocultural origins and worldviews will be produced (Griffin, 2006). As a result, the development of Indonesian literature is largely dependent on the many cultural origins of its authors, who come from a variety of socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds. One of literary works is a book that serves as a vehicle for writers to represent and accommodate national diversity (Nurhamidah et al., 2019). The nation's variety, as shown in the book, will enhance the culture (Griffin, 2006). The book is both a literary work and a cultural product that depicts life, particularly the community's sociocultural representation (Nurhamidah et al., 2019). Beyond their aesthetic merit, these literary works frequently speak to more profound social issues, the most notable of which is the long-lasting effects of colonialism.

The exploitation of the country's natural resources and populace, in Indonesia, as well as political and economic hegemony, all went hand in hand with colonialism (Arora, 2020). Hegemony is when those who are in charge submit to authority, while others who are mastered absorb the norms and values of the ruler and endorse servitude (Gramsci, 1999). It serves as a political force, a cultural force, a via moral and intellectual leadership, and a tool for regulating public perception in colonial culture (Griffin, 2006)(Jackson, 2010). The occurrence of colonialism in Asia, especially Indonesia, has a long history related to economic, political, social and religious issues. Postcolonial emerged as a result of colonialism both when society experienced colonization and after being colonized, but still left an influence on a culture(Hardiyanti & Nugraheni, 2018).

Thus, various phenomena related to the characteristics and practices of Dutch East Indies colonialism which shaped the resistance of indigenous communities were represented in literary works, both written during the colonial period and when Indonesia became independent (Arora, 2020; Nurhamidah et al., 2019). In order to seek change and reform, leadership is seen to be crucial (Sumintono et al. 2015). Literary works that tell the tale of colonial power from the outset of colonization to the present are among the fields of study. In this context, colonialism takes the shape of either psychological or physical occupation (Arora, 2020). A high struggle in national emancipation founded on an orientalist nationalism is celebrated by postcoloniality (Spivak, 2021). Postcolonialism refers to a whole cultural construct that is shaped by the imperial/colonial process from the period of colonization to the present, following a nation's formal recognition and eventual cessation of colonization (Fox et al., 2004; Helendra, 2011; Nimasari, 2019).

The theory of postcolonialism itself is divided into several discussion that deal with different themes of colonialism presented in literary works (Abrams & Harpham, 2012). In the field of postcolonial studies, several literary critics focused on forms of government, such as Edward Said, who discussed orientalism theory, hegemony and resistance, and the oppression of the subaltern or lowest social class, slavery and human rights inequality during colonialism, frequently questioned by Gayatri C. Spivak (Piu, 2023; Spivak, 2021). The influence caused by colonialism can be presented in the form of hybridity, mimicry, ambivalence, and subalternity (Duffy & Chartrand, 2015; Salih, 2017; Rothman et al., 2017; Wahyuni et al., 2022; Piu, 2023). Hybridity is a journey into the riddles of recognition (Pieterse, 2001). This argument casts doubt on the notion of pure or true cultures by emphasizing how cultural identity is dynamic and frequently conflicted in postcolonial circumstances. By showing how imitation may both reflect and undermine colonial authority, mimicry highlights the contradictions within this blending, whereas hybridity stresses the emergence of new cultural identities through the blending of

colonizer and colonized influences (Wahyuni et al., 2022). Mimicry is the process by which colonized people take on the customs and culture of their colonizers, usually as a means of assimilation or survival, but it sometimes inadvertently highlights the brittleness and artificiality of colonial power (Duffy & Chartrand, 2015). It is mimic others' facial expressions, behavioral movements, and verbal patterns. Despite appearing to be an act of absorption, this mimicry invariably results in ambivalence, which is a condition of both attraction and resistance that defines the complicated connection between the colonizer and the colonized. Ambivalence is ambivalence is the term used in postcolonial theory to describe the connection between colonizer and colonized that is marked by both attraction and aversion. Because of this duality, the colonized subject experiences a complex dynamic in which the culture and power of the colonizer both attract and repel them. (Rothman et al., 2017). While ambivalence discloses the psychological tension and instability within colonial power dynamics, it is often the subaltern—those who are doubly marginalized—who most acutely exemplify and bear the consequences of this broken authority (Piu, 2023; Salih, 2017). Then, subaltern is people who are socially, politically, and geographically outside of the hegemonic power system are referred to as subalterns (Piu, 2023; Verloo, 2019). Groups marginalized by colonial and imperial processes, whose voices are frequently ignored or repressed, are referred to in postcolonial studies.

Project of postcolonial was first put forward by Frantz Fanon in his book entitled *Black Skin, White Mask* and *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York, 1967), translated by Peau Noire, *Masques Blancs* (Paris, 1952). Fanon was a psychiatrist who developed a very careful analysis of the psychological and sociological impacts caused by colonization (Arora, 2020). The impacts of colonization on cultures and communities are addressed by post-colonialism (or often post-colonialism). Postcolonialisme is one of the best theories to study how culture shapes literary works (Nimasari, 2019), particularly novels, is postcolonialism (Arora, 2020). The ideology of postcolonialism emerged subsequent to the independence of the majority of the colonized nations (Helendra, 2011). The object of study of postcolonialism is everything that it includes aspects that have experienced imperial rule since the beginning of colonization until its death (Nimasari, 2019), including various effects and texts related to the former colonies of the European empire, especially Indonesia (Alawiyah, 2020; Helendra, 2011).

Subaltren is one of the postcolonial fields proposed by Spivak The phrase "subaltern," which originates from the Latin "sub," meaning under, and "alter," or other, designates someone of lower military rank, is a British term (Piu, 2023). Antonio Gramsci coined the term "subaltern", which describes social groups that are under the power of the ruling class (Salih, 2017; Verloo, 2019; Piu, 2023). Peasants, laborers, slaves, and those without access to hegemonic power comprised this stratum of society (Arora, 2020). The first subaltern study was published in 1982. This research developed into a critical study of postcolonial development, focusing on his states and recorded history (Piu, 2023). As we know from history, suzerain powers often target the oppressed lower classes, turning them into subalterns. Spivak uses the term "subaltern" to refer to all lower levels of colonial and postcolonial societies. Its condition is usually seen unemployed, homeless, subsistence farmers, etc. (Carter, 2012; Piu, 2023).

Spivak gained her popularity for his 1985 article, "Can Subaltern Speak?" In her article, the environment surrounding the suicide of a young Bengali woman which indicates her failure represents herself (self-representation) (Salih, 2017; Verloo, 2019). Since his attempts to "speak" outside normal patriarchal channels are neither understood nor supported, Spivak concludes that "the subaltern cannot speak" (Spivak, 2021; Piu, 2023). Subaltern comes from the military world, refers to officers under the captain. Now used to refer to oppressed people (Verloo, 2019; Putri et al., 2021). Marxist historians have studied colonial history from the perspective of the proletariat using the concept of social classes determined by economic relations. In the 1970s, subaltern began to refer to the colonized peoples of the Indian subcontinent and provided a new perspective on the history of imperial colonies from the perspective of those who were colonized, not the

perpetrators of colonization (Salih, 2017; Verloo, 2019; Arora, 2020; Piu, 2023). In the 1990s, the scope of Subaltern Studies was implemented as a form of “South Asian historiographic intervention”.

There are several classifications of subaltern groups. Spivak subalterns can be divided into oppressed women, rural communities, and migrant workers (Salih, 2017; Verloo, 2019; Uswatun Hasanah, 2023). Subalterns are unable to represent the intellectual community due to their powerlessness and inadequacy. Many phenomena show that women are not able to express or portray themselves (Spivak, 2021; Putri et al., 2021; Piu, 2023). This novel offers sarcasm of Britain social class and a strong criticism of patriarch (Ro'ifah, 2009). Many colonized peoples are indigenous peoples who are ruled or controlled by foreign states. Subalterns are parties or groups that experience oppression from other powerful groups (Salih, 2017; Verloo, 2019). Subalterns are parties or groups that experience oppression from other powerful groups (Piu, 2023; Salih, 2017). The women are oppressed by double colonization. Double colonization refers to women who are colonized by both patriarchal ideology and hegemony (Griffin, 2006). This situation leads to a more complex movement and the struggle of women (Putri et al., 2021). This condition occurred among many women who fought against imperial colonization, but unfortunately, they were still ignored by other women.

Just as the men were oppressed through physical and energetic intimidation, until their blood and property were tightly controlled by colonial powers (Arora, 2020). They are often victims of physical, economic, racial, and educational oppression (Nimasari, 2019). Subaltern groups in society included farmers, workers, slaves, and other groups without access to hegemony (Salih, 2017; Verloo, 2019; Arora, 2020). Carter also supports this statement by adding the term “subaltern” (Piu, 2023), which refers to all lower levels of colonial and postcolonial societies. i.e. unemployed, homeless, subsistence farmers, etc. (Carter, 2012). The issue of subalterns as the lowest class, whose voice and aspirations are frequently silenced by hegemonic authority, is one of the key subjects of postcolonial studies.

One of Indonesian literary works with postcolonial background is *Gadis Kretek*. This novel was written by Ratih Kumala, which published in 2012. The novel tells the story of a number 1 *kretek* entrepreneur in Indonesia who is dying and waiting for his death to come (Kumala, 2012; Siwi & Prabawa, 2025). While waiting to die, he mentioned the name of a woman who was not his wife, “Jeng Yeah” is her nick name. Three heir children, Djagad Raja Kretek, is disappointed, while his wife is jealous because her husband's last request was to meet Jeng Yah. But in the end they went to remote areas of Java with the angels of death, namely Lebas, Karim, and Tegar to look for Jeng Yah before his father died. Their journey is like a journey through business and family secrets. Lebas, Karim and Tegar meet an old maid, discover the origins of Djagad, *Kretek* king which is the number one *Kretek* in Indonesia. Apart from that, the three of them learn about their father's love story for Jeng Yah, who turns out to be the owner of the local cigarette in a city “M”, where “*Gadis Kretek*” come from.

To support this study, there are some previous studies chosen. One of them aimed to describe the mimicry and hybridity contained in the novel, *Gadis Kretek*. This descriptive qualitative research used literary content analysis methods. The data was collected using documentation techniques and analyzed using interactive data analysis techniques which include data collection techniques, data presentation and conclusions. The results of research showed the forms of mimicry including mimicry of language, promotional media, means of transportation, attitudes and lifestyle (Hardiyanti & Nugraheni, 2018). Mimicry and hybridity as representations of cultural and social adaptation during and after colonial rule, as depicted in the novel *Gadis Kretek* (Siwi & Prabawa, 2025). Thus, this research has relevant implications for literature learning in high school level in basic competence of analyzing the content and language of novels and basic competence of designing novels or novelettes based on content and language.

The other research aims to describe the form of mimicry and subaltern carried out by the colonized nation to the colonizer in the Postcolonial context found in the Novel *Gadis Kretek* by Ratih Kumala (Alawiyah, 2020). The data source for this study is the Novel *Gadis Kretek* by Ratih Kumala published by PT Gramedia Pustaka Utama, Jakarta in 2019. The data in this study are equipment for living, social systems, science, and art in the postcolonial context that appear in the novel (Dinata et al., 2022; Siwi & Prabawa, 2025). The method used in this study is a descriptive method, the type of data taken from this study is qualitative. The research instrument used to collect data is documentation. The results of this study show: (1). the description of the elements of mimicry found in the Novel *Gadis Kretek* by Ratih Kumala is present in several aspects of equipment for living, social systems, science, and art (2). the description of the subaltern elements found in the Novel *Gadis Kretek* by Ratih Kumala is present in several types of subalterns, namely subalterns that appear in the interaction between workers and employers.

Another study investigated the subaltern portrayed in a French novel, Patrick Chamoiseau's *Texaco* (Khalida, 2022). The problem of subalterns as the lowest class whose aspiration and voice are often blocked by hegemonic power is one of the important topics to discuss in postcolonial studies (Spivak, 2021). This literary criticism who's the data mostly sentences (excerpt), words, dialog, or narration. Then, the data analyzed by classifying, describing, giving the interpretation, and making the conclusion. This study presented the portrayal of subalterns and emphasizes how they can't speak. As a result of this research, the subalterns whose voices are blocked and cannot speak, who cannot express themselves, who do not have access to hegemony, and who are oppressed subaltern women and men were shown to be subalterns. The struggle of the subalterns in Patrick Chamoiseau's novel "*Texaco*" is a fight against oppression, a fight for their rights, a fight to have a voice, a fight against injustice, a fight to build a city, and it is a struggle to gain legitimacy as a nation city impact on literature learning at university.

Regarding the explanation above, the differences are found. The first previous studies did not subalternity has not included in the research, but become the object of the second previous study by using different theoretical framework to analyze. Due to some form of post-colonialism, such as hybridity and mimicry, occurred in the novel, *Gadis Kretek*, the researchers aimed to investigate the forms of subalternity of the colonized nation towards the colonial nation using postcolonial theory as a scalpel used to analyze *Gadis Kretek* by Ratih Kumala' novel through postcolonial theory by highlighting the term "unspeakable" in Gayatri Spivak's subaltern theory. It is expected that this research will be able to broaden readers' insight and foster a sense of nationalism through literary interpretation.

## METHOD

### Research Design

This study used qualitative research design with a textual analysis method grounded in postcolonial literary theory. It aims to interpret and analyze themes, characters, and representation (rather than measure or quantify). The study used textual analysis method to closely read and interpret the novel's language, character development, narrative structure, and symbolic elements in relation to subalternity. This involves identifying themes and patterns related to colonial power structures, marginalization, identity, and resistance, analyzing how certain characters (especially women, workers, indigenous voices, etc.) are represented as subaltern, and considering who speaks, who remains voiceless, and what socio-political forces shape those dynamics (Putri et al., 2021). In addition to offering a methodical framework for analyzing the book, this approach closely reflects the goals of literary criticism, which looks for the text's underlying cultural contexts, ideological undercurrents, and deeper meanings.

Literary criticism is used as a design in this research. It is the general term for the study of defining, analyzing, reviewing, classifying, interpreting, and evaluating literary works (Abrams

& Harpham, 2012). Literary criticism is a method of interpreting a particular literary work (Nurhamidah et al., 2019). The school of literary criticism has provided us with a variety of insights into the important aspects that can be revealed in literary works. The researchers used Gayatri Spivak's subaltern theory to study objects and theory for excerpt collection (Salih, 2017; Verloo, 2019) since it is an appropriate theory to analyze the representation of subalterns and their struggles presented in *Gadis Kretek* novel.

### Data Sources

The data source of this study is a novel under the title, *Gadis Kretek*, written by Ratih Kumala. The novel, *Gadis Kretek* contained 274 pages (Kumala, 2012). It highlights Javanese culture in Indonesia, especially regarding the movement of *kretek* (cigarette) factories in the early days of their establishment in Indonesia (Dinata et al., 2022). After long research and putting it together in one piece, finally the novel *Gadis Kretek* was successfully published in March 2012 by Gramedia Pustaka Utama. In the same year, the book successfully received the 2012 *Kusala Sastra Khatulistiwa* award. This event is an award for the world of Indonesian literature which was founded at first by Richard Oh and Takeshi Ichiki in 2001. Then, the data for this study was taken in the form of excerpts, sentences, words, phrases, stories, and dialogue in the novel.

### Data Collection

To collect the data, textual observation of the novel "*Gadis Kretek*" was used. In this study, there are several procedures for data collection. First step is intensive close reading. It is reading the novel in its entirety to understand its content. This is the main approach to literary analysis. Finding themes, symbols, character portrayal, dialogue, and narrative structures that represent subaltern voices requires closely reading the book. Close attention to textual detail is crucial since subalternity frequently shows up softly, such as through resistance, marginalization, or silence. The next step is followed by thematic coding (content analysis). Manually or digitally categorizing recurring themes or discourses related to subaltern groups (e.g., gender, class, indigenous identity, colonial heritage). It begins to categorize the depictions of colonial subalterns and their struggle for freedom depicted in *Gadis Kretek* novel. This step looks for patterns of domination, resistance, voicelessness, and representation. The following step is literary criticism. It analyzing how language within the novel constructs power relations, especially between colonial and subaltern subjects. This pace focuses on power, ideology, marginalization, and resistance encoded in speech, narration, or silence. The last step is historical-contextual research. This stage gathers secondary data such as historical texts, colonial records, or interviews to understand the socio-political background depicted in *Gadis Kretek*. This phase is to ground your interpretation in real colonial/postcolonial history and understand subalternity in a local Indonesian context.

### Data Analysis

After collecting data through the several steps above, the researchers begin to analyse using an interactive model that consists of data collection, data presentation and drawing conclusions. Classifying and coding the data based on the depiction of the subaltern people experience and the subaltern struggle as depicted from Ratih Kumala's *Gadis Kretek*. The researchers, then, compare the data to find the different types of problems. After comparing the data, the data was proceeded to analyse. Next, interpretation of the data was provided to describe. After comparing the data, finally, the researcher came to a conclusion as the final result of analysing the data.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In postcolonial theory, the difference between colonizers and colonized is a hegemonic relationship between the colonizers as the upper class and the colonized as the lower class or subaltern. From

this relationship emerges what is called domination and subordination, in this case this relationship model will have an unpleasant image of the colonized.

The *Gadis Kretek* novel represents the society within the Japanese era in Indonesia (Kumala, 2012). The colonizers in *Gadis Kretek* novel were Japanese army who gave stress for community. Then, mostly Indonesian people were colonized at that time whose condition become subaltern (Piu, 2023). Such as Romaisa got depressed to hide, after hearing the news that the Japanese also took women by force to be used to satisfy their lust. The woman was depressed (Kumala, 2012). Here, they are specifically two kinds of the subaltern interaction between employers - subordinates' interaction and women oppression (Salih, 2017; Verloo, 2019; Spivak, 2021; Afifah, 2024).

### 1. Employer-Subordinates Interaction

The first employer - subordinates' interaction subalternity occurred when Tegar expected to be able to play during the school vacation like Karim and Lebas although he has been accustomed to work since he was childhood, as seen in the following part;

*Selama libur satu bulan sebelum tahun ajaran baru dimulai, Romo menyuruh Tegar kerja jadi buruh giling di pabrik. Sebenarnya melinting bukan hal baru buat Tegar. Sejak kecil ia biasa ikut iseng melinting kala bermain. Kadang pula ikut mengepak rokok yang sudah dilinting, di bagian ini lebih banyak dilakukan laki-laki. Tapi toh yang namanya liburan sekolah, tentu Tegar mengharapkan bermain seperti yang lain. Seperti kedua adiknya, Karim dan Lebas, yang bisa bebas melakukan apa pun (GK, 2012: 37).*

Translated from the excerpt above,

During the one-month holiday before the new school year began, Father ordered Tegar to work as a miller in the factory. Actually, rolling cigarettes was not something new for Tegar. Since childhood, he used to join in rolling cigarettes while playing. Sometimes he also helped pack the cigarettes that had been rolled, in this part it was mostly done by boys. But of course, during the school holidays, Tegar expected to play like the others. Like his two younger brothers, Karim and Lebas, who could freely do whatever they wanted.

The excerpt above indicated that the workers' rights have not been fulfilled in colonial era. In other words, the employers can do everything even force the workers as they want to order without any humanity.

The second employer - subordinates' interaction subalternity is seen when Tegar feels comfort if he works rolling cigarettes with the women workers, as cut in the part below;

*Meski pelintingan lebih banyak dilakukan kaum perempuan, tetapi Tegar merasa nyaman melinting bersama mereka. Tegar sampai pada kesimpulan bahwa dia percaya tangan-tangan para pelinting itu punya otak sendiri (GK, 2012: 38).*

It is known from the excerpt above that,

Although the rolling is mostly done by women, Tegar felt comfortable rolling with them. Tegar came to the conclusion that he believes the hands of the rollers have their own brains.

The excerpt above displayed that at that time the men have stereotype that the women are naturally created in the world just for to be the workers that everything the women do must be nice to feel.

The third employer - workers' interaction subalternity occurred as reflected in the following quote;

*Kali ini, Romo menyuruh Tegar mengikuti jam kerja pegawainya. Ia pun diupah seperti pegawai lainnya. Tak ada kata liburan untuk remaja tanggung itu, keluar pabrik hanya ketika Tegar mendaftar untuk masuk SMA, lain itu tidak. Ketika meminta izin pada Romo saat teman-teman mengajaknya main ke Menara Kudus, Romo tak memperbolehkan. Tegar*

*sempat protes, merasa liburannya terganggu dengan sikap dictator Romo, tapi Romo malah bilang, "Kalo Cuma ke Menara Kudus kamu sudah ke sana dari kecil, apa lagi yang mau dilihat? Belum berubah, tempatnya juga masih sama. Kalau kamu mau pergi main, lebih baik kamu mengusahakan semua buruh diajak jalan-jalan bersama. Biar semua merasakan senangnya jalan setelah kerja keras (GK, 2012: 38-39).*

The quote conveys,

At the time, Romo told Tegar to follow his employee's working hours. He was also paid like other employees. There was no such thing as a vacation for the teenager, leaving the factory only when Tegar registered to enter high school, otherwise not. When asking for Romo's permission when his friends invited him to go to Menara Kudus, Romo did not allow it. Tegar protested, feeling that his vacation was disturbed by Romo's dictatorial attitude, but Romo said, "If it's just to Menara Kudus, you've been going there since you were little, what else do you want to see? It hasn't changed, the place is still the same. If you want to go out, you better try to invite all the workers to go out together. So that everyone can feel the joy of going out after hard work.

The excerpt above showed how the subaltern ultimately works. They only have citizenship as status. They do not own the right of time, more over free for refreshment or relaxation even though the boss was his own family.

## 2. Subaltern Oppression

The first oppression subalternity arisen when Idroes Moeria suddenly went limp because he felt the gun point against his back, forcing him to raise his hand, and telling him to turn around slowly. He was so weak that he could no longer hold the photo he had been holding, as seen the following part;

*Hingga ia merasakan mata senapan menempel di punggungnya, memaksanya mengangkat tangan, dan menyuruhnya untuk berbalik pelan-pelan dengan logat yang sulit ditangkap. Idroes Moeria melihat tiga orang prajurit bermata sipit dan berkulit kuning, masing-masing menyodorkan senjata kearah Idroes Moeria. Tangannya seketika lemas. Demikian lemas hingga ia tak mampu lagi menggenggam pasfoto yang sedari tadi dipegangnya (GK, 2012: 77).*

The excerpt mentioned that,

Until he felt the gun point pressed against his back, forcing him to raise his hands, and telling him to turn around slowly with an accent that was hard to catch. Idroes Moeria saw three soldiers with slanted eyes and yellow skin, each pointing a weapon at Idroes Moeria. His hands suddenly went limp. So limp that he could no longer hold the passport photo that he had been holding.

The excerpt above revealed that the colonized people suffered traumatic events of colonialization since the oppression must happen and cannot be avoided anymore.

The second subaltern form of oppression represented by the character Romaisa when they heard and saw what happened to the girls who became the passion of Japanese people. Witnessing this incident, Romaisa wanted to find and save her husband who had not been found, so that little by little Romaisa became depressed. Hearing that her husband was captured by the Japanese made her want to let her husband go, but she was always forbidden, causing her to faint to miscarriage, returning him even more miserable, as seen in the quote below:

*Romaisa benar-benar tertekan. Ia ingin pergi untuk mencari Idroes Moeria tapi juru tulis dan istrinya menyuruh Roemaisa untuk sembunyi, setelah mendengar kabar orang-orang*

*Jepang juga membawa paksa perempuan untuk dijadikan pemuas hawa nafsu. Perempuan itu depresi (GK/2012: 79).*

The excerpt above tells that,

Romaisa was really depressed. She wanted to go to find Idroes Moeria but the clerk and his wife told Roemaisa to hide, after hearing the news that the Japanese also took women by force to be used to satisfy their lust. The woman was depressed.

The information above showed that women struggle to defend the right and protection such as from sexual harassment caused by the colonizer (Japanese soldier) can do everything they want to do.

The third oppression of subaltern happened when Roemaisa heard that Idroes Moeria was captured by the Japanese. She just cried about her days until they were blurry and her eyes were swollen. The woman ate, drank, the only taste she tasted for days was the taste of tears which had now drained away. There was only a sob left, but not a drop of water came out of his eyes. Roemaisa's body deteriorated in just a matter of days, her skin wrinkled as if she was 10 years older, and her hair fell out. All her body's nutrients were taken by her baby, while her beauty was absorbed by her sadness. Until there were no more remaining nutrients that could be absorbed by the fetus, and the fetus decided to leave Roemaisa's body, as exemplified by as illustrated quote:

*Roemaisa hanya menangisi hari-harinya hingga pandangannya kabur dan matanya bengkak. Perempuan itu tak makan, tak minum, satu-satunya rasa yang dicecapnya selama sehari-hari adalah rasa air matanya yang kini pun telah habis terkuras. Hanya ada sisa sesengguk, tapi tak setetes pun air keluar dari matanya. Tubuh Roemaisa mengurus hanya dalam hitungan hari, kulitnya mengeriput seolah ia 10 tahun lebih tua, dan rambutnya rontok. Semua nutrisi tubuhnya diambil oleh jabang bayinya, sedangkan kecantikannya diserap kesedihannya. Hingga tak ada lagi sisa nutrisi yang bisa diserap oleh janinnya, dan janin itu pun memutuskan pergi dari tubuh Roemaisa (GK, 2012: 79).*

The passage above expresses that,

Roemaisa just cried her days until her vision was blurry and her eyes were swollen. The woman did not eat, did not drink, the only taste she tasted for days was the taste of her tears which had now been drained. There were only a few sobs left, but not a single drop of water came out of her eyes. Roemaisa's body wasted in a matter of days, her skin wrinkled as if she was 10 years older, and her hair fell out. All the nutrients in her body were taken by her fetus, while her beauty was absorbed by her sadness. Until there were no more nutrients left that could be absorbed by her fetus, and the fetus decided to leave Roemaisa's body.

The excerpt above disclosed that the effects of colonialization. The colonized people cannot do anything as Spivak argued that subaltern cannot speak and it is useless if they speak because nobody can listen to subaltern.

The fourth oppression subalternity is depicted when the character Rukayah wants to help her mother work to increase her income and when her parents accept Rukayah as an attractant for *kretek* (cigarette) buyers, as illustrated in the following quote:

*Rukayah yang mulai menginjak remaja pun kini mendapat izin dari ayahnya untuk ikut Dasiyah ke acara pasar malam. Meski tubuhnya mungil, tapi dia cukup untuk menjadi penarik pembeli Kretek Gadis (GK/2012: 153).*

It means that Rukayah, who is starting to enter her teens, now has permission from her father to accompany Dasiyah to the night market event. Although her body is small, she is big enough to be a buyer puller for *Kretek Gadis*. This quotation showed the struggle of woman's

oppression happened because they had to help their mother every day, who was colonized by the Dutch.

The fifth subaltern form of oppression exemplified when Idroes Moeria wake up from his nightmare he buried twenty years ago in Japanese colonialism that repeated in the event of G 30 S (September 30th movement) in his old. He was tortured, as illustrated in the quote below:

*Warna yang identik dengan PKI, serta darah jenderal-jenderal yang menjadi korban G 30 S. Idroes Moeria tak pernah menyangka, mimpi buruk yang dikuburnya dalam sebuah kotak bernama penjajahan Jepang, kini terulang lagi di usianya yang senja. Ia disiksa dengan cara yang menjadi kunci atas kotak ingatan bernama penjajahan Jepang dua puluhan tahun yang lalu (GK/2012: 227).*

The path above says that,

The color that is identical to the PKI (Indonesian communist party), as well as the blood of the generals who were victims of G 30 S. Idroes Moeria never thought that the nightmare he buried in a box called the Japanese occupation, would now be repeated again in his old age. He was tortured in a way that became the key to the memory box called the Japanese occupation twenty years ago.

The facts above expressed the effect oppression by colonialization gives historical wounds that shackle the formation of their national identity and tend to try to escape these wounds by forgetting the painful past. They seem to have historical amnesia. The people were uprooted from their original identity and could never return to it, namely the identity before experiencing colonialism. The influence of colonialism was so great that it influenced the thought patterns, patterns of appreciation of life, and behavioral patterns of postcolonial society.

The sixth oppression occurred when Sergeant Sentot began to introduce Jeng Yah as a *kretek* girl to his colleagues and rolled some *tingwe* for the TNI and explained that *Merdeka Kretek* had nothing to do with the PKI. The concept of *kretek* was inspired by Sukarno's Independence Day, that's why the color red is used like the color of the flag on the *kretek* cover (GK/2012: 230-231) as reflected in the following sentences;

*Sejak itu, Sersan Sentot mengenalkan Jeng Yah sebagai gadis kretek kepada rekan sejawatnya. Ia melinting beberapa tingwe untuk para TNI. Dijelaskannya pula, bahwa Kretek Merdeka tak ada hubungannya dengan PKI. Ia adalah kretek yang telah berdiri bertahun lalu, demi menghormati Soekarno yang mengumandangkan kemerdekaan. Sedang warna merah yang pilih untuk papiernya adalah adaptasi dari salah satu warna Sang Saka Merah Putih, yang berarti berani. Demikianlah konsep Kretek Merdeka yang memang diperuntukkan mengobarkan semangat keberanian rakyat dan kebebasan dari penjajahan (GK/2012: 230-231).*

The passage states that,

Since then, Sergeant Sentot introduced Jeng Yah as a *kretek* girl to his colleagues. She rolled some *tingwe* for the TNI (Indonesian national army). She also explained that *Kretek Merdeka* had nothing to do with the PKI (Indonesian communist party). It was a *kretek* that had been established for years, in honor of Soekarno who proclaimed independence. While the red color chosen for its paper was an adaptation of one of the colors of *Sang Saka Merah Putih* (Indonesian flag), which means brave. Thus the concept of *Kretek Merdeka* which was indeed intended to ignite the spirit of people's courage and freedom from colonialism.

Just as the previous study (Hardiyanti & Nugraheni, 2018; Khalida, 2022), the excerpt above emphasizes how subaltern characters use imitation and hybridity to maneuver around and challenge prevailing colonial or hegemonic structures through resistance and subaltern

agency in *Kretek Merdeka*, subalternity as resistance and adaptation, and subalternity as experience of oppression.

The resistance and subaltern agency is shown in cultural production. *Kretek Merdeka* is presented by Jeng Yah and Sersan Sentot as a representation of Indonesian nationalism and anti-colonialist resistance (Afifah, 2024). They turn a traditional craft into a potent declaration of identity and defiance by fusing it with nationalistic iconography, such as the red of the Indonesian flag, and tying the finished product to the spirit of independence. The subaltern's position within a post-colonial narrative is redefined and agency is reclaimed through this act of cultural hybridity.

Beside, subalternity as resistance and adaptation is indicated in how repressive systems are negotiated by subaltern characters through hybridity and imitation. Mimicry in *Gadis Kretek* emphasizes how the characters interact with colonial influences, but the mixing of identities to assert autonomy is known as hybridity. These tactics serve as instruments for expressing opposition, promoting patriotism, and motivating bravery in the instance of *Kretek Merdeka*. Collectively, they show that subalternity encompasses both creative resistance and oppression, enabling oppressed voices to recover identity and power in colonial and post-colonial settings (Piu, 2023).

Furthermore, subalternity is shown as a common experience of oppression and a forum for resistance. Similar to *Texaco* struggle to create a space of validity and expression (Khalida, 2022), the subalterns in *Gadis Kretek*'s attempts to forge cultural identity and national pride via customs, the subalterns in. Both stories demonstrate how the subaltern has persevered in overcoming institutional obstacles, making their hardships representative of larger post-colonial resistance movements. When taken as a whole, they highlight how crucial literature is to investigating and comprehending subaltern voices and their long-lasting influence on identity and agency.

The subaltern are struggling to assert their rights. Strikes are one way to express their desires and demand their rights including independence. They also want their voices to be heard and to respond with a strike. They fought back, but ultimately their voices were not heard. Bake still did not comply with her request. Instead, they use the law to protect themselves and those in power. Subalterns are the lowest group, exhibiting inferiority complexes and subject to physical and psychological oppression.

The interaction of subaltern in the field of between subordinates and masters or employers is mostly expressed by the sadness because of the dominated group. These people at the bottom are unable to speak (Spivak, 2021), not only because they have experienced oppression, but because their voices are constantly cut off by hegemony. Women become objects and even victims of double rape (Afifah, 2024). Subalterns often referred to indigenous issues and colonialism in the colonial state's arbitrary exploitation of indigenous peoples. Subalterns are often oppressed, open-minded, and violent (Putri et al., 2021). The way of subalterns discussed above is expressed in resisting, fighting, and rebelling against colonialism and humiliation. The excerpt in this reflected from several condition, social systems, or context that appears in the novel.

The book depicts those are all discussed above dealing with the effects and struggles of oppressed subaltern. Those are all can be divided into two types subalternity, namely employer-subordinates and women oppression. To sum up, the effects of colonialization comprise fear, depression, and traumatic events. The struggles of oppressed subaltern include defending the right, protection, voicing even not listened, survival by keep working, and forgetting any kinds of effect of colonialization that makes sadness. In this era, both the subordinates and women still had many difficulties voicing their rights (Afifah, 2024; Putri et al., 2021). However, those struggles inspired the next generation to continue the fight. By post-

colonial study, the colonized people had to show that they were capable of equaling the colonial people.

## CONCLUSION

The book focuses on two forms of oppressed subaltern groups: women's oppression and employer-subordinate relationships, highlighting their hardships and impacts. The subaltern's problems include claiming their rights, experiencing hardships, and attempting to survive, while the aftermath of colonialism includes trauma, sadness, and terror. Even though they have had a difficult time advocating for their rights, their tenacity is an example for coming generations. Colonized people seek to prove their equality and competence with their colonizers through post-colonial studies. Therefore, it is recommended to use this research as material for consideration to conduct further research being able to complement this research.

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