

THE SOCIAL POSITION AND TYPOLOGY OF MADURESE WOMEN IN MADURA FOLKTALES

Posisi Sosial dan Tipologi Perempuan Madura dalam Cerita Rakyat Madura

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Abstrak: Makalah ini bertujuan mengobservasi posisi wanita dalam kehidupan sosial masyarakat Madura dan meneliti tipologi wanita-wanita Madura pada tiga cerita rakyat Madura, yaitu *Aer Mata Ebu*, *Asal-Usul Pulau Madura*, dan *Aryo Menak dan Istrinya*. Untuk menganalisis posisi sosial dan tipologi wanita digunakan teori feminisnya Cixous. Untuk mengungkap aspek-aspek sosial yang mempengaruhi cerita rakyat tersebut digunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan etnografi. Ketiga cerita rakyat ini memiliki banyak kesamaan karena ketiganya menggambarkan perjuangan, keuletan, ketabahan, dan ketulusan wanita-wanita Madura. Dengan demikian, dengan menganalisis cerita-cerita rakyat ini, dapat diamati posisi sosial wanita-wanita Madura. Para wanita diposisikan sebagai makhluk suci dan terhormat. Berdasarkan analisis tersebut juga ditemukan tipologi wanita-wanita Madura yang tercermin dalam cerita rakyat tersebut, yaitu tulus, tabah, ulet, agamis, dan sufi.

Kata-Kata Kunci: feminisme, cerita-cerita rakyat Madura, tipologi

Abstract: The aim of this study is to observe the woman position in the social life in Madura and observes the typology of Madurese women on three Madura folktales, i.e. *Aer Mata Ebu*, *The Origin of Madura*, and *Aryo Menak and His Wife*. To analyze the social position and typology of women, this study uses the Cixous's theory of feminism. Qualitative method with ethnography approach is used to do this research. These three folktales have similarities, because all of these three folktales tell about the struggle, tough, firmness, sincere of Madurese women. Thus, by analyzing these folktales, the women social position in Madura can be observed. The women are considered as the holy creature that must be appreciated. From the analysis, several typologies of Madurese woman reflected in the folktales can also be identified, i.e. sincere, firmness, tough, religious, and sufism.

Key Words: feminism, Madura folktales, typology

INTRODUCTION

In traditional society, mostly the social position for women usually are being marginalized, they are suggested as “second class community” due to their lack in physical power and its cultural image. It is caused by the strong domination of man in many areas, like politics, economy, and social life. For example in Java in the past time, the duties for woman are only three M's (*macak* [making up], *masak* [cooking], *manak* [giving birth]) while, man can get

their high social position like becoming a leader in every areas including politics, economy, and social . In Europe, it is very difficult for a woman to be a writer because of her gender, such as Charlotte Bronte. She must change her real name because she does not want the publisher know that she is the woman, for the gender bias. Certainly, her work, like *Jane Eyre*, is high qualified and it tells the criticism to the imbalance of the social point of view toward the relationship between man and woman.

Thus, in Europe in the past time the woman marginalization in their roles also happened. In relation with such condition Showalter in Berthens (1992) states that the theme of literary works describes the “woman point of view” and “woman experience”. Since in the past time women are suggested as “an angel”, self-sacrifice. It means that the women images are created as “the hero” at home who are ready to take care and sacrifice themselves for the family happiness.

Woolf in Plain and Sellers said woman is ‘the most discussed animal in the universe’ (p.2). It means that woman is the unique creature with the unique stereotypes, because the women images will develop from time to time and it is also influenced by the culture. The next, this image becomes the stereotypes, and it has the negative effects. Thus, the woman stereotype is formed culturally but it is not formed naturally. Jehlen in Frank (1995) states that “gender is a matter of nurture and not nature”. The social position of woman who usually as “a second class citizen” is not caused by their fate, but because of the system which make the woman has the marginal and unlucky position. Their stereotypes are formed by the unfair treatments from the man, even like St. Thomas stated that woman is imperfect man. The negative stereotypes will make the woman become inferior in their social relationship, mainly with the man.

Madura is the island with the special characteristics which make them different with other cultures. Its culture is affected from Hinduism and mostly from Islam. Its long history, certainly will give an influence to the characteristics of madurese, including the social position of the madurese women, especially their spiritual life. Islam as the majority religion in Madura affects in all of social sides. All of their rites based on islamic teaching, like *mauludan*, *Idhul Adha ceremony*, *Nisfu sya’ban*, and other

Islamic ceremonies. The strong influence of Islamic teaching also gives the effect to the relationship of man and woman in Madura. The position of woman in Madura society, like in other traditional society is also being marginalized. In the traditional society, the social position tends to take a side to the patriarchy system. So that, the social position of woman will be inferior, it is also supported by the Arab proverb, “*thalib al-mawla mudzakar*” it means that the searcher of the God is the man. Because Madura is much influenced by Islamic teaching, this Arabic proverb gives the effect to the social relationship.

In Madura, the woman social position is reflected in their folktales, like *Aer Mata Ebu*, *The Origin of Madura*, and *Aryo Menak and His Wife*. Such three stories have many similarities, especially in their woman character role. The woman characters are self-sacrifice, they sacrifice themselves for others’ happiness, such as their husbands and son. The social values and also the local wisdom that can be caught from these folktales is short description of Madurese traditional society attitude toward the gender, especially their way of thought in relation with the gender. Besides, the folktales describes the social position and relationship; by analyzing them, the typologies of madurese women can be observed because, in these three folktales, the woman are the main characters.

THEORY

Cixous (1981) in Berthens (2001) states that “the inferior terms always associated with feminine, while the term that occupies the privileged position is associated with masculinity”(p.165). Thus, generally in the traditional society, the woman has the inferior position or is suggested as a second class citizen in line with the man. They will be the object and not the subject. Certainly,

they do not have the power. Therefore, they will become the victim of an unfair system. For example in the past time, the woman cannot continue their study at the higher level because there is an opinion that the woman's duty is only staying at home to take care of their husband and son. This negative view is formed by the cultural's view itself. Because the women culturally are considered as the weak creature who can do nothing, so that they were never given the proper social position and chance.

Selden (1992) states that man domination in social life is caused by the patriarchal system which has been developed since in the past time in the traditional society by giving the special right to the man. Then, Budianta (2000) defines patriarchal as a system that through its social, political, and economic order gives the priority and power to the man, thus directly or indirectly they will oppress or carry out the subordination to the woman. The patriarchal system in the society is very strong and it blocks the woman's potency. In other words, the patriarchy has the power to oppress the woman's roles in many areas, like economy, politics, and social. Furthermore, Berthens (2001) states that the gender problem is originated from the culture or subculture, and it will cause the negative cultural construction to the woman. For example, women are naturally timid, or sweet, or intuitive, or dependent, or self-pitying, on the other hand, the connotation of man are strength, rationality, stoicism, and self-reliance (p.98). Thus, the gender is constructed by the culture itself, but it is not naturally constructed. Like in some religions, God is represented by HE, so that the image of God is man, and it is the cultural construction. Another example, the man are always considered as the protector and the leader of the family, thus from their childhood they receive the special treatment, like

learning the martial arts, getting good education, and learning many things to prepare their future.

Meanwhile, Madura society which is much influenced by Islam has the different point of view related with the patriarchy. The relationship between man and woman cannot be separated with the religion values, because Madura society hold the Islamic religion tightly. Islam has become their root of life and it has been proven by the Islamic day celebration as their cultural tradition and also their way of life. In Madura traditional house, *taneyan lanjang*, it can find a small mosque, called *langgar or kobhung*. This place has two main functions, first it is for praying, secondly it is for accepting the male's guest. Madurese implement the Islamic teaching very well through its traditional culture, like the construction of their traditional house. *Taneyan Lanjang* as the product of Madurese local wisdom represents and describes the gender relationship in Madura. This house is a long formation from the west to the east, and always looks out to the south. The gate is only one and is placed in the east. This *Taneyan Lanjang* is built for women protection. Madurese woman must stay with his parents after her marriage, and she must live in *Taneyan Lanjang* so that, her parents can protect and control her. The structure of *Taneyan Lanjang* also symbolizes its protection, because in the tip of the west there is *Langgar or kobhung* (small building for moslem's praying functioned like the mosque). The *langgar* does not only use for praying but also use to accept the guess, especially male guess. Thus, its function also looks like a living room. The male guess is forbidden to get in the house directly, they must sit in *langgar or kobhung* to avoid the direct contact with the hostess. Therefore, it can be implied how far the Madurese appreciate the

women and protect them. The male guests are taboo to meet the hostess directly. Therefore, the male guest must wait in *langgar or kobhung* as the holy place to avoid the negative effect of the meeting between man and woman, especially in line with sexual relationship, so that man and woman can avoid the bad attitude, like adultery and so on. *Taneyan lanjang* also has only one gate in the east. It means that every people who come to the house can be identified and controlled easily.

The next, the position of Madurese women in social life is also reflected in the language that they use in daily communication. Kuntjara (2004) said that the language that they use is reflected their social life (p.101). In Madura, if the woman has been married and has a son or daughter, she will lose her name because, as the mother, they will be called using the name of their first son or daughter. Such as, if the name of her first son is *Agus*, she will be called *bu Agus*. Thus, although Madura society is much influenced by Islamic values, but they have their own uniqueness which make them different with other societies in Indonesia. By contrast, from the feminism point of view, it is suggested that Madurese women do not have the autonomous position because they have missed their right linguistically. It also can be called that their social position are weak and it shows that they do not have their independence as the human, they are controlled by the man and this control is formed by the culture.

For muslim, actually the position of man and woman are similar. There is no difference in social, political, and economic domain. Although they have the same position, they have different roles, and they must obey and appreciate their different roles each other. The holy Qur'an in An-Nisa's verse "The men is the leader of women" (v.34). Based on

Mulyadi, it means that the men must fulfill their wife's basic necessity like paying their daily expenses, protecting, and guiding them (<http://ern.pendis.kemenag.go.id/dokpdf/ern-III-01.pdf>). While, the women must keep themselves when their husband look for their basic necessity. They must take care the house and their sons. But, it is possible for the women to get a job and help their husband to fulfill their basic necessity. Siti Khodijah has proven herself as the successful businesswoman. Nevertheless, she still carry out her duty as the wife and mother for her sons. Or, in Indonesia there are several women who are active to empower the woman and society through the organization, like Nyi Walidah Ahmad Dahlan. She set up *Aisyiyah* that takes care of the social and education activities.

According to Dzuhayatin (2002), in Islam there is three qualifications as an ideal women, first they must have the political self-reliance (*al istiqlal as-siasah*). The woman with this type is Queen Bilqis who lived in prophet Solomon's era. She had the power as the leader of a kingdom. Another example is Fatimah Az-zahro who could build the *Fathimiyah* Chalipate in Egypt. Secondly, the economic self-reliance (*al-istiqlal al-istishadiy*). The muslim woman who has this economic independence is Siti khodijah. She was a successful merchant, and she was very rich. At last, the self-reliance to determine the personal's choice (*al-istiqlal al-syakshi*). The woman who has this self-reliance dared to express her idea and show their standpoint or vision in spite of the man or the husband's resistance. Like, Masyitoh who still kept her belief although the pharaoh threatened to boil her.

METHOD

This research uses qualitative method with ethnography approach. The

ethnography approach is chosen because the process of finding folktales is a kind of investigation and uses participant observation. The data are Madura folktales (*Aer Mata Ebu, the Origin of Madura*, and *Aryo Menak and His Wife*). The next, the data are analyzed through their social symbol and social function to get the message inside of these three Madura folktales.

DISCUSSION

According to the three Madura folktales, *Aer Mata Ebu, The Origin of Madura*, and *Aryo Menak and His Wife*, the women's typology including their social position in the society can be found. Their social position are created by the local wisdom that is as the real and original identity of Madurese, because the local wisdom, such as folktales, were born from the long process of social interaction and values. Its long process will color the life journey of the society while they face the modernization, even westernization. In this discussion it will be divided into three parts, first Syarifah Ambami sufism, secondly, Bendoro Gung's firmness, and the third is menak's wife sincerity. The discussion focuses to the struggle of the women characters in the story with their own characteristics and point of view.

Syarifah Ambami Sufism

The word sufism usually implies to the people who devote themselves to Allah Swt to get the "real happiness". It means that by devoting to Allah Swt they will gain the truth happiness which will be given by Allah Swt. Thus, according to Norhasan (2008), to gain its happiness, the sufism leaves the world life, because the world's life is perishable. Rabi'ah Al Adawiyah is one of sufism women. She can be the model of a sufism woman, because of her attitude and her devotion to Allah Swt. Then, the woman character in the story who is close to the sufism

characteristics is Syarifah Ambami. Perhaps, it is debatable to call Syarifah Ambami the sufism woman. However, several of her attitudes, behaviors, and her ways to be close with Allah Swt tend to be sufism woman. Many proofs can be used to observe her as the sufism woman. She is the woman who has a great obedience to the God, Allah Swt. Her characteristic is the one of sufism. The sufism tries to look for God by leaving all of the hedonism and the world's attractions. The sufism continually and simultaneously pray and give their soul only to Allah SWT. The sufism want to get the Ma'rifat, they feel as if Allah SWT will come and stay around them. Another example of sufism woman is Ummu Haram. She was involved the battle at the Utsman Chalipate era, and she was killed in that battle. Syarifah Ambami is the great woman with the great belief and the great firmness in Madura. She is also the moslem who always brings about the Islamic teaching.

Syarifah Ambami is the wife of Cakraningrat 1, the leader of Bangkalan. When, Sultan Agung came to Madura, he was interested with Cakraningrat 1 skill in the war, and he asked Cakraningrat 1 to marry with his daughter. Then, Cakraningrat 1 married with Sultan Agung daughter and spent his much time in Mataram and left her first wife, Syarifah in Madura. Syarifah lived alone in Madura, but she still kept her husband's honor. She continually prayed for her husband kindness, although her heart was injured. She was a patient wife. She tried to get closer to God by praying every time. In her pray, Syarifah expected to Allah Swt to give her great descents who would become the king of Madura. She prayed and expected her seven descents would be the leader or king in Madura.

Unluckily, after Cakraningrat 1 went home, and she told her praying, her

husband was angry, because her husband, Cakraningrat 1, did not want his seven descents but he wants all of his descents would be the king in Madura. He was angry and left Syarifah to back to Mataram again. Syarifah as the wife felt guilty very much. Then, she went to Arosbaya hill and left all of the beauty of the world to be the sufism woman. She prayed on the top of the hill for years. She begged to Allah Swt for her husband and her sons happiness in their life. While she was praying, she cried and dropped her tears. Everyday she prayed and cried till she was passed away. To remind her kindness, sufism, firmness, and struggle, she was buried on the top of the hill in Arosbaya. Today her cemetery is called Aer Mata cemetery. The word "Aer Mata" means tears, this name refers to the way of Syarifah Ambami praying. Because she cries while she prays to Allah SWT until she is passed away. Therefore to commemorate her highest spiritual achievement and holiness, such event is given as a name of her cemetery.

Her cemetery which took place on the top of the hill shows her highest position in her spiritual level. She is considered as the sufism woman who devoted and sacrificed her life for her husband and son's happiness. She is suggested as the holy woman. Therefore, she must be appreciated by buried on the top of the hill. Like the King and other royal families, or Wali, all of them are the people who has the high social position. Thus, after they passed away, they still put on the high place, like the position when they still live in the world. Today, her cemetery is visited by many people from entire of Madura, even from the outside of Madura. Her cemetery is considered as a sacred place, because of her religious level as a sufism woman.

From the story above, it can be found that Syarifah Ambami is the woman that can be used as the model for

other Madurese women today. She was an independent woman, who could do everything alone including to take care her sons. She educated her sons, while her husband was in another area. In addition, Syarifah was also a strong, resolved, and patient woman. She struggled, even sacrificed herself to gain and to realize her husband aim. As the faithful woman, she tried to be patient when she faced her husband attitude. She told her burden only to Allah Swt, she believed that Allah Swt would help her to overcome her problems. She is the ideal combination of the aristocratic woman (she is the lady of Madura's king), great wife, kind mother, and the sufism woman.

Bendoro Gung's Firmness

Bendoro Gung is the daughter of Majapahit king, but she was chased away from the kingdom because she was pregnant without husband. She went to Madura and sent her baby in there. Due to her journey to cross the Madura strait before her childbirth, she gave her baby named Raden Sagoro. The meaning of sagoro is "sea". This name was given to commemorate her struggle to save her baby after her father chased her away from the kingdom, even her father would kill her. After delivering a baby, she lived alone and took care her baby alone in the dry land. Nowadays this dryland is called Madura. Her hard struggle had formed her characteristics becoming the tough and firmness woman. She must feed her child, educate, and face many dangerous things and situation in such dry land. Although she was a woman, she never gave up to the condition.

One day she heard that her father, the King of Majapahit, Kertarajasa Jayawardhana, got the severe illness. When, she knew her father condition, she felt pity. She was a holy woman, she did not have the hard feeling to her father who had injured her heart. It was

proved when she delegated her son, Raden Sagoro to go to Majapahit and cured her grand father. Sagoro had grown to a handsome, brave, and valiant young man. He was a kind young man, and he always reminded his mother message to help every people who need him. Bendoro Gung was a great woman with a great attitude. She always helped other people, although that people had tortured her. Finally, Raden Sagoro came to Majapahit and he successfully cured his grand father. The King was very glad because he could heal from his sickness. Thus, the king wanted to give the reward to Sagoro who had cured him. At last, the king knew that Sagoro was Bendoro Gung's son. He felt guilty and asked Sagoro and Bendoro Gung to stay in the palace. However, Bendoro Gung rejected to stay in the palace. She returned to Madura with Raden Sagoro because she felt that her duty to develop Madura to be a comfortable and prosperous place had not finished yet.

From the story above, it can be observed the characteristics of the Madurese woman based on the folktale, The Origin of Madura. Bendoro Gung as the representative of the indigenous Madurese woman has many sublime characteristics which differ from other people. She is the firmness and tough woman, because as the single parent, she must bring her son up alone in the dry and isolated island. The result, she can guide her son to be the kind and sacred young man. Bendoro Gung shows her great effort as the great mother by giving right life guidance to her son, so that her son becoming the young man who appreciate the older people, although that people has made his mother's life in a poor condition in the past time. Therefore, Bendoro Gung, as a tough and firmness woman and mother, always struggle to get success in her life despite many challenges. Furthermore, Bendoro Gung is a sincere woman because she

always help the people who need her help, although such people had hurted her, like her father who wanted to kill her in the past time. Bendoro Gung is also the woman with the strong principle, because she chooses not to stay in the beautiful palace with the luxurious facilities, but she chooses return to Madura, the dry and hot island in order to develop and make Madura be a better and prosperous place.

Aryo Menak's Wife Sincerity

The other madura folktales that describe the characteristics of Madurese woman is Aryo Menak and His Wife. This folktale tells about the effort of Aryo Menak to get his wife by stealing the angel's shawl. He stole the shawl while the angels taking a bath in the pond. Then, he took one of the angel's shawl. When, other angels could fly and returned to the paradise, one angel could not back, because she, lost her shawl. The left angel then, became Aryo Menak's wife because she cannot back to the paradise. The shawl that is stolen by Aryo Menak is as the medium to fly and back to the paradise, so that without the shawl, it is impossible for The Angel to come back to her place together with her friends.

At the beginning of their life, they live in happiness, the angel is the loyal and sincere wife. She obeys all of her husband's suggestions and instructions. She always tries to make her husband happy by serving his husband well. She cooks the delicious rice and other foods for her husband. By her magical power, she never touch the rice and other foods which are available in the barn. Thus, Aryo Menak can enjoy the delicious food everyday without lack of his property. His wife only needs a single seed of rice to make all of delicious foods by her magical power. But, she always tells to Aryo Menak not to look at her way of cooking, even disclose the

cooking pan. Unfortunately, Aryo Menak breaks the rule. Due to his curiosity, he peeps at her wife while she is cooking in the kitchen. The secret is opened and everything has changed. The Angel, Aryo Menak's wife can not use her magical power anymore. Consequently, time by time the rice stock in the barn less and less until the base of the barn can be seen. Unluckily, the angel, Menak's wife finds her shawl, then, she takes the shawl and backs to the paradise. Menak's regrets her behavior and attitude.

From the story above, it can be concluded that the angel is a sincere and loyal wife, although she knows that Aryo Menak is the people who steal her shawl, but she is still loyal and obeys her husband. As a wife she tries to make her husband happy by making him the best food using her magical power. But, her sincerity and loyalty is abused by her husband. Because of such abusing, she leaves her husband. Her leaving of husband is not influenced by her hatred or she does not love her husband anymore, but it is because her awareness of fate. She awares that her fate is as an angel, so that she must return to the paradise to do her job as an angel in the paradise. She awares that it is impossible for her to live in the earth and marries with the ordinary people, because she is an angel. Thus, with the bitter heart, she returns to the paradise to undergo the other noble duties. As the woman she is the sincere and loyal wife, she is obedient wife who always obeys to her husband instruction, but as the angel she must carry out her duties in the paradise.

CONCLUSION

The folktales as a local genius usually reflects the identity of Madurese including their characteristics. Although such typologies are not appropriately valid, but at least the characteristics which are described in the folktales can

be used to predict the characteristics of Madurese women generally. These three folktales *Aer Mata Ebu*, *The Origin of Madura*, and *Aryo Menak and His Wife* represent the description of Madurese women typologies in general because such three folktales are originated from the society. By analyzing all of three stories above, it also can be observed how the social position of Madurese Women. In Madura, the women have the special social position, because of the influence of Islamic religion. The woman must be appreciated, because they will be the mother. The description of mother which is reflected in Madura folktales, like in *Aer Mata Ebu* and *The Origin of Madura* places on the high position. The mother are sincere, tough, firmness, brave, high and hard struggle in life, good educator and guidance. While, in *Aryo Menak* story, the woman as wife is described as the sincere woman who serve her husband and always want to make her husband life happy.

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