



Fashion in West Sumba Culture: From Identity to Power in Indonesian Novels

Cahyaningrum Dewojati¹, Renanda Putri Sabrina²

¹²Universitas Gadjah Mada, Sleman, Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta 55281, Indonesia

cahyaningrum@ugm.ac.id

Abstract. One of the ethnic identities in Indonesia is their traditional dress. The identity of people of West Sumba who live in Waikabubak have a diverse style of dress as a symbol of their identity and social strata. The symbols and strata of West Sumba society are also interestingly displayed in the novel *Perempuan yang Menangis Kepada Bulan Hitam*. In the novel, there is a shift in the function of *katopo* from a symbol of identity to a symbol of power due to the patriarchal culture inherent in the community. The patriarchal culture created by society creates disharmony towards the function of *katopo*. The power represented through *katopo* can be explained from Antonio Gramsci's perspective. This research aims to reveal the shifting function of *katopo* as a symbol of male identity into a symbol of power. The data found will be analyzed using descriptive qualitative research methods. The research results will be described regarding the shift in the function of *katopo* contained in the novel *Perempuan Yang Menangis Kepada Bulan Hitam*.

Keywords: Culture, West Sumba, Power, Patriarchy

1 Introduction

The people of West Sumba adhere to the *Marapu* belief. [1] *Marapu* belief combines elements of Animism, Spiritism, and Dynamism. On the other hand, *Marapu's* views are strongly influenced by magical factors. This affects the culture of West Sumba in controlling various aspects of people's lives. In the culture of West Sumba, traditional beliefs continue to be oriented towards the ideas and social systems of the people of West Sumba. The customs in the life cycle of the people of West Sumba are called initiation rites, which include the custom of cutting hair, the custom of sharpening teeth, the custom of circumcision, and the custom of chopping body skin (tattoos). In addition, the influence of the beliefs of the people of West Sumba inspires clothing. The power of the *Marapu* belief is contained in the traditional Sumba woven cloth motifs. Sumba traditional woven fabrics are closely related to the order of people's lives. Traditional Sumba woven fabrics prove this at every birth, marriage, and death ceremony [1].

The customs in the life cycle of the people of West Sumba have been oriented toward social life to create a social life order based on local customary rules. The people

© The Author(s) 2023

U. Muttaqin et al. (eds.), *Proceedings of the 5th International Conference on Language, Linguistics, and Literature (COLALITE 2023)*, Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research 792,

https://doi.org/10.2991/978-2-38476-140-1_10

of West Sumba are in a kinship social organization by the *Marapu* belief system, namely that a father is also a mother who is the creator and nurse of life.[2] The people of East Sumba have three critical points related to local cultural identity such as the order in religious belief (*marapu*), the order based on place of residence (*paraingu*), and the order based on kinship ties (*kabihu*). Thus, the people of the Sumba tribe build self-identity socially based on the declaration made by their ancestors and preserved from generation to generation.

The dynamics of the traditions of the people of West Sumba are represented in an Indonesian novel with the title *Perempuan Yang Menangis Kepada Bulan Hitam (PYMKBH)*. The novel by Dian Purnomo, published in 2020, has a cultural background in West Sumba, so some dialogues and narrations use the West Sumba language. Dian Purnomo, a graduate of Criminology, stayed for six weeks to experience the atmosphere of West Sumbanese life. In this work, Dian Purnomo presents the story of the main character's journey alongside the traditions of West Sumba. The ancestral traditions of West Sumba are contained in reports, such as the tradition of catching marriage (*yappa mawine*), the black moon (*Wulla Poddu*), the tradition of hunting in the forest, and the tradition of the chicken belly book. In addition, Dian Purnomo does not only want to introduce West Sumba culture through literary works. However, this woman writer pays attention to the social life of West Sumba women from different generations.

Djiwatampu [3] weaving is a technique for making clothing material by combining transverse threads (weft threads) and elongated threads (warp threads). As the primary material for making woven fabrics, yarn is generally made of fiber. Limono [4] woven fabric is a traditional cloth symbol in society that is used as a medium for communication, self-identity, social status, and self-expression by displaying a meaningful philosophy through motifs on cloth. Then, Sumba woven fabrics have three different types of woven fabrics (*Makete*), *sulam* woven (*Humbi/Lumbi*), and *songket* woven (*lam-baleko*). the *marapu* belief in the people of West Sumba influences the philosophy of the Sumba woven cloth motifs [5].

Several studies are relevant to the object of the research material. [6] Alkhaira, in her research discussing the subordination of women in the novel *Perempuan yang Menangis Kepada Bulan Hitam*, the female characters in the *PYMKBH* novel experience subordination caused by traditional constraints. The form of subordination found in female characters in the *PYMKBH* novel is the status of women who are degraded and considered insignificant in the social order of society.

In the research, the selection of the topic of discussion regarding the shifting function of fashion in West Sumba culture in the novel *Perempuan yang Menangis Kepada Bulan Hitam* aims to interpret the form of shifting meaning of West Sumba cultural fashion from a symbol of identity to a symbol of power. In this research, the data found will be explored from the perspective of Antonio Gramsci's cultural hegemony. According to Gramsci, the concept of culture is a material force that has a "dangerous"

practical impact on society, especially the proletariat. The concept is considered dangerous because culture only functions as a tool to create a society that cannot adjust and turn it into a barrier between themselves and others [7].

Gramsci emphasized that the development of subaltern class politics and culture was not carried out spontaneously but with the awareness that arose from the proportions of class political and cultural developments. Furthermore, Gramsci's theory of hegemony talks about cultural transformation through the subject. Gramsci is oriented to De Sanctis's opinion regarding culture as a view of human life, which refers to behavior, lifestyle, and the basis of behavior patterns for individuals and society [8]. Thus, the theory of hegemony is built on a premise that emphasizes ideas and the lack of physical power in social control. The theory of hegemony determines the position of ideas in culture.

In this study, the research method was divided into data analysis and data collection methods. [9] The data analysis method is a research technique that extends the human mind not to collect data but to look for relationships between data. Then, the data collection method is carried out through literature studies to obtain facts in the form of narratives related to research problems. The data were obtained from reading the novel *PYMKBH* and written sources related to research problems, such as books, journals, dissertations, and theses. Then, the technique used for data collection is closed reading. The researcher reads and examines the data sources, and then the data obtained is qualified into each category according to the data analysis needs. The research results will describe the shift in the function of West Sumba cultural fashion from a symbol of identity to a symbol of power.

2. Result and Discussion

2.1 West Sumba Fashion and Culture in Novel PYMKBH

In the novel *Perempuan yang Menangis Kepada Bulan Hitam*, the life of the people in Waikabubak district is described as traditional and modern. In modern life, in the novel *Perempuan yang Menangis Kepada Bulan Hitam*, people in the Waikabubak district, in their daily lives, use woven fabrics combined with modern tops. This is Soelarto's opinion [1], which explains that the people of Sumba have a sense of tolerance. This is displayed by an attitude of openness to accepting new things that are foreign, not only in the spiritual but in the material and physical side. Sumba people can accept new things that do not conflict with traditional structures and beliefs, such as using modern clothing and modern building materials. This can be seen in the following quote.

"Magi wears a uniform black shirt and sarong with the cloth worn by Leba Ali, a dark red woven Sumbanese house pattern for the cloth, and a *mamuli* motif for the sarong and shawl" [10: 267]

The quote above illustrates that people in West Sumba accept the modernization that occurs in West Sumba culture, one of which is in traditional clothing. The quote above shows the character Magi Diela as a young woman in West Sumba who combines woven fabrics with modern clothes during her wedding procession. A more appropriate, fairer, and more democratic concept of culture for Gramsci [7] is culture as an organization, a person's inner discipline, which is the achievement of a higher consciousness, which, with its support, a person succeeds in understanding the historical value of himself, his function in life, his rights and obligations.

The male character in the novel *PYMKBH* is named Dangu Toda, a young man from West Sumba born into a family of traditional leaders (*rato*). The upbringing given by Dangu Toda's family is very disciplined and guided by the cultural norms of West Sumba. This makes Dangu Toda a West Sumbanese man with a high sense of nationalism and love for culture. This can be seen in the following quote.

"He looked at himself in the mirror. A dark blue cloth with orange stripes has tied her waist to the middle of her thigh, a matching headband also wrapped around her head " [10:258]

The quote above describes the character Dangu Toda in his dress. This young man uses woven cloth and a headband that symbolizes the identity of West Sumba men. The way Dangu Toda dresses shows that as a young man in West Sumba who lives in modern times, he does not arbitrarily forget the ancestral culture. This is evidence of the results of the upbringing given by his parents, who act as traditional leaders (*rato*).

2.2 Masculinity and Social Class in the Fashion of the West Sumba Society

Gramsci woven cloth motifs in the West Sumba region are generally small and abstract [11]. On men's cloth, the motifs often include lines, dots, and *mammoli* around the edges. At the same time, the original motifs on the women's clothes are rhombus (buffalo eyes) and triangles (horsetail). West Sumba traditional woven fabrics can be used for all levels of society. However, the procedure for using woven cloth differs for men and women. Limono explains that men wear woven cloth with a wide size that is given *lengiti* as a tie for the ends of the cloth [4]. Then, men wear two pieces of cloth used for slings and tied at the waist. The accessories used by men are headbands (*kapouta*), belts (*kete kobu*), machetes (*katopo*), arm accessories (*lele pungu*), leg bells (*lagoro*).

In Sumba men's accessories for clothing, a machete (*katopo*) is a must-have piece of equipment. *Katopo* has a very close relationship with the people of West Sumba. *Katopo*, a traditional weapon, becomes the protector and identity of West Sumbanese men [12]. Papalius [13] explains that the history of *katopo* was used as a medium of trade and became a symbol of power and social power of the owner of the *katopo* at that time. *Marapu's* beliefs related to magic affect the function of *katopo*. This can be seen in the following quote.

“The machete (*katopo*) given by Ama Nano, whose hilt is made of shark bone, is neatly tucked into her left waist. He knew these machetes were expensive. And he knew this machete made people see it differently. The authority of the machete, which the villagers said was once “stuffed,” made it somehow respected by people” [10:259]

The quote above tells the history of Dangu Toda's machete (*katopo*). Dangu Toda's *katopo* was inherited from Dangu Toda's father. Dangu Toda's father is a traditional leader (*rato*) and is believed to have great magical skills in the village. According to Gramsci, hegemony will give birth to obedience, an attitude of accepting the situation without questioning it critically because the ideology exposed by the hegemonic class is only swallowed raw [14]. People who regard Dangu Toda's father as a person with magical powers believe that Dangu Toda's *katopo* has magical powers. Thus, when Dangu Toda carries the *katopo* given by his father, the local community respects Dangu Toda.

The relationship between class and culture implies how the cultural field becomes a strategic terrain for constructing forms of agreement and how ideological and cultural forms are historically negotiated between dominant and subordinate groups [7]. In the novel PYMKBH, we are told there is a shift in the function of *parang* (*katopo*). In the past, the *parang* (*katopo*) functioned as a wayfinder to protect oneself and one's family. This can be seen in the following quote.

"It's the same with the Ama. They are the ones who feel the most manly when they are born as men and can go anywhere with their machetes... Magi was greeted by loud voices from his neighbors, threatening to kill my big brother. He raised the machete high, ready to swing it at the neck of his little sister, who was reluctant to make coffee for his older brother. [10: 87]

The quotation above shows that the Big Brother character, as the dominant character, feels unacceptable when the Little Sister character, as the subordinate character, wants to make coffee. As the dominant character, the older brother threatens to kill the younger sister using a *katopo*. This quote shows that there is a relationship between class and culture.

Gramsci, the transformation of culture becomes the goal of hegemony. Changes in culture and ideas (philosophy, religion, myths) do not evolve by themselves. In the novel PYKMBH, it is told that the people in Waikabubak village consciously accept the shift of the function of *katopo*. This can be seen in the following quote.

For things like that, almost everyone agrees to be silent and thinks this is the way it is and can't be changed anymore." [10: 87]

The quote above shows that the local villagers consciously agreed to accept the shift in the function of *katopo*. The change in the function of *katopo* is carried out by bug brother character as the dominant group towards little sister character as the residents consider the subordinate group as a bad change that has occurred and cannot be corrected. The transformation of *katopo's* function is a form of cultural revolution that creates a new ideology in the lives of people in West Sumba so that it can happen and be taken for granted.

3 Conclusion

In the past, fashion in West Sumba culture functioned as a community identity. In the novel *PYMKBH*, people in West Sumba combine traditional and modern fashion. The supporter of male fashion in West Sumba is the machete (*katopo*). *Katopo* is a traditional weapon in West Sumba that functions as a self-protection tool. In the novel *PYMKBH*, there is a change in the function of *katopo* carried out by the domination towards the subordinate. The change in the function of *katopo* harms the subordinate in the form of non-verbal violence. The cultural transformation of *katopo* is accepted by the community in the local village. Thus, the transformation of the function of *katopo* as a male identity shift to a symbol of male power as domination.

References

1. Soelarto, B.: Budaya Sumba Jilid 1. Proyek Pengemba Proyek Pengembangan Media Kebudayaan Ditjen Kebudayaan Departemen P & k Republik Indonesia.ngan Media Kebudayaan Ditjen Kebudayaan Departemen P & k Republik Indonesia., Jakarta (1980).
2. Soeriadiredja, P.: Dinamika Identitas Budaya Orang Sumba. FIB Universitas Udayana, Denpasar (2016).
3. Djiwatampu, S., Juwita, L.D.: Analisis Penerapan Nilai-Nilai dalam Motif Tenun Sumba Timur. *Jurnal Jalinan*. 1–8 (2021).
4. Limono, L.: Potensi Kriya di kabupaten Sumba Barat Daya. *Jurnal Senirupa Warna*. 47–59 (2019).
5. Anggriady, C. et al.: Penerapan Elemen Hubungan Harmonis Alam khas Tenun Sumba Pada Desien Motif Tekstil. *Folio*. 9–28 (2022).
6. Alkhaira, N.: Subordinasi Perempuan dalam Novel Perempuan Yang Menangis Kepada Bulan Hitam Karya Dian Purnomo. *Bahtera: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa dan Sastra*. 22 (1), 47–55 (2023).
7. Faruk: Pengantar Sosiologi Sastra. Pustaka Pelajar, Yogyakarta (2014).
8. Tami, R. et al.: Hegemoni (Negosiasi dan Konsensus Produk Budaya Indonesia). Alauddin University Press, Makassar (2021).
9. Faruk: Metodologi Penelitian Sastra. Pustaka Pelajar, Yogyakarta (2020).
10. Purnomo, D.: Perempuan Yang Menangis Kepada Bulan Hitam. Gramedia Pustaka Utama, Jakarta (2020).
11. Wakhyuningngarsih: Busana Adat Wanita Sumba Barat Beserta Kelengkapannya, <https://kebudayaan.kemdikbud.go.id>, last accessed 2023/06/10.
12. Opung, K.U.: Penegakan Hukum Terhadap Kebiasaan Masyarakat Sumba Barat Membawa Katopo. Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana (2022).

13. Papalius: Galeri Sumba, <https://www.galerisumba.com/>, last accessed 2023/06/23.
14. Gramsci, A.: Catatan-catatan dari Penjara. Pustaka Pelajar, Yogyakarta (2013).

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>), which permits any noncommercial use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.

