

Facts and Values of Karo's "Merga Purba" Folk Stories

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ABSTRACT

The facts of myths, legends, and mythical beliefs belong to the genre of oral folklore. As it is generally understood myth is a sacred folklore having gods or half-gods as their figures and while legend is meant a people's prose which is considered to have occurred in the world in the not-too-distant past and had human beings as the characters who had tremendous qualities and were assisted by magical creatures. Such religious beliefs not only describe the sacred beings such as gods or angels, and unseen natures, like heaven or hell, but what is more important is the relations between such creatures with humans' real world of life. The research is qualitative, taking into account only on the primary data in which the observation was held in several locations such as Seribudolok, Pematangpurba, Kaban, Lau Gendek, Gunung Barus and Gunung Singkut or in Beluh Duri and was focused on ethnographic aspects. Results show that "Merg Purba" folk stories are oriented to (1) shamans as astrologers, (2) springs as medicine, and (3) shower ritual. Furthermore, the fairy tales of belief contain (1) an angel, (2) damage prevention to the natural environment, and (3) the value of cohesiveness/togetherness. Likewise, in the legend, the beliefs may include (1) the value of ethics of decency, (2) the origin name of Kaban Jahe, and (3) fairy logic.

Keywords: Merga Purba, Karo, facts, values, folk stories, belief, folklore

INTRODUCTION

The Latin word *factus* or *fact* in English is described by Kartodirjo as something that can be caught by the human's senses or as data of reality that has been proven and has occurred and shows true information or becomes an irrefutable statement of truth (Kartodirjo, 1982: 16). Such statement can be in the form of sentences which are written and based on reality, events, or on circumstances that have actually occurred. Myth, legend, and fairy tale belong to the genre of oral folklore. Myth is a sacred folklore having gods or half-gods as its characters; legend is folklore which has occurred in the world in the not-too-distant past and its characters are human beings who often have tremendous

qualities and are assisted the magical creatures; fairy tale is a folk prose story that is never happened and not bound by time and place (Dananjaya, 1994: 50).

Asa story or as such that has source just like history but is more prominently in the fantasy, myth always includes human life and usually has super man as its character. The mythical story usually consists of two parts and the first part is characterized as mythical, fairytale, and legendary containing the state of the past, the origin of kings in a kingdom, and the beginning of the enactment of customs and so on. The second part can be identified when its author tells the time of his own life. The structure of folk story is very complex and contains not only stories, myths,

legends, and tales, but also various things concerning life and community life of its owner (Nasution, 2012: 1).

The value of faith has a different writing style with five characteristics: having region-centric or regional, ignoring elements of facts, containing beliefs in magical power or elements, believing in magic by certain figures (Darmiasti, 2009: 34). Everything is centered on the king or on his royal family and this is often called palace-centric. Religious beliefs not only depict and explain sacred beings such as gods or angels, and supernatural beings, like heaven or hell, but also more importantly connect human beings with their real world. Dilistone (in Hariadi, 2006: 130) argued that the existence of a world is associated with meaningful goods and objects which are the sources of inspiration or imagination of the creators when goods and objects have meanings that can be achieved as the efforts of human's dedication and cooperation. However, goods and objects remain the centers which are full of attraction, invention, deed, and responses. They are always seen vital and sacred and in addition, objectively they become meaningful items because of self consciousness as well as of certain individuals.

According to Nottingham (2002: 2) the meaning of objects and goods as the representation of cognitive formation for the existence of consciousness in itself is presented and interpreted in the ideology of construction of standardized binary opposition which is categorized as good, moderate, sufficient, low and sacred which is often said sacred and secular. On the other hand, the meaning of sufism and postmodernism in formation reproduces symbols of language showing the different construction of ideologies, such as Sufism, Hinduism which exist in themselves to represent the symbol of the living things such as the sacred bull, Christians present the symbol of the inanimate object of the cross on the Altar, Muslims present a symbol of inanimate black stone that is placed in the corner of Ka'bah, the Jews present a symbol

of inanimate stone where the written text of the ten commandments of God exists.

Values refer to empirical qualities that can not be defined but it does not mean they can not be understood. Value is something important and useful to human beings, so it is often seen as something grand and sublime. It also means an appreciation or quality that determines one's behavior, because something is fun, satisfying, interesting, useful, profitable or is a system of belief (Kasnadi, 2017: 2). Therefore, value is upheld by a group of people and refers to something that contains the meaning of happiness or worth and goodness. Generally, literary works of traditional society, such as folklore, is an expression of social life of a society and its customs. When analyzed this story is linked with social principles and when seen in deep it shows the cultural value in Karo folklore, so the text of the folklore becomes the reflection of cultural values.

Cultural values include (1) ideas, values and norms, (2) complex activities of human's behavior patterns, and (3) human's works. The form of cultural institutions in the form of value systems, ideas, norms, customs that are abstract, unformed can not be touched or photographed. This first form functions as a behavior that governs, controls, and gives direction to human behavior and behavior in society (Koentjaraningrat, 1979: 35) and is called cultural value which covers all series of elements that become the most prominent characteristics of a culture, which further describes the character of the culture.

Cultural values are generally shaped by values, norms, and beliefs so that they can not be seen. In each society, a number of ideally cultural patterns are developed and tend to be reinforced by restrictions; cultural limitations are divided into two types, namely (1) direct restriction occurring when we try to do something customary in our culture, which is unusual or perceived as a violation of modesty, for example when someone comes to a college in inappropriate clothes. Then the person will be directly

reprimanded by the lecturer; (2) indirect restrictions covering activities committed by infringers which are not impeded or restricted directly but such activities will not receive responses from other members of the culture because they are not understood by them, for example when somebody does shopping in a traditional market by using English because he will not be served because nothing is understood. A system of cultural values consists of conceptions that live in the minds of most people who know the things they have to value in life. Therefore, a cultural value system usually serves as the ultimate guide to human behavior. A more concrete system of human behavior, such as special rules, laws, and norms, all of which are guided by the cultural value system (Koentjaraningrat, 2002: 41).

Koentjaraningrat (2002: 25) noted that cultural value is the first level of ideal or customary culture and is the most abstract and broadest scope. This level includes ideas that conceive of the most valuable things in people's lives. The second form of cultural value is social system covering the structure and process in a particular container that has nine main elements such as trust, feelings and thoughts, purpose, rule or norm, position and role, monitoring, sanctions, facilities, sustainability and survival, and preservation of quality of life with environmental quality. All values will inadvertently form in society and will be taken into account from one generation to the next so that it is considered to be a very meaningful and valuable because they have become a living concept in the public mind.

Folklore can be interpreted as events that actually occurred in the past related to the origins of genealogy of kings who ruled. The knowledge on folklore is used to study human's history diachronically and synchronically. Folklore can be identified from the specific words such as "It is said in the ancient times ...", "Once upon a time ...", "It was told in the past ..." and so forth, which are commonly found in the

beginning and make folklore relevant and operational in the present context, is timeless, time-bound, or reversible-time, but at the same time it explains what is happening and what will happen in the future (Ahimsa, 2001: 50).

The Merga Purba folklore reveals ethnographic, societal, mythic, legendary, dogmatic, traditional, and literary aspects. Therefore, the research problem is: what facts of value or beliefs in the Merga Purba folklore really exist? Kasnadi (2017) did his research on "The religious values: A local wisdom of Ponorogo's folk story" and found that such values were in accordance with the concepts of submission, piety, and gratitude to God. The values with relevance to the concept of animism and dynamism appeared in the form of objects, belief in places, in good and bad days, and in spirits. Wardhani (2017) has undergone her research on "The cultural values of Bugis' Si Jago Rencana in Sumbawa Regency" and described how Bugis' cultural values looked at attitudes and manners, and behavior which were shown by characters when dealing with the conflicts and how they solved problems of life.

Junaini (2017) focused her research title on "Analysis of value of character education from Seluma folklore" and the results showed that early enforcement of educational values could contribute to the world today because education was very close to everyday life so it should be implanted. Seluma folklore consisted of values of bravery, attitudes of mutual need, discipline, self-respect, fairness, care, self-protecting, respect to others, deliberation, and mutual cooperation.

METHODS

As a qualitative research, the data was taken from primary and secondary sources and the first source was obtained from Merga Purba folklore from some locations, i.e. Seribu Dolok, Pematang Purba, Kabanjahe, Lau Gendek, Gunung Barus, and Gunung Singkut or in Beluh Duri; all the locations are located in Karo

Regency, North Sumatera Province. The research was ethnographic to determine some factual truths.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Facts and Values of Merga Purba Folklore

Humans are basically homo religious, meaning having religion so homo religious refers to a type of man who lives in a sacred realm with religious values, enjoys the existing sacredness and is visible in the universe, in the material realm, in the natural vegetation, in the animal nature, and in the human realm. This sacred appreciation further influences, shapes, and contributes to the pattern and way of life. Being aware of the fact that the Saints and the Almighty exists, man must be able to control himself in order he can unite with God as his creator. Various efforts are carried out by man to show his love to God because he wants to come back and unite with God; therefore, various ritual ceremonies and prayers are performed because he is aware that he is part of the universe created by the Almighty and that his existence in the universe is very dependent on God. He is an absolute entrepreneur of men who fear of being destroyed. Man lives in this world with good guidelines, with way of life that directs all actions; he knows things to do, can control himself, and has a balance in his life.

(1) Myth of faith value to forecasters

The values of attitudes and behaviorsto the forecast from shamans are believed to be characteristics of folk stories. This is of course the hallmark of folklore that still has the animism and the things that may not make sense (like superstition and the fact of myth). The house of King Purba still stands firmly in Dolok Saribu as shown in Fig. 1.



Figure 1. House of King Purba

Once upon a time, it was said, at the time when the youngest son of King Purba was born, the King became constantly sick, as if after the birth of his son, his happiness was badly increasing. Therefore, a powerful magician named Guru Pakpak Tujuh Sejalan was invited to predict and to look for treatment for the causes of the sadness. Then, the future of the King Purba's family was predicted and foretold. The magician said that the birth of the son brought bad luck and disaster for the whole family of the King. Therefore, the son had to be removed or thrown away from his family and even, the son was not recognized as his son in the Kingdom. So, the King trusted everything to the magician who was allowed to take further steps for his son. Finally, it was decided that the son was taken away by the magician and exiled far from his family.



Figure 2. Mount Barus

By the time when the son was brought to an isolation, he was thirteen years old; he was taken away from Simalungun by crossing Mount Barus and went towards the sunset which symbolized the condition of his broken heart and sorrow; he was really heart-wrenching more than what he ever suffered pain from thorns while walking through the thick jungles. After a few days, they came to a flat ground

which, the magician thought, was suitable for an exile. He built a hut for the son and soon moved to leave him there but, unluckily, the son cried deeply and begged that he was not left alone. Then, the magician decided not to leave but accompanied him; but suddenly, he transfixed his stick to the ground and then seven springs appeared in the location. He also planted thorned bamboos in dense as fences with a purpose that the son would not be able to come back to his homeland as well as the fences could protect him from being attacked from wild animals (the location of the fences is now called Buluh Duri in which seven springs can be found and it is located in Lau Gendek village; the place is still considered sacred by local community, as seen in Fig. 3).



Figure 3. Seven plain springs in Buluh Duri

After all the tasks were completed, the Guru disappeared and left the merga Purba in exiles alone, who was confined by bamboo fence spiked. He travelled to the land of Karo.

Myth of trust on the Seven Springs

The myth of the trust on seven springs has become the belief system of the Karo's people by visiting the shower and having bath. In ancient times, the celebration is intended for: (1) gaining the luck (fortune), (2) treating illness, (3) releasing from danger, for example, to recover from the disease, (4) establishing prestige and recognizing a person's position in the midst of the family, and (5) showing the number of relatives (showfoce) (Ginting, 1999: 38).



Figure 4. Seven Springs (Tujuh Mata Air Pancuran)

Ritual Ceremony of Taking Shower in the Springs

The erpangir ku lau ritual was seen from what Sembiring Kembaren/Beru Ginting clan conducted when this clan acted as the si man pangiren. When all the participants as well as guests were present and the materials were complete, the ritual began. The materials included: (i) water dipper (pangir), (ii) seven types of citrus and kaffir lime (jeruk purut), and (iii) frying pan (belanga) used as the place for water dipper. Then, before the erpangir ritual started, a master spelled mantras (see Fig. 5).



Figure 5. Persentabinritual

The master pleaded with a supplication to the dibata kaci-kaci (God) through mantras (or tabas) in order he was given power. Then the pangir mantras or anjab (bamboo mouthpiece) was said and marked the persentabin (saying sorry) which was facilitated by pronounce a sheet of white cloth. Flawless and smooth betel leaves (daun sirih) were prepared. The master washed her feet, hands, and face

with water, then washed her face with water in the water dipper which was placed on the thick and black cloth and beneath the cloth, there was unpolluted white mat; he faced to the east in the standing position and said through her mantras.

The ritual was the old belief system of animism existing during Pre-Hinduism or during Proto Malay age in which it was predicted that the Karonese great grandfathers had lived. Then, the influence of Hinduism came and Tamil merchants brought the term dewata (or God) with them from the West coast of Barus, heading to Dairi, then living in Karo region. There was mixed marriage between the merchants and the local people who later knew the term dewata (or in local word it is called dibata). Likewise, there was a conglomeration of faith between Proto Malays and Tamil's Deutro which seemed to be in harmony (Ginting, 1999: 2).

Based on this reconstruction, it appears that the conglomeration made Karonese people to survive their rituals which are addressed to the spirits which are higher than the ordinary spirits.

Some informants argued that the diversity of faiths in Karo land increased quite rapidly, however, animist beliefs (or tribal religions) are still widely found in the villages. Although, in principle, Karonese receive Christianity and Islam as their religions but their old belief (sometimes called pemena) is still adopted in some villages.

Fairy Tale on Abstentions of Killing Snakes and of Making Promises

The value of faith may refer to the actions to prevent natural or environmental damages, and to develop efforts to repair such damages, for instance not to kill snakes, to keep cohesiveness, not to violate promises, and to remind wife and children to never acknowledge that they were descendants of King Purba. This means that togetherness in doing activities or in thinking can achieve their goals, such as working together with his mother and the

bird who was his father who deliberately lured Merga Purba to go to the Singkut mount with a purpose to plan an arrangement between Merga Purba and a beautiful fairy.

After their marriage they lived in Kabanjahe and had six sons and a daughter and the Merga Purba clan in Karo was nicknamed as the Purba Si Enam (or the sixth Purba) and all his descendants were warned not to kill snakes and they follow this up to now. They were also warned not to claim to come from the Merga Purba Simalungun and not to ever make their Kingdom ashamed. Moreover, Purba females are beautiful because they were descendants of angels. The Merga Purba was in the hunt of a bird, and without realizing, he suddenly saw a beautiful woman sitting to dry her body and hair near a clean and clear spring. "What is your purpose to come here?", she said with a sweet smile at him. He kept silent without being able to answer because he was very shocked to find a woman in the middle of the dense forest and he was bombarded with questions from her who looked like a princess from the unseen world.

"Why do you keep quiet?" she continued to ask because she felt that her question was not responded by a handsome hunter. "Oh ..., oh ... no", said Merga Purba nervously. "I'm shocked to see a lonely woman in this forest" and he then approached her who became the first human being that he met after seven years in exile here". Then, they talked intimately and he then told how he came to the mountain; he also told her about him who was a son of a King Purba in Simalungun.

The princess listened intently and felt amazed to hear his sad story. Because the two were passionate to talk, they did not realize that morning was changing to noon; the position of the sun was in the middle of the day and they were hungry. "Come on, let's go to my house to eat", she invited him and actually he did not mind to be beside a princess. After some steps, they arrived in a fairly clean cave which was not far from the place where they met. They went inside but

Merga Purba suddenly startled and almost jumped out if he was not caught by her because in the vague cave there was a big but short snake, circling as if it was waiting for their arrival. Nearby, on a rock, a bird that he chased some hours ago perched; it is named kak in Karo or kakak tua (parrot) in Indonesian. "Please come in and sit down", said the snake and the bird at the same time. This condition made Merga Purba confused, while the princess smiled, spreading a mat to where they could sit.

While sitting, they ate fruits, such as guavas, bananas, and other kind of fruits. While they were relaxed, the princess told him that the snake was her mother and the bird her father; the two intentionally provoked Merga Purba to come to the Singkut mount because they planned to arrange marriage between their daughter with him.

Legend of a Village Named Kaban

Ethics is a set of behavioral rules agreed by a particular society so that politeness is a prerequisite in social community. Therefore, this politeness is usually called etiquettes, customs or customary practices in a community, such as the Merga Purba asked permission from the village chief of Kaban to establish a place for residence, or a married couple should be able to receive and entertain their parents or their parents-in-laws who visited their house as shown in the following fact of legend:

Having reached an agreement, then Merga Purba got an arranged marriage with a princess and their marriage later became the history of Purba clan ancestor in Karo land. The princess' parents suggested that the newly couple lived with other human beings and received normal life as human beings, that is they did not isolate themselves or lived in exile in Mount Singkut or in Beluh Duri Duri which was Merga Purba's place. After the couple were advised about many things, they had to go to the nearest human's settlement. They saw from a distance the Mount Singkut which

could be marked from its smoke. The mount was located in the southwest of the Kaban village which was inhabited by Merga Kertaren and Kaban. The next day Merga Purba and his wife went to Kaban's hometown and when arriving they reported their existence to the penghulu (village head) and to ask for his permission to live and to build a house there. The penghulu responded by saying that he received their status. "If you want to be a village resident, we receive you well and build your barung (home) directing to enjahe" (meaning to the downstream of the village).



Figure 6. Kabanjahe House Village (Desa Rumah Kabanjahe)

Since then, their hut stood in the village of Kabana rah enjahe (now it is called Kabanjahe village as seen in Fig. 6) which was close to a large tree and had its own springs. The informant argued that when Merga Purba's mother-in-law came, he was in a big hole of the tree. He and his wife often gave visit his father-in-law who lived in Mount Singkut (see Fig. 7).



Figure 7. Singkut Hills (Bukit Singkut)

Gradually, the barung became a village for Purba's and it was then named Kabanjahe. Apparently, his descendants grew rapidly, spreading to all directions, such as to Ketapul, Samura, Keraren, Berhala, Sumbul, Kaban, Raya, Lau Gumba, Peceren, Daulu, and Ujung Aji.

CONCLUSIONS

With regards to the facts and values of Merga Purba folklore, its main idea is based on the origins of Kabanjahe. The folklore tells about the youngest son of King Merga Purba in Simalungun regency, who was brought in exile by a paranormal with the permission from his parents. The folklore contains several facts and values such as (1) forecast by magical shaman, (2) water springs as medicine, and (3) animist ritual of taking shower. The folklore also has a tale of faith in relation to (1) an angel world, (2) the value for preventing natural and environmental damages, and (3) cohesiveness/togetherness. Similarly, in case of legend, the folklore owns (1) the value of politeness, (2) the origin of place named Kaban Jahe, (3) legendary logic for the present.

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