

The Image of Women in the Lontar *Megantaka* Manuscript as an Agent of Social Harmony Value Transmission

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Abstract. This research examines the image of women in Sasak Lontar manuscripts as agents of social harmonisation value transmission. This research uses feminism and social harmonisation approaches with literature study data collection techniques. The data in this research is in the form of transliterated Sasak Lontar manuscripts, namely *Megantaka* manuscripts. The data analysis technique uses thematic analysis techniques. The results of the analysis show that women in the Lontar *Megantaka* manuscript have an image of love and compassion, loyal and loyalist, empathy and willing to sacrifice, and women who are full of complaints. The image of women that appears in the *Megantaka* manuscript characters is influenced by the male power hierarchy. *Megantaka* script can reflect gender injustice by emphasising the role of women as social beings. The positive image possessed by women has been able to form social harmonisation in the family, community and state. This research has implications in realising the precepts of Indonesian Unity that lead to social harmonisation, love peace, and oppose all forms of oppression.

Keywords: Women's image, Social harmony, Sasak palm manuscript, *Megantaka*.

1 Introduction

Sasak Lontar Script is one of the cultural heritages that contains knowledge, history, and wisdom values possessed by the community in ancient times. Nontar Sasak manuscripts (NLS) not only contain historical records but also as a means of instilling cultural values, social solidarity, and spiritual teachings among the Sasak people of Indonesia. [1], [2], [3] The existence of NLS is often used as life advice, moral teachings on how to build human relationships with humans, humans with nature and humans with God. [4], [5] The existence of NLS is a medium in maintaining the sustainability of social harmonisation values that connect individuals with society, nature and God so as to create a balance of life that has an impact on peace and happiness. The values of social harmonisation contained in NLS are actualised through character imaging.

NLS does not only highlight male characters as the main characters in the storytelling despite the dominance of the patriarchal system that exists in Sasak society. However, in some texts such as *Doyan Neda*, *Megantaka* and *Rengganis*, women not only play a role as housekeepers, but also as figures in educating important values to maintain social harmony in the community. The female characters in NLS are portrayed as carriers of the values of love, self-sacrifice, patience, and loyalty, which are the foundation for the creation of a harmonious

society. This certainly contradicts the view of women as inferior, evil or just objects of love [6]. The vital role of women in the social environment portrayed in the NLS contradicts the feminist movement of the 19th century. [7] which demands that women have the same rights as men and avoid slavery. If feminists aspire to inclusivity and justice for women as described in [8] the NLS considers women to have a strategic role that is not inferior to men in various aspects of life. This view is in line with the medieval concept of art that considers women as virtuous mystics [9].

Feminism is a movement by women in various social, economic and legal aspects [19]. Feminists can also be defined as people who intensely promote gender equality and reject traditional gender roles and are committed to the emancipation of women [20], [21]. Thus, feminism can be interpreted as an understanding embraced by women who want to get justice in society and do not want to be marginalised in the social, economic, cultural and legal fields. Feminism in the view of [22] bring women who struggle to gain freedom but have no control over their lives in traditional situations. Men's control over women can lead to gender imbalance [23].

Positive images of women in lontar texts can be found in the studies of [10] which states that Bugis-Makassar women in lontar manuscripts are described as Goddesses of Life, religious experts, protectors and at the same time imaged as loyal, obedient and intellectual women. Another study that examines the image of women in ancient manuscripts, which examines *The Shahnamaeh* as a work of Eastern (Indo-Iranian) literature and *The Odyssey* as a work of Western (Greek) literature, both texts depict the image of women as respected and powerful [11]. In Traditional Chinese literature as per research conducted by Guo [12] that women are portrayed as kind, calm and content with their roles and not fighting for equality. In China, gender equality does not result in happiness for women but favours men [13]. Women in ancient texts such as "The Shahnamaeh" and "The Odyssey", as well as in Bugis-Makassar lontar, portray women as having an important role in society, not only in a domestic capacity but also in maintaining social harmony and even acting as leaders or protectors of the community.

Meanwhile, research on modern literary works often views women as alienated, hurt, discriminated against and gender oppressed as shown in the research of Bowers (2018); Gregory (2013); and Kolodny (1980). Bowers (2018) examines Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Herland* which features issues of racism, elitism and degradation of masculinity that place the author outside the feminist literary genre. Furthermore, Gregory (2013) tries to present the results of research that displays the boredom of female characters, socio-political struggles and generative power behind modernist formals. Meanwhile, Kolodny (1980) presents feminist literary criticism that focuses on the sexual stereotypes of women in literature and criticism. Modern literature tends to view women as weak and seeks to lead to women's liberation. (Evans & Hogan, 2020). Westerners view women from a negative perspective because they try to interpret the Bible about the first woman Eve (Eva) as a figure who seduced Adam so that Adam sinned, which led to an anti-feminism attitude (Henderson and Mc Manus in).

Modern and traditional literature's perspectives on women are inversely proportional, with modern literature viewing women through the lens of feminism as weak beings who need to fight for themselves against gender injustice and oppression. [19], [20]. Meanwhile, traditional literature such as that found in lontar manuscripts portrays women based on traditional roles and values derived from local wisdom. [21], [22]. In the context of NLS, women are portrayed as faithful, gentle, loving companions who maintain social harmony in the

community. Women are considered a symbol of wisdom that has moral and spiritual strength. Women have a strategic role in social harmony through family, economic development and nature conservation. In addition, women have a more caring attitude, willing to listen, family carers, and as a unifier in the family. [23].

The representation of women as agents who transmit the values of social harmonisation in NLS illustrates that women have the ability to maintain peace, tranquility, and try their best to avoid conflict even though they have to accept the consequences. This research pioneered the study of the image of women in Sasak Lontar Manuscripts as agents in transmitting the values of social harmonisation. The findings in this study contribute to integrating the values of social harmonisation in order to prevent social conflicts in the family and society, especially for the Indonesian nation which is prone to the emergence of conflicts caused by SARA. This study also contributes to counteracting negative stereotypes of women, so that there will be awareness in the community to appreciate the attitudes and struggles of women as agents in encouraging harmonious social structures [24], [25].

Using the approach of feminism and social harmonisation, this research aims to reveal the image of women in Sasak Lontar manuscripts as agents of transmission of social harmonisation values. The study of lontar manuscripts not only aims to appreciate Sasak cultural heritage, but how ancient manuscripts can be integrated as conflict resolution in the midst of global world tensions. In addition, in the Indonesian context this research has implications in realising the precepts of Indonesian unity which leads to social harmonisation, love of peace, mutual respect and opposition to all forms of oppression.

2 Research Method

This research uses a qualitative approach with descriptive methods. The qualitative approach is known as research that is naturalistic, contextual, and interpretative, and emphasises clarity and procedural rigour to understand the meaning and dimensions of human experience and social interaction. [26] [27] [28]. This approach was chosen because it is able to reveal naturalistically and provide in-depth interpretation of the meaning contained in the Naskah Lontar Sasak (NLS), especially related to the representation of women as agents of transmission of social harmonisation values.

The data collection technique in this research uses literature review, namely by collecting data from written sources in the form of transliterated Sasak Lontar Manuscripts. The main source of data in this research is *Megantaka manuscript*. The selection of Megantaka manuscript is based on the central role of female characters who dominate in determining the storyline, so it is considered relevant to the research objectives. In addition, research on manuscripts contains indications of original meaning that are more accurate than other types of evidence.

Furthermore, the data analysis technique in this research uses thematic analysis technique. Thematic analysis is an analytical method that aims to identify, analyse and interpret themes (patterns of meaning) in qualitative data. [29], [30]. In this research, the use of thematic analysis is used to analyse the meanings that lead to the image of women in Sasak Lontar Manuscripts as agents of social harmonisation value transmission. Data analysis using thematic techniques can be reviewed based on life experiences, views and perspectives, as well as behaviours and practices carried out by female characters in the stories contained in Sasak lontar manuscripts.

3 Result And Discussion

Lontar Sasak *Megantaka* manuscript is one of the collections of the NTB Museum with collection number 07.205 written in Sasak script (Jejawan) in Sasak language. The manuscript consists of 190 plates and was transliterated in 2005. The *Megantaka* manuscript tells the story of a kingdom that is plagued by a disease because the king has dampit twins. In order to save the people and the country, the king decides to banish one of his children, Princess Ambara Sari, to a gili that has no inhabitants. Putri Ambara is portrayed as a female character who is self-sacrificing, loving, loyal, warrior, clever, and entertainer. The attitudes of women in this text can be internalised as the value of social harmonisation in society. Women who have a positive image and can be agents of transmission of social harmonisation values in *Megantaka* manuscripts are Puti Ambara Sari, Bekul, Soka, Madapa, Rasadibya, Ibu Rangada, and Sekar Kencana. The following describes the image of women contained in the transliterated Lontar *Megantaka* manuscript.

3.1 The Image of a Woman Full of Love and Compassion

The image of a loving and affectionate woman refers to a female character who has a closer emotional connection to others. Affection can be manifested in the form of verbal and physical expressions that reflect inner feelings towards oneself and others. Affection reflects the need to get attention and positive responses from others communicated through affectionate behaviour in more intimate social relationships. [31], [32], [33]. The Lontar *Megantaka* manuscript contains images of women who are full of love and affection, mostly represented by the character Ambara Sari to her lover Ambara Pati. Bekul, Soka, Madapa, Sekar Kencana to the king of Nusantara. The representation of Ambara Sari's image to Ambara Pati, who is full of love and affection, can be found in the following script excerpt.

Basremin arep sagara, Degna lain Panji Ambara Pati, Sasmbate adoh ratu, Ya mas mirah panembahan, Baya ngumbe tingkahda, Tingkah dewa tengaq laut, Yen ta mate sabarengan, Deq naraq sarembat pikir

Crying towards the sea, None other than Panji Ambara Pati, who is mentioned: Duhai ratu, my beloved idol, how is your brother in the middle of the sea, If we die we die together, so that there is no objection in the heart.

The quote above is one of the expressions of love expressed verbally by Princess Ambara Sari to Ambara Pati. The sentence *Ya mas mirah panembahan* (o queen that I love the idol of the heart) shows the feelings of love and deep longing felt by the character Ambara Sari because there is a personal relationship (mutual love) with the character Ambara Pati. The use of *Mas Mirah* diction refers to priceless affection likened to gold jewellery and expensive gems. The deep feeling of longing is reinforced by the phrase *Yen ta mate sebarengan, deq naraq serempat mikir* (If we die we die together, so that we have no objections in our hearts). This sentence shows strong love and affection because Ambara Sari is willing to live together. The strength of this love is based on the emotional closeness and commitment between Ambara Sari and Panji Ambara Pati that has been formed when they first met at the gili then strengthened by the possession element (desire) that exists between the two characters. Based on the philosophy of love [34] the affection portrayed by Ambara Sari is based on the bonds of love, physical attraction, and a long-term commitment to look after each other. Thus, the image displayed by Ambara Sari as the main character in the Lontar *Megantaka* manuscript in terms of love and affection is a combination of three components namely intimacy, desire and commitment.

In contrast to other female characters, such as Bekul, Soka, and Madapa, the love that is portrayed is based on intimacy and commitment. This can be found in the following quote.

Maka telu kula seni, tasadug siq mamiq dewa, bareng onyag bareng lenge, kuala jari bebantelan, ngiring satibapara, penanda kuala jaq ratu, leq neneq galuh kuasa.

These three of us are trusted by the princess's father and mother, to be with you for life, I am your devoted servant, wherever I am with you, to God Almighty.

The above quote is an example of a loving and affectionate female character based on intimacy and commitment. Bekul, Soka and Madapa are female characters who are given the responsibility to look after Ambara Sari during her exile in the gili. Love and affection are represented by these three characters based on their closeness as royal servants who must obey the king's orders, this can be strengthened by the sentence "*then telu kuala seni, tasadug siq mamiq dewa, naremh onyag bareng lenge*" (these three of us are trusted by the princess's father, life and death with you). The image of affection portrayed by women in the Lontar *Megantaka* manuscript is formed by individuals based on the need to be cared for, valued, emotional closeness, and obedience.[35], [36], [37], [38].

The image of a loving and compassionate woman displayed by the character Ambara Sari in Lontar *Megantaka* is actually formed from the injustice faced, thus requiring a search for affection from Ambara Pati who is considered to care about her fate. This phenomenon in the view of feminism is formed due to the inability of women to defend themselves in the midst of social, political and gender. [8], [39]. The love portrayed by Ambara Sari in the view of feminism can be a response to her alienation due to the attitude of her parents who kicked her out of the house because they were considered the background of the natural disaster. This illustrates that women, despite having a high social status in society, often do not have the freedom to organise their own lives because they are dominated by patriarchal policies. [40], [41], [42], [43], [44], [45].

Ambara Sari as a female character in Lontar *Megantaka* can be used as an agent in maintaining social harmony in the family and society. The image of love and affection represented by Ambara Sari can create good social relations in the community. Ambara Sari's longing for Ambara Pati is not only seen as an emotional dependence but also to achieve balance in maintaining relationships and avoiding conflict and tension. Likewise, the affection shown by Bekul, Soka and Madapa is a form of social harmonisation in realising their roles and functions as servants. This is in line with the theory of structural functionalism that each individual in society has their own role so that order is formed and conflict is avoided. [46], [47]

3.2 The Image of Loyal and Loyalist Women

The image of loyal women in the study refers to actions that show commitment and consistency to the agreements that have been made with others so as to create loyalty even in the face of temptation. Loyalty is part of loyal behaviour that is carried out continuously with impartiality because it is based on shared social identity and intense interaction. [48], [49], [50], [51]. The image of loyal women in the *Megantaka* manuscript is caused by intense personal relationships and is influenced by the hierarchy of power (the dominance of the king's power). Quotes that show the image of a loyal woman in the Lontar *Megantaka* manuscript are mostly highlighted by the character Ambara Sari. Her loyalty is only shown to her lover Ambara Pati. Here is one of the quotes that shows the image of Ambara Sari's loyalty to Ambara Pati.

Aduh dewa panembahan, kawala aturang pakiling, buat trena kuala ngawula, masrah sapati urip, silaq dea ilinging, kagungan dewa nu turut, muga gen kula kican, tobat kalwan mas kawin, leq akherat sadusa kuala sampurna.

Duhai gusti jujungan hamba, I convey a warning for the sake of love I serve, give up life and death, ask the master to remember, the majesty of God is obeyed, may I be granted, repentance through dowry, in the hereafter my sins are forgiven.

The sentence *kawala aturang pakiling, buat trena kuala ngawula, masrah sapati urip* (I convey a warning for the sake of love I serve, giving up life and death) is a sentence of high loyalty and loyalty of Ambara Sari when she was first married by Ambara Pati. The commitment to serve by giving up life and death is interpreted as the highest attitude of loyalty in society because it gives up life and death to someone. [52], [53], [54], [55]. The loyalty highlighted by Ambara Sari to Ambara Pati is a symbolic loyalty that reinforces the social norms in Sasak society that women after marriage are considered the guardians of family honour and must be obedient and obedient to their spouses. [56], [57], [58]. The image of a woman who is loyal to her partner is portrayed as a good woman who can provide comfort in the family. [59].

The loyalty of Ambara Sari in Nasakah Lontar *Megantaka* is mostly described in the form of metaphorical sentences, indicating that Ambara Sari is very difficult to describe how much she loves and is loyal to her lover Ambara Pati. In line with the opinion of Fainsilber & Ortony (1987) that the use of metaphors aims to express emotions that are difficult to explain with actions. The following is an excerpt expressing loyalty using metaphorical sentences.

In another form, ande kaji kekembang nagasari, tur sengeh mengarum-arum, Dewa jari kabonangan, Deqna pegat suck sari mengembuh, ande kaji awur dante, mas mirah gadung kasturi.

Or both menitis in another form, if I were a fragrant nagasari flower, you would be the beetle, without stopping to suck honey, if I were a wasp, you would be the master of gadung kasturi.

The quote above describes a woman's loyalty to her partner expressed with a metaphorical sentence. The sentence *Ande kaji kekembang nagasari, tur sengeh mengarum-arum, Dewa jari kabonangan* (I am a fragrant nagasari flower, you are the beetle). The use of the symbols "nagasari flower" and "beetle" carries a wide range of meanings. Flowers can be associated with femininity, beauty, softness while "beetles" are liveliness and masculinity. The metaphor of flowers can be interpreted as the softness, beauty and fragility of Ambara Sari's life in the *Megantaka* manuscript so that her life is very dependent on Ambara Pati and the nurturing host. This can reflect a harmonious life cycle because they need each other. The use of flower and beetle symbols reflects cultural values that value loyalty, social harmonisation so as to create a balance of life. The image of women depicted in the form of metaphors of flowers and beetles can be transmitted as agents of social harmonisation because both symbols are mutually beneficial to maintain the balance of life. [61], [62], [63].

The loyalty of Bekul, Soka, and Madapa, Rasadibya and Rangda Kasyan is motivated by their social status as people who serve the kingdom. Their loyalty is in line with the results of research conducted by Knyazev (2024) that the people's loyalty to the king is exploited by the political interests of the kingdom. Their loyalty was not entirely of their own free will but due to social pressure and feudal structures. [64], [65]. The loyalty highlighted by the characters Bekul, Soka, Madapa, Rasadibya and Rangda is not meant to be considered as something negative but it reflects noble values that can be emulated. In fact, in creating harmony in the state and nation that the people should have obedience to the leader as long as what is in

question is a good deed. In the context of Sasak society, people's loyalty to leaders is a form of socialisation and compliance with the norms of customs. For Sasak people, being a servant to a great person such as a leader is considered a form of devotion and is worth worship and can increase social status in the community. [66], [67].

3.3 Images of Women who are Empathic and Willing to Sacrifice

The image of women found in the Megantaka manuscript is empathy and willing to sacrifice. Empathy is a form of emotion that understands the feelings of others so that it can feel and understand the social phenomena faced by others. [68], [69]. Furthermore, what is meant by willing to sacrifice is an attitude to be willing to help and various to others on the basis of willingness not on the basis of selfishness. [70]. The image of women who have empathy and are willing to sacrifice is mostly represented by women with lower social status, namely ordinary people who empathise with the king's daughter in this case shown by the characters Bekul, Soka, and Madapa, Rasadibya and Rangda Kasyan. Meanwhile, Amabara Sari has a self-sacrificing attitude by being willing to be banished to an isolated place so that the people do not experience misery due to her being born dampit. The following excerpt from the Lontar Megantaka manuscript shows Ambara Sari's willingness to sacrifice her happiness and pleasure as a child of the king for the safety of her people.

Wayana si lakar tebuang, Wayan baruq pituq balit, Tajaleq widadari kendaran, Tejaleq Amabara Sari, Solah deq naraq tanding, Maraq isin suwarga turun, Datu mamigna pada, Bini laki pada nangis, Ampes batang deqna bani Serminang bije.

When she was about to be thrown away, she was seven years old, like a heavenly angel, named Amabara Sari, incomparably beautiful, like the inhabitants of heaven, her parents, women and men all cried, they could not bear to see their daughter.

The context of the above quotation is that Ambara Sari was decided to be banished by her father because she was born in dampit, which is believed by the community to be the result of various disasters and diseases that afflict the people. [71], [72]. Some Sasak people believe that the birth of a dampit (twin brother) who is exactly the same is considered bad luck, causing disharmony. [73]. In the context of the Lontar Megantaka manuscript, the character Amabara Sari is willing to be sacrificed by releasing all the luxuries of life as a much-loved son of the king in order to remove the curse that befalls the people. The sacrifice made by Ambara Sari is in the form of sacrificing his social status, comfort of life, his right to all property as a child of the king and the most severe is sacrificing himself to no longer get attention and affection from his parents. Ambara Sari, although still a child, was willing to sacrifice herself for the people she loved. In the context of cultural sacrifice, the attitude represented by Amabara Sari can be used as a symbol of maintaining social harmony and natural balance. The context of sacrifice involving humans to maintain the balance of nature that is trustworthy is also explained through research conducted by [74] that the practice of sacrificing humans as divine food can be a social control because it is influenced by hierarchically organised power.

3.4 A Complaining Image of Women

The *Megantaka* script not only displays a positive image of women but also displays a complaining attitude that is mostly represented by Ambara Sari. The complaining attitude of women is mostly caused by the suffering or pain caused by unfavourable treatment from others. [75], [76]. The form of complaints made by Ambara Sari in the Lontar Megantaka

Manuscript are complaints about the attitude of her parents Raja Agung Nusantara, complaints about the suffering faced during exile, complaints due to illness, complaints because she was abandoned by her lover Panji Ambara Pati. Complaints were also made by Bekul, Soka, and Madapa because they could not bear to see Ambara Pati's suffering. The following quotation shows the description of Princess Ambara Sari's complaints.

Sue kuala nandang sakit, tabuang tengaq sagara, pira sengker kuala ete, nane wah bataun-taun, sangu kuala deq araq, malit kulit malekas balung, urip siq gegedeng melaq.

I have been suffering for a long time, exiled in the middle of the sea, how long do I have to be here, now it's been years, my provisions have run out, only skin wrapped around bones, living on leaves.

The quote above shows Ambara Pati's lament when he was banished to a gili by the Great King of the Archipelago. The sentence *Sue kuala nandang sakit* (I have been suffering for a long time) shows the deep pain faced by Ambara Pati. The feeling of pain here is not only physical pain but also mental suffering that has been felt for years. This is emphasised by the phrase *sangu kuala deq araq, malit kulit malekas balung*. In this context, complaining becomes a way to show women's powerlessness in the face of unfair situations, such as exile or ill-treatment. [77], [78]. The *Megantaka* text can represent a critique of the social structure of women who suffer unnaturally. Ambara Sari's complaint against her father's policy is a reflection of the tension between families who prioritise the interests of the people. Sentences in the quotation such as *malit kulit malekas balung* (just skin wrapped around bones) have a strong symbolic meaning. Besides describing extreme physical suffering, the phrase can also be interpreted as a symbol of an individual's total sacrifice for the sake of others. The use of such metaphors strengthens the emotional appeal of *Megantaka*'s text, allowing readers to feel the characters' suffering deeply. A prolonged attitude of complaining can create social disharmony in the community because it will disturb emotions when interacting.

4 Conclusion

Based on the results and discussion above, it can be concluded that the *Megantaka* Manuscript depicts positive and negative images of women. The positive image of women can be in the form of love and compassion, loyalty and loyalty, empathy and willingness to sacrifice. Meanwhile, negative images of women can include women who complain too much and say words that can weaken themselves mentally and physically. The image of a woman who can be an agent of transmitting the value of social harmonisation is a woman who has a positive image while a woman who has a negative image can form social disharmony.

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