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### Cultural Hybridity in Indonesian Contemporary Cinema: A Postcolonial Study on the Film Bumi Manusia

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#### Abstract

*Colonialism has profoundly engulfed the cultural, social, and political aspects of Indonesian society. Indigenous people have responded to its legacy by movements, negotiating their identity, and engaging in cultural appropriation. This article analyses the portrayal of cultural hybridity in the film Bumi Manusia which was directed by Hanung Bramantyo and released in 2019. In particular, this paper investigates how indigenous and Indo-European people navigate their identities through the adoption of distinct cultural practices. Subsequently, this article examines their challenges when engaging in cultural hybridity. The research is qualitative with the critical paradigm and employs the theory of cultural hybridity. The research findings indicate that pivotal indigenous figures and an Indo-European decent negotiate their identities by engaging in both indigenous and European cultural practices. This is evident in their adoption of language, attire, food, and tradition. They aimed to adjust to a diverse colonial society and achieve self-empowerment and resistance through negotiations and practices. However, their engagement in cultural hybridity encounters both approval and rejection.*

**Keywords:** Cultural Hybridity, Identity, Bumi Manusia, Indigenous and Indo-European People.

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#### Introduction

All facets of Indonesian society bear the impacts of colonialism. Its legacy has profoundly influenced the cultural, social, and political aspects of Indonesian society, leaving a lasting imprint on the collective memory of its people (Clark, 2011). As an illustration, the cultivation systems imposed by the Dutch colonial administration compelled peasants to cultivate cash crops, resulting in changes to the economic framework and social hierarchy (Miftahadi et al., 2022). The Dutch East Indies government's policies categorized society into three groups: European, foreign easterners, and Inlanders, leading to discrimination and social stratification (Suratminto, 2020). In such social stratification, indigenous people must negotiate their identities to adapt to the various political and legal policies, cultural practices, technologies, and educational systems implemented by the peoples of Europe in the colonies. Identity negotiations often result in hybrid cultural practices.



Contemporary media plays an important role in constructing identity and culture in the midst of transnational relations. Shohat & Stam (2003: 74) asserts that contemporary media shapes identity, and many argue that these outlets have become fundamental to identity production. Media consumption significantly influences national identity, communal allegiances, and political ideology in a transnational world characterized by the global circulation of sounds, images, products, and peoples. Film, as a form of contemporary media, plays an important role in constructing a narrative of events, including the history of colonization and its impact on transnational people. Rony (2022) contends that the influence of film and digital media on rewriting history is substantial, as they challenge prevailing narratives and counter detrimental ideologies. One who lives in a colonial era can accept or reject identity and carry out a mixture of identity and culture amidst the plurality of colonial societies. Moviemakers in this context can determine how attitudes represent identity negotiations and the possibility of cultural mixing and its impact.

The examination of cultural hybridity in the film “Bumi Manusia” (Bramantyo, 2019) holds great significance in the Indonesian context. It sheds light on the continuous process of reconciling with the country’s colonial history and its impact on the creation of present-day identities, social interactions, and intercultural connections. “Bumi Manusia” shows the enduring impact of the colonial past on Indonesia’s socio-cultural fabric, namely in terms of class, race, and ethnicity, by portraying the intricate relationships among people from varied cultural backgrounds. The characters’ experiences and relationships illustrate the amalgamation and conflict between indigenous Indonesian and European cultures, exposing the intricacy of managing one’s identity in colonized environments. This component of the film is especially pertinent for examining how contemporary Indonesians navigate their national and cultural identities in the face of globalization and ongoing Western hegemony in different domains.

To explore how the indigenous people in the film “Bumi Manusia” practice different cultures, which makes them have multifaceted identities, this research used cultural hybridity theory. As it pertains to postcolonial studies, it is the amalgamation and fusion of distinct cultural identities, practices, and components that resulted from globalization and colonialism that leads to the emergence of new cultural identities and expressions that integrate components from various origins (Burke, 2009; Hamil, 2019; Nomer, 2017). Scholars have employed cultural hybridity to understand how marginalized communities reclaim their ethnic identities through hybrid practices (Aoyagi et al., 2020), how individuals navigate their identities in the face of globalization (Seo et al., 2020), and how cultural hybridity can serve as both a resistance mechanism and a source of innovation (Taylor, 2019).

The film “Bumi Manusia” has garnered significant scholarly interest, with researchers utilizing various theories and methodologies to decipher its intricate narrative depths and cultural subtleties. Helandri (2021) analyze the representation of intercultural communication in the film. They examine its social foundations and shed light on the sociological aspects of communication depicted in the film. A substantial amount of research centers on the film’s main female heroine, Nyai Ontosoroh, who becomes a symbol of colonial female feminism and a disruptor of established gender conventions. Researchers Aryani (2023), Mayanti & Haryono (2023) the media plays the role of social and Budiarto & Febriana (2021) underscore Nyai Ontosoroh’s enduring strength, intelligence, and exceptional leadership abilities. Consequently, these studies strongly support the cause of women’s rights, equality, and liberation. Meanwhile, in their analysis, Faizah & Tjahjani (2021) examine the film’s counter-narrative against Western Orientalism, emphasizing the indigenous resistance and subversion of preconceptions. In addition, Nisa & Damayanti (2022) provide a linguistic

analysis that explores the utilization of profanity in the movie. They specifically focus on finding the references and purposes of swear words within the trilingual conversation, which includes Malay/Indonesian, Javanese, and Dutch.

Although extensive research has been conducted, there is still a lack of investigation into the cultural hybridity present in “Bumi Manusia,” specifically in terms of how the film deals with and reconciles European and Indigenous cultures. This study seeks to address this void by examining the complex manner in which “Bumi Manusia” depicts the interplay between European and Indigenous identities, providing insight into the dynamic mechanisms of cultural interchange, adjustment, and opposition. Thus, this article will discuss the representation of cultural hybridity in the film “Bumi Manusia.” Specifically, it will look at how Indigenous and Indo-European figures negotiate their identities by practicing two different cultures. Then, this article will analyse the obstacles faced by indigenous and Indo-European figures in practicing both indigenous and European cultures. By so doing, this research aims to provide fresh insights into the intricacies of cultural identity and the diverse dynamics of colonial and postcolonial interactions. By doing so, it will contribute a unique viewpoint to the academic discussion surrounding “Bumi Manusia.” This study not only emphasizes a neglected field of research but also emphasizes the film’s importance as a means of comprehending the many complexities of cultural blending within a historical framework.

### Method

This research uses a descriptive qualitative technique and a critical paradigm to examine the cultural hybridity in the film “Bumi Manusia.” The qualitative method is crucial for comprehending the characters, dialogues, and visual aspects that communicate themes of cultural hybridity (Bryman, 2022). This study seeks to examine the identity negotiations depicted in the film by adopting a critical paradigm. It aligns with the need for a critical approach to analysing cultural representations in media, as advocated by Kincheloe & McLaren (2018). This approach not only enables a comprehensive analysis of the film’s substance but also actively interacts with the wider socio-political circumstances that it portrays and questions. Furthermore, it offers a comprehensive theoretical framework that highlights the significance of analysing power dynamics, social disparities, and the historical circumstances that influence cultural manifestations and identities in the film “Bumi Manusia”.

The audiovisual and textual elements of “Bumi Manusia” serve as the main data source for this study, providing insights into its narrative structure, character development, and visual symbolism as explicit representations of cultural hybridity. The secondary material will consist of academic papers, book chapters, and criticisms that specifically examine the film, its historical background, and the wider topics of cultural hybridity, postcolonialism, and the development of identity. The secondary sources will offer the essential theoretical framework and contextual backdrop to enhance the research, bolstering the primary data with scholarly perspectives on the themes investigated (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). An in-depth analysis of these texts through document research will be the foundation for gathering data, allowing for a thorough comprehension of the film “Bumi Manusia” in connection to known theories and debates in cultural studies.

The process of data collection will involve examining documents and carefully organizing both primary and secondary data for thorough analysis. The task at hand is programming the data to recognize reoccurring themes, motifs, and examples of cultural hybridity as portrayed in the film. The forthcoming content analysis will examine these codes, interpreting the data through the lens of cultural hybridity theory to unravel the

intricate connections between identity, colonial power, and indigenous response towards the obstacles that are embedded within the narrative and visual features of “Bumi Manusia”. This method of analysis will show how the film expresses, questions, and redefines cultural identities in response to the effects of colonial histories. It will also give us useful insights into how cultural hybridity is portrayed in contemporary Indonesian film.

## Results and Discussions

### Constructing Hybrid Identity through European and Indigenous Cultures

In the film “Bumi Manusia,” there are two indigenous characters, namely Minke and Ontosoroh, and an Indo-European girl named Annelis, who have central roles. Annelis is the daughter of Ontosoroh and a Dutchman, Hermann Mellema. Minke, Nyai Ontosoroh, and Annelis negotiate their identities by practicing both indigenous and European cultures. They have the ability to communicate with indigenous people and also with Dutch people. Both Minke and Ontosoroh have a modern view of facing life. Minke studied at HBS, while Ontosoroh became a professional woman who has the ability to manage modern farming and milk companies. Meanwhile, Annelis supports Ontosoroh in handling the company. They practiced both local and European cultures.

Minke is a polyglot, fluent in Dutch, Javanese, and Indonesia, which he adeptly uses to navigate diverse social settings and cultural norms. He embodies a living synthesis of colonial and postcolonial identities. Among his school friends, who are of Indo-European descent, he comfortably communicates in Dutch, showcasing his adaptability and openness to different cultures. However, authorities often resist his attempts to speak Dutch in formal settings like courts and interactions with Dutch police, deeming it inappropriate for him due to his indigenous background. Despite these barriers, Minke remains undeterred, seamlessly switching to Javanese when he is with his family and local friends, grounding himself in his Javanese heritage.

Minke, who received his education in a Dutch school, represents the intricacies of a colonial educational system while also preserving his indigenous heritage. Minke exemplifies this hybridity by skillfully maneuvering between his Javanese heritage and the European modern intellectual traditions that he has assimilated through his studies. His ability to scrutinize and assess both sets of cultural norms showcases a hybrid awareness, unrestricted by one culture yet capable of actively engaging in and challenging both. Minke’s defiance of his Javanese upbringing, as emphasized by his mother’s remark that he is no longer Javanese and has become a brown Dutch guy (Bumi Manusia, 2019, 01:0:03), demonstrates the profound influence of his schooling and social contacts inside colonial society, resulting in his assimilation into the Dutch culture. His mother’s comment highlights the perceived transformation in Minke’s identity, which has evolved from being solely Javanese to being more intricate and linked with European influences. The statement underscores the inherent tension arising from cultural hybridity, where the fusion of multiple cultures creates novel identities that the original cultural group may not fully acknowledge or embrace. Minke’s experience exemplifies the difficulties encountered by individuals in postcolonial societies as they negotiate their complex identities, frequently finding themselves at the intersection of traditional norms and modern, frequently imported, concepts.

Minke’s bilingual journalism, featuring articles in both Dutch and Malay/Indonesian for local and Dutch newspapers, highlights his broad horizons and deep knowledge. From the end of the 20th century, Malay language began to blend with Dutch, which later developed in Batavia, central Java, and also East Java (Soekiman, 2014: 31). Minke wrote an article in the Malay newspaper in Indonesian entitled “Boemi, Manusia Dan Perkaranja” (The Earth, Human Beings, And Its Problems) (Bumi Manusia, 2019, 02:24:33). On Another Occasion,



He Wrote An Article In The Dutch Newspaper With The Title “Een Njai Is Ook Een Mens, Haar Bestaan Wordt Niet Erkend Door Het Recht Worden Otnkend” (a Nyai—Concubine—Is Also a Human, His Existence Must Be Protected By Law) (Bumi Manusia, 2019, 01:45:33). Minke’s mastery of multiple languages not only signifies his intellectual prowess but also his ability to bridge disparate worlds. Through his writings and daily interactions, Minke challenges the rigid boundaries of language and culture, representing a living example of cultural hybridity and resilience. Minke’s journalistic work in both colonial and indigenous languages represent a form of resistance and an assertion of agency. By expressing himself in both Dutch and Malay/Indonesian, he not only broadens his audience but also confronts colonial discourse. Minke’s involvement in journalism to articulate his thoughts also suggests his global point of view in positioning himself in a colonial context, as some newspapers were organized by Dutch people.

Comparable in language proficiency to Minke, Nyai Ontosoroh also speaks Javanese, Indonesian, and Dutch fluently. She demonstrates exceptional cultural adaptability and profundity as a persona, skillfully traversing the intricacies of identity via her linguistic skills and social engagements. When Ontosoroh spoke to the financial officer of her company, she used the Javanese, “Iki kudu mbok perikso meneh. Deloen iki sik salah. Gurung seimbang (You have to check it again. Look at this. It’s still wrong, not balanced)” (Bumi Manusia, 2019, 00:18.56). On another occasion, when Ontosoroh spoke to her Dutch husband, she switched to Dutch. Hamil (2019) asserts that linguistic hybridity can occur through various processes such as code-switching, borrowing words from different languages, incorporating idioms and phrases from multiple linguistic traditions, and creating new hybrid languages or dialects. Code switching from Javanese to Dutch enables Nyai Ontosoroh to navigate diverse cultural and social environments with ease. Her acquisition of Dutch proficiency occurred via her interactions with her Dutch-speaking spouse, from whom she obtained Dutch linguistic instruction. This aptitude proves advantageous for her, as it facilitates effortless correspondence with Dutch speakers in both informal domestic contexts and formal legal proceedings, like in court.

Nyai Ontosoroh’s utilization of Javanese, particularly when conversing with her subordinates at the agricultural and dairy enterprises she supervises, underscores her profound affiliation with her ancestral heritage and her position of authority in her locality. Her ability to speak two or three languages highlights her intricate sense of self as an individual who connects the colonial and indigenous spheres, exemplifying a type of cultural hybridity. Her adeptness in maneuvering through these heterogeneous linguistic and cultural domains is indicative of her fortitude and strategic prowess. Throughout her interactions, Nyai Ontosoroh consistently exhibits a remarkable ability to adjust and assert herself, regardless of the context—be it confidential domestic discussions, business management, or legal advocacy to protect her interests. She can be regarded as a multidimensional woman who adeptly utilizes her varied linguistic abilities to maneuver, bargain, and at times contest the patriarchal and colonial frameworks that encircle her.

Annelis, being of Indo-European descent and the child of Nyai Ontosoroh and Hermann Mellema, speaks Javanese, Dutch, and Indonesian. When the children of the farmers asked Annelis, “When will we play again?” she answered in Javanese, “Sesuk (tomorrow)”. Then Annelis asked, “Wis mangan Gurung? (Have you all eaten?)”. And when Annelis saw the children running, she said, “Ojok mlayu-mlayu!” (Don’t run!) (Bumi Manusia, 2019, 00:22:38 – 00:22:54). Annelies’ ability to speak two languages is a clear indication of her dual identity, representing the blending of European (Dutch) and indigenous (Javanese) traditions. Bhabha (1994) explores the idea of a “third space” of expression, which enables the exploration of cultural identities that go beyond the binary divisions of colonizer and

colonized. Her European heritage and Javanese upbringing shape Annelies' hybrid identity. Despite her European half upbringings, her ability to speak Javanese fluently represents a type of cultural negotiation and adaptability. This challenges the strict social divisions imposed by colonialism and reflects her personal experience of combining different cultures. Language, within the framework of cultural hybridity, functions not only as a means of communication but also as a conduit between different cultures, enabling reciprocal comprehension and interaction. Annelies' utilization of the Javanese language when communicating with the children of the officers highlights her position as a facilitator between the colonial and indigenous realms.

In terms of outfit, Minke's choice of attire, combining European outfits with local Javanese elements like blangkon (the Javanese hat) and batik, presents a vivid example of cultural hybridity in practice. Taylor (2005) stated that clothing forms the social identity of the people depicted, places them in historical times, and connects the wearers with specific communities. As the son of Bupati in Java, Minke often wore a Blangkon that connected him to the Javanese culture that his family practiced, which had a high social position. While the European model suit he wore showed his adaptation to the European culture that influenced Indonesian colonial society.



**Figure 1.**  
**Minke Wears Blangkon and European Shirt**

Source: Bumi Manusia, 2019, 00:52:48

This blend of clothing styles not only reflects his multifaceted identity but also serves as a symbolic representation of the negotiation and fusion of different cultural influences. Minke's hybrid outfit can be seen as a form of resistance and subversion against colonial power structures. Bhabha (1994) discusses how hybrid cultural expressions can challenge dominant narratives and undermine the authority of colonial culture. By mixing European styles with traditional Javanese elements, Minke's clothing choices resist the imposition of a singular cultural identity and assert the legitimacy of hybrid identities. This act of sartorial hybridity disrupts the binary oppositions of colonizer/colonized and traditional/modern, illustrating the complexity of postcolonial identities (Bhabha, 1994).

Minke's clothing also serves as a powerful tool for self-expression, allowing him to navigate and articulate his identity in a postcolonial context. Hall (1990) emphasizes the role of cultural practices in the construction and communication of identity. By choosing to wear both European and Javanese garments, Minke expresses his dual affinity for and belonging to both cultures. This sartorial choice highlights the fluidity of identity in postcolonial societies, where individuals often embody multiple cultural affiliations (Hall, 1990).

Nyai Ontosoroh's choice to wear both European dress and the traditional Javanese kebaya symbolizes a form of cultural negotiation and synthesis. This sartorial hybridity reflects a broader postcolonial reality where individuals navigate multiple cultural heritages

and identities. Nyai Ontosoroh was wearing a white kebaya when she first met Minke. Kebaya gives identity to Nyai Ontosoroh as a woman from the background of Javanese culture.



**Figure 2.**

**Nyai Ontosoroh wears Kebaya when she met Minke for the first time**

Source: Bumi Manusia, 2019, 00:18:00

Ontosoroh's attire can be seen as an embodiment of her personal history and social status, as well as a strategic response to the colonial legacy that values European aesthetics alongside her own Javanese heritage. When Nyai Ontosoroh spent her time with her Dutch husband at the beginning of their relationship, her husband asked Nyai Ontosoroh to wear European dress.

Annelies exemplifies cultural hybridity not only through her linguistic skills but also in her clothing preferences. Her adeptness in transitioning between traditional Javanese garb, such as the kebaya, and European clothing exemplifies the intricate interplay of identities she symbolizes. Her wardrobe's contrasting selection of clothing visually symbolizes her mixed cultural identity, shaped by the combination of Dutch colonial and indigenous Javanese elements that define her existence.

During her first meeting with Minke, Annelies appears dressed in European attire, which could symbolize her affiliation with her Dutch ancestry and the ruling class of the colonial era. Nevertheless, her self-identification as Indigenous, despite her European clothing, challenges traditional assumptions and demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of identity that surpasses superficial appearances. This event highlights the flexibility of cultural identification and the constraints of visual indicators in determining one's identity and loyalty.

Prior to hosting Minke for dinner, Annelies chooses to wear the kebaya, a customary Javanese attire that symbolizes her acceptance and admiration of her Indigenous heritage.



**Figure 3.**

**Annelis wears Kebaya when she's going to host Minke's dinner**

Source: Bumi Manusia, 2019, 00:28:31

This intentional decision demonstrates her wish to affirm her affiliation with the indigenous culture, possibly as a sign of reverence towards Minke and an acknowledgement of her intricate ancestry. Annelies defies the colonial-imposed division between European and Indigenous by wearing the kebaya and instead embraces the blending of cultures that shapes her identity.

Annelies' effortless transition between European and Javanese fashion norms exemplifies cultural hybridity, wherein individuals embody and articulate several cultural influences. Her dress choices are not only based on appearance but rather include deep cultural meaning, allowing her to explore her complex identity. Annelies provides us with a firsthand account of hybridity, where cultural identities are not static but are constantly shaped and expressed via the influence of various factors such as context, relationships, and personal processes of self-definition. Her narrative provides a clear example of how people in postcolonial settings construct their sense of self by combining many cultural backgrounds, rejecting oversimplified classifications, and embracing the complexity of their mixed identities.

In terms of food, Nyai Ontosoroh and Minke also practice cultural hybridity. Although Ontosoroh is a native, he serves bread and milk for Minke. In the colonies, cakes and confectionary, which were fundamental components of European gastronomy, came to represent European cultural and social norms. The Dutch discovered cakes and confectionary in the Dutch East Indies, as part of a larger endeavor to emulate their homeland's culinary landscape, and the colonial community regarded them as symbols of opulence and social standing. The practice of consuming cake with milk can be interpreted as an evolution of the European tea and coffee tradition, which emphasizes the harmony between sweet baked products and hot beverages.

The wedding of Minke and Annelis exemplifies cultural hybridity, clearly showcasing the interaction between Islam, traditional Javanese practices, and European influences. This event represents the fusion and coexistence of several cultural components, illustrating the intricate social dynamics of the Dutch East Indies during the colonial era. Minke and Annelis represent the union of their dual heritages by wearing traditional Javanese clothing during the *ijab kabul* (Islamic marriage vows) and then alternating between European and Javanese garb during the wedding party. This clothing decision highlights a deliberate process of discussing and accepting one's identity, where both the native and colonial aspects are recognized and honored.



**Figure 4.**

**Minke and Annelis wear traditional Javanese outfit in their Ijab Kabul**

Source: Bumi Manusia, 2019, 02:11:18

The incorporation of traditional Javanese dancing and gamelan music as a form of entertainment, combined with the availability of European-style dishes for the guests, further

highlights the hybrid character of the celebration. The fusion of music, dance, and cuisine showcases a process of cultural synthesis, where each tradition coexists harmoniously, contributing to a diverse and multicultural experience. Furthermore, the inclusion of European visitors and the adoption of European cooking methods emphasize the permeable divisions between the colonizer and colonized societies, indicating an intricate network of social connections and cultural interactions.

The wedding of Minke and Annelis serves as a prime example of cultural hybridity in the Dutch East Indies, showcasing the potential for cross-cultural interaction and the formation of shared cultural environments. The wedding provides a miniature depiction of the broader societal processes in colonial and postcolonial contexts, where diverse cultural traditions constantly shape identities and cultural practices.

### **Challenge of Hybrid Cultural Practices: The White's Rejection**

Minke and Nyai Ontosoroh's engagement in both local and European cultural practices demonstrate their position within in-between spaces. Both Minke and Ontosoroh are determined to preserve their native character. Furthermore, in several instances, they endeavor to assimilate by engaging in the customs and traditions of European culture. Nevertheless, Europeans did not readily embrace the European cultural traditions that Minke and Ontosoroh engaged in. Meanwhile, Annelis, who had the European blood of her father, wanted to mingle with the indigenous people, but the Dutch government restricted her movement because socially stratified Annelis was considered to be above the natives.

The cultural hybridity displayed by Nyai Ontosoroh and Minke through their proficient command of the Dutch language and their embrace of European customs can be seen as deliberate efforts to navigate and challenge the colonial power dynamics while also asserting their native identity and upbringing. The activities demonstrate a sophisticated approach to resisting and negotiating within the repressive colonial system. They utilize the language and cultural symbols of the colonists to demand respect, rights, and acknowledgment.

When dealing with Dutch people, Minke uses Dutch, such as when he wanted to enter a Dutch restaurant but was approached by a Dutch waiter. The waiter said, "Mau apa kowe? Ini klub untuk Belanda" (What are you doing? This is a Dutch club). Then Minke answered in Dutch. But the waitress replied, "Kamu bicara melayu? Bahasa Belanda bukan untuk monyet." (You are speaking Malay? Dutch is not for monkey"). The visualisation of Minke's encounter with the Dutch waiter is as follows:



**Figure 5.**

**Minke and his friend are not allowed to enter Dutch restaurant**

Source: Bumi Manusia, 2019, 00:07:00

The encounter between Minke and the Dutch waiter at the entrance of a Dutch restaurant exemplifies the racial and cultural conflicts that are widespread in the colonial

setting of the Dutch East Indies. Minke's endeavor to gain access to a club that is only for Dutch people and speaks in the Dutch language signifies an attempt to traverse and surpass the inflexible colonial divisions that segregate society based on race and culture. Nevertheless, the waiter's reply emphasizes the deeply ingrained biases and the colonial mindset that regards the colonized as intrinsically lesser and undeserving of participating in the language and environments of the colonizer. Examining this episode from the perspective of postcolonial theory, specifically focusing on the interplay between language and power dynamics, reveals the existence of a colonial hierarchy that favors the culture and language of the colonizer as being superior. The waiter's insulting comment, which compares Minke's use of Dutch to an action that is inappropriate for his race, highlights the colonial discourse that portrays the colonized as "other"—a dehumanized creature positioned below humanity, as indicated by the description of Minke as a "monkey." The dehumanization of indigenous peoples is a crucial element of colonial power since it provides a rationale for the oppression and marginalization of these groups, denying them the same rights and benefits enjoyed by Europeans.

The waiter's refusal to accept Minke's use of the Dutch language exemplifies the phenomenon of linguistic imperialism, in which the regulation of language supports existing social and political power structures (Phillipson, 1992). Despite being fluent in Dutch, the waiter denies Minke the privilege to speak it and enter venues specifically reserved for Dutch people. This reveals the shortcomings of cultural and linguistic assimilation as methods to combat colonial tyranny. The colonial system upholds its authority not only via physical dominance but also through symbolic coercion, in which language is employed as a means to establish superiority and define the boundaries of social inclusion (Bourdieu, 1991).

Moreover, we might examine this occurrence from the perspective of Frantz Fanon's theories on racial identity and the psychology of colonization (Fanon, 1967). Fanon explores the inclination of the colonized person to imitate the colonizer as a means of attaining acknowledgement and humanity within colonial society. Nevertheless, as Minke's personal experience demonstrates, these endeavors frequently encounter the insurmountable obstacle of racial bias, resulting in feelings of isolation and reinforcing the subordinate position of the colonized individuals.

Hermann Millema's disapproval of Minke's efforts to traverse colonial culture by adopting its own symbols of authority. Mellema said to Minke, "You mean wearing European clothes, with Europeans, and speaking Dutch, and then you're a European? No, you're still a monkey!" (Bumi Manusia, 2019, 00:30:18). Hermann Mellema's derogatory comments on Minke, in which he criticizes Minke's efforts to integrate into European society by adopting European clothing, socializing, and speaking the language, illustrate the profoundly ingrained racism and essentialism that are inherent in colonial philosophy. Mellema's claim that Minke, despite his attempts to conform to European conventions, is nevertheless regarded as "a monkey" is a clear example of the colonial discourse that devalues and reinforces preconceptions about the colonized. These distinctions are not just descriptive but also function to legitimize colonial domination and the cultural dominance of the Western world. Mellema's remarks exemplify an orientalist viewpoint by suggesting that Minke is inherently unable, perhaps due to biological or cultural shortcomings, to fully integrate into European society, irrespective of his linguistic abilities or fashion preferences.

Dutch people have also rejected Nyai Ontosoroh's attempts to communicate in Dutch, particularly when he faces a court case. Nyai Ontosoroh's husband died at the prostitution house, and Nyai Ontosoroh was accused of involvement in the murder. When the judge asked him if Nyai Ontosoroh had ever had any direct contact with the owner of the prostitute, Nyai Ontosoroh initially replied in Dutch, but the Dutch judge requested Nyai to answer in

Indigenous language (Bumi Manusia, 2019, 01:45:40–01:46:00). She strategically navigates the power dynamics of colonialism and asserts her autonomy within a system that aims to marginalize and suppress indigenous voices by choosing to communicate in Dutch, the language of the colonial oppressor. Nevertheless, the Dutch judge's insistence on Nyai Ontosoroh using an indigenous language, despite her fluency in Dutch, clearly highlights the colonial desire to maintain a distinct separation between the colonizer and the colonized, thereby undermining her efforts to engage on an equal level. The judge's decision not to communicate with her in Dutch highlights the constraints of hybridity in confronting deeply rooted colonial power structures and the enduring presence of colonial mindsets that aim to marginalize indigenous individuals, relegating them to a state of eternal foreignness in their own country.

Annelis and Nyai Ontosoroh came to the court together. Before entering the court, Nyai Ontosoroh was asked by the Dutch officer to take off her shoes. Having seen that instruction, Annelis also wanted to take off her shoes. Annelis said, "Jika ibuku diminta melepas Sepatu, maka aku juga ( If my mother is requested to remove her footwear, then I am likewise obligated to remove mine)" (Bumi Manusia, 2019, 01:42:46–01:42:29). But the Dutch officer asked Annelis to keep his shoes on.



**Figure 6.**

**Annelis wanted to take off her shoes**

Source: Bumi Manusia, 2019, 01:42:46 - 01:42:29

In this context, Annelis, as an Indo-European descendant, wanted to position herself in an equal position with her indigenous mother, but her desire was blocked by the Dutch colonial system. Annelis's acts can be seen as an effort to reconcile her complex identity, bridging the gap between her Indo-European origin and her strong connection to the indigenous upbringings of her mother. Her decision to take off her shoes, which symbolizes her respect and cultural affinity for her indigenous mother, reflects her endeavor to embrace indigenous people's social position. In doing so, she aims to challenge the inflexible dichotomies enforced by colonial culture.

The presence of cultural hybridity and resistance in colonial and postcolonial contexts highlights the disputed nature of identity. The deliberate utilization of language and attire by Nyai Ontosoroh, Minke, and Annelis not only asserts their intricate identities but also emphasizes the difficulties of surpassing deeply ingrained colonial narratives and prejudices. Their experiences exemplify Bhabha (1994) concept of hybridity as a realm of negotiation and conflict, in which colonized individuals employ the tools of the colonizer—such as language, attire, and other cultural symbols—to express their autonomy and question the colonial system.

However, the varied response to these efforts by the Dutch highlights the intricacies of cultural hybridity as a means of opposition. Nyai Ontosoroh and Minke strive to surpass the constraints imposed on them by their colonial environment, although their stories also exemplify the enduring obstacles to acknowledgment and parity within the colonial system.

The complex interplay between affirming one's identity and questioning the prevailing narrative through the adoption of cultural hybridity highlights the intricate methods by which individuals manage their cultural identities in response to external influences and limitations.

### Conclusion

The examination of cultural hybridity in "Bumi Manusia" uncovers an intricate fabric of identity negotiation among its protagonists, who epitomize the intricacies of residing between Indigenous and European cultures. Minke, Nyai Ontosoroh, and Annelis demonstrate the complex process of cultural hybridization by managing their diverse identities through language, clothing, food preferences, and careers. The linguistic adaptability and journalistic achievements of Minke, the skillful management of domestic and professional responsibilities across different cultures by Nyai Ontosoroh, and Annelis's successful blending of indigenous and European cultural traditions all demonstrate the endeavors of individuals to connect diverse societies. Their efforts signify more than just a means of survival in a colonial setting, but a purposeful and aware involvement with other cultural domains, demonstrating a wider pursuit of identity and a sense of belonging in a world characterized by cultural intersections.

The challenges faced by Minke and Nyai Ontosoroh, such as the rejection and contempt from Dutch individuals who consider their embrace of European culture as lacking authenticity or being inappropriate, highlight the constraints of cultural hybridity within the context of colonial power dynamics. The resistance highlights the persistent obstacles created by colonial ideology, which firmly separates cultural identities and upholds hierarchical divisions between the colonizer and the colonized. Dutch officers' prohibition on Annelis's shoes in court exemplifies colonial governance's control and differentiation strategies, symbolizing the project's goal of separating European colonizers from indigenous populations. Despite the challenges faced, the characters' determination to navigate and combine cultural customs demonstrates the power of cultural hybridity to bring about change. This challenges fixed ideas of identity and opens up new opportunities for comprehending and overcoming the effects of colonialism. Their experiences exemplify the enduring significance of cultural hybridity in current debates on globalization, multiculturalism, and postcolonial identity, highlighting the constant transformation of cultural identities in reaction to historical and global influences.

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