

Reflection on the Role of Women in Banyumas Folklore: How Can It be Reconstructed in Gendered Literary Education?

Meina Febriani*, Agus Nuryatin, Teguh Supriyanto, dan Hari Bakti Mardikantoro

Universitas Negeri Semarang, Indonesia

*Corresponding Author: meinafebri@mail.unnes.ac.id

Abstract. Banyumas folklore is a cultural heritage which contains the values, norms and understanding of the local community. However, the role of women in folklore is often trapped in gender stereotypes and subordination which limit their potential. Through the use of feminist theory and a critical approach, this article discusses the importance of criticizing the representation of women in Banyumas folklore and how literary education can be a medium to build awareness of gender equality. This article has two objectives: (1) to examine the role of women in Banyumas folklore and (2) how their representation can be reconstructed in literary education with gender perspective. A qualitative approach was carried out with the artifacts of the Banyumas folklore which becomes the important data in this study. This article has two important points. First, exploring the role of women in Banyumas folklore involving women characters and identifying their depictions. This role can be seen from a domestic and public perspective which has implications for the active and passive roles of women figures. Second, reconstructing the role of women in Banyumas folklore to make it more inclusive and promote gender equality. There are four reconstruction strategies: (1) strengthening the role of women characters, (2) changing the central point of perspective of women characters, (3) changing gender stereotypes in the substance of the story, and (4) using gender-inclusive language. In addition, this research also contributes to the construction of a gender perspective literary education strategy that can expand the role and contribution of women in Banyumas folklore.

Keywords: women; Banyumas folklore; literary education; gender perspective; reconstruction.

INTRODUCTION

Folklore is a valuable cultural heritage that reflects local wisdom in the form of community identity and values (Supriyanto, 2021). In Indonesia, folklore has its own wealth and uniqueness, one of which is the Banyumas folklore which is part of the Javanese subculture. Banyumas folktales have become an important part of the oral literary heritage inherited from generation to generation. In the process of appreciating folklore, there are cultural values which are enculturated in social life. One of the values of life that is represented is the concept of gender equality which applies in society (Wang, 2020).

The role of women in folklore is often stereotypical and limited. This reflects patriarchal views and gender inequality that is still inherent in society (Rokhmansyah, et al., 2023). For instance, when women only appear as objects that must be protected or become the cause of conflict in the story, while men are the main characters who take the initiative and solve problems. Women are also often associated with domestic roles, such as being a faithful wife, a loving mother, or an obedient servant. On the other hand,

men are often described as strong heroes, brave leaders, or brave warriors (Hosseinpour & Afghari, 2016).

The perspective and the partiality which focus on narrative are crucial parts in gender projection of folklore. A woman as a mother who chooses to genuinely care for and educate her child does not necessarily represent gender inequality (Adukia, dkk., 2021). This is similar with the statement when a women who works in the public sector, it does not mean that they are trapped in the patriarchal environment. It is because an in-depth feminist study is needed to find out the reflection of the role of women.

Folklore has changed its role from a cultural product which records the ideology, values and attitudes of society to be oriented towards educational goals. This is accordance with the opinion of Citraningtyas (2010, 2013), states that there has been a shift from *dulce et utile* in the context of literary education (Horace in Teeuw, 2017), to be *utile et dulce*. In this context, the exchange of concepts emphasizes that literature must not forget its neutrality. In education field, the factors of benefit and education are essential (Febriani, dkk., 2023).

Banyumas folklore cannot be separated from the reflection on the role of women in its narrative. In the Banyumas folklore which has

been spread, women often only appear as passive characters, limited domestic roles or as objects of love, and they are rarely given an active role in dealing with conflicts and challenges. Indirectly, it has an impact on the image of norms which are not gender inclusive in social life.

Literary education is the right medium to introduce folklore to the public and help them to understand its cultural values (Widianti, dkk., 2017). However, the point of view of the folklore narrative, which is gender imbalance, certainly causes anxiety. Moreover, folklore is part of the enculturation of community-based character education. In the concept of literary education with a gender perspective, there needs to be critical reflection on the role of women in Banyumas folklore. Reconstruction of the narrative and representation of women in the folklore is needed to reflect gender equality and representation.

In this regard, previously Sawden (2015), Setiawan, et al (2016), Putra (2018), Qur'ani (2021), Syam & Aris (2021), have conducted research on folklore with gender perspective. In this context, folklore does not only act as a mere cultural product and has not yet manifested itself as teaching material in literary education. Gender values in folklore are projected as marks of social interaction in social life. In this context, literature is not considered as merely an imaginative work, but more than that, literary artefacts are actually cultural products in a mimetic context. However, specific discussions regarding the role of women and how to reconstruct folklore have not been discussed in these studies.

The purpose of this article is to explain the importance of reflecting on the role of women in Banyumas folklore and how its reconstruction can be implemented in literary education with gender perspective. Through a deeper understanding of women role in Banyumas folklore, it is hoped that literary education can become an inclusive and emancipatory tool that encourages gender awareness and a broader understanding of equality and justice (Lee, 2014).

In this article, an analysis is carried out on several representatives of Banyumas folklore, namely "*Babad Baturraden dan Tragedi Sabtu Paing*" by looking at the role of women in the narrative and how they are constructed in social and cultural relations. Furthermore, Banyumas folklore is reconstructed into folklore with a gender perspective to be utilized in an educational context. There are two main substances in this article, namely: (1) reflection on the role of

women of Banyumas folklore and (2) reconstruction of Banyumas folklore with gender perspective.

METHOD

A qualitative approach through content analysis of literary artifacts (Banyumas folklore) based on the theory of sociology of literature, particularly feminism, is used in this research. Researchers would go directly to the object of the research (the content of folklore) (see Rohidi, 2012; Marshall & Rossman, 2006). The phenomenological design is applied by oriented to the content of the Banyumas folklore (*Babad Baturraden dan Tragedi Sabtu Paing*). Purposively, the researchers focus on the phenomenon of the role of the women in folklore. The material object of this research of the Banyumas folklore (*Babad Baturraden dan Tragedi Sabtu Paing*). While the formal object is the role of women and the reconstruction of folklore. The perspective of the research is based on the sociology of literature, namely the study of feminism.

The research data was collected through document analysis technique, namely by collecting the primary and secondary data about the role of women in Banyumas folklore (*Babad Baturraden dan Tragedi Sabtu Paing*) based on the written sources related to the research object. After being collected, the data were carefully analyzed by using a literary sociology approach, particularly feminist literary criticism. This method is used to analyze the data on the aspects of gender inequality, particularly aspects of the role of female leaders in a society that adheres to patriarchal view and negative stigma against women. This research was conducted through the following steps: (a) collecting the data in the form of words, sentences, denotative and connotative expressions related to characters' nature, emancipation, and women's struggles, (b) analysis of women's roles, (c) synthesis, and (d) verification (Miles & Huberman, 2005).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, there are two essential substances, namely: (1) reflection on the role of women in Banyumas folklore and (2) reconstruction of Banyumas folklore with gender perspective.

Reflection on the Role of Women in Banyumas Folklore

Folklore has become an inseparable part of the culture and heritage of a society. In every folktale, there is a reflection of the role of women which is interesting to be explored. Through narratives which rich of symbolism and local wisdom, folklore often describes women with important and powerful roles. Folklore as a valuable cultural heritage, including Banyumas folklore, has a substantial role for women in telling it. The role of women in Banyumas folklore has unique aspect and can provide insight into gender roles in traditional society.

The role of women in Banyumas folklore has diversity and complexity which reflects the values and social norms in Banyumas society. The role of women in Banyumas folklore can be classified based on their participation, including: (1) Banyumas folklore which represents the role of women in passive stereotypes such as waiting for rescue and (2) the role of women as passive figures in Banyumas folklore.

First, the role of women as active character in folklore is a representation of women's strength, intelligence, courage, ability to overcome challenges and change destiny, and play an important role in influencing the storyline. In Indonesian folklore, the active role of women characters is rarely portrayed as a hero who advances on the battlefield carrying weapons and fighting mightily. The character of a heroic woman is more portrayed with gentleness but full of resistance. For instance, the character of Timun Emas who is fighting a giant. Through his ingenuity, Timun Emas finally succeeded in defeating the giant without using physical resistance. On the other hand, there is also the character of Dewi Sri in Javanese folklore, who is the goddess of the harvest and symbolizes fertility. He is described as a strong character, has special skills, and plays an important role in providing life and abundance for the community (Nafiyah & Mardikantoro, 2016).

In addition to the protagonist character, the folklore also presents an antagonist who is the opponent of the protagonist and it is considered as an obstacle in achieving the goal which the main character wants (Dewi & Kamayana, 2021). For instance, the character Calon Arang and Bawang Merah are described as antagonists. Although as an antagonist, this woman's role shows that women can also have significant power and influence in the story. What about Banyumas folklore?

In the story of *Babad Baturraden*, there is a character "Raden" who is told as a beautiful and

rich daughter of the Duke of Kutaliman. One day, the Adipati's daughter got stuck in a bush. Apparently, there was a young man who saved him. The young man worked as a horse caretaker (read: *batur gamel*) who was the Duke of Kutaliman's servant. As time went on, the princess and *gamel* fell in love and decided to get married. The Duke of Kutaliman was furious and did not allow the marriage on grounds of unequal strata.

In the folklore of *Babad Baturraden*, the princess showed her activeness in the form of rebellion to leave the house and marry the young man of *batur gamel*, her life choice. They lived on the slopes of Mount Slamet which was eventually named as Baturraden area. The daughter's action to fight against social strata discrimination is a representation of the liveliness carried out by women characters.

Second, the role of women as passive figures in Banyumas folklore. The representation of passivity of women characters refer to the way of women characters which are presented in literary works or narratives as characters who are less active, so that they have small influence. The passive women characters are often presented as objects in stories, if it is compared to the subjects who have strength and willingness. They may only appear in the story as decoration or to fulfil the male character's narrative needs. They often do not have a significant role in making decisions, dealing with conflicts, or contributing to the plot of the story. The representation of the passivity of the women characters in literature can reflect a patriarchal view in society in which women are considered weaker, less empowered, or unable to take an active role in their lives. This can reinforce gender stereotypes and ignore the potential, desires and power that women have in real life.

In the folklore *Tragedi Sabtu Paing*, there is a woman character, namely Rara Sukartiyah. The character was represented as a passive character in dealing with conflict, resulting in a major event, namely the murder of Adipati Wargautama I (King of Banyumas, father of Rara Sukartiyah) by Sultan Pajang's envoy, who is Rara Sukartiyah's husband. Before marrying King Pajang, Rara Sukartiyah had been "unregistered married" with the son of Toyareka (from Purbalingga). However, they divorced before "getting together" (fornicate). Without asking for confirmation from Rara Sukartiyah, Raja Pajang asked gandek I (bodyguard I) to kill Adipati Warga Utama I. After gandek I went to carry out

the order, King Pajang confirmed Rara Sukartiya and she was still in a holy state when married the King Pajang. Therefore, King Pajang then ordered gandek II (bodyguard II) to clarify, so that gandek I did not kill Adipati Warga Utama I. Unfortunately, the murder had already happened (Priyadi, 2001; Febriani, et al., 2023). As a woman who played an active role, there is a great opportunity for Rara Sukartiyah to manifest to her husband (Sultan Pajang) before the incident occurred, as an anticipation. Unfortunately, the fact does not like what is expected.

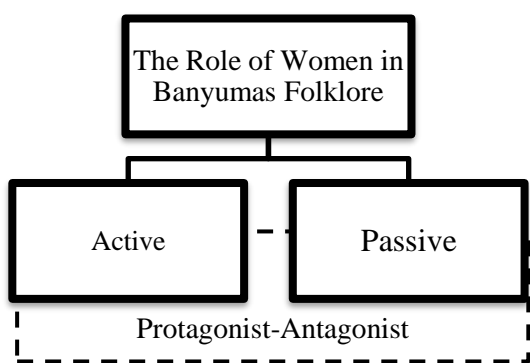


Figure 1. Classification Chart of The Role of Women in Banyumas Folklore

Reconstruction of Banyumas Folklore with a Gender Perspective

Reconstruction of Banyumas folklore with a gender perspective is an important approach in updating and reconstructing traditional narratives to reflect a stronger, empowered and relevant role for women. In Banyumas folklore, women are often presented with limited role and they are seen as passive objects or recipients of the actions of male characters. Reconstruction of folklore with a gender perspective allows us to review these stories, explore the potential of women in narratives, and create representations that are more inclusive and strengthen women's roles in stories (Setiawanti, 2014; Setyaningsih, dkk., 2020).

In folklore, women who are shown as active, empowered and directly involved in story events are very important in helping to shift traditional views that might limit women's roles to only passive characters or objects in the story (Setyaningsih, dkk., 2018). By presenting women as active figures, folklore provides examples and inspiration for women in real life to take initiatives, overcome challenges and achieve success.

There are four strategies of reconstruction in Banyumas folklore with a gender perspective. It

is hoped that the reconstructed folklore can be used as a learning resource in the literary education context. The four strategies include: (1) strengthening the role of women characters, (2) changing the central point of view of women characters, (3) changing gender stereotypes in the substance of the story, and (4) using gender-inclusive language.

The first strategy is strengthening the role of women characters. One of the solutions is to reconstruct Banyumas folklore, namely by giving an active and influential role to women characters. The women characters can be presented as heroes who have strength, intelligence, and independence in facing challenges and achieving their goals. In addition, the reconstruction of folklore with a gender perspective involves expanding the role of women in the story. They are not only described as domestic roles or romantic love, but they can also become other characters such as influential leaders, strategists, or warriors women in society. It reflects the diversity of potentials and roles that women can implement in their real life (Latifi, 2016).

The second strategy is by changing the central point of view on women characters. This strategy can be conducted by finding out the perspectives of women in stories. In addition, it can also be carrying out by exploring women's perspectives and experiences. There are many folklore in which the role of women is often displaced or marginalized. Therefore, in implementing this solution, namely by exploring stories based on women's perspectives, the deeper dimensions of their experiences, thoughts and emotions can be explored.

The third strategy is changing gender stereotypes in the substance of the story. This purpose of this strategy is as an attempt to avoid stereotypes that restrict the role of women in the folklore. So, to overcome this problem, we can create other women characters who are diverse, both in terms of their personalities, skills and aspirations. Besides, we also can consider other aspect, namely how the story is told. To make it different, the solution is by avoiding understanding in strengthening the role of women that only delimits in the context of the household or becomes supporting roles. In addition, other aspect such as the plot should give opportunities for women to be role characters as strong, empowering and have opportunities to take initiative than other characters in the story.

Lastly, the fourth strategy that can be

implemented is using gender-inclusive language. The language which is used in folklore really pays attention to the choice of words and narration. It aims to reconstruct the story. It is conducted by choosing words and phrases, which does not reinforce gender stereotypes or discrimination. It is important

to be applied because it can respect women and reinforce their role to be active, strong and influential characters. The following is a description of a systematic chart (Figure 2) regarding the strategy reconstruction of Banyumas folklore.

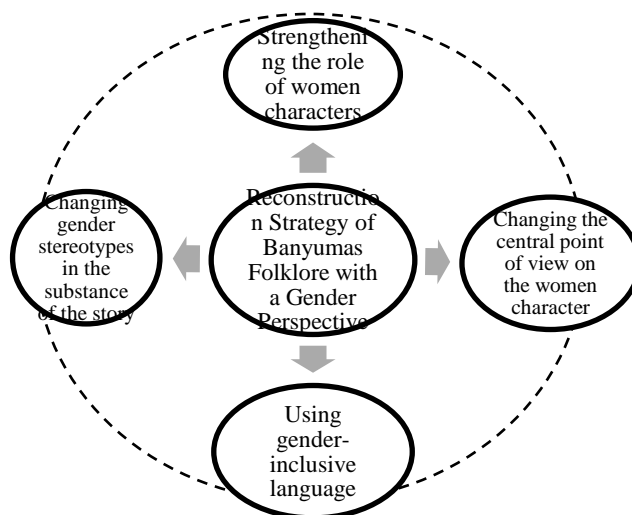


Figure 2. Chart of Reconstruction Strategy for of Banyumas Folklore with a Gender Perspective.

In the folklore of Babad Baturraden, a substantial reconstruction is in the point of view. The point of view used in the folklore is centered on the gamel Kuda Adipati Kutaliman, which is male. Therefore, the perspective of Babad Baturraden can be reconstructed centered on the character Raden who is the female daughter of

Duke Kutaliman. Thus, the plot and conflicts can be seen from the perspective of women. Including how Raden fought against strata discrimination by his parents. The Babad Baturraden reconstruction strategy can be seen in table 1 below.

Table 1. Gender Reconstruction of *Babad Baturraden* with a Gender Perspective

No	Strategy	Pre-Reconstruction	Reconstruction
1	Strengthening the role of women characters	The role seems passive because the center of the story is in the <i>gamel</i> horse character	Active role as a decision maker
2	Changing the central point of view on the women character	The center of the story is on the <i>gamel</i> horse character (male)	The daughter of Duke Kutaliman (Raden) becomes the central character
3	Changing gender stereotypes in the substance of the story	Women as recipients of Destiny	Women can make decisions
4	Using gender-inclusive language.	-	Using gender-proportionate language

Next, in the folklore *Tragedi Sabtu Paing*, there is a substantial reconstruction of the four strategies. First, strengthening the role of women characters by strengthening the role of Rara Sukartiya in the plot to confirm that she is still holy. Second, changing the central point of view on the women character, namely Rara Sukartiya.

Third, changing gender stereotypes in the substance of the story by emphasizing that Rara Sukartiya married Sultan Pajang because of his decision, not because of coercion or subordinate delay. Finally, using gender-inclusive language. The reconstruction strategy for the *Tragedi Sabtu Paing* can be seen in table 2 below.

Table 2. Reconstruction of *Tragedi Sabtu Paing* with Gender Perspective

No	Strategy	Pre-Reconstruction	Reconstruction
1	Strengthening the role of women characters	The roles seem passive because the central story focuses on Sultan Pajang and Adipati Wargautama I	Active role as a decision maker in marrying Sultan Pajang
2	Changing the central point of view on the women character	The center of the story is on the figures of Sultan Pajang and Adipati Wargautama I	Rara Sukartiyah became the central character
3	Changing gender stereotypes in the substance of the story	Women as recipients of Destiny	The woman (Rara Sukartiyah) regreted, she should be able to make a decision to immediately clarify things with Sultan Pajang
4	Using gender-inclusive language.	-	Using gender-proportionate language

The reconstruction of Banyumas folklore with a gender perspective is not only important in updating the stories, but also as a source of learning in literary education. This provides an opportunity for students to understand the importance of gender equality, analyze and criticize stereotypes, and appreciate diversity in the representation of women in literature. This can encourage critical thinking and strengthen awareness of the role of strong and empowered women in society.

CONCLUSION

In Banyumas folklore, the role of women are often limited and trapped in gender stereotypes that limit their potential. However, through literary education with a gender perspective, Banyumas folklore can be reconstructed to reflect a stronger, more active and empowered role of women. The reflection of the role of women in Banyumas folklore can be classified into active and passive roles. Next, the reconstruction of Banyumas folklore (*Babad Baturraden* and *Tragedi Sabtu Paing*) is a paradigm shift from folklore which has a limited role as a mere cultural product, to have an educational purpose as a learning resource. Therefore, the reconstruction of Banyumas folklore can be carried out through four strategies: (1) strengthening the role of female characters, (2) changing the central point of view of female characters, (3) changing gender stereotypes in the substance of the story, and (4) using gender-inclusive language.

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