Female Representation in *Legenda Tangkuban Perahu*: A Transitivity Analysis

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Abstract: Legends and folktales are inherent in every culture as it is one of the ways to impart wisdom and the ways of life to the younger generation. One of the issues that seem to be present in these stories is gender representation. This paper attempts to examine the representation of female in a popular legend from West Java, *Legenda Tangkuban Perahu*. This study applies the mixed method approach that combines the quantitative and qualitative approach to analyze the processes and the participant roles connected to the portrayal of the female character in the story using the Transitivity System and Participant Roles theories. The finding suggests that despite having been assigned to active participant roles, the main female character is still represented as passive in the story and thus establishes the view of a more traditional gender role in the society, a finding which is quite different from a previous study done on female characters archetype in Indonesian folklores. The result of this present study is believed to be the ground for developing the younger generation's understanding and establishment of our traditional culture and helps to build the sustainable development goals in terms of gender and intergenerational issues.

1 INTRODUCTION

Folklores have been around for centuries and are considered an innate part of every culture. Defined as "customs, superstitions and sayings of the people" (Thomas, 1846, in Gilbas, 2018, p. 57), folklores hold cultural values and beliefs of a certain culture, making them unique to the cultures where they belong. Legends and myths are two genres of folklores that Gilbas (2018) considers as "effective vehicles in explaining and/or validating the nature of an individual in relation to his ethnic group" (p. 57) since they capture and illustrate the traditions of the people in a certain place at a certain time.

There are numerous legends and myths in Indonesia, being a country which is culturally diverse. Each culture has its own legends and tales of old, some are popular, and some are known only to the people in the particular culture. One of the most well-known legends in Indonesia comes from the Province of West Java; it tells the lore of creation of Mount Tangkuban Perahu in the northern part of Bandung, the provincial capital City of West Java. The legend revolves around a young man named Sangkuriang, who accidentally created the mount when he, out of anger, kicked the boat he was making until it flew away and fell upside down in the northern part of Bandung. As Sangkuriang was a man of magic, the boat then transformed into a mount; hence the name "*Tangkuban Perahu*" (in English, literally, "upside-down boat"). This legend has been very popular and has been adapted into a live-action television series in the early 1990s (Supriadi, 2012).

Despite its popularity, the legend of Mount Tangkuban Perahu does not seem to be an interesting source of data for many literature and linguistics researchers as is shown by the sparse number of academic articles written about it. From the literature

perspective, the research subject is quite limited to analyzing the moral value of the story (Supriadi, 2012; Sofa, 2020), while some analyses in the linguistic perspective include the analysis of affixes (Pauzan, 2016) and lexical error in translation (Andre & Jurianto, 2015). When the characters are discussed, Sangkuriang—the main male character—seemed to be the focus of attention. There are even articles about him from the perspective of visual communications (e.g., Iskandar & Nurusholih, 2019; Woelandhary, 2019).

On the other hand, there is rarely any mention of the main female character, Dayang Sumbi, in any published scholarly articles in spite of her importance in driving the plot of the story. It is believed that without this character, most of the events in the story would not have unfolded at all. This being said, nonetheless, a study by Rosliana (2013) has attempted to examine the archetype of the main female characters in three Indonesian folklores, namely *Legenda Tangkuban Perahu*, *Nawang Wulan*, and *Bawang Merah dan Bawang Putih*. The research leans towards the psychological approach of literary interpretation, basing the portrayal of the female characters on Jung's five classifications of female archetypes in a narrative. The result of this study shows that compared to the female characters in Western folklores, the three female characters analyzed here (i.e., Dayang Sumbi, Nawang Wulan and Bawang Putih) are shown to have more agency and are more assertive.

In this present study, our aim is to examine whether one of the female characters used in Rosliana's study is truly portrayed as more assertive and active by focusing only on its representation in its original culture without comparing it with different cultures as we believe that it may have a different result.

Hall (1997) suggests that representation is not absolute; it depends on the way the producer of the text creates meaning for them through language. This creation of meaning can be observed through the participant's involvement with experiences around them (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). There are two types of experience; the 'outer' and 'inner'. Outer experiences include processes like: (1) material process, the process of physically doing something; (2) mental process, which involves the participant's feeling, thought, and perception; (3) behavioral process, the combination between material and mental processes; and (4) verbal process, which involves the use of language to symbolically signing. On the other hand, inner experience is realized through the existential process, which simply states

the (non-)existence of something, and the relational process—the process of assigning a quality and/or identity to the participant(s).

Aside from observing the processes, Toolan (1998) mentions that the role of the participant(s) in the clauses can also reveal how they are represented in a text; especially the participants in the material processes. For this purpose, he creates a further classification of the doer and done-to participants (termed 'actor' and 'goal' in Halliday's (1990) categorization). A human actor can be classified into an 'agent'—a human participant who intentionally does an action—and a 'medium-initiator' (medium-i), a human participant who initiate the process volitionally. Meanwhile, a human 'goal' may be the 'recipient' of an action or the 'medium-target' (medium-t), the human target of the process. By nature, the agent is considered the most powerful in the human participant category, and the medium-t is the least powerful.

2 METHODS

In order to obtain the most comprehensive representation of the female character, this research uses the mixed method research design, a method combining into a single study the techniques and methods of both qualitative and quantitative research (Creswell, 2014). This type of methodology has been widely used nowadays in linguistics research—especially in the field of Corpus Linguistics. Corpus linguistics is usually associated with the quantitative analysis of a large number of data, and it generally uses a computer software as a tool for data collection (Biber & Repen, 2015; Yuliawati, 2018). In this research, the quantitative analysis has the role of providing more comprehensive and accurate data before they are interpreted further using other linguistic tools, which is the qualitative analysis part of the research. This method of analysis is in accordance to McEnery and Hardie's (2012) opinion about the nature of corpus-based approach which sees the corpus as a source of empirical data to give model of language through the application of other linguistics theory.

The source of data, the *Legend of Tangkuban Perahu* story, is taken from a public domain on the internet, with the size of a total of 993 token—the total words in a corpus (Cheng, 2012). This corpus is considered a specialized corpus (Cheng, 2012) as it is only aimed to represent a particular kind of language and thus is homogeneous and smaller in size. The collection of data uses the help of the corpus software

AntConc, with which the data is sorted through the module of concord in two ways: (1) by the span of five words to the left and right of the node, i.e., the search word, and (2) by clause boundaries. The concordance analysis helps to examine the word(s) in question in its own textual environment and context of sentence (Sinclair, 1991).

After the data are collected using the software, they are then categorized into the different processes types based on the Transitivity System in Systemic Functional Linguistics. This process of categorization uses the descriptive qualitative approach, one of which characteristics is the interpretation of data by applying the researcher's own perceptions and conceptual orientation regarding the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Having been assigned to its respective process types in the initial step of data identification, the participants of the clauses are categorized into their roles in Toolan's participant role categorization ranked by the degree of active before being interpreted qualitatively to find the representation of the main female character of this story.

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

There are a total of 176 clauses in the text. Nevertheless, only clauses relating to Dayang Sumbi are analyzed in this research. The concordance analysis using several nodes as the main search word ("Dayang Sumbi", "*ia*", "*nya*", "*dia*") finds 65 clauses in which Dayang Sumbi is the participant, both as the subject and object of the clauses. This number is quite insignificant compared to the total number of clauses in the story (only 36.93% of the whole text). The majority of the clauses in the text focuses on the main male character, Sangkuriang, and other minor characters, for instance, Dayang Sumbi's father the king. At a glance, the imbalance seems to bear no weight; especially because Sangkuriang is considered the main hero of the story and thus warrants him a more thorough description. However, as has been mentioned before, Dayang Sumbi's role as the propeller of the story plot is very crucial in the story. Hence, by only assigning a small proportion of the text to portray her, it shows that Dayang Sumbi is not seen as an important character in the story. This finding is not out of the ordinary; on the contrary, it is in accordance to previous studies which have shown that female characters are often marginalized and given inadequate representation in literature (e.g., Barry, 1995; Lippa, 2002, among others).

Table 1: Process types and occurrences.

Process Type	Number of Occurrences
Material	31
Mental:	
- Affective	7
- Cognitive	2
- Perceptive	4
Behavioral	2
Verbal	13
Existential	1
Relational:	
- Attributive	4
- Identifying	1

From the classifications of the 65 clauses into their process types as can be seen from Table 1 above, we can see that the material process is the most dominant process of all with the percentage of occurrence of 47.69%. Material process is the process that is concerned with physical activities, like running, eating, and reading. Based on this finding without taking into account the rest of the text, it can be drawn that this story wants to put an emphasis on the actions of its participants, or in other words what the participants do. This is in line with Eggins' (2004) opinion which states that a text with a lot of material processes wants to focus on physical events involving the participants. In this case, it can be said that the writer of the legend wants to focus on the physical activities done by Dayang Sumbi, thus making her represented as an active character. Conversely, as the clauses belong to a larger text, it is impossible to disregard all the other clauses in the text completely. When compared to the clauses in which Sangkuriang and other characters are the main participants of the material process type, the percentage drops steeply from around 40% to only about 18%. As a result, Dayang Sumbi cannot be determined as an active character who does a lot of physical actions in the story. Again, this is not something that is unusual in the work of literature as female characters are oftentimes portrayed as passive and submissive (Holt, n.d.).

The representation of Dayang Sumbi in this story is also revealed through the analysis of her participant role in the clauses. Due to space constraint, this research only focuses on Dayang Sumbi's role as a participant in the clauses which process type is material. Table 2 shows that Dayang Sumbi appears in all four categories of human participant roles based on Toolan's classifications. There are 19 instances where she appears as the agent, that is the human participant who deliberately initiate a physical action (Toolan, 1998). This means that in isolation from the larger context, Dayang Sumbi is seen as a character

who is in control and domineering; she is active and powerful. Still, from the perspective of the whole text, the agentive role of Dayang Sumbi is comparatively lower than her counterpart, Sangkuriang—the main male character.

In addition to analyzing the most dominant process, the representation of Dayang Sumbi can also be observed through assigning the role she has in the clauses, especially the clauses with material process. Toolan's classification proposes four different human participant roles in this process type, in which the 'agent' is considered the most active as it refers to the person who does an action intentionally while the 'medium-t' is seen as the least powerful done-to participant (in other words, the person to whom an action is directed). The result of the categorization suggests that Dayang Sumbi is an active character, seeing that her role as an agent of a clause occur the most frequently, as can be observed from Table 2 below. Yet, from the perspective of the whole text, the agentive role of Dayang Sumbi in the story is low compared to Sangkuriang, the male character.

Table 2: Occurrence of participant roles in material process.

Participant Role	Number of Occurrences
Agent	19
Medium-i	3
Recipient	1
Medium-t	8

Further, Dayang Sumbi's representation is established by the action verbs found in the 19 clauses which she is the agent of. The analysis of collocation shows that the word that collocates with Dayang Sumbi and other pronouns relating to her character is the lemma *makan* (in English, 'eat'); this word and its variations (*makan, memakannya, dimakan*) appear four times while other verbs appear only once. As eating is a basic human need, it can be considered into a necessity; not something that requires one's physical fitness or effort. Therefore, it is a neutral word which cannot add to either the negative or positive representation of Dayang Sumbi.

The other verbs, nevertheless, show that Dayang Sumbi embodies the stereotypes of women: submissive, emotional, and a homemaker (Datesman, Crandall, & Kearny, 2014). Most of her actions in the clauses are related to things that women traditionally do—weaving ('*menenun*'), cooking (*masak*), giving birth (*melahirkan*) and even combing her lover's hair (*menyisir*). Looking at the verbs used to represent Dayang Sumbi, it can be concluded that in spite of the high percentage of her agency status in the material type clauses, the actions assigned to her are those which conform to traditional portrayal of women: a domestic character whose works are restricted to house chores.

In a previous research regarding the role of women in this legend, it is mentioned that Dayang Sumbi is considered as an active character due to the fact that she "passes […] moral and […] social value to her son" (Rosliana, 2013, p. 26). However, it is of our opinion that her activeness in this event only further establishes the fact that Dayang Sumbi is represented to be a traditional woman who is expected to manage their household and rear children (Stralton, 1990, by Peter, 2010). This shows that Dayang Sumbi is indeed active and assertive, but she is only portrayed as so in what has always been considered as a female domain, i.e., around the house.

4 CONCLUSIONS

There are two things that can be drawn from the analysis above. When analyzed exclusively, the character of Dayang Sumbi can be established as an active character—the high occurrence of her participant role as an agent proves so. However, when the whole text is taken into account, this activeness and dominance is paled in comparison to the representation of the male character. Moreover, Dayang Sumbi in the story is only shown to be active in the domestic setting of the house; she does things that are typical to women's activities and leaves the more active works of doing activities outside the house to the male characters. This leads us to believe that the writer wants to represent Dayang Sumbi as a traditional woman who abides to what the society expects from her. In a nutshell, it is believed that in terms of representation, Dayang Sumbi is a passive, powerless character.

Nevertheless, this conclusion is based on the analysis of only specific aspects of the text. There are details that are overlooked due to the space and time constraint in which this research is done and therefore we cannot claim any generalization of the result. We believe that the use of a different theory or approach may be useful to arrive to a more comprehensive and general conclusion. Moreover, it is also suggested to compare the different versions of the legends as it can help in determining whether the female character of the story is always represented traditionally.

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