

**DYNAMIC CHARACTERS IN THE LEGEND OF KUDUS
AS A PERSPECTIVE INSIGHT OF LIFE CONTEMPLATION**

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I. Introduction

Some conceptualizations of the relationship between literature and society are rather straightforward: literature is a reflection of society, a force in society, or simply a separate part of social life. Others argue that the enterprise of literature is more complex, potentially capturing diverse forms of interaction between various parts of and players in society.

Then, life is a stage of theatrical performance portrayed in various genres of literary works. Life is frequently made as the subject matters of the creation of literary works. Life as social activities and literary works as media of portraying are as kind of mirror and its reflection. Those two components seem unable to separate; social life contributes literature in the matter of idea to be aesthetically exposed; while literature donates social life as its portrait or even as its historical record.

Literature develops as the social life does. Certain era, as well as certain regions, brings its own uniqueness of literary progress and development. Certain era and regions may be mostly exposed through poetry, drama, or prose. An instance is a local legend or folklore coming from Kudus, a small town in the area of North Beach of Central Java. It tells the history of Kudus and some districts and villages in it. As it is categorized into legend, one genre of a narratives, it contains moral messages that might be a perspective insight of life contemplation for people today. Some characters told in the legend present dynamic changes of life making us contemplate from the bad characters or soft skills into the good ones. This may show us that people are not always good in their behaviour, but the more important this is that they can learn from their dark life to be better in the future.

Considering that background, this paper tries to dig up the existence of a local culture in the form of legend. A perspective insight of life contemplation have been shown through some social activities of people from Kudus so far.

II. Sociology and Literature

Such concern with the historical and sociological dimensions of literature requires a theory of history and society. This is not to say that one is limited to vague theorizing about the relationships between literature and society in general, nor that it is necessary to speak in generalities about social conditions which are required for the emergence of literature. Rather, the historical explanation of literature has to address the extent to which particular social structures find expression in individual literary works and what function these works perform in society. Man is involved in specific relations of production throughout his history. These

relations present themselves socially as classes in struggle with each other, and the development of their relationship forms the real basis for the various cultural spheres. The specific mode of production, i.e. the economy, is the independent explanatory variable not only for the forms of property and organization of state and government but, at the same time, for the form and quality of human life in each historical epoch. It is illusionary to assume an autonomy of social superstructure, and this is not altered through the use of a scientific terminology. It remains powerless to make cogent statements, even though in practice the talent and sensibility of a literary historian may have produced something of interest. A genuine, explanatory history of literature must proceed on materialistic principles. That is to say, it must investigate economic structures as they present themselves in literature, as well as the impact which materialistically interpreted work of art has in the economically determined society.

Such a demand along with the social theory which it presupposes, has a dogmatic character unless it specifies its problematic. This has been achieved to a large extent in the fields of economics and political history, but even in the area of literary studies fledgling attempts have been made. Worthy of mention are Franz Mehring's essays on literary history which, somewhat using a simplified and popular, sometimes a narrowly defined political approach, have for the first time attempted to apply the theory of historical materialism to literature. But as in the case of the aforementioned psychological studies, the work of Mehring and other scholars of his persuasion has either been ignored or even ridiculed by literary historians. A sociologist of culture recently referred to "such a conceptual framework not only as unsociological but incompatible with scientific sociology," but also comparable to "a parasitic plant" that "sucks off the healthy sap of a tree."

The materialistic explanation of history cannot afford to proceed in the simplifying and isolating manner so characteristic for the academic establishment of literary history, interpretation, and criticism. Contrary to common assertions, this theory neither postulates that culture in its entirety can be explained in terms of economic relations, nor that specific cultural or psychological phenomena are nothing but reflections of the social substructure. Rather, materialistic theory places its emphasis on mediation: the mediating processes between the mode of production and the modes of cultural life including literature. Psychology must be considered as one of the principal mediating processes, particularly in the field of literary studies, since it describes the psychic processes by means of which the cultural functions of a work of art reproduce the structures of the societal base. In as much as the basis of each society in history can be seen as the relationship between ruling and ruled classes and is, in fact, a metabolic process between society and nature, literature-like all other cultural phenomena — will not make this relationship transparent. For that reason the concept of ideology will be decisive in the social explanation of all phenomena of the superstructure from legal institutions to the art

ideology is false consciousness of social contradictions and attempts to replace them with the illusions of social harmony. Indeed, literary studies are largely an investigation of ideologies.

The often-voiced criticism that the theory of historical materialism lacks methodological refinement and possesses a crude conceptual apparatus can easily be countered: the proponents of this theory have never avoided the discussion of its flaws. Its findings and results have always been open to the scrutiny of other scholars, as well as to possible theoretical changes prompted by new experiences in social reality. Historical materialism has certainly not taken refuge in quasi-ontological imagery which, seductive and enchanting as it might be, connotes a spurious philosophy of knowledge. As long as a theory does not consider itself finite but rather continuously sustained and possibly altered by new and different experiences the frequent accusation that historical materialism ultimately contains an element of faith seems of little consequence (Lowenthal, 1988).

III. M.H. Abram's Literary Classification

This is a way of categorizing literature and literary criticism developed by M.H. Abram. It is essentially based on deciding what is the most important aspect or aspect of text in general. Once that is decided the critic can evaluate the text based on that criterion or those criteria.

3.1 Mimetic

Mimetic criticism judges the literary work based in terms of the "truth" of its representation of the reality of the world and of human life and character.

3.2 Pragmatic

Pragmatic criticism focuses on a literary work as something designed to produce emotional or moral responses in the reader, and on how those effects are produced.

3.3 Expressive

Expressive criticism views a work as an expression of the individuality of the author.

3.4 Objective

Objective Criticism focuses on the intrinsic qualities of a literary work treating it as an object of art that can be studied and evaluated without reference to author or reader.

IV. Dynamic vs. Static Characters

Characters experience varying amounts of change over the course of a story (<http://fictionwriting.about.com/od/glossary/g/dynamic.htm>). Two types of characters are

- (i) **Static characters** that do not experience basic character changes during the course of the story.
- (ii) **Dynamic characters** is a major character in a work of fiction who encounters conflict and is changed by it. Dynamic characters tend to be more fully developed or static, characters.

If you think of the characters you most love in fiction, they probably seem as real as people you know in real life.

8. Perspective Insight of Contemplation in Literature

As literary works function to entertain, nourish imagination, and teach moral lessons, they may also provide chances of being perspective insight of contemplation. It further offers suggestions for people to think and consider. People may think and consider to change their nature in the other nature. People may be aware of mistakes they have done due to the messages in literary works.

(http://www.shew.com/info_8049215_morals-literature.html) Inherent in good literature are values that promote and enhance moral education and moral decision-making. This includes sensitivity, motivation and character as we understand underlying life lessons in literature. The moral may be left to the reader to determine for themselves or it may be explicitly stated. In either case, the theme of morality in literature is a lesson in ethics.

Literature reflects the philosophy of the culture in which it is written. The purpose is to entertain, teach a valuable life lesson and lay a foundation for future learning. The classic example, for instance, Children love fairy tales. As a sub-class of children's literature, they are stories of mythical characters such as fairies, goblins or elves that portray life lessons on a smaller scale than adult issues. They develop a strong bond with the characters and relate them in their day-to-day lives. Fantastical tales captivate children while teaching good values and instilling the right values in them.

As another sub-class of children's literature, these simple stories convey universal lessons. Since ancient times generations have enjoyed Aesop's fables, reminding them of age-old values and the importance of being good and practicing virtue. Even though the stories are as old as our civilization, they are as relevant today as they were thousands of years ago.

Being honest, caring and committed to doing what is right is how adults define morality. We can examine ethical issues through books, plays or poetry and relate them to our life experiences, guiding us to self-examination and a re-evaluation of our ethical beliefs. Important values illustrated in literature help us to grow as citizens by helping in faster moral development.

VI. Synopsis of *The Legend of Kudus*

The Legend of Kudus briefly tells about the history when Kudus itself was born, along with other sub-districts and some villages in it.

6.1 Kudus

Kudus is a name of a regency, about 50 km in the North side of Semarang, the capital of Central Java. The name "Kudus" derives from the Arabic word "al Quds", a name of the

Palestine where Sunan Kudus, Sunan Ja'far Shodiq, ever studied and lived in a boarding school there. His teacher told him not to forget the place where he ever studied. That is why he then named the place he comes from "Kudus". He also named the Mosque of Kudus *Masjidil Aqsho*, adapted from *Masjidil Aqsho* in Palestine.

Other version told that when Sunan Kudus studied in Palestine, he got scabies (*kudis*, a skin disease like pimple) in the boy. He got contempt by his friends. This made him show his supernatural power. When came back home to Java, people in Arab got the similar disease, and this became a disaster nobody could recover. The King of Arab sent messenger to invite Sunan Kudus to recover the disaster. Sunan Kudus was offered gold and much money as the prize of his success to recover the disease, but did not receive it. He just asked the King of Arab to bring a stone home as souvenir and put it as symbol in building the mosque of Kudus. In front the mosque of Kudus was built a kind of gate, of which shape and appearance was like Hindu temple.

In his part of his life he ever met and lived in tolerance with Kyai Telingsing, a Hindu figure, who finally became a moslem. Sunan Kudus learns much about supernature from him. Sunan Kudus respected him very much. Although Kyai Telingsing already beacame moslem, he still did Hindu custom; and Sunan Kudus really appreciated this. He even recommeded his people not to slaughter cows for they were holy animal for Hindu.

6.2 The Villages: Pereng, Prambatan, Jember, Damaran, Sucen

Once upon a time, two young men were committed to have gamecock in a field. They were the sons of Sunan Kedu and Sunan Kudus.

The cock of Sunan Kedu's son, which was in fact a knife transformed into a cock, initially won the gamecock. Finding that fact, Sunan Kudus got violent rage, and transformed a hammer into a bold cock. Then, the cock of Sunan Kudus Son knocked the cock of Sunan Kedu's son down.

The gamecock ended with the involvement of the two young men's fathers. Sunan Kedu was passionate to come to Kudus by flying *tampah* (a tool for cleaning rice from dirt) to attack Sunan Kudus. Before landing, Sunan Kudus waited for Sunan Kedu with his welcoming attack and Sunan Kedu's flying *tampah* run out of control and was going to fall. Such condition in Javanese was so called *mereng-mereng* or *miring-miring*, that the place this happened was named *Pereng* Village.

Being defeated, Sunan Kedu intended to go to Sunan Kudus to supportively apologize. Because of falling down, Sunan Kedu was not able to walk. He just crept through a village called *Prambatan*, since creeping in Javanese is *mrambat*.

How unlucky Sunan Kedu is! In the way to Sunan Kudus' house he had to pass a very dirty and slippery place. Javanese called such condition *ngecember* or *jember*. This then became

a name of a village. Before arriving at Sunan Kudus' house, the night had come, so Sunan Kedu to find lamp to lead his way. Javanese said lamp as *damar*, and this was the name of a village *Damaran*. Then, as his body was dirty, he took a bath in *Sucen*, deriving from the word *Pasucen*, (Javanese, a place for cleaning body or taking a bath).

Sunan Kudus then forgave Sunan Kedu with a condition that he had to give up his wealth to Sunan Kudus. This is proved that in Kedu Region, there are many tobacco plantations, cigarette factories, and the cigarette factories are found in Kudus.

VII. Discussion

The story above is called legend. As a genre of narrative, it has moral messages. The characters of the legend are categorized dynamic characters, since they have changes in their behavior. They changed from being wicked to being good.

7.1 Sunan Kedu

He came from Kedu (a residence covering some regions in Central Java: Magelang, Temanggung, Purworejo, Kebumen). He was very powerful. This made him think he was the only person who had great supernatural power. Hearing that there was another person in Kudus, claimed to be powerful, he felt challenged. He set an effort of competition by challenging Sunan Kudus' son to have a gamecock. Here, Sunan Kedu started showing his power by changing a knife into a cock until driving *flying tumpah* to show his supernatural power. This indicates that Sunan Kedu is **arrogant**.

However, Sunan Kedu is a **sportive** person. After being defeated by Sunan Kudus, he admitted that Sunan Kudus was more powerful than him; and he decided to apologize for his arrogance and mistakes he did.

Besides, Sunan Kedu always kept its **consistency**. He would get Sunan Kudus' approval if he fulfilled the condition, giving up his wealth to Sunan Kudus. He really did it then. It is actually only a symbol meaning that people from Kudus and from Kedu build a **cooperative** venture to run business. Nowadays, there are many cigarette factories in Kudus, and you can nearly find tobacco plant/field there. Otherwise, we can find many in Kedu, but also many cigarette factories are found there.

7.2 Sunan Kudus

Sunan Kudus was known as *wali/sunan* (Javanese, a person who taught and spread Islam in the north side of Java). He was also the commander of Demak Kingdom. As a *wali*, he was expert of Islam religion; and as a commander he was well-known for his supernatural power. From the legend above, he might have characters of **bravery to stand up and fight for the truth and self-image**. He showed up his power to Arabis people.

contempted him, so that they got disease. For his service and help to cure from the disease he did not want to receive the prize the King of Arab promised. This indicates that Sunan Kudus is not greedy.

Again, he was easy to forgive. He forgave Sunan Kedu who really made mistake to him. The condition he gave to Sunan Kudus is just a symbol of his **visionary** view of running business between Kudus and Kedu people.

Sunan Kudus is a person who is wise to choose the acceptable method of announcing Islam. He aculturated Hindu and Islam cultures in some occasion. Building the gate of the Mosque of Kudus is a kind of effort not to make people afraid or awkward of entering the mosque to hear and learn Islam. In addition, he has high tolerance in living together with non-moslems. This even attracts non-moslem to follow Islam.

VIII. Conclusion

Overall, as a perspective insight of life contemplation, we may learn from literary works which are rich of moral values. The conclusive details are:

- (i) people may make mistake, but apologizing, receiving punishment as consequence of responsibility of doing mistake, and not repeating the mistake must be the next activity
- (ii) people should not have and do revenge, otherwise they should apologize one another
- (iii) people should keep trying hard to make goodness for themselves and others.
- (iv) people should have patience and tolerance although they live together in heterogeneous society.
- (v) People should have good cooperation and communication among others, so that peaceful and advantageous life can be gained

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