

Women's Public Spaces in Nias Folklore

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Abstract: The purpose of this paper is to construct a public space used by Nias women to maintain life, which is represented in folklore. The theory used is subsistence ecofeminism. The Feminist method by elaborating on a qualitative descriptive method that focuses on thematic studies. The material object in this paper is folklore originating from the Nias ethnic group. The results obtained are that women of Nias ethnicity have a public space as a place to work in addition to carrying out household tasks, namely in the fields as farmers and at home as breeders. Nias women are also likened to gods in the form of women. Women for the people of Nias are strong creatures.

Keywords: Nias women, subsistence, folklore, public space

Introduction

Many modern perspectives that manifest in globalization are contrary to local wisdom. Local wisdom in this globalization era is starting to be abandoned by the communal because it is considered unfit for the modern way of life (Wuriyani: 2019). The way of life by processing and utilizing natural products directly is considered a complicated way of life because the market has provided all the necessities of life. For example, people's lifestyles that apply the principle of subsistence or live by prioritizing their ability to adapt to the times and nature are considered a way of life that is left behind. The assumption that the market provides all needs is true, but before the goods reach the market, there are series and rows of various parties involved in the process. These activities are inseparable from the activities of women as producers as well as consumers.

Women as producers and consumers can be found in various folk stories. Traditional literature or what is often known as folklore tells a lot about how humans convey rules, prohibitions, and instructions, as well as how to behave, and behave in relationships with others, nature, and God. Traditional stories also tell about the work done by women both in the household and in nature. Almost every area has a story about women who are represented as the goddess of fertility, beautiful, strong, and even evil women.

In this paper, the folklore that is reviewed is limited to stories from the Nias ethnic group with the criteria that there are female characters, work outside the home, and there are activities of characters in nature (rice fields, fields, or forests). Limiting this problem is necessary because the purpose of this paper is to construct and describe how the Nias community constructs the relationship between women and nature in terms of maintaining their lives as well as their families and the people around them.

Literature Review

Literature and ecofeminism

The study of ecofeminism in literature currently is no longer a study that is rare and empty of interest. Ecofeminism is currently a trend study carried out by people working in feminism studies. The study of ecofeminism is an interdisciplinary study that can coexist with many fields of science, one of which is literature. Ecofeminism studies see an important relationship between dominance over women and dominance over nature (Keraf, 2002:131-133). Ecofeminists believe that the structure of social and political institutions must be changed to eliminate or at least reduce the oppression and exploitation of men against women and the human exploitation of nature. Ecofeminism is not just a theory but is described as a movement, a collective action to challenge all social and political institutions that perpetuate the domination and exploitation of women and nature.

The history of the relationship between literature and ecofeminism has been reviewed in depth by Murphy (1991). Murphy (1991) has explained that ecofeminism is a form of developing and expanding philosophy that can be used as an element of a structured and integrated ecofeminism movement. The criteria for ecofeminism literature represent a phenomenon at the end of the 20th century with a proto ecology that can embody two dimensions that overcome the ecological crisis and solve women's oppression (women's oppression and environmental degradation).

Ecofeminism in literary research for Kunze (2014) is not only able to reveal the relationship of cultural, political, and ideological domination. However, it is also used to express the intertwined representation of nature with representations of gender, race, class, and sexuality. The way ecofeminism works in literature begins by analyzing the use of language, ideas, knowledge, and power.

Furthermore, from the field of literature, Bennett (2005) explains that literature can be used as a teacher for readers to teach a more environmentally friendly lifestyle, not looking for happiness, pleasure, and pleasure on the suffering of others. Bennett uses several views of ecofeminism to review literature. Bennett reveals the principle behind ecofeminism that is appropriate for analyzing literature. Literature can be interpreted in many ways, one of which is by connecting the issue of ecofeminism with the American lifestyle.

Based on some of the expert opinions above, it can be concluded that ecofeminism literature is literature that was born at the end of the 20th century to the 21st century which represents the phenomenon of natural exploitation to seek human benefit, natural damage that impacts women's oppression, to how to overcome existing damage and oppression. However, to find out the grassroots of women's connection with nature, old literature or folklore can be studied using ecofeminism (Wuriyani, 2019). The way literary ecofeminism works is done by dialogue between contrasting voices in the text through dialogue between characters and characters with the objects around them, the author's voice with the voice of the reader, the text with other literary texts, and the text with the context implicit in the text. In other words, ecofeminist literature does not view the text as a single discourse, but as a multi-complex discourse.

Subsistence in Ecofeminism

Subsistence according to Mills (1998: 170-171); Shiva and Meis (1993); and Jones (2017) is a way of sustaining life by prioritizing togetherness and not exploitation. Subsistence is still a way of responding to life's competition in the context of modernization. Subsistence is maintained because every culture has a history and way of life that cannot be compared and claimed to be higher or better than others. The perspective of one party as superior to the other only results in domination which makes them colonize a lot of tribes or countries around them. The attitude of togetherness and cooperation is a priority in the face of globalization. Subsistence is a way of sustaining life that needs to be socialized to reduce the increasingly expensive dependence on life (Wuriyani, 2019)

Women's Public Space

The division of domestic and public labor will not be a problem if it does not define who is appropriate and who is not. As a result of this job discrimination, there is resistance. Things like that are not easy to apply in some cultures, considering the issue of division of labor is always different in each culture (Kamilah, Nuryanti, Soewarno, & Setiawan, 2014: 142). Mies (in (Kasim, 1996: 42-48)) states that the sexual division of labor is not just a problem within the family but the structure of the whole society. Udasmoro (2015: 81) explains that it is not easy to say whether something is appropriate or not, because there is always a system that influences and shapes it.

Research Method

The feminist method, which is elaborated with a qualitative descriptive method, is used to review the problems in this paper. The feminist method refers to De Vault (1991), which is used to examine women's lives and individual relationships with the natural environment. Furthermore, Dobscha and Julie (2008) explained that studies related to women have become natural to use the feminist method. This study focuses on the study of thematic structure, considering that the source of the data is a literary text. The term thematic structure refers to Goldmann's concept which focuses on the relationship between characters and characters with the objects around them (Faruk, 2015: 72). The material object in this paper is folklore from the Nias Ethnic which has criteria for female characters, working outside the home, and character activities in nature (rice fields, fields, or forests), weaving, trading, and raising livestock.

Findings and Discussion

Nias by Geography and History

Nias is one of the regencies in North Sumatra Province on a separate island called Nias Island. The capital city of Nias is in Gido District. Travel to Nias can be traveled by sea from Sibolga and air travel from Medan by airplane. The area of Nias Regency is 1,004.06 km², parallel to and located in the west of Sumatra Island and surrounded by the Indian Ocean. Based on its geographical location, Nias Regency is located on the lines 0°12'-0°32' North Latitude (LU) and 97°-98' East Longitude (BT) close to the equator (Hadi, Ritonga & Lubs: 2020).

The natural topography of the mainland of Nias Regency is mostly narrow and steep hills and mountains with a height above sea level varying between 0-800 m, consisting of lowlands to bumpy, from bumpy to hilly lands, and from hilly to mountainous. Due to such natural conditions, there are 67 small, medium, or large watersheds found in almost all sub-districts (Hadi, Ritonga & Lubs: 2020).

Historically, in 1956 (Law Number 7 of 1956), Nias Regency was designated as an autonomous region called the Autonomous Region of Nias Regency Level II, led by the Regent of the Regional Head. In addition to the Regent of the Regional Head, a Regional Government Council is formed which is elected by members of the DPRD. Then, from 1961 to 1969, the Chairperson of the DPRD was directly concurrently held by the Regent of the Regional Head. To assist the Regent of the Regional Head in running the daily wheels of government, a Daily Administration Agency was formed which was said to replace the DPD (which had been abolished). However, from 1969 until the enactment of Law No. 5 of 1974 concerning the Principles of Regional Government, the BPH institution as Assistant to the Regional Head in carrying out the daily government has never held again (Hadi, Ritonga & Lubs: 2020)

According to Hadi, Ritonga & Lubs (2020), many unique things exist in Nias, one of which is the village naming process. Naming village names in Nias Regency is generally related to hills, plants, rivers, events, customs, occult stories, natural events (events that occur in a village), equipment, animals, livelihood (work), village names, and boundaries. area and number. From the aspect of the building elements, the naming of the villages in Nias Regency is made up of one

word, two words, three words, and four words. The elements that are built on two or more words are a combination of various variations of the word in the naming.

The Theme of Women in Nias Folklore

Based on the search for books of Indonesian folklore collections, interviews, and through the internet, five (5) Nias Ethnic folklore titles were found. Stories are selected as material objects with the following conditions: in the story, there are female characters, women work outside the home, there are activities of characters working in nature (rice fields, fields, or forests), weaving, trading, and raising livestock. The table below presents the titles and summaries of stories originating from Nias.

Table of Nias Ethnic Folklore with Female Characters

No	Title	Representation of Women in Stories
1	Princess Buruti Siraso	In Tano Niha (Bumi) Putri Buruti Siraso helps farmers who are struggling because the planted seeds won't grow. Finally, Putri Buruti Siraso distributed seeds from heaven starting from planting and caring for them, until the day of harvest. It turned out that the seeds gave abundant good harvests.
2	The Story of the Goddess of Seeds	Folklore that makes a Putri Buruti Siraso has the title of Dewi Bibit or Goddess of Seeds because she helps the community by planting and caring for the day of harvest by providing abundant harvests so that people can use it well to eat and sell to make money.
3	The Origin of Mado-Madi in Nias	One of the folk tales that have a female character is Burutiraoanaa. In this case, it can be said that women are strong beings and can be made into a god for the first time. The existence of a woman in this story is described as a glorified figure.
4	The Legend of Tödö Hia	One day, her daughter-in-law who is described as an evil woman throws the bottle containing the heart into the river and is carried by a great flood into the sea because her daughter-in-law is tired of hearing her advice.
5	The Lauwumaru Cave	In this story there is a princess who betrayed Lauwumaru because she cut her hair and made Lauwumaru from strong to weak, suddenly Lauwumaru's power was restored, and destroyed the royal palace.

In the story entitled **Putri Buruti Siraso**, there is a female character named Buruti Siraso. She was a princess from heaven, then she descended to Tano Niha (Earth) by the king (God) because the king knew that Putri Buruti Siraso and her brother (twin brother) loved each other. Therefore, to avoid indecent acts, the princess must come down to earth and teach humans about agriculture to processing crops. Putri Buruti Siraso distributes seeds from heaven to earth. Putri Buruti Siraso's efforts start from planting and caring for, to harvesting. Thanks to the seeds from heaven, the harvest is bountiful. After that Princess Buruti Siraso returned to heaven.

The next story is titled **The Story of the Goddess of Seeds** in this story there are two (2) female characters, firstly the consort of the king of King Balugu Silaride Ana'a, and the second Princess of Seeds or known as Buruti Siraso. This story has similarities with the Princess of Buruti Siroso. This story can be said as a version of the story. The difference is in the knowledge and work that is stouter, namely teaching livestock. Her daily work besides distributing rice seeds also raises livestock. This story is related to the story above, but this story focuses more on how Putri Buruti Siraso, who initially only helped residents, got the nickname of the goddess of seeds from the community.

In addition, there is a folk tale about **The Origin of Mado-Mado in Nias** named Burutiraoanaa which tells about the first God in the form of a woman.

Meanwhile, in the **Legend of Tödö Hia**, there are two female characters namely Hia and her daughter-in-law, Hia is a dead mother and says that if she dies, she wants her heart to be put in a bottle and hung on the roof of her house because she is like a newspaper that can talk and always inform the events that will take place around them and give good advice.

Based on the story from **The Lauwumaru Cave**, women are described as weak and easily swayed when they are under threat. This is what makes it easier for men to assume that their rank is higher.

In the story of Putri Buruti Siraso, it can be used as evidence that the women in this story are people who know seeds, planting, caring for, processing, and selling. This is in line with the ecofeminism view that women first know how to farm, which is associated with the ability to care for and cultivate (Tong, 1998: 373-398). In this story, the female character is described as a princess who was brought by God to teach her how to live and survive by interacting with nature. This is in line with the principle of subsistence life (see Mills (1998: 170-171); Shiva and Meis (1993); Jones (2017), and Wuriyani, 2019). Based on this review, it can be concluded that the people of Nias have a collective record that women can cultivate natural or natural products that can be used to continue life on earth. By cultivating nature, a peaceful, harmonious, and sufficient life can be maintained.

Nias Women's Public Space

Women as the Root of Self Subsistence with Nature

The discussion on public space for women is still an issue that has not yet been agreed upon. As stated by Walby (2014:264) that class differences make work differences for women. Women whose men dominate the domestic upper class, so women work at home, lower class women, or women of lower categories, can work in the public. However, if we go back to the five stories of the Nias ethnic group, we get data that it is the upper class that teaches women to work outside the home.

This female character is described as coming from heaven, the child of a king or God. Then it was also told that the Nias woman was one of the great and strong figures. Thus, the Nias folklore represents that women have two spaces to carry out their daily activities. A woman's domestic space becomes a place for her to carry out the nature of pregnancy and carry out the division of labor to raise children and take care of the household. Then the public space is used by women to work by farming by utilizing forest land by farming and raising livestock.

Based on the discussion above, it can be said that in Ethnic folklore, women from the beginning have been reconstructed to have a close relationship with nature and have a public space. Women are not only described as being good at taking care of children and households and being obedient to their husbands. Nias women have a public space, namely in nature. Nature through farming activities, processing products, and utilizing harvests as an effort to express knowledge and abilities. In addition, Nias women are also strong figures.

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