

The Image of Women Figures in Folklore of Kudus Kulon's Toponyms: A Linguistics Anthropology Study

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Abstract: This study aims to explore the image of women figures in folklore relating to the naming of a place (toponym) in the Kudus Kulon area. This study was carried out with a linguistic anthropology approach, which focuses on language as a set of symbolic resources that enter the constitution or social and individual representations in the real world. The results of this study are as follows: 1) the origin of the toponym, i.e. the name and the activity of the women figures; 2) the role of women figures, consisting of the main and side characters; 3) the relation between female and male figures in toponym can be divided into two: (a) women figures representing the husband and (b) women figures representing themselves; 4) opportunities for women figures, including opportunities to solve problems, opportunities to move according to their interests, and opportunities to participate in public roles; 5) influences of women figures, including influences on spirituality, influences on economic activities, and influences on culture.

Keywords: image; women figures; toponym; Kudus Kulon; linguistics anthropology

Abstrak: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi citra tokoh perempuan dalam cerita rakyat yang berkaitan dengan penamaan tempat (toponim) di kawasan Kudus Kulon. Penelitian ini dilakukan dengan pendekatan antropologi linguistik, yang berfokus pada bahasa sebagai seperangkat sumber daya simbolis yang memasuki konstitusi atau representasi sosial dan individu di dunia nyata. Hasil penelitian ini adalah sebagai berikut: 1) asal usul toponim, yaitu nama dan aktivitas tokoh perempuan; 2) peran tokoh perempuan, terdiri dari tokoh utama dan tokoh samping; 3) hubungan antara tokoh perempuan dan laki-laki dalam toponim dapat dibagi menjadi dua: (a) tokoh perempuan mewakili suami dan (b) tokoh perempuan mewakili diri mereka sendiri; 4) peluang bagi tokoh perempuan, termasuk peluang untuk memecahkan masalah, peluang untuk bergerak sesuai dengan minat mereka, dan peluang untuk berpartisipasi dalam peran publik; 5) pengaruh figur perempuan, termasuk pengaruh pada spiritualitas, pengaruh pada kegiatan ekonomi, dan pengaruh pada budaya.

Kata Kunci: gambaran; figur perempuan; toponim; Kudus Kulon; antropologi linguistik

A. Introduction

The story of the spread of Islam in Java by Walisongo in the 15th century was dominated by male figures. In fact, women actually also have a role in it. In his research, Ahmad¹ outlines the role of women in the Islamization of Java. First, indigenous women who are married to immigrants who are Muslims. They became the pioneers of the indigenous people who first converted to Islam. Second, female relatives of officials who were married by Islamic propagators. This marriage will strengthen the position of a figure as well as facilitate the Islamization of society. Third, Islamic women who are married to royal officials. This marriage indirectly legitimizes the existence of Islam in the kingdom.

The spread of Islam in Kudus also involved the names of women: Ratu Kalinyamat, Mbah Sekar Kuning, and Nyi Ponco. This is known from the folklore as the background for naming places in Kudus Kulon, Kudus. The folklore is circulated verbally and contains the local wisdom of the people. Therefore, folklore represents the values and views of society towards nature and its environment, including human views of their fellow human relations.

The folklore analyzed in this study is focused on naming areas in the Kudus Kulon area that relate to women figures. Kudus Kulon is the center of Islamic development in the 15th century in Kudus, Central Java, which is located west of the *Kali Gelis*. Kudus Kulon is usually called *Kudus Tuwo* (The Old Kudus) because inside it is the Menara Mosque and the Tomb of Sunan Kudus.² Kudus Kulon is classified by castles into two sections based on their demographic location, namely the old city center and the suburbs. The old city center covers seven villages, namely the village areas of Kauman, Kerjaasan, Langgardalem, Demangan, Janggalan, Damaran, and Kajeksan. The center of the old city is an area close to the Menara Mosque as a center for the spread of Islam in the area. Meanwhile, the suburbs, covering the villages of Krandon, Singocandi, Purwosari, and Sunggingan. The results of castles' research³ provide an understanding of the "first layer" and the "second layer" of the Kudus Kulon Region

¹Tsabit Azinar Ahmad, "Peran Wanita dalam Islamisasi Jawa Abad XV," *Paramita: Historical Studies Journal* 21, no. 1 (2011): 1–13, <https://doi.org/10.15294/paramita.v21i1.1024>.

²Syafwandi, *Menara Mesjid Kudus dalam Tinjauan Sejarah dan Arsitektur* (Jakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1985), 15.

³Lance Castles, *Tingkah Laku Agama, Politik, dan Ekonomi di Jawa: Industri Rokok Kudus* (Jakarta: Sinar Harapan, 1982), 183.

that the closer the location of an area to its center, the thicker its influence and culture. Vice versa.

Folklore about these female characters has to do with the reason for naming a place or commonly called a toponym. Toponymy is part of onomastics,⁴ namely the investigation of the origin, form, and name of the person, especially the name of the person and place.⁵ Onomastics consists of two branches which have become separate studies, namely anthroponymy, and toponymy. Anthroponymy examines the history or origin of the person's name.⁶

In anthropolinguistics, toponym is one of the things that are observed and analyzed, in addition to cultural terms and expressions, politeness, cultural concepts of language elements, ethnicity from the point of view of language, and ways of thinking through the structure of language.⁷ This is because the toponym is the realization or manifestation of language, which in addition reflects the physical structure of the language itself, also contains the thoughts and experiences of its speakers. As it is known, a place is named after human experience and consideration. Giving a specific name can be derived from the name of the character, certain vegetation that grows in the area, characteristics of the population, a profession of the population, the name of the site, and several other considerations.⁸ This is consistent with Sapir Whorf's hypothesis which says that there is a relationship between language, culture, and the thoughts of its speakers. A speaker will think according to the language he uses. Meanwhile, the language used by a group of speakers is influenced by its culture. So, language research can be known as well as the culture of thinking of a society. Thus it can be said that the culture of society and the human mind are actually reflected in language, including one in the toponym as the realization of language use. Analysis of toponyms will find out how they represent themselves and view nature in life.

⁴Harimurti Kridalaksana, *Kamus Linguistik* (Jakarta: Gramedia, 1993), 217.

⁵Kridalaksana, 149.

⁶Ayatrohaedi, "Kata, Nama, dan Makna," Pidato pengukuhan Jabatan Gurubesar Madya Tetap (Depok: Fakultas Sastra UI, 1993), 10.

⁷Robert Sibarani, *Makna Nama dalam Bahasa Nusantara: Sebuah Kajian Antropolinguistik* (Bandung: Bumi Siliwangi, 1993), 12.

⁸Erwito Wibowo, Hamid Nuri, and Agung Hartadi, *Toponim Kotagede* (Yogyakarta: Rekompak, Kementerian Pekerjaan Umum Direktorat Jenderal Cipta Karya, Java Reconstruction Fund, dan Forum Joglo, 2011).

This study was carried out in the framework of linguistic anthropology. As stated by Foley,⁹ linguistic anthropology sees language through the core prism of anthropological concepts and culture to try to uncover the meaning behind the use, abuse or non-use of language, different forms, registers, and language styles. Research in linguistic anthropology studies is different from other language studies. Hudson in Duranti¹⁰ argues that the difference between anthropological linguistic researchers and other language reviewers lies not only in the importance of using language but also in focusing on language as a set of symbolic resources that enter the constitution or social and individual representations in the real world.

The findings of this study are theoretically and practically useful. Theoretically, this research will be useful to contribute findings in the study of the history of Islamic culture, anthropology, and linguistics. Practically, the findings in this study are useful for examining the history of Islamic culture more broadly related to the naming of a region or toponym.

B. Origin of the Toponyms

There are three toponyms recorded in the Kudus Kulon that relate to women figures, namely *Kalinyamatan*, *Sekaran*, and *Jetak Kembang*. When viewed from the origin of the toponym, the relation between the folklore and the existence of women figures can be identified as follows.

First, the name of the women figures in folklore as the origin of the toponyms. This first identification can be seen in the toponym of Kalinyamatan and Sekaran. Kalinyamatan is derived from the name Ratu Kalinyamat. Sekaran toponym is derived from the name of Mbah Sekar Kuning. These two names are not real names, but famous names.

Second, the activities of women figures in folklore as the origin of toponyms. Jetak Kembang is included in this second identification. In the folklore, it is told that Nyai Ponco who is the wife of Kiai Ponco has a fondness for planting flowers. The activity made the area known as a flower producer so that the word *kembang* (flower) contributed to the naming of the place.

⁹William A. Foley, *Anthropological Linguistics: An Introduction* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1997), 1.

¹⁰Alessandro Duranti, *Linguistic Anthropology* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 3.

C. Role of Women Figures

To find out the role of women figures in the folklore of Kudus Kulon's toponyms, these toponyms' grammatical structures are analyzed. First, women figures who play a major role in the toponyms are found in *Kalinyamatan* and *Sekaran*. These are complex forms, which contains more than a morpheme. The words *Kalinyamatan* and *Sekaran* actually contain smaller units than the word itself. In its formation, the two toponyms have a morphological process, namely the process of forming words from other units which are the basic form.

Kalinyamatan originated from '*kalinyamat*' which was added with the suffix '-an'. Similarly, *Sekaran* which is also the basic form '*sekar*' is added with the suffix '-an'. The morphological processes that occur in *Kalinyamatan* and *Sekaran* called affixation. The basic forms of the two toponyms have affix addition to a complex form. Those two basic forms are nouns. The suffix {-an} means 'originating from an area or region expressed in its basic form' or 'place referred to in its basic form'.¹¹ Thus, *Kalinyamatan* means 'Ratu Kalinyamat's region', while *Sekaran* means 'Mbah Sekar Kuning's region'. Seeing this structure, the words *Kalinyamat* and *Sekar* are the main and only elements in this naming.

The names of women figures which are the main elements in toponyms indicate that they are the main reasons for naming regions. This conclusion is also appropriate with the contents of folklore which is passed down orally from generation to generation. The area which is now called *Kalinyamatan* was visited by Ratu Kalinyamat before visiting Sunan Kudus. Likewise, the naming of *Sekaran* cannot be separated from the role of Mbah Sekar Kuning in the area as a propagator of Islam as well as a Sunan Kudus' servant.

Second, the female figure who has a side role in the folklore of *Jetak Kembang*. Almost the same as the two previous toponyms, *Jetak Kembang* also includes the involvement of a woman figure in naming the area. Nyai Ponco who is a female figure in the toponym plays a complementary role. Her contribution to naming the region lies in the second word '*kembang*' which reflects her hobby in flowering. This activity was then imitated by the people in the *Jetak Kembang*. During the harvest, the flowers are sold and provide economic benefits for the

¹¹Wedhawati dan Sjamsul Arifin, *Tata Bahasa Jawa Mutakhir* (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 2006), 232-3.

people. Thus, the word *kembang* in this toponym refers to the product of Nyai Ponco's activity, not the figure of herself. This role can be lived well by Nyai Ponco due to her status as the wife of Kiai Ponco who has a prominent position as a religious leader.

These can be explained by looking at the grammatical structure that forms *Jetak Kembang*. It is a complex form that is formed through compounding, a combination of two words: *jetak*¹² and *kembang*. It includes attributive endocentric phrases which one element describes another element. The word *jetak* is explained by *kembang* so that it becomes a central element in the phrase. In other words, the word *kembang* is the complementary element of this phrase.

D. Women and Men Figures Relation

The folklore of Kudus Kulon's toponyms also represents the relation between women and men figures. First, a woman figure whose presence in folklore represents her husband. The female figures included in this identification are Ratu Kalinyamat and Nyai Ponco. Ratu Kalinyamat, the character who is the reason for naming *Kalinyamatan*, is the wife of Pangeran Kalinyamat or Pangeran Hadiri. Her real name is Retna Kencana,¹³ while her famous name is following her husband's name. In other words, she was known as Ratu Kalinyamat after marrying Pangeran Kalinyamat.

Although attributed to her husband's name, the presence of Ratu Kalinyamat to Kudus is not a representation of her husband. It is known that Ratu Kalinyamat who is the son of Sultan Trenggana is in conflict with his cousin, Arya Penangsang. They take revenge for the death of their families. Even Pangeran Kalinyamat was killed in this civil war.

The name of NyaiPonco also refers to her husband, KiaiPonco. Folklore of *Jetak Kembang* does not mention the real name of NyaiPonco. The existence of NyaiPonco in Kudus Kulon was recognized because of the existence of Kiai Ponco as a propagator of Islam. The change in the wife's name by following the husband's name occurs due to marriage. In Javanese culture, this new name is

¹²The word *jetak* is derived from *jetak* or *etak-etak* which in Javanese means 'large and empty land'. In this hamlet, exactly on the banks of the Gelis River, Sunggingan, there is a very large land that was given by Sunan Kudus to Mbah Kyai Ponco (Nyai Ponco's husband).

¹³Panitia Penyusun, *Sejarah dan Hari Jadi Jepara* (Jepara: Pemerintah Kabupaten Daerah Tingkat II Jepara, 1988).

called *nama sepuh* (the elderly name), which is the second name obtained by someone after he/she is married. Men choose a new name after marriage, but not the wives. They leave their *nama alit* (given name) and will be called by her husband's name.¹⁴

This change seemingly shows the inequality of relations between women and men in the household. However, in fact, Javanese culture states the opposite. The equality between women and men in the household is manifested in the idiom *garwa*, which stands for *sigaraning nyawa* (soulmates). The other term is *sisihan* (companion), so that the position of women and men is equal. The other evidence that shows it is that the gender difference in Javanese is not very strong.¹⁵ They tend to be built on stratification (level of language) which reflects the politeness and status of the speaker and interlocutor¹⁶

Second, female figures who represent themselves. In contrast to Ratu Kalinyamat and Nyai Ponco, it was told in folklore that Mbah Sekar Kuning or Mbah Khomsah actually played the main role. His given name and nickname only represents herself, not his husband or anyone else. This independence is indicated in the naming of Sekaran which is entirely derived from his nickname. Sekar Kuning 'yellow flower' actually refers to the yellow of *Cempaka* flower which she planted.

E. Women Figures Opportunities

In this study, it was found that women figures are told as somebody who has various opportunities to solve problems, to move according to their interests, and to participate in public roles. This is clearly stated in the folklore Kudus Kulon's toponyms.

It is said in the *Kalinyamatan's* folklore that the aim of Ratu Kalinyamat's presence to Kudus is to meet Sunan Kudus. This meeting took place at the initiative of Ratu Kalinyamat to resolve the protracted problems of the Demak Royal Family. Ratu Kalinyamat is in conflict with her cousin, Arya Penangsang. This dispute began with the death of Pangeran Sekar Seda Lepen, Arya Penangsang's father, who was killed by Sunan Prawata, Ratu Kalinyamat's

¹⁴Ridha Mashudi Wibowo, "Nama Diri Etnik Jawa," *Humaniora* 13, no. 1 (2001): 45-55.

¹⁵Sri Suhandjati, *Akulturası Islam dengan Budaya Jawa* (Yogyakarta: Gama Media, 2004), 51.

¹⁶Foley, *Anthropological Linguistics: An Introduction*, 291.

brother. A few years later, it is said that Sunan Prawata was killed by Arya Penangsang's envoy with Sunan Kudus's Kiai Betok kris. Knowing this, Ratu Kalinyamat and Pangeran Hadiri met Sunan Kudus to ask for an explanation. This problem also dragged on to kill Pangeran Hadiri, Ratu Kalinyamat's husband.

This event was recorded in the folklore of Kudus Kulon's toponyms¹⁷ in detail, one of which was Kalinyamatan. The other two toponyms are located in Kabupaten Kudus, namely *Prambatan* and *Kaliwungu*. Prambatan is the name of the village located in the west so that it connects Kudus Kulon and Kabupaten Jepara, while Kaliwungu is the name of the village as well as the name of the sub-district in Kabupaten Kudus in the west which borders directly with Kabupaten Jepara.

Three toponyms located in Kabupaten Jepara are Mayong, Purwogondo, and Mantingan. It is said that when returning from Kudus to Jepara, Ratu Kalinyamat's entourage was attacked by a messenger from Arya Penangsang. The wounded Pangeran Hadiri walked up and down the vine. Based on the story, the area is called Prambatan 'the place of vines'. Walking towards the north, Pangeran Hadiri's wound got worse. Arriving at the river, Pangeran Hadiri was bleeding so much that the river was purple (*kali* 'river'; *wungu* 'purple'). To commemorate the incident, the area was called Kaliwungu. When he arrived at the border of Jepara-Kudus, Pangeran Hadiri walked in unsteadily, so that the area was called Mayong (*moyong-moyong* 'sempoyongan' [totter]). Finally Pangeran Hadiri passed away with a body that smelled good so that the place was known as Purwogondo (*purwa* 'the former'; *gondo* 'smell nice'). When carried, the Pangeran Hadiri corpse stretcher "sways left and right" so that the place is called Mantingan.¹⁸

The opportunity for women leaders to move according to their interests is found in the folklore of *Jetak Kembang* and *Sekaran*. Two women figures in the folklore, namely Nyai Ponco and Mbah Sekar Kuning have a hobby of planting flowers. The activity also made the area of these two figures have names related to flowers. In Javanese, *Sekar* which is the basic form of *Sekaran* and *Kembang* which is one of the basic forming elements of *Jetak Kembang* means 'flower'. In

¹⁷Lestari Wardani, "Pola Perkampungan Kota Lama Kudus: Tinjauan Berdasarkan Toponim," Non Published Under-Graduate Thesis (Yogyakarta: Universitas Gadjah Mada, 1991).

¹⁸Chusnul Hayati, Dewi Yulianti, dan Sugiyarto, *Peranan Ratu Kalinyamat di Jepara pada Abad XVI* (Jakarta: Departemen Pendidikan Nasional, 2000), 76, 84-5.

Javanese culture, flowers are interpreted to contain symbolic values of beauty. In some expressions, women are also identified with flowers because of the similarity of their beauty. Therefore, this flower planting activity is considered more suitable for women. In addition, it also requires patience whose structure is closer to women than men.

The opportunity to participate in public roles was shown by the woman figure in Sekaran, Mbah Sekar Kuning. In the folklore, it is told that Mbah Sekar Kuning was a retainer of Sunan Kudus who also had a role in spreading Islam in the local area.

F. Influence of Women Figures

Toponyms show that the reason for naming it is an important reason. Likewise, naming regions that involve women figures shows that the existence of these figures is very important and influential for the surrounding community. In this study, three influences were found by female figures, namely influences on spirituality, influences on economic activities, and influences on culture.

The first influence is owned by Mbah Sekar Kuning. As stated in folklore, Mbah Sekar Kuning has a strong influence on the spread of Islam in *Sekaran*. It was also said that Mbah Sekar Kuning was also respected due to his influence as a figure in the dissemination of religion. Mbah Sekar Kuning is known to dislike *Barongan* arts so that *Barongan* performances that pass through his tomb will stop the game.

Second, the influence on the economic activities of the community. As the wife of a religious propagator, Nyai Ponco is known to have an influence on the economy of the surrounding community. The interest in Nyai Ponco planting flowers was also followed by the community so that the Jetak Kembang was known as a flower producer at that time. The community also receives economic benefits from the sale of these commodities.

Third, influence in culture. The existence of Ratu Kalinyamat as one of the reasons for toponyms in the Kudus Kulon is unique. As is well known, Ratu Kalinyamat became the wife of Pangeran Hadirin who ruled in an area now included in the Jepara Regency, Central Java. In fact, the name of the Kallinyamatan in Kudus Kulon is the same as the name of the sub-district in Jepara. In *Kalinyamatan*, Kudus Kulon, there is a *belik* (water springs) that was used to purify by Ratu Kalinyamat. In ancient times, the *belik* in the lowlands released water so that it became a source of water for the surrounding community. At present, even though they no longer release water, the

surrounding community still has a habit of making *bancakan*¹⁹ in the form of *nasi urap* which is distributed around it.

In some cultural constructions, being masculine is a status that has more prestige when compared to feminine status.²⁰ This is related to the basic task of women to give birth to children. The task of raising children is the basic differentiator between the domestic and public areas. Men who are closer to the public area have greater access to political, economic and religious alliances. However, the three influences prove that women figures participate not only in the domestic sphere but also in the public sphere. In general Javanese women have the freedom to work, for example planting rice in the fields, selling in the market, and doing business. It was further explained that Javanese women had freedom of speech with men, had broad economic independence, and participated in religious, political and social life.

G. Conclusion

From the discussion, the findings of the research are summarized as follows. 1) Toponyms come from two categories, namely the name and the activity of a woman figures. 2) The role of women figures consists of the main and side character. 3) The relation between women and men figures in folklore can be divided into two, namely: (a) women figures representing the husband and (b) women figures representing themselves. 4) Women figures in the folklore of Kudus Kulon have various opportunities, including to solve problems, to do activities in accordance with their interests, and to participate in public roles. 5) The influence of the women figures found in the folklore is on spirituality, economic activities, and culture.[s]

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¹⁹ Gift/alms in the form of cooked food.

²⁰Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo dan Joan Bamberger, *Woman, Culture, and Society*, ed. Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo dan Louise Lamphere (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1974).

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