

Karonese Perception on the "Si Beru Dayang" Folk Myth

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ABSTRACT

The folk myth "Si Beru Dayang" is one of intangible heritages in North Sumatra and belongs to Karo society. The myth is still believed by Karonese and inherited orally because it has local wisdom that each Karonese should know. The research was carried out as efforts to prevent the extinction of Karonese cultural heritage because this heritage is potential to build mental development in North Sumatra. This paper aims at describing Karonese perception on the values of local wisdom contained in the myth. The research was qualitative descriptive using observational and interviewing techniques. Data was analyzed by sociology of literature approach focusing on a number of folkloric and mythical concepts in the myth. The approach always tries to understand the social action and life of society as complex, interconnected, dependent and meaningful networks; moreover, the construction of the social reality possessed by every member of a group, community or society are also paid attention. The results show that Karonese perceptions can be divided into two groups; first group remains to believe the myth but the second does not trust it.

Keywords: myth, Karonese folklore, Si Beru Dayang, sociology of literature

INTRODUCTION

Folklore is part of traditional literature (Barone, 2011). In the folklore there is definitely a myth. That is, between folklore and myth have a close relationship. Myth also serves as part of a complex global system, involving energy, issues, and interacting ideas (Glottfelty, 1996). Karonese public perceptions on the folk myth "Si Beru Dayang" are still available although the existence of the myth gradually declines if the function of the myth is only considered as superstition. The excavation of the public perception on the roles of the folk myth which has local wisdom is a way to know the existence of the myth; in addition, the myth can be used as cultural documents because it was ever lived or embraced by persons or society and the

myth is hoped to create good mental attitude or mindset in current society.

Man lives with myths that limit all his acts and fear and bravery are determined by the myths available in his environment. However, according to Te Lin (2000) with the rise of 19th century rationalism, myths only become the strange stories about the gods, a false belief, and symbolic stories although, in fact, myths are not just stories about gods and others but they were created to explain the disharmony of nature, although there are also some myths that explain nothing. Therefore, myths store a number values of local wisdom that is able to harmonize man and his life. According to Sibarani (2012: 112), local wisdom refers to the aboriginal knowledge of a society which

came from the noble values of cultural traditions to regulate the life of society.

A book on Karonese myths was written by Z. Pangaduan Lubis and entitled *Cerita Rakyat dari Karo 'Folk Myths of Karo'* and some of the myths are *Tuan Bagunda Raja dan Manuk Ni Nanggur Dawa 'The King and Chicken Ni Nanggur Dawa'*, *Asal Mula Padi 'The Origin of Rice'*, and *Putri Ginting Pase 'Princess of Ginting Pase'*, and others. All the myths contain values of local wisdom. In another version, the myth is titled *Si Beru Dayang 'the female'* telling about a fruit that was the embodiment of a child named *Si Beru Dayang*. The fruit was cut into several parts and planted and maintained properly until it grew like rice. The myth teaches people not to fight for fruits but to take care of paddy plants well, of pounding and cooking rice.

The research on the perception has the purpose to build identities among Karonese youths who should not lose their confidence in the midst of globalization era. One effect of globalization is that youths would discard the culture they were given birth and raised. Thomas Lickona (in Abourjilie, 2002) said, "When we think about the kind of character we want for our children, it is clear that we want them to be able to judge what is right, care deeply about what is right, and what do they believe to be right, even in the face of pressure from without and temptation from within". People with good characters are those who have polite attitude and behavior, are peace lovers, and others. Therefore, folk myths in general must contain the values of local wisdom. When discussing the the Karo Batak's *Manuk Sidanggur Dawa-Dawa*, Susilo et al. (2017) concludes that folklore has the values of local wisdom such as religious and social values, and value of cooperation.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The current data were taken from preliminary observation and collected through recording and notes as well as interviews with Karonese informants who

live in Karo regency. The approach in this research is qualitative descriptive. Bogdan and Taylor (in Moleong, 1998: 3) suggested that qualitative procedures would result a research that reveals qualitative data with an approach which is aimed at holistic background and at individuals or at perceiving as a whole. Kirl and Miller (1986: 9) argued that qualitative research is a particular tradition in social science that is fundamentally dependent on observation to humans within their own region and that relates to the fields of social sciences and of humanities which cover all activities based on scientific disciplines when collecting data, and classifying, analyzing and interpreting facts and the relationship among the natural facts, society, behavior, and the human spirit in order to discover the principles of knowledge and new methods.

The sociology of literature approach is also used in this study because the approach focuses on a number of concepts on folklores and myths in the "Si Beru Dayang". In the approach, it is known that strategies relate to the understanding of social action by considering the life of society as a complex, interconnected, dependent and meaningful networks, the construction of the social reality possessed by every member of a group, community or society.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Karonese perception on Si Beru Dayang folk myth

The folk myth "Si Beru Dayang" tells about a child who changed himself into a fruit and then the fruit was cut into pieces; such pieces were planted and maintained properly so that they grew and became paddy plants. The Karonese people believe that if they together take care of Si Beru Dayang then their paddy plants will flourish and produce good results. The same story about the myth of rice fertility is also found in the Javanese society, namely "Dewi Sri" mythical folklore. Dewi Sri was considered a goddess who brought fertility to paddy fields. It was said that on the grave of Dewi

Sri, some paddy, coconut, and banana plants were growing.

The "Dewi Sri" and "Si Beru Dayang" folk myths told about the growth of plants, especially paddy plants and such myths are found in some areas in Indonesia. The core of the myths is almost the same, that is, plants grow from human bodies. Such myths are attractive because they worship fertility and they are mostly found in agricultural cultures. The myth of fertility also reflects the sacrificed character who becomes the symbol or the parable of the plant seeds which must be broken or destroyed first, then new plants grow. The informants who argued about their perception on the "Si Beru Dayang" are classified into two groups. The first group consisting of old generation still believes the myth but the last one consisting of younger generation disbelieve it. The elders still consider that the myth must be preserved so that all people appreciate rice crops and they do not waste food or rice. Young people think that the myth remains the myth that

did not really happen in the past because they think that it is impossible for human beings to change themselves into rice.

Those who are illiterate and those who are passed from junior high school still believe in the power of "Si Beru Dayang" who could fertilize rice crops. One of the reasons why they believes such myth is that they listened the myth orally (or from mouth to ear) from their elder generation. Such myth was told in an interesting and memorable way so that these young people also tended to convey to others. Many local myths were spread in the same way. Those who were graduated from high schools and from college disbelieved the myth because they thought that they had modern mindset so they did not need to believe myth anymore. Members of this group were also familiar with religion so they must be religious. Therefore, they believe in the power of God but do not believe in the power of a human being living on earth. Karonese perception on the "Si Beru Dayang" myth can be seen in the Fig. 1.

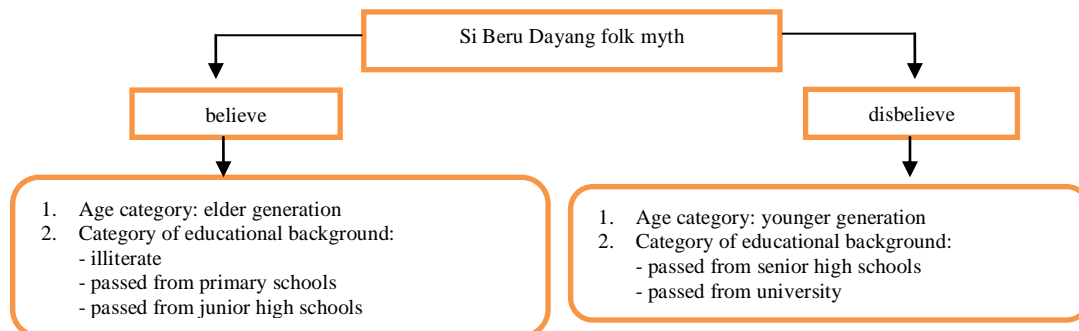


Figure 1: Karonese perception on "Si Beru Dayang" folk myth

In the cultural perspective, the functions of folklore are to make (1) the grandchildren know the origin of their ancestors who always tried to tell them "Si Beru Dayang" myth because the ancestors thought that telling myth to their great grandchildren would not make the myth disappear, and (2) other people learn and appreciate the Karonese ancestors who created the myth. The way the Karonese appreciate human being who created rice is normatively done by keeping and taking

care for the condition in which the myth is usually retold to younger generations.

Various public perceptions on the "Si Beru Dayang" folk myth indicate that its existence is only believed by elder generations and by those who have bad educational background, for instance they were passed from junior high schools. It is hoped that this cultural heritage still exists in the society because there are still many youths in rural areas who do not pursue their education after they are passed from junior

high schools; they indirectly become agents of local cultural heritage.

CONCLUSIONS

It is concluded that the first group consisting of old generation still believes the myth but the last one consisting of younger generation disbelieve it. The elders still consider that the myth must be preserved so that all people appreciate rice crops and they do not waste food or rice. Young people think that the myth remains the myth that did not really happen in the past because they think that it is impossible for human beings to change themselves into rice. Those who are illiterate and those who are passed from junior high school still believe in the power of "Si Beru Dayang" who could fertilize rice crops. One of the reasons why they believes such myth is that they listened the myth orally (or from mouth to ear) from their elder generation. Such myth was told in an interesting and memorable way so that these young people also tended to convey to others. Many local myths were spread in the same way. Those who were graduated from high schools and from college disbelieved the myth because they thought that they had modern mindset so they did not need to believe myth anymore. Members of this group were also familiar with religion so they must be religious. Therefore, they believe in the power of God but do not believe in the power of a human being living on earth

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The research for this paper was financially funded by University of Sumatera Utara (USU) in relation to the contract of research application proposed to the USU's TALENTA under the budget year 2018 Nomor: 2590/UN5.1.R/PPM/2017 dated March16, 2018.

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How to cite this article: Lubis HS, Nasution I, Marsella E. Karonese perception on the "Si Beru Dayang" folk myth. International Journal of Research and Review. 2018; 5(9):201-204.
