

# Women in Domestic and Public Spaces: Unraveling the Batak Doxa in the Oral Story of North Sumatra

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**Abstract.** The role of women, especially Batak women in the domestic space is considered not a contribution in social or cultural development, but a duty or responsibility of women within social and cultural structures. This is a problem that needs to be examined because women are narrated and structured differently in the oral story of North Sumatra. Then, there's the discourse produced by the oral story of North Sumatra about women. The oral stories of North Sumatra depicting this phenomenon are *Putri Lopian* (Central Tapanuli), *Si Beru Dayang* (Karo), and *Asal Usul Padi Pulut* (Pakpak Dairi). The oral stories explain that Batak women take care of domestic affairs (housekeeping and child care) as well as public affairs (planting and farming). However, the dual role is not considered part of social and cultural development. Batak women continue to be narrated as being in a domestic space.

**Keywords:** Doxa, North Sumatera Oral Story, Women

## 1 Introduction

Women, especially in this study are Batak women are narrated as those who take care of domestic problems, such as taking care of household affairs and caring for children. Furthermore, after being re-examined, Batakese women are also narrated as planting, watering, and farming in North Sumatera oral stories. The activities of planting, watering, and tending the fields are tasks in a public space. It means that women also have a role in public space. However, the role of women in planting, watering, and cultivating the fields is not considered a contribution to public space or to social and cultural development. Such roles are seen as the duties or responsibilities of women within social and cultural structures. In fact, women's role is part of social and cultural development. This happens because the treatment of women has become a view that is internalized and normalized by society so that it forms the structure of society's life..

For example, a mother who in her upbringing tells tales and contains poems or songs of the region, certainly develops the values of locality in the child - the wisdom values, which will shape the child's character. These actions are included in social and cultural development, through the role of women in the domestic space. However, this role is never considered as part of social and cultural development.

Another example is a woman who has taken care of the household (cooking and tidying up the house) and caring for children also does the work of watering plants/ fields. Women play a double role. However, such role is not considered part of the development. The role is considered part of domestic duties.

When we read the oral history of North Sumatra, we find that Batak women also have a role in the public sphere (farming and managing nature). However, this role is considered a domestic activity, not a construction activity. This is what needs to be highlighted as a criticism of the views of the Batak people (which Bourdieu called as the doksa). Based on that, this study addresses the question of 1) the structure of oral history and 2) the doxa produced by oral history.

Research on oral literature focusing on women has been done extensively such as the research done by Septriani and Arianto (2022), Qur'ani (2021), Nisa, et al. (2025) which discusses the problems of women and nature, women's images, and women's aggressiveness [1–3]. In addition, oral literature research focusing on women with the study of A.B. Lord's theory of structuralism and structural constructivist of Pierre Bourdieu have been carried by Maulana (2023), who explains that women take care of nature, men take care of social; women as the dominated and men as the possessors of power; respect nature. This became a doxa in the village community of Babadan [4]. Then, research on the oral stories of *Si Beru Dayang* (Batak Karo) and *Pulut Page* (Pakpak Batak) were conducted by Sinulingga, et al (2025) with a comparative literary study [5].

Those studies had differences with this study. This study used North Sumatra oral history objects focused on women. This research combines the concepts of A.B. Lord's structuralism, Pierre Bourdieu's structural constructivism, and Betty Friedan's gender concepts of the objectification of women in the domestic space. The research focused on uncovering the doxa that exists in Batak society about women in domestic and public spaces through North Sumatra's oral stories. Thus, it is explained that the narrative that becomes a stereotype for women is something that is narrated over and over again until it becomes a belief, which is then normalized or experienced by society.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Structuralism of A.B. Lord**

A formula is a phrase used in oral singing to facilitate the recall and composition of the text. A formula is a distinctive pattern for forming a story. The formula is useful for remembering the essence of the story because it has a distinctive pattern to make it easier for the conductor or the audience to remember the oral singing [6].

A theme is an idea or concept that is repeatedly present to recall a story, containing recurring events and descriptive parts. Although the theme appears at the very end of the process of

transmitting a story, the theme can actually appear simultaneously or without a formula from the beginning of the process of transmitting a story [6].

Composition is the way singers compose and create oral narratives as they perform, such as the process of techniques used to develop stories [6]. Lord (1971) explains that there are three stages in the composition process. First, the mastermind or narrator chooses the teacher because the teacher's role is to teach the particular language. Second, imitation and assimilation through hearing. Three, collect, combine and modify the formula. Thus, composition as a means of enriching a story or art [7].

## **2.2 Structural Constructive of Pierre Bourdieu**

Bourdieu (1979) explains that habitus is the cognitive structure that connects the individual with social reality. The view of reality is what Bourdieu called the doxa. Doxa is a view accepted and believed by the community, without question. Doxa is an idea that is accepted naturally by society [8].

Habitus is not born in itself or scientifically, but rather it is a product of history that is formed after humans are born and interact in society in a particular area. The underlying habitus of the arena, which is the network of relationships between objective positions in the social order that exist separately from the consciousness of the individual. The arena is a structured relationship that unconsciously regulates the positions of individuals in the social order. The arena is a partially autonomous realm of power and also an arena for contending for positions. Such a struggle as transformation or defense of the arena of power [8]. The arena is defined as an arena of power and struggle to maintain a power relationship with the strategies that have been created by the agent [9,10].

Bourdieu divided capital into four groups, namely economic capital, cultural capital, social capital, and symbolic capital. Economic capital includes the means of production (machinery, land, labor), material (income and goods), and money. Cultural capital encompasses all the intellectual classifications that can be produced through formal education or family inheritance. The social capital or social network that the actor (individual or group) has in relation to other parties that have power. Symbolic capital encompasses all forms of prestige, status, authority, and legitimacy [11].

## **2.3 Concept of Private and Public in Gender Studies**

The concepts of private and public are dichotomized through the natural and cultural aspects attached to women and men. The natural aspect of women is that by nature, women have reproductive functions, such as pregnancy and childbirth. It places and assigns roles to women in the domestic realm. Meanwhile, men have a production function in the public space (cultural aspect) [12].

The dichotomy was criticized by Betty Friedan (1963). Friedan questioned the position of women who were only placed in domestic spaces, women who were prepared to be housewives [13]. It is an injustice to empower women only in the domestic space. Therefore, feminists fight for equality for women to be given the opportunity to be in the public space. However, as time went on, women in public spaces became more and more tied down because women had a

double burden. Women work in two spaces at once, domestic and public, without any participation from men [12,14].

### **3 Methods of the Research**

This research used qualitative method that lead to content analysis [15]. The source of data was Bataknese's oral story. The researcher chose three Bataknese oral stories about women in accordance with the results to be (*purposive sampling*) [16]. The chosen oral stories were *Putri Lopian* (Central Tapanuli), *Si Beru Dayang* (Karo), and *Asal Usul Padi Pulut* (Pakpak Dairi).

The data were collected by using listening method [17]. Faruk states that listening method is an appropriate method to obtain verbal data, such as words, phrases, and sentences [14,18]. After being collected, the researcher categorized the data. Then, the researcher analyzed the data using structuralism concept by A.B. Lord and constructive structure concept by Pierre Bourdieu, and Betty Friedan's study of gender.

### **4 Result and Discussion**

#### **4.1 North Sumatera Oral Story Structures**

##### **Formulae**

Formulae of *Putri Lopian* (Central Tapanuli) oral story is that a woman is placed in nature and handles the domestic matters, such as cooking. Her cooking is delicious so that she wins the contest and becomes the wife of the prince. Next, formulae of *Si Beru Dayang* (Karo) oral story is the story of rice. The rice is kept by a woman. The woman is farming (planting the seed and watering). Then, formula of *Asal Usul Padi Pulut* (Pakpak Dairi) oral story is that a woman who handles the farming and children.

##### **Themes**

The themes of these three oral stories above are a woman is in the kitchen, handles children and farming (planting and watering), and becomes a scramble because of her beauty. The themes are often used in some stories. The woman is placed in domestic matters.

##### **Composition**

The composition of the oral stories of *Putri Lopian* (Central Tapanuli), *Si Beru Dayang* (Karo), and *Asal Usul Padi Pulut* (Pakpak Dairi) are as follows.

The oral story of *Putri Lopian* (Central Tapanuli) has a composition of the characters seen in the existence of the main characters and supporting figures such as prose stories in general. The main character in this oral story is Princess Lopian. Princess Lopian is a central figure. This can be seen from the title and storyline that tells the life of Princess Lopian from life alone to have a life partner of a Prince Badiri, as well as four children. At the end of the story, Lopian's

daughter died from being carried away by the waves while holding the "Mangusung Bunti" ceremony in her 17 years of marriage. The following is the quote.

*Once upon a time in the Lopian region of Central Tapanuli, there lived a princess named Lopian. It is said that his father and mother disappeared at the bottom of the Indian Ocean, becoming the fairies of the vast ocean floor. The royal guards and hulubalang are also mysteriously disappeared. The princess was left alone in her father's former palace [19].*

In the oral story of *Putri Lopian* (Central Tapanuli) also found a plot composition. The plot composition is seen in the description of the story that starts from the phrase 'long ago' which shows the characteristics of an oral story. *Putri Lopian's* oral story (Central Tapanuli) meets the element of a story, namely the existence of characters and plot so that the story becomes intact and accepted by the community. The following is the quote.

*Because it was not properly inhabited, the palace and its surroundings were overgrown with shrubs. The bushes then became a dense forest because no one was left around the royal palace except the Lopian princess. At first, Princess Lopian was terrified of living alone in the vast palace. However, as she grew accustomed, she eventually became brave and tried to survive by eating wild fruits and herbs that grew around the palace [19].*

Furthermore, the oral story of *Si Beru Dayang* (Karo) has a character composition and plot. As explained above that the composition of characters and plot is an element of a story - which makes the story intact and is accepted by the community. There is a central figure, namely Si Beru Dayang (rice) sent by the gods to humans. The story begins with 'long ago' and 'one day' which shows the backwards and progress. The following quotes.

*The owner of the story said once a kingdom in the land of the Karo. The population is not familiar with rice, therefore wood is used as food. so it was sent Si Beru Dayang as a mediator to the people and created corn as food. One day some children were walking around carrying their younger siblings, Suddenly they found one piece as big as a large pumpkin [20].*

Later, the oral story *Asal Usul Padi Pulut* (Pakpak Dairi) has a story composition that is not much different from the previous stories, namely the composition of characters and plot. Here's a quote from it.

Once upon a time, there was a great and populous land called the Land of Sicike-cike. In that region, people were formerly known as a powerful datu (witches). His reputation is well-known. He was famous all the way to Barus and all over Batak Land [20].

The quote above shows the characteristics of an oral story. There is a composition of the backward and progress. Then, there is a composition of the character, namely a magic datu (shaman). The composition of the plot and the character shows the integrity of a story.

## 4.2 Production of Bataknese Doksa in North Sumatera Oral Stories

### Bataknese's Life Structure

The Bataknese adheres to a patrilineal system or blood ties based on the father's lineage. The patrilineal system regulates kinship [21]. The patrilineal system gives men more rights than women, namely the right of inheritance. Men as the successors of the clan who have rights and status in Batak culture [22]. The position of men and women is very different in social structures. Therefore, the treatment is also different between both of them. The existence of a boy is more valuable than a girl.

Furthermore, Bataknese also has kinship system of *Dalihan Na Tolu*, that is *mora* (wife's parents), *kahanggi* (friends of one clan of husband's clan), and *anak boru* (son-in-law and his entire families). *Dalihan Na Tolu* has a role in regulating people's behavior in all aspects of life. Each person's rank or position in *Dalihan Na Tolu* is determined by the male, while the female only follows or supports the male position [23].

### Accumulation of Bataknese Women's Capital in the Oral Story of North Sumatra

Bourdieu (1979) divides capital into four groups, namely economic capital, cultural capital, social capital, and symbolic capital. This capital becomes a concentration of specific forces operating within the arena. The arena of cultural production is identical to that of contestation, so that capital as a collection of sources of power and power can be used and exploited by agents to contend for legitimate positions. Having capital means having power to be the dominant party

The oral stories of *Putri Lopian* (Central Tapanuli), *Si Beru Dayang* (Karo), and *Asal Usul Padi Pulut* (Pakpak Dairi) have been published into a book. The oral story of *Putri Lopian* (Central Tapanuli) is collected in a book of folk tales entitled *Bunga Rampai Cerita Rakyat Tapanuli Tengah*, has been published by the North Sumatra Language Hall (Medan, 2016). Later, it was re-published by the Language Development and Education Agency (Jakarta, 2016) as a single story for the reading of children in grades 4, 5, and 6. Furthermore, the oral stories of *Si Beru Dayang* (Karo) and *Asal Usul Padi Pulut* (Pakpak Dairi) are collected in the book titled *Folk Stories of the North Sumatra Region*. The book was published by the Ministry of Education and Culture for the Regional Cultural Inventory and Documentation Project (Jakarta, 1982).

The publication of the manuscripts of the oral stories of *Putri Lopian* (Central Tapanuli), *Si Beru Dayang* (Karo), and *Asal Usul Padi Pulut* (Pakpak Dairi) explains that these oral stories have been legitimized (symbolic capital) and spread (cultural, economic, and social capital)..

### Women in the Domestic and Public Spaces: The Doxa of the Bataknese Society

The doksa in society, especially Bataknese society, is that women are in the private space, that is, cooking food, running the household, and taking care of children [24]. However, in the oral tradition of the *Putri Lopian* (Central Tapanuli), women not only take care of domestic affairs, but also take care of nature. Similarly, in the oral story of *Si Beru Dayang* (Karo), women are depicted in the fields. Later, the oral story of the *Asal Usul Padi Pulut* (Pakpak Dairi), women take care of the fields and children.

Based on the oral stories of *Putri Lopian* (Central Tapanuli), *Si Beru Dayang* (Karo), and *Asal Usul Padi Pulut* (Pakpak Dairi), women not only take care of domestic affairs, but also public affairs (farming, matching crops). It is just that women are portrayed as figures in domestic spaces. As Betty Friedan (1963) explained in her book *The Feminine Mystique*. Friedan explained that women are the feminine mystique. The female is a representation of domestic domestication. They are positioned as happy person in the domestic space. Friedan also called it the cult of domesticity, the placement of women in domestic spaces. [12,13].

Women's roles depicted in these oral stories, such as being in the fields (farming) and taking care of nature are not considered to play a role in public space. But if it is seen in depth, women who work in the fields are women who have played a role in social and cultural development. Without the women who plant and water the crops in the fields, the crops do not grow well. It means that social and cultural development will be hampered.

In fact, Batakese women are able to carry out their duties in the domestic space (such as cooking, caring for children, and taking care of other household chores) while carrying out their duties in the public space (fields) to maintain the balance of nature, as well as build social and cultural. Batak women deserve to be portrayed as strong women.

## 5. Conclusion

Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that there is a bias narration about women in domestic spaces. This becomes a doxa for the Batak people. The narration can be broken by the discovery of oral stories that raise the story of women in the domestic space as well as in the public space, such as the oral stories of *Putri Lopian* (Central Tapanuli), *Si Beru Dayang* (Karo), and *Asal Usul Padi Pulut* (Pakpak Dairi). These three oral histories explain that women were not only in the domestic room, handling household affairs, but also tending nature and farming. It explains that women's role in social and cultural development is reflected in the women's task of planting and watering crops in the fields. Batak women are able to carry out their duties in the domestic space as well as carrying out their duties in the public space (fields) to maintain the balance of nature. Batak women deserve to be portrayed as strong women.

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