



The Role of Betawi Women in the *Kronik Betawi* Novel

La Ode Gusman Nasiru¹, Gita Juniarti¹, Salam Salam¹

¹Universitas Negeri Gorontalo, Gorontalo City, Indonesia
laode@ung.ac.id

Abstract. This research discusses Betawi women who uphold traditional values but live in Jakarta, which is rapidly modern. This is contained in the book *Kronik Betawi* by Ratih Kumala. This research aims to see the position of Betawi women amidst modernity in society. The method used is descriptive with a qualitative approach. This research discusses the two main characters in the novel, namely Edah, who works as a dancer and often experiences negative stereotypes, and Julacha, who has to accept that her husband is in polygamy with a widow. These characters are depicted as passive women but have rebellion in their hearts because they disagree with other people's decisions. The conclusion obtained from this research is that Betawi women have begun to develop in this new century. They have achieved higher education and qualified jobs. Despite this, many parents and partners still dominate in decision-making.

Keywords: Betawi, Traditional Values, Women, Modernity

1 Introduction

Modernization is an exciting phenomenon to research within the scope of social sciences. First, modernity is felt in the culture of Western people who use advanced technology to carry out daily activities, up to the mindset of punctuality. A culture like this will encourage people in Indonesia to make progress and become even better.

On the other hand, modernity has backfired in Indonesian society itself. Young people in Indonesia have forgotten the local values that are the hallmark of the Indonesian nation. Modernity has brought materialistic, individualistic, secularistic, and even hedonistic attitudes [1], which potentially eroding local Indonesian values [2]. Before the introduction of modernity into everyday life, Indonesian people were considered virtuous, simple, and concerned with social problems [3]. In the end, modernity undermined even more of the Indonesian values believed in by previous generations.

Modernity is generally associated with the Western world since it is caused by the momentum of the modern era in Western Europe [4]. Modernism has the opportunity to destroy the values of life in the form of individuals or groups adopting the cultures offered by colonial people. Western culture, which initially did not exist in Indonesia, has slowly merged into one in the values adhered to in everyday life [5]. Some cultures have lost their identity due to the influence of modernization. For example, the Papuan Malay language in the Maya Libit area is disappearing due to the influx of foreign tourists in the Raja Ampat area. The Papuan Malay language is vital for the

tribal groups living in Raja Ampat, which are increasingly closely related. The Papuan Malay language is also an identity that cannot be separated from those residing in Mayalibit [6].

Modernity influences cultural changes, and this culture also influences changes in the mindset of people in their previous place of residence [7]. These changes in modernity also impact women. Women in modernity are confronted with feminist politics in post-modern society [8].

The results of previous research show the struggle between modernity and the position of women in society. Women in rural areas generally stay mostly the same. They still uphold Indonesian values - being virtuous, straightforward, and caring. On the other hand, urban women tend to show a side of modernity that diminishes Indonesia's identity [9]. Women in urban areas start working and are busy with the world they build themselves, and then walls called individuality are created [10]; the reasons include increasingly expensive city life, unlike villages. Besides, the inflow of individualistic values by Westerners was absorbed by women in the city, not to mention the insecurity of women, which makes them not need to care about the environment around them [11].

The phenomenon of modernity, loss of national identity, and women encouraged the researchers to discuss this phenomenon in Ratih Kumalasari's novel *Kronik Betawi*. The Betawi ethnic group lives in Jakarta, the capital city of Indonesia. In Jakarta, modernity increased, and local traditional values decreased Betawi traditions. The existence of Betawi culture is gradually eroded along with the increasing number of immigrants and the values of globalization, which are increasingly unstoppable [12].

The uniqueness of the *Kronik Betawi* novel is that the life of the Betawi people in the novel is still powerful. The Betawi people have good concepts in everyday life, which are packaged excellently in the novel. The presence of modernization and these values make the Betawi people try to maintain their principles before these principles merge into modern society [13].

It has been proven that Betawi values have been eroded. What about Betawi women? Betawi women in the novel *Kronik Betawi* are a unique research subject as they try to survive, upholding Betawi cultural values within themselves, even though there is a lifestyle with modern values around them. The problem formulation in this research is how Betawi women are depicted in the novel *Kronik Betawi*. This research discusses the female characters who are considered the main characters in this novel.

2 Methods

The approach to this research is to describe modernity, Betawi values, and Betawi women. These findings are presented in descriptive form. The methodology used is qualitative descriptive. Data was collected by repeatedly reading the entire contents of the novel and then marking the parts in line with the overall research goal. After the critical parts have been recorded, the next thing to do is sort and select which data will be used as the primary source and which data will be used as a concrete explanation. When the data has been selected, the author will then classify the data. Classification

is done to place the data by the flow of this research writing. The data is then analyzed using a modern approach to answer the questions asked in the article.

3 Results and Discussion

3.1 The Synopsis of "*Kronik Betawi*"

Kronik Betawi's novel tells the story of a family of three generations. The first generation is Juned, who married Ipah. Juned has a cattle business, obtaining the cows from Mr. Hank, his Dutch boss. Before owning a cattle business, Juned was a milk delivery man from Mr. Hank's farm. Juned and Ipah have three children, the three of whom are the second generation in the novel *Kronik Betawi*. The three children from Juned and Ipah's marriage are Jaelani, Jarkasi, and Juleha. Jaelani, the first child, was given an inheritance from Juned's cattle business. Meanwhile, Jarkasi works as a conservator of Betawi culture, which is increasingly becoming extinct. He is active as a *lenong* and *gambang Kromang* player. Meanwhile, the third child, Juleha, married a famous *kiyai* in Jakarta.

Jaelani has three children, namely Juned, Japri, and Enoh. Jaelani practiced polygamy, and from his second wife, he had a child named Fauzan. The problems started when Jaelani could not pass on the cattle he had managed so successfully because his children thought cattle farming was not good in the modern era. Jaelani's children, Juned and Japri, prefer to work as motorbike taxi drivers rather than manage a cattle farm. Meanwhile, Enoh, as the only daughter, is confused by the men who try to propose to her. On the other hand, Enoh's *babe* (father), Jaelani, only accepts men who are experts in religious matters. For example, if a man wants to marry Enoh, crocodile bread and a dowry are not enough, but he must be able to memorize the Koran and practice all Islamic teachings in everyday life.

Another third generation featured in this novel is the child of Jarkasi (Jaelani's younger sister) and Enden, Edah. As previously stated, Jarkasi works in the field of Betawi arts, namely playing *lenong* and *gambang Kromang*. In this novel, Edah encounters conflict with her mother's prohibition on dancing. The conflict between Edah and Enden is one of the exciting aspects of this novel. This Betawi Chronicle novel contains stories that can be found in everyday life in Jakarta. The point of view used is a third person perspective so that the problems of each character told in this novel are raised, starting from the first generation (Juned and Ipah in the era when the Dutch were still colonizing Indonesia) to the era of Juned's children, Japri, Enoh, and Fauzan who lives in the middle of an increasingly modern Jakarta.

3.2 Betawi Women in "*Kronik Betawi*"

In the novel *Kronik Betawi*, three female characters will be studied further. The figures discussed are as follows:

Edah (son of Jarkasi)

Julaecha (daughter of Juned)

The uniqueness of these two figures is that they come from different generations. If we make a family tree, then the following:

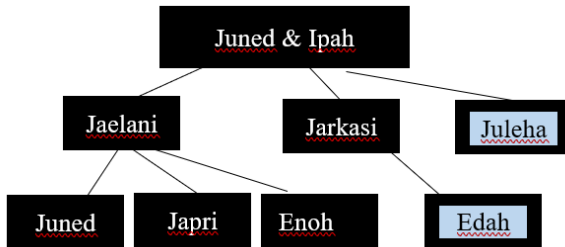


Fig. 1. Family Tree of Juned's Family

Besides, they are both main characters in the novel *Kronik Betawi*. The main characters in this story are Jaelani, Jarkasi, Juned, Japri, Fauzan, Juleha, and Edah. This means that, among the other characters in the novel, these two women have a conflict that can be discussed further.

Edah is the child of Jarkasi and Enden, his wife. Edah often comes with her father, Jarkasi, to perform *lenong* performances. It is what underlies the growth of Edah's love for dancing. On the other hand, Enden, as Edah's mother, forbids Edah from dancing. It was caused by growing gossip from neighbors about Edah. To the neighbors, Edah, who works as a dancer, is considered a woman who likes to flirt, so she allows her body to be touched by other men. Not to mention, negative stereotypes about dancers are strong among Enden's neighbors, and Enden decided not to support Edah's love for dance activities. Moreover, Edah is depicted as a woman who never gives up, even though Enden opposes Edah's passion for the world of dance. It is also by the following quote:

"Edah said she has dreams. I do not want to date if my dreams have not been achieved. Duh, I am getting even more dizzy; when I asked about my goals, I did not want to say anything. Edah's cousin, Enoh, was as good as me, and now he has two children. Well, Edah's girlfriend isn't there. I'm worried that people around Edah's stalls won't sell because they are accused of selling while giving. Naudzubillah..."(pg. 123)

"Edah bilang, dia masih punya cita-cita. Belum mau pacarana kalo cita-citanya belum kesampaean. Duh, saye jadi tambah pusing, waktu ditanya cita-citanya ape, die juga ogah bilang. Sepupu Edah, Enoh tuh, yang sepantaran ane die aje sekarang udah punya buntut dua orang. Nah, yang jadi pacarnya Edah aje kagak ada. Saye khawatir, orang-orang sekitar mandang Edah nggak laku karena dituduh jualan sambil ngibing. Naudzubillah"(h. 123)

Besides there are other quotes as follows:

"Oh my, Edah, you do not understand Enyak's feelings. What if you are sold and become a prostitute? Yesterday, you were just cheated, and your money was gone. Luckily, you were safe." Endah shrank, sitting on the edge like a turtle.

"Well, you still don't want to back down from your dreams. Oh my goodness, my only child is very stubborn." (pg. 235)

"Ya ampun, Edah, lu kagak ngarti perasaan Enyak. Pegimane kalo lu dijual terus jadi pelacur? Orang kemaren aje lu udah ditipu kaya begitu, duit udah melayang, untung lu selamat". Endah mengkeret, duduk di pinggir seperti kura-kura.

"Dah, tetep aje ya lu gak mau mundur dari cita-cita lu. Ampun dah, punya anak sebiji aje kerasnya minta ampun". (h. 235)

From this quote, it can be seen that Edah has a strong desire to pursue her dreams. Even though her parents, the people closest to her, were against her wishes, Edah still strongly desired to pursue her dreams. Juleha is Ji'ih's wife, described as a 'famous kyai' in Jakarta. Juleha's problem is that she has no children, even though she has been married to Ji'ih for many years. The conflict between Juleha's character begins when Ji'ih asks Juleha for permission to remarry. He wanted children, but Juleha produced them years after they married. Another reason for Ji'ih was that he wanted to marry a widow as his second wife, as he tried to help a widow. Juleha agreed although she was reluctant, as she believed that a woman's duty in the household was to obey her husband's words and orders. The following is a quote from the character Jule.

"The woman is pregnant. Next week, they will celebrate seven months of pregnancy even though the marriage ceremony was only good last month. Ah, what can I do? What do I know? This morning, Bang Ji'ih returned from his second home (I prefer to call the woman 'second home' rather than 'second wife') and offered news that he considered good news. (pg. 121)

Perempuan itu hamil. Minggu depan mereka akan merayakan tujuh bulan. Padahal ijab Kabul baru enam bulan lalu. Ah, aku tak bisa apa? Aku tahu apa? Pagi ini, Bang Ji'ih balik dari rumah keduanya (aku lebih suka menyebut perempuan itu 'rumah kedua' daripada 'istri kedua') dan menawarkan berita yang dia anggap gembira itu. (h. 121)

Furthermore, there is a quote as follows:

"That is how Bang Ji'ih introduced me to the widow. I never wondered until two months later, he asked permission to remarry because he wanted to have children and descendants. He has been waiting for me long, but it still pregnant nothing. He also used the story of the Prophet Ibrahim, who later remarried Sarah and gave him children.

Bang Ji'ih introduced him nicely to me. Call me jealous or vengeful, but I won't mention his name! Not even you. Not now or later.

"Do not be confused, I allow it, Bro!" I took off the Mukenah, folded it, and put it on the prayer mat. Then, I folded the prayer mat and left the room carrying the mukena and prayer mat. I left the future bridegroom in that room" (p. 234).

"Demikianlah Bang Ji'ih mengenalkan aku dengan janda itu. Aku tidak pernah bertanya-tanya, hingga dua bulan kemudian, dia meminta izin menikah lagi, sebab ingin punya anak dan keturunan. Sudah lama ia menunggu dariku, tetapi tidak juga kunjung berisi. Ia juga menggunakan

kisah Nabi Ibrahim, yang kemudian menikah lagi dengan Sarah, lantas memberikannya keturunan.

Bang Ji'ih memang memperkenalkannya dengan baik-baik padaku. Sebutlah aku pencemburu, atau pendendam, tapi aku tidak mau menyebut namanya sekalipun! Tidak juga padamu. Tidak sekarang maupun nanti.

"Jangan bingung, aye ngijinin kok, Bang!" Aku melepas mukenah, melipatnya, dan menaruh di sajadah. Lalu melipat sajadah, kemudian beranjak dari ruangan sambil membawa mukena dan sajadah itu. Aku meninggalkan si Bakal Manten di ruangan itu." (h. 234).

These quotes show that Juleha was hurt by her husband's decision to practice polygamy. However, she allowed it without provoking anger between her husband and her second wife. Juleha chose to stay away and keep her hurt to herself. From this description, some symbolic violence is represented. For example, the character Juleha does not give children to her husband, so Juleha agrees to let her husband practice polygamy. Polygamy is a problem that causes women to experience invisible symbolic violence, even though a woman says that she gave up her husband to marry another woman. It was also discussed in previous research that polygamy has an impact on harm rather than benefit [14] because there is a disregard for human rights that should be obtained by everyone [15].

Meanwhile, symbolic violence against the character Edah is limiting human roles. This is caused by the paternalistic system still used by people in Indonesia, including in Betawi. Edah is considered different from other women who dream of dancing abroad. She is compared to her cousin, Enoch, who already has two children. For the Betawi people, women should be at home and take care of children, as the character Enoch does.

Previous research has studied this phenomenon of women in "wells, kitchens, and mattresses." Women are restricted not only in their chosen jobs but also in their dreams. When women acquire a college education, parents set many conditions, such as the college not being far from home so that it is easy for the daughter to return to her hometown. Parents also have to choose higher education, so women cannot choose something meaningful for their future [16].

In the novel *Kronik Betawi*, the Betawi people have several characteristics and fundamental themes, as seen in their conversations. First, the Betawi people are strictly identical with the values of the Islamic religion. It can be seen from Jaelani, who gave Enoch the requirements to choose a Muslim man, memorize the Koran, and lead congregational prayers. It is also confirmed in the book, which examines the local wisdom of the Betawi people, that the Betawi people have a custom of holding a celebration ceremony if their child has been declared finished with the Koran by the Koran teacher. For Betawi people, this celebration must be carried out because people who have finished reading the Koran are considered to understand Islam [17].

Unfortunately, this is inversely proportional to the polygamy that Ji'ih carried out on Juleha. Ji'ih's actions further strengthen the stereotype that Betawi people are often known as people who frequently practice polygamy. On the other hand, Jaelani's character is depicted in the opposite way, where Jaelani is a character who is very loyal and finds it difficult to replace the position of the woman he loves, even though he has repeatedly arranged marriages with other women. The results of previous

research also illustrate that Betawi women previously adhered to and believed in patriarchal ideology. Betawi women are often identified as old-fashioned and out-of-date, even though they live in the middle of Jakarta's concrete jungle [18],

Amid the current era of modernity, Betawi women are known to have received higher education. This means they are no longer known as old-fashioned people, especially women. Betawi women have also started to participate in employment. They also gathered other Betawi women in the Betawi Women's Association (PWB). Her job is to fight for the rights of Betawi women, such as rights that are taken away from the family and the workplace [19]. Even in the *Kronik Betawi* novel, women with good education, like Julaeha and Edah, do not have the opportunity to speak out. Julaeha accepts whatever her husband decides, while Edah does not dare to speak out in front of her parents. Other characters in this novel, such as Enoch and Jarkasih's wife, show that they generally live like women, taking care of their children and waiting for their husbands at home. These characters further strengthen Edah's position, who has big dreams and tries to achieve them.

4 Conclusion

The explanation in the research above shows that Betawi women in the novel *Kronik Betawi* still follow the values instilled by their parents. Women are tranquil people who uphold Islamic values. On the other hand, these women are still limited in what they can do. Women in Betawi in the novel *Kronik Betawi* are depicted as submissive figures. They cannot make decisions based on themselves. It can be seen from the character Edah, who dared to speak out but was opposed by her parents. Likewise, Juleha could not do anything but remain silent and obey her husband.

Meanwhile, future researchers are suggested to publish articles that lead to Betawi ideology. Books about other Indonesian cultures deserve to be analyzed more deeply since the events in novels are generally considered fictional. Many values can be drawn and studied through these literary works.

References

1. Matondang, A.: Dampak Modernisasi Terhadap Kehidupan Sosial Masyarakat. Wahana Inovasi: Jurnal Penelitian dan Pengabdian Masyarakat UISU 8(2), 188–94 (2019)
2. Nasution, R.D.: Pengaruh Modernisasi Dan Globalisasi Terhadap Perubahan Sosial Budaya Di Indonesia [Internet]. Universitas Muhammadiyah Ponorogo. Available from: http://elibrary.sekolahsabilillah.sch.id/%2Fsdiss%2Findex.php%3Fp%3Dshow_detail%26id%3D626%26keywords%3D, last accessed 2024/4/29
3. Mulyono: The Problems of Modernity and Identity in Globalization Era. Journal of Maritime Studies and National Integration 1(2), 106–11 (2017)
4. Hasanah, M., Thayyibah, A., Khairi, M.F.: Hakikat Modern, Modernitas dan Modernisasi Serta Sejarah Modernisasi di Dunia Barat. Religion 1(2), 309–18 (2023)
5. Ananda, T., Anshari, A., Saguni S.S.: Dampak Modernitas dalam Novel Layar Terkembang Karya St. Takdir Alisjahbana: Perspektif Modernisme Anthony Giddens. HUMAN: South Asian Journal of Social Studies [Internet] 3(2), Available from: <https://ojs.unm.ac.id/human/article/view/51805>, last accessed 2024/4

6. Rumbewas, V.P., Hidayat, N., Pabalik, D.: Pengaruh Modernisasi Terhadap Dinamika Kebudayaan Masyarakat Suku Maya Kabupaten Raja Ampat (Studi Pada Bahasa Abel Suku Maya Di Kampung Kali Toko Distrik Teluk Maya Libit). *GD* 6(1):114–22 (2017)
7. Nahak, H.M.I.: Upaya Melestarikan Budaya Indonesia di Era Globalisasi. *Jsn* 25, 5(1), 65–76 (2019)
8. McRobbie, A.: *Pormodernisme dan Budaya Pop*. Kreasi Wacana, Yogyakarta (2014)
9. Antorino, T.: Myth-Busters: Women Writers and the Myths of Modern Male Individualism in Early Twentieth-Century Spain. *Bulletin of Spanish Studies* [Internet]. Available from: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/14753820.2022.2026042> last accessed 2024/4/30
10. Ju, L. T.: Women and Modernization. *Jurnal Masyarakat & Budaya* 17(1):17–28 (2015)
11. Gelgel, N.M.R.A.: Perempuan Gianyar dan Belunggu Ranah Publik dan Privat. *Jurnal Kajian Bali* 6(1), 173–210 (2016)
12. Musthofa, B.M.: Aplikasi Betawi Akses: Model Strategi Pelestarian Budaya Betawi di Era Teknologi Informasi dan Komunikasi Masa Kini. *Jurnal Sosial Humaniora Terapan*. 2(2), 14 (2020)
13. Ibrahim, N.: Bentuk Akulturasi Masyarakat Betawi Pada Novel *Kronik Betawi* Karya Ratih Kumala. *IMI* 4(1), 44–54 (2021)
14. Hikmah, S.: Fakta Poligami Sebagai Bentuk Kekerasan Terhadap Perempuan. *Sawwa: Jurnal Studi Gender* 7(2), 1–20 (2012)
15. Mustafid, M.: Konseptualisasi HAM Dalam Poligami. *El-Izdiwaj: Indonesian Journal of Civil and Islamic Family Law* 2(2), 1–10 (2021)
16. Sholeh, M., Juniarti, G.: Studi Gender dalam Komunikasi Keluarga: Problematik yang Dihadapi Remaja Perempuan dalam Pengambilan Keputusan. *Ideas: Jurnal Pendidikan, Sosial, dan Budaya* 8(1), 97–108 (2022)
17. Suswandari: *Kearifan Lokal Etnik Betawi: Mapping Sosio-Kultural Masyarakat Asli Jakarta*. Pustaka Pelajar Yogyakarta, Yogyakarta (2017)
18. Halimatussadiyah: *Menjadi Orang Betawi: Mengungkap Rasa, Membangun Makna (Telaah Pengalaman Komunikasi Individu Bicultural di Jakarta)* 2017 https://scholar.google.com/citations?view_op=view_citation&hl=id&user=mCOBGB4AAAAJ&citation_for_view=mCOBGB4AAAAJ:UebtZRa9Y70C Last accessed 2024/4/30
19. Ahyat, I.S.: *Dinamika Wanita Betawi pada Abad ke-20*. *ATIKAN* 5(1). Available from: <https://journals.mindamas.com/index.php/atikan/article/view/6> last accessed 2014/4/30

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.

