

Awakening the Mother Nature: The study of Motif-Index in Putri Tandampalik

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ABSTRACT

Putri *Tandampalik*, a South Sulawesi tale, has recalled one of the major phenomena that long recited in the prose narrative. The main character, a royal princess, represents an idea that fitting into a multicultural society and the looming crisis seemed strangely prophetic. This story somehow talks about a series of motifs as it entails a cultural background in a sensible way. When the incurable disease occurred, the princess by consent was exiled to Wajo in approving the higher authority. The conflict has foreshadowed gender issues within the patriarchal system, yet the female character is subject to a far-reaching change. Due to this antagonism, this research, therefore, aims to identify and reason with the theme behind the narrative. Thompson's motif-index collaboratively works with Dundes' method of structural analysis in reading the elements of folk literature. The recurring thematic index acknowledges matter-of-factness and mythic features found as a formula in referencing a paragon of virtue, awakening the primitive image (goddess) into public. Thus, *Putri Tandampalik* speaks upon a portrait of a culture and its transformation that inspire the process of sublimation.

Keywords: Motif-index, mythic, South Sulawesi tale, Putri Tandampalik.

1. INTRODUCTION

Living up to folktales is never as easy as understanding its major implication. According to Willam Bascom in Dundes's book of *Sacred Narrative*, folktale, along with myth and legend defines the basic forms of prose narratives that can articulate time, belief, place, attitude, and principal character with profound significance and power [8]. Distinctively, folktale speaks upon a conventional formula and fictional idea to where humanity is staged and portrayed. Some stories usually share the origin of certain places, kingdoms, humans, and non-humans in order to carry the important traits of culture and social life. They happen to transfer the subliminal message and knowledge to the audience, conveying the *logos* of one autonomous existence. However, folktale partially shades its identity to heighten the moral sense alone. This has become the primary focus on most of the secular equations instead of reasoning with the motifs beforehand.

What is meant by the term motif in folklore are the elements of a story (narrative elements). The motif of the text of a folk tale is the element of the story that appears and is unusual in nature. These elements can be

an object, an extraordinary animal, an essential concept, a sequel of action, deception of a character, a type of person, certain things, or certain traits in which they all represent the world through a landscape of fiction. The substance and style of folktales somehow can draw attention to themselves. They are full with symbols and metaphors that make the readers wonder about their origins and implications. In folkloristic writing, the "mirror" concept is still applied to relate historical and cultural information about a group, with the presumption that it is also a marker of a particularistic social identity. Folklore, in the light of Dundes, as a mirror of culture frequently reveals the areas of special concern. It is for this reason that analyses of collections of folklore can provide the individual who takes advantage of the opportunities afforded by the study of folklore a way of seeing another culture *from the inside out* instead of *from the outside in* [12]. If folktale happens to experience the society in a form of text, Dundes, in his enlightenment is aware that myth must have communicated through context, known as a category that only exists when we are outside of the culture looking in from within the culture. In other words, Dundes emphasizes the study of folklore in

literature as “text within context” to identify the narrative structure, suggesting that it has connections to a quest of discovery for a hidden meaning. Motifs, referring to narrative elements helps define the type of story and be vocal with its characterization. The study of motif, therefore, can see a different angle or have another sense of justice to present an alternative stage of action and in this research, *Putri Tandampalik* (PT) brings forth an interesting type of tale that responds to an idea of empowerment.

PT captures the identity of people in Luwu where monarchy stands tall against the odds. It shows gender hierarchy and cultural tendency in foretelling the fate of a female character. In the story, a young princess named Putri Tandampalik herself happens to be the most desirable and fairest person ever told across the regions. The rumor about her beauty becomes public attention, yet such compliment later runs into courses of the problem, namely marriage custom, disease, and banishment. The female character here is introduced to be vocal with patriarchal society and subjected to culture. On the other hand, the intrinsic elements of the story implicitly pronounce the motifs behind the text, imposing how the collective actions somehow indicated a primitive image. Generally speaking, Danandjaya refers to the mentioned elements having something to do with symbolic tools, extraordinary animals, taboos, initial trials, intelligent creatures, good versus evil, or particular events that involved mythical experience [1]. The right angle to capture those concepts determine how the motifs and their signification in discoursing PT are situated in a patriarchal system and the empowerment that one identity can surface from the threshold.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In folklore research, motifs are a key concept in the category of folktales. They form the primary descriptive units, and their configuration defines the types of a story. Structural analysis has become the major instrument of literary study these days. In folklore, structuralism is more functional and indicative to make sense of a story in which contains mythical elements. The application of this concept is also varied by the objects and focuses on determining the solid point of view about secularity. For this reason, PT appears to be our object lesson exploring the motif and cultural identity portrayed by a woman. Lévi-Strauss stated that to understand the correlations between language and culture, one must be aware of the parallel itself and highly focus on what can be compared [7]. Views on the study of motifs formally open to identification and interpretation of the text and the context unfold a different shape of either figurative, metaphorical, or symbolical meaning.

The correlation part that we focus on is between the female character and the elements of the story.

Baughman’s work has inspired us to adopt *Motif-Index* by Thompson to discover the type and theme of England and North American folktales. The purpose of his study is to show what is included in the corpus of the country, the frequency of occurrences, and their distributions [5]. An alternative viewpoint from Philip Frick McKean (1971) also highlights a motif reading on his works, *The Mouse-deer (Kantjil) in Malayo-Indonesian Folklore*, using structural analysis of *motifeme* by Dundes. He managed to discover that the collected stories of *kantjil* were constructed by four *motifeme*. Thompson’s *Motif-Index* on the other hand takes the course of motif readability on broader categories compared to Dundes’ framework. Vidiarama, et al (2019) have forwarded Dundes’ theoretical view in analyzing the forms of punishment and the motives of seven folk tales. They found that the stories had six motifs in the same sequence. The formulas for the sequences of the six motifs are the same, namely (L), (LL), (I), (V), (C), and (AE). Meanwhile, the folklore of Atu Belah Ajaib and Hiu Adodo only has five motifs. The five motifs have sequential formulas (L), (LL), (I), (V), and (C).

As the object of study, PT was conducted by Rukayah (2018) with the research title "The Existence of Folklore as a Media for Character Building for Elementary School Students" using this fairy tale as one of the media for building student character because it contains noble values so that it can be used as a medium for character building as an example. The results of the study stated that in the PT, there are religious values, social care, sincerity, responsibility, intelligence, and other characters. The second study was conducted by Nirwana, et al (2018) using the same object to see how far the language skills, especially listening, of seventh-grade students of SMP 3 Masamba in North Luwu Regency. The results of this study explain that there are obstacles experienced by students in learning languages, especially in listening. In addition, this study explains that to improve students' listening skills, a strategy is needed. In the end, the use of fairy tales as a medium in the guessing strategy showed that the listening ability of the seventh-grade students of SMP 3 Masamba was adequate.

In comparison to the goal of this paper, Dundes' paradigm of folklore becomes the methodical standpoint and the *Motif-Index* turns into a theoretical framework. The tale itself represents the text with narrative elements and the context within speaks upon the sublimation of identity, the transformation which happens apart from the moral story.

3. METHOD

The paradigm formulated by Dundes as a model of analyzing folklore comprises identification and interpretation in search of buried or disguised meaning that is not apparent from a literal reading. Through

motifeme, PT can be segmented into several collective structures that each goes with plot description, namely Lack (L), Lack Liquidated (LL), Interdiction (Int), Violation (V), Consequence (Conseq), Attempted Escape (AE). However, not all of the six *motifemes* applied to the text. Dundes used the outline of identification and interpretation, which he had earlier established as a framework for folkloristic investigation, and focused particularly on establishing symbolic equivalence as the key analytical outcome leading to interpretation. After all, most of the questions in his interpretations of folklore revolved around the various symbolic reading of folkloric texts within their cultural contexts [12]. Since the object of this research entails cultural background, the main focus weighs on the female character whom we assumed could represent an important role and empowerment of female character in her society. Thus, structural analysis works as an instrument in identifying the main structure and reason with its motif. The major analysis involves Thompson's *Motif-Index*. It will introduce the very core narrative elements as it also speaks upon the contextual signification. By distinguishing the motifs, the data would be content with thoughts about the themes of a female character in both text and context acculturated by the society, and how her empowerment is addressed through symbolic meaning.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

4.1 *Motifeme: The Sleeping Princess*

PT starts off with a major conflict addressing the communality of one custom in Luwu. The narrative brings the *Violation* (V) to the surface and is aware to come up with no cross-cultural marriage issue. Datu Luwu (the King) strictly rejected Pangeran Bone's marriage proposal due to cultural background. The princess whose name is Putri Tandampalik herself suddenly underwent a typical event in which presumably happened because of the rejection. With this kind of plot, the princess experienced *Lack* (L) as she was suffering an incurable disease. Her condition was beyond help and she had no choice but to isolate herself to a faraway land in order to stop the plague from spreading across the kingdom. This way, Datu Luwu must sacrifice her very own daughter to maintain the period of prosperity.

In the banishment, the princess once again experiences another unusual event. It was miraculous that a white buffalo out of nowhere approached her and got rid of the virus. The animal magically performed the trick by licking her skin and it slowly recovered. This plot indicates *Lack Liquidated* (LL) in response to the lackness that happened before. Once the princess was healed, she claimed the white buffalo to be protected and the isolated island where she lived was named

"Wajo" under her authority. Displaying her sense of power apart from the kingdom has situated this female character into transformation, recharging from the patriarchal system that treated her as a sacrificial lamb and began altering her voice. The princess later met Pangeran Bone coincidentally for the second time and she hatched a plan to make him her husband. The *Attempted Escape* (AE) played by the princess was able to change the course of taboo. When Pangeran Bone was asked to deliver *keris* to Datu Luwu as a marriage proposal, it has signified the safety of the princess and her sensible decision. The sensible part refers to the female's judgment toward the hierarchy and *keris* is representing the symbol of honor and dignity that highly speaks upon the fundamental principle [6]. Her action, therefore, allowed the cross-cultural marriage to happen and that violation opened to diversity. With this course of the narrative, PT slowly brings the notion of female identity to the surface. The female character has undergone a transformation from being an object (sacrifice) into a subject (fertility). What does the subject have to do with fertility? In the following quote, the context is trying to convey the meaning behind the disease and how the poetic words can recall it in appropriate metaphor.

Keesokan harinya, kerajaan Luwu geger. Putri Tandampalik terkena penyakit kusta. Sekujur tubuhnya mengeluarkan cairan kental yang berbau anyir dan sangat menjijikkan. (2018: 267)

Her entire skin and the unpleasant smell can both represent the keen senses of life forms. To reason with natural phenomena, disease happens for a justifiable reason and the incurable disease exists for resistance. That indication illustrates how nature works in response to a well-ordered system. In PT, the female character fell ill and she must be taken out of the kingdom. Her suffering was considered fatal to humans and banishment was mandatory for well-being. When monarchy fails to reason out, sacrifice is done to support life, and thus, banishing the princess serves as the answer to the unreasonableness. The tale may help us understand that sacrificing one can save many lives, but in a different context, nature is trying to help the female character out of the patriarchal system. Once the female character return to nature, her power (fertility) is slowly restored. The (L) and (LL) indicate the dynamic of nature from resistance to liberation, bringing back the classic well-ordered system that shares the glimpse of Mother Nature (matriarchy).

4.2 *Motif-Index: Awakening the Mother Nature*

What is found in the tale of PT involves three kinds of motifs. These three motifs form a chronology of stories that have significance and power. Thanks to the reading of Thompson's *Motif-Index*, it is found that there is a natural contestation against human domination. There is the animal symbolism and body

transformation of the female character making it possible to break through a tradition. Here is the Motif-Index in this tale:

4.2.1 S: Unnatural cruelty

PT illustrates the superiority of men through the traditions that exist in that society. This motif shows the dominance of patriarchy which makes women the object and it leads to a particular segment of S260: Sacrifice. When faced with critical situations, related to natural phenomena, ancient humans sacrificed virgin women to calm nature. This concept is carried out on the helplessness and inability of humans trying to gain control over the unreasonableness. The tale also executed this theme when the princess was infected with a plague and required her to go into exile. The decision itself was unnatural in the sense that the father, the authoritative and powerful figure among his family and subjects, had to sacrifice his own daughter for a greater cause. This distinctive personality has been driven by the royal system which leads to the understanding of a patriarchal society where men are more dominant than women. The theme itself depicts the image of power that suppresses the soul and body of women to obey, but they are very vulnerable as an object. In some myths, especially Greece, Andromeda and Iphigenia experience the same injustice. They were sacrificed to beg the gods/goddesses for forgiveness. Their presence only completes the core material of ritual offerings. This motif is also considered a response to human sin and transgression. Through sacrifice, humans will release something from themselves in order to feel relieved/freed from the burden.

The motif of S260: Sacrifice found in PT, through human senses, is a response to the inability in dealing with the plague. When the disease afflicts the princess, nature wants to detach her from the patriarchal body and segregation carried out by humans, giving an opportunity for the female character to independently function. The presence of the plague is a form of natural resistance to human domination, so the banishment is an effort to criticize the system. The disaster that befell the princess actually opened a new path to the spiritual shutter. Nature responded to the princess' downturn and brought a white buffalo to liquidate her lackness.

4.2.2 B: Animal Motifs

This motif presents the figure of an animal that can perform miracles and mystical experiences in PT. It is narrated that the princess met a white buffalo who came to her and cured her of an incurable disease. The representation of animal in this tale defines the motif of B511: Animal as a healer and it serves as an attribute of nature. White buffalo, representing nature itself, has the same potential, namely its capacity to cure or recover.

The significance of this animal is also closely related to the culture in South Sulawesi. In Toraja, the buffalo symbolizes fertility, power, and wealth [10]. When PT has introduced the narrative elements of South Sulawesi tale involving places or animals, the text closely interacts with the symbols of the culture. In the miraculous segment, the princess and the white buffalo are met through a spiritual journey where the character experiences a significant event that can recover her inner strength. The white buffalo is later considered sacred as it can communicate through power and knowledge so that the character recognizes the potential of nature.

Saat sedang termenung, tiba-tiba seekor kerbau putih menghampiri putri Tandampalik dan menjilati kulit sang putri dengan lembut. ... Sungguh ajaib, setelah terus menerus dijilat, kulit putri tandampalik yang mengeluarkan cairan menjijikkan menghilang tanpa bekas.

Wahai para pengawalku! Lihatlah keajaiban ini. Kulitku kembali seperti dulu. Ini berkah dari Tuhan melalui kerbau putih ini. (2020: 268)

The miracle experienced by the female character occurred not because of the prevalence of a fictional story. The presence of the white buffalo is aware of the significance of nature and the transformation of the body. That is how the character engages in a dialogue with nature and realizes potential. According to Imelda Green (2019), the symbolism of the buffalo is a reminder of needs related to prayer and abundance. The white buffalo itself has two strong representations, namely the color and the convention of meaning for the animal. Its attributes seem to communicate through forms that are related to nature, are sacred or holy, and independent [15]. The motif of B511: The Animal as Healer works as a message, eliciting an understanding based on the healing factor. The white buffalo carries a message that speaks of an impact and the miracle is the ideological separation between humans and animals that set between worldly and divine viewpoints. Animal as the attribute of nature expresses the essence of one body that has not been completely influenced or bound by political discipline. The animal can recognize self-freedom through its potential, so the role is to demonstrate spiritual knowledge as fuel to empowerment.

4.2.3 A: Mythological Motifs

This motive appears to invest character development into a new perspective. When nature successfully separated the princess from patriarchal domination and neutralized her body through the white buffalo, this series of events finally culminated in a new creation. This motif narrates about the freedom that brings transformation. At the end of the segment, an initiative orchestrated by the princess, an attempt to voice her

decision without concerning her inferiority as a woman. After she was freed from the intervention of nature, the course of the story changed. The female identity has been legitimized by naming the island (Wajo) and making the white buffalo a sacred animal. This type of legitimation expresses control to recognize her power and significance in a democratic way. All these actions coexist alongside female empowerment, withdrawing from patriarchal domination and old tradition that leads to diversity.

... Dan mulai sekarang, aku tidak mengizinkan kalian untuk menyembelih bahkan memakan kerbau putih yang ada di Pulau Wajo. (2020: 268)

Through nature, the primitive image has awakened in the last segment. The *Attempted Escape* (AE) has finally altered the stage and allowed the cross-cultural marriage to happen. Pangeran Bone once got rejected due to the different background of culture and the banishment seemed to reunite him with the princess. This leads to an understanding that not only human who gains control or becomes the subject. Nature, on the other hand, can also play a role as the subject. It orchestrates both humans and animals to restore the balance and causes a major change. The awakening figure here is mythic and it possesses the quality against the dominant culture. This sense of power is quoted out of particular context, something that foreshadowed the text from male domination. This mythological motif follows a natural sequence of divinity patterns against the antagonism of females. Nature implicitly defends the matriarchal system throughout the portrayal of the princess (fertility), Wajo (resourceful), white buffalo (dynamic), and cross-cultural marriage (well-ordered system). They all play an important part in restoring the balance against the monarchy. The awakening Mother Nature, therefore, criticizes communality and lets diversity break the barrier.

From these selected themes, we find that PT consists of cross-referenced ideas about the perspectives of nature, women, and animals in a patriarchal society. Each motif encircles a particular landscape of how identity is constructed by culture. The tale first reveals S260: Sacrifice as a stereotypical image of prejudice in the sense that Datu Luwu grievously alienated his own daughter just to restrain the natural order. It was an objective decision, but the sacrifice was meant to deal with a critical situation and ultimately result in the oppression of women. B511: Animal as Healer shows a sacred mystical journey that turns out to be a turning point. The female character fully recovered from the incurable disease, and this segment brought his recovery. Her affection and maturity grow stronger as she welcomes foreign men instead of ignoring them. The man who worked as the Prince of Bone himself felt comfortable under his femininity. Then, A: Mythological Motif brings a new element of the story

where cultural change occurs because of its initiatives that develop from its feminist nature. What enriches the elements of folklore is the variety with many collections of stories containing patterns, symbols, goals, and much more. Therefore, the ideas of cross-reference have connected us through millions of backgrounds in which all the tales appear and can be understood. This Motive-Index also helps us to further identify the basic elements of folklore and possibly encrypt the hidden meaning.

5. CONCLUSION

Due to the plague, nature has the chance to contest on the stage of tradition. Events involving sacrifice and healing are the motifs for the sequence to arrive at the climax of the story. PT from the beginning has questioned cross-marriage which is considered taboo. The term of marriage is conventionally a construction, a moral truth made to discipline the body. Interestingly, this tale plays a series of motifs to criticize the tradition. The role of nature is so significant in playing its instrument and this criticism departs from *violation* (V). Chronologically, the proposal from Pangeran Bone managed to trigger the main problem and came to pull the princess out of the system. If the disease (L) is considered a love letter, then nature deliberately made it happen to separate the princess from family tradition (LL), and reunite her with her beloved on Wajo in an attempt of resistance (AE).

The portrayal of white buffalo is highly significant in the healing process of the princess so that the reciprocal process is in the form of legitimizing the naming of the island and making the white buffalo a sacred animal. Communication between the female character and nature gave birth to a portrait of ecofeminism. They succeeded in criticizing the superiority of men over traditional marriage. When nature brought the princess together with her beloved, the initiative to take action of resistance departed from the symbolic tool (*keris*) to Datu Luwu. As a result, the princess and Pangeran Bone got the blessing. The fruit of their marriage established a relationship between the kingdom of Luwu and Bone. Thanks to nature, the harmonization of these two kingdoms can be established.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

The contributions of each author are as follows conceived and designed the analysis, collect the data, contributed data or analysis tools, performed the analysis, and wrote the paper.

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