

From the Theft of Angel Shawl to Resistance Due to Breaking Taboos: Characteristics of Fairy Tales in Indonesia

Hasina Fajrin R¹, Heksa Biopsi Puji Hastuti²

{hasina.fajrin.r@brin.go.id¹, heksa001@brin.go.id²}

National Research and Innovation Agency, Jakarta, Indonesia

Abstract. Indonesia has a significant level of diversity, with approximately 633 ethnicities and more than 700 local languages. Each ethnicity represents its locality. The writing discusses six stories to identify similarities that characterize fairy tales in Indonesia using structural approach. The beginning of the plot is started with the encounter between humans and angels. The story's conflict begins when the angelic shawl is stolen, leading to negotiation for mixing upper and lower worlds. The denouement is tinged with the human being's resistance after breaking the taboos. The solution can be resignation to accept fate or struggle by making any possible efforts to reunite with his wife, the angel. The six-fairy tales have similarities despite being born and living in different cultural societies.

Keywords: Indonesian Fairy Tales, Angel Shawl, Structural Approach

1 Introduction

Indonesia has a significant level of diversity, with approximately 633 ethnics [1] and more than 700 local languages [2]–[4]. Ethnicities in Indonesia consist of Melanesian groups on Maluku Island and Papua and Austronesia groups on Sumatra, Java, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, Bali, and Nusa Tenggara. Each ethnicity represents its locality. The writing discusses six stories to identify similarities that characterize fairy tales in Indonesia. The fairy tales entitle Jaka Tarub and Nawangwulan [5] from Java Island, Puteri Bensus and Malim Dewa from Sumatra Island [6], Putri Surga from Papua Island [7], Oheo and Anawaingguluri from Sulawesi Island [8], Cerita Air Tukang from Maluku Island [9], and Legenda Telaga Bidadari from Kalimantan [10]. The six-fairy tales present Austronesian and Melanesian speakers in Indonesia. The fundamental correspondence of cultural products born from the illiteracy community, including folklore, is its anonymous nature, and its transmission is carried out orally from generation to generation [11].

The writing focuses on the theft of angel shawl because the shawl is one of visual identifiable of heaven's creature. The shawl is not merely shawl. It denotes power and identity. In Hindu culture, specific garments are designated with the purpose of safeguarding individuals from detrimental energies while concurrently attracting positive and spiritual energy. There is a prevailing belief that the selection of appropriate attire might potentially elicit the attraction of positive energies from the surrounding milieu towards an individual [12].

Some studies conducted on the fairy tales emphasize the similarity of motif with twelve folktales and the objectivity of women [13], comparative between Indonesian and Chinese fairy tales [14], male superiority and female resistance in facing the new life [15]. The writing analysis six different fairy tales to find out the similarities of the theft of angel shawl. Using structural approach, the theme and story fact of fairy tales are analyzed. The story facts refer to the various components inside a narrative that function as a creative documentation of the occurrences within a story. It relates to plot, character, setting, and theme [16].

2 Between Heavenly and Earth Creatures

Earth is the place where humans live— with all their limited capacities. Human beings must work that cost arm and leg to fulfil their needs. Humans may discharge excretion and should clean it if they want their bodies clean. Human beings do not have the privilege that makes them visit the sky.

Gods or sacred celestial beings inhabit the heavenly world, while ordinary people populate the earth. In Indonesian's fairy tales, angels are recognized as heavenly creatures that can migrate from heaven to the ground. Generally, an angel and a man intertwine the relationship between two worlds [17]. It is hardly found in Indonesian fairy tales of angelic men and women.

Another advantage of heavenly creatures is illustrated physically. The angels are depicted as beautiful women whose faces are unparalleled, so their existence is questioned because no beauty is compared to them. In Puteri Benu and Malim Dewa's fairy tale, the ideal body of the angel is narrated in detail, such as long curls falling to the heels, a pointed nose, lips likened to a blooming pomegranate, and fair skin. Therefore, when Putri Sulung is infested with black flies, she is considered dirty because flies symbolize her sinful deeds. Consequently, she is expelled from heaven because only holy creatures can live there.

Although humans and angels have different worlds, they have feelings and nature to consider. From this trait, it is further described the way of characters in fairy tales can feel attracted to each other, feel happy, feel sad, or feel disappointed. They are also delineated to consider the decisions taken when they must choose.

In the fairy tales of Jaka Tarub and Nawangwulan, it is articulated that Nawangwulan comes from heaven, which means the place of gods or heaven. Oheo, who has gone through many obstacles to heaven and finally managed to arrive in heaven, must return to earth because Oheo and the celestial beings are different. Angel also experiences such a case in Cerita Tukang Air. Her affection for her children and husband, who had stolen her fur (shawl), causes her to hesitate to leave the world. However, the earth is not her world, so she should not be there.

3 The Union of Man and Heavenly Creature: Place, Event, and Plot

The object connecting the world of heaven and earth is the angel's cloth, depicted as a shawl. Some fairy tales mention feather, which metaphorically represents one of the materials used in making clothes and serve as a tool for flying. The cloth is one of the angelic features attached to clothing that allows the angels to move from heaven to earth and vice versa.

In addition to the similarity of events, the contact area between humans and angels is generally lakes, rivers, or ponds. In these tales, the water becomes one of the centers of human activity like catching fish, bathing, washing, or just enjoying the view of the lake. Meanwhile, for the angels, the water is only for their place to have fun on earth. However, the encounter between humans and angels in the water source exposes the origin of the union of the two worlds, and that water is the source of love for living things. Although, the way taken unites the two worlds through the theft of the angel's shawl or cloth. The theft initially does not cause conflict because the angels do not realize that their shawls are stolen by humans, as happened in Oheo and Anawaingguluri fairy tales. Still, more fairy tales describe that the angels do not know that the men who would marry them were the ones who had stolen their shawls.

The cloth in the six-fairy tales is not clothing in the denotative meaning. Still, it is a means to convey social, cultural, and psychological anxieties evoking the ethical dimensions of individual and group struggles [18]. For angels, scarves or clothing represent their identity as celestial beings. Without the scarves, they are the same as other earth creatures because they only can inhabit the earth. While for men stealing scarves, the shawls are a form of desire fulfillment to have something extraordinary compared to others. The conflict of interests between two different worlds causes problems. Some fairy tales state that the marriage of angels and humans is based on love and mutual agreement because the angels feel indebted for the help of humans. Different reasons are determined because the angels consider the need for boundaries to cause their world to be distinctive. Even the children they give birth to do not have the same miracle as their angelic mothers. They are earth creatures, so they only can live on earth. For this reason, the angles negotiate by proposing boundaries of dos and don'ts when they are united as husband and wife.

Derived from varied fairy tales in Indonesia with different cultural constructions, the taboos mentioned vary, but others do not note it because of ignorance about the cause of their having to unite in marriage. In Oheo fairy tale, the taboo is not washing and cleaning dirt if Oheo and his wife have children in the future. The division of parental roles indicates that both have an essential role in parenting. It is only not charged to the wife. The disappointment due to non-compliance with the agreement that was a prerequisite for their marriage became why Anawaingguluri left Oheo. Unlike the taboos in Oheo, Jaka Tarub and Nawangwulan fairy tales require Jaka Tarub to restrict himself from entering the kitchen and opening the rice steamer. Jaka Tarub can access the kitchen when Nawangwulan permits him. It indicates the limitation of men and women in the home. The one in the control kitchen is Nawangwulan. As confirmed when Jaka Tarub breaks the restrictions, the magic possessed by Nawangwulan, who only needs to cook a grain of rice without pounding, is finally gone. Nawangwulan is like humans, who need to exert energy to cook rice.

As for fairy tales that do not mention taboos, such as *Legenda Telaga Bidadari*, *Cerita Air Tukang*, and *Putri Surga*, the separation between humans and angels is due to the exposure of shawl theft committed by humans. In *Legenda Telaga Bidadari*, the robbery is discovered because the black chicken climbs into Datu Awang Sukma's barn, so the roof where the Putri Bungsu's shawl was hidden was exposed. This event became the cause of the ban on raising black chicken in South Kalimantan because it is considered disastrous. The same thing also happened in the story of Jaka Tarub and Nawangwulan. The connection between the two worlds is severed after taboos are violated. However, in Putri Benu and Malim Dewa's fairy tale, Putri Benu and Malim Dewa agree to live together on the earth and open new lands that invite many immigrants to reside in the ground.

While in the Putri Surga fairy tale, the son of Yokaga and Putri Sulung finds bird feathers on the roof of his house. Although Putri Sulung has returned to heaven after finding her fur,

she still returns to earth. Yokaga does not give up and goes on a journey searching for Putri Sulung. His effort successfully brings Putri Sulung to the planet and has children spread in valleys and mountains. The same thing is also done by Oheo when his wife flies back to heaven. Through many obstacles, Oheo finally brings his wife back to earth. In *Cerita Air Tukang*, the ground and the heaven are still considered different worlds. However, even Angel leaves the planet, and she still asks the earth creature to contact her through the full moon and bonfire.

4 Conclusion

Angel fairy tales in Indonesia depict the separation upper and lower lives. The beginning of the plot is started with the encounter between humans and angels. The story's conflict begins when the angelic shawl is stolen, leading to negotiation for mixing upper and lower worlds. The rising level is the marriage of two different world creatures. Further, it falls until the consequences of agreed negotiations appear. It drives the angel to depart to heaven after rediscovering her angelic cloth. The denouement is tinged with the human being's resistance after breaking the taboos. The solution can be resignation to accept fate or struggle by making any possible efforts to reunite with his wife, the angel. The six-fairy tales have similarities despite being born and living in different cultural societies.

References

- [1] A. J. Pitoyo and H. Triwahyudi, "Dinamika Perkembangan Etnis di Indonesia dalam Konteks Persatuan Negara," *Populasi*, vol. 25, no. 1, p. 64, 2018, doi: 10.22146/jp.32416.
- [2] A. Dharma, "Pembinaan dan pengembangan bahasa daerah," in *International Seminar "Language Maintenance and Shift,"* 2011, pp. 8–11.
- [3] P. Wijonarko and A. Zahra, "Spoken language identification on 4 Indonesian local languages using deep learning," *Bulletin of Electrical Engineering and Informatics*, vol. 11, no. 6, pp. 3288–3293, 2022, doi: 10.11591/eei.v11i6.4166.
- [4] Badan Pengembangan dan Pembinaan Bahasa, "Data Bahasa di Indonesia," Bahasa dan Peta Bahasa di Indonesia.
- [5] Mardiyanto, *Kalarahu: Kumpulan cerita rakyat Jawa*. Jakarta: Pusat Bahasa, Departemen Pendidikan Nasional, 2007.
- [6] Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, *Amat Rhang Manyang Raja Deumet Puteri Naga Puteri Benu dan Malim Dewa Puteri Ijo (Cerita Rakyat Aceh)*. Jakarta: Proyek Pengembangan Media Kebudayaan, Ditjen Kebudayaan Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan RI, 1976.
- [7] S. Ajar. Ismiyati and Pusat Bahasa (Indonesia), *Puteri surga*. Pusat Bahasa, Departemen Pendidikan Nasional, 2007.
- [8] H. B. P. Hastuti, "Representasi perempuan Tolaki dalam mitos: Studi terhadap mitos Oheo dan mitos Wekoila," *Universitas Halu Oleo*, 2013.
- [9] E. O. Kumbangsila et al., *Cerita Air Tukang*.
- [10] "Dongeng Legenda Indonesia: Asal Mula Telaga Bidadari," Dongeng Cerita Rakyat.
- [11] V. R. Troll, F. M. Deegan, E. M. Jolis, D. A. Budd, B. Dahren, and L. M. Schwarzkopf, "Ancient oral tradition describes volcano-earthquake interaction at merapi volcano, Indonesia," *Geografiska Annaler, Series A: Physical Geography*, vol. 97, no. 1, pp. 137–166, 2015, doi: 10.1111/geoa.12099.

- [12] A. V. Dwivedi, "Clothing (Hinduism)," in *Hinduism and Tribal Religions*, J. D. Long, R. D. Sherma, P. Jain, and M. Khanna, Eds., Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 2020, pp. 1–3. doi: 10.1007/978-94-024-1036-5_452-2.
- [13] I. N. Nisa and E. F. Andalas, "Motif 'Jaka Tarub' dan objektivitas perempuan dalam cerita rakyat nusantara," *KEMBARA: Jurnal Keilmuan Bahasa, Sastra, dan Pengajarannya*, vol. 7, no. 2, pp. 438–462, 2021, doi: <https://doi.org/10.22219/kembara.v7i2.17984>.
- [14] D. Tazkiyah, M. Thohir, and M. Herliana, "Mitos Jaka Tarub dan Niulang Zhinu: Kajian Bandingan," *Alayasastra*, vol. 17, no. 1, pp. 157–173, 2021, doi: <https://doi.org/10.36567/aly.v17i1.792>.
- [15] R. Hidayat, F. Rahman, D. Wirawati, and M. S. S. Purnama, "Male superiority and female resistance in Indonesian fairytales themed Seven Nymphs," *Bahastra*, vol. 41, no. 1, pp. 84–90, 2021, doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.26555/bahastra.v41i1.19941>.
- [16] R. Stanton, *Teori Fiksi*. Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2007.
- [17] W. Wiyatmi, "Memahami Motif Perkawinan Bidadari Dengan Laki-Laki Bumi Sebagai Spirit Feminisme Dalam Folklore Indonesia," *Diksi*, vol. 29, no. 1, pp. 41–50, 2021, doi: 10.21831/diksi.v29i1.33108.
- [18] M. Murai, "Costume and Fairy Tales," *Studies in Costume and Performance*, vol. 7, no. 2. Intellect Ltd., pp. 179–182, Dec. 01, 2022. doi: 10.1386/scp_00072_2.