

The language realization of the role of women as anthropocentric subjects in Sundanese culture

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ABSTRACT

Local cultures often inherit a patriarchal view that regards women as the second gender category. However, this stereotyped view is only partially correct, especially when looking at the extent to which Sundanese culture views, defines, and places the role of women. Women in the local Sundanese culture have a role as balance keepers in the sense of anthropocentrism. This study aims to describe the role of women as an anthropocentric subject in Sundanese culture. The data of this study were taken from the film *Ambu* (2019), which represents women's roles in Sundanese culture, especially as shown in the Baduy tribe. This study is descriptive-qualitative. It used Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach. Using CDA, the film *Ambu* (2019) is studied through its discursive dialogues and scenes, examining how these elements reflect and engage with social and cultural practices. The findings show that the film portrays a representation of women through *Ambu Misnah*, who embodies gender balance in Sundanese culture, challenging traditional views of domestication. As a cultural symbol connected to Sunan *Ambu*, her role contrasts with liberal feminist ideals, highlighting a more localized form of female empowerment. Furthermore, the language used by a male character, specifically the head of the Baduy Tribe, reflects a transfer of authority, signaling a shift in gender-power relations. Thus, these findings emphasize an anthropocentric awareness of the role of women, particularly within the Sundanese community.

Keywords: *Ambu* film; anthropocentric subject; Baduy tribe, Critical Discourse Analysis

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INTRODUCTION

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is not a brand-new subdiscipline in linguistics, and its roots can be traced back to classical rhetoric and sociolinguistics (Wodak, 2002). It is also known as *Critical Linguistics* (CL) and this term is interchangeably used with CDA, although it is recognizable that the latter term far exceeds the former in terms of popularity. Recently, CDA has been used to underlie the critical linguistic approach highlighting language and power which are apparent in a discourse as the unit of communication (Wodak, 2002). With 'approach' as the underlying element, it is unsurprising to notice that research on this subject does not fall into one single framework but offers

multiple approaches that have been considerably developed over the years.

Despite the fact that different frameworks take the central stage in CDA research, arguably, some concepts are carried out in the same way across various frameworks. One of such concepts is discourse. Discourse can be simply defined as written or oral texts (Wodak, 2002). van Leeuwen further elaborates that such texts are constrained by a context (van Leeuwen, 2008). Therefore, based on this notion, we could categorize texts (both oral and textual) in specific contexts such as in political speeches, in dining rooms, and in classrooms as three different types of discourse.

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Additionally, the concepts of power and ideological struggle are always apparent across CDA research. Wodak (2002) argues that CDA is primarily concerned with social practices. In this context, social practices are the discourse, which implies a relationship between a discursive event and the context/situation. This relationship suggests that a discourse is not only shaped by social structures and cues but also has the power to influence and reproduce those structures. Consequently, CDA examines how language is used to maintain or challenge power dynamics and ideological constructs within specific social contexts.

Furthermore, Wodak and Meyer (2001) explain four principles of Critical Discourse Analysis. First, Critical Discourse Analysis focuses on a particular issue. Second, the approach tends to be eclectic and interdisciplinary. Third, it demystifies power and ideology through systematic, in-depth, and transparent data studies in writing, orally, and visual images. Fourth, researchers tend to be assertive and reflective of the research process.

With the elements take the central stage of CDA, our focus now shifts into in what area the power and ideological struggle take place. One prominent example of power and ideological struggles rests on the idea of feminism with the primary notion of feminism rests on the deconstruction of the roles of women within a society.

Modern people often produce stereotypes about the domestication of women that occur in ethnic cultures as actions that are not based on human rights values (Dent, 2020; Naples & Hawkesworth, 2008). Domestication refers to the subordination of women's roles below men's. It is the tendency for men to be seen as the main figures, while women are given more secondary roles. This inequality has become deeply embedded in the culture of certain ethnic groups (Prasetyo, 2018). Women's roles often focus on household duties which are seen as natural and unquestioned (Hyunanda et al., 2021). After the emergence of the feminist movement, these traditional views of women's roles began to be challenged, questioned, and deconstructed (Coté, 2005; Dent, 2020). One of the movement's agendas is to seek gender equality.

In contrast to these feminist challenges, the mythical figure of Sunan Ambu in West Java offers an alternative narrative. Portrayed as a goddess or divine mother residing in a heavenly realm, Sunan Ambu is linked to nature, maternal love, and traditional Sundanese spirituality. This figure has inspired Sundanese literature and art, notably in the film *Ambu* (Dermawan, 2019). Unlike many modern portrayals that emphasize women's subordination, *Ambu* (Dermawan, 2019) highlights a character who embodies strength and reverence within her cultural context. Thus, *Ambu* (2019) serves as a valuable

resource for understanding Sundanese culture, offering insights into the awareness of women's roles as anthropocentric subjects within that culture (Sánchez & Férez, 2021).

Ambu (2019) is the first film to be entirely shot in the Baduy Tribe. The success of filming there highlights the film's focus on the authenticity of local culture. The production followed the tribe's customs, such as using only natural light without electricity, which reflects a respect for Baduy traditions. This approach shows how filmmakers balanced the authenticity of the Baduy culture with the reality of external intervention through the film's production.

The film *Ambu* (2019) highlights anthropocentrism through the character of Ambu Misnah, who plays a central role in upholding the traditions of the Baduy Tribe. In this society, women are seen as the core of maintaining social and cultural values. Ambu Misnah's character shows how women are key decision-makers and protectors of tradition within the family and the community.

The film portrays conflicts between Ambu Misnah, her child-Fatma, and Fatma's child-Nona. They reflect how their lives are shaped by cultural expectations. Fatma's decision to leave and later return to the tribe shows how people are judged based on their loyalty to traditions, reinforcing the idea that human actions, especially those of women, play a crucial role in preserving the community's identity. The film emphasizes how the choices these women make directly impact their community, with Ambu Misnah representing the importance of women in keeping cultural traditions alive.

Previously, there were several studies that discussed anthropocentrism in films (Khan, 2021; Winata & Megasari, 2019; Zeman & Zeman, 2012). The films include first, *Avatar* (2009) which shows anthropocentric values through human dominance and nature control (Zeman & Zeman, 2012). Other films such as *Watership Down* (1978), *Babe* (1995), and *Okja* (2017) reveal anthropocentrism through relationships between humans and non-human animals (Khan, 2021). Moreover, *Moana* (2017) shows anthropocentrism and its effects on the environment (Winata & Megasari, 2019). However, these studies have not thoroughly addressed anthropocentrism from a cultural perspective, particularly in terms of gender roles. Therefore, this study fills that gap by analyzing the roles of women as anthropocentric subjects within Sundanese culture in an Indonesian film. Thus, the research question is: "How does the film *Ambu* (2019) portray the anthropocentrism of women within Sundanese Baduy society?"

Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach was applied to uncover the underlying gender-power relations, cultural values, and language and ideologies that shape the portrayal

of women as anthropocentric subjects in the film. Fairclough's CDA is also known as the three dimensional approach, consisting of Textual Analysis, Discursive Analysis, and Social/interdiscursive Analysis. This study is focused on this classification as they covered analysis of discourse in relation to uncovering how specific linguistic elements, such as word choice and transitivity reflect underlying ideologies related to gender and power and in relation to social and cultural reality (Fairclough, 1989).

Within the context of Fairclough's CDA, it is important to note that discursive analysis is primarily concerned with how the discourse is produced and consumed. In this study, it is arguably vital to include the production process of the movie, which in and of itself is also incredibly difficult to attain as it includes a deep dive with the whole production team (eg., director, screenwriter.) Therefore, this research limits the analysis in the sense that it only focuses on the textual and intertextual/interdiscursive elements of the three-dimensional framework.

METHOD

This study used Fairclough's CDA framework (Fairclough, 1989), widely known as the three-dimensional framework. Fairclough (2010) stated that the critical discourse analysis of a text should pass through the three stages of description, interpretation of the relationship between text and interaction, and explanation of the relationship between interaction and social context. The Critical Discourse Analysis allows an examination of film as a form of integration between linguistics and social change to be vital and reflective (Fairclough, 2010). As its name implies, the three-dimensional framework covers: (1) Textual Analysis (the micro level); (2) Discursive Analysis (the meso level); and (3) Social/interdiscursive Analysis (the macro

level). The textual analysis is primarily concerned with the critique of discourse seen through lexical, grammatical, or any linguistic devices used in the discourse. In this study, the micro-level primarily deals with analyzing dialogues spoken by the characters. The discursive analysis focuses on the production of the discourse and the target audience. In this context, this means that at the meso-level, researchers must seek to investigate the movie production process. Lastly, the interdiscursive analysis highlights how other intertextual elements play their role along with the discourse. This last element encompasses the use of visual information embedded as the dialogues are spoken out by characters.

As briefly discussed in the previous section, this study only utilized two of the three analysis tools, namely: (1) the micro-level (textual analysis); and (2) the macro-level (the interdiscursive analysis). The primary reason for eliminating the meso-level analysis (the discourse production and consumption) lies in the nature of the data. As the data are *Ambu's* (2019) movie scenes and transcripts, the meso-level analysis requires the movie production and screenwriting process analysis, implying the need to conduct an in-depth interview with the filmmakers and analysis of pre-production processes.

In this study, the data were collected using Boggs' and Petrie four narrative structures as the guideline, namely: exposition, complication, climax, and denouement (Boggs & Petrie, 2008). The film's dialogue excerpts and interplay with respective visual information are the primary data. Additionally, the excerpts will be coded as [Title/Data Number/Minute]. The primary justification of using the four narrative structures as the guideline is to ensure that the *Ambu's* plot is still carried out while the analysis and discussion take place. The big picture of the film *Ambu* (Dermawan, 2019) plot is presented as follows.

Table 1
Ambu Film Structure (2019)

Film	Dramatic Structure			
	Exposition	Complication	Climax	Denouement
<i>Ambu</i> (2019)	Fatma Family Conflict	Fatma Returns to the Baduy Tribe but Gets Rejection	Ambu Misnah Begins to Receive Culturally	Purification Ceremony, Fatma and Nona are Culturally Accepted

In addition, as a linguistic concept, discourse is a higher structure than a sentence, the highest and largest grammatical unit (Halliday & Hasan, 2014; Kridalaksana, 1993; Wodak & Stubbs, 1985). The Critical Discourse Analysis used in this study conveys discourse as the use of language as a social practice (Fairclough, 2010; Fairclough & Wodak, 2011). The discourse may imply the presence of a dialectical relationship between discursive events

and the situations, institutions, and social structures that compose them (Fairclough, 2010; Fairclough & Wodak, 2011; Titscher et al., 2009; Wodak & Meyer, 2001; Wodak & Stubbs, 1985).

In terms of the steps of data analysis, Fairclough (2010) identified four stages in Critical Discourse Analysis which are (a) focuses on social wrongs in the semiotic aspect; (b) identifies barriers leading to social irregularities; (c) considers whether

there is a social order that causes social irregularities; and (d) identifies several ways to overcome these barriers. The study used these stages for the analysis of the data objects. The detailed operational work of the analysis is as follows.

First, the researcher questions any social standing and role; and reveals the underlying ideology and power relations that might have been at play or exercised in the *Ambu* film (Dermawan, 2019). The intended social deviance is the social understanding of the role of women as a second gender category, especially stereotyped against local culture because it often inherits patriarchal views. The role of women discourse shown in the film through the characters' relationship with the concept of gender equality.

Second, it identified the inhibiting factors that lead to the problem of social irregularities—the inhibiting factor in question is the power relations between the central female figure and the customary leader who has a role in the leadership structure of the Baduy tribe. Third, it considers the extent to which social order implies social irregularities. In other words, the social order found in the Baduy tribe, especially the practice of gender equality, is then juxtaposed with the discourse of Sundanese culture. Fourth, identify ways to overcome the inhibiting factors of social problems, namely the practice of gender equality within the Baduy tribe as an alternative discourse from the local Sundanese culture.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section describes the findings and discussion. The results are presented based on the film's dramatic structure (exposition, complication, climax, and denouement) so that the form of discourse development is known (Lotman, 1990; Scollon & Scollon, 2003). Meanwhile, the discussion section elaborates the dramatic structure of the film and the theory of feminism and anthropocentric subjects based on Critical Discourse Analysis. It is further described as follows.

Ambu Misnah as a Gender Equality Figure in the Baduy Society

In the film *Ambu* (Dermawan, 2019), the dimension of local wisdom in the form of the charismatic leadership of the conventional system is seen as dominant in two characters. First, the traditional leader is called *Jaro*. Second, Ambu Misnah is the mother; Fatma (Ambu Misnah's daughter) and Nona (Ambu Misnah's grandchild or Fatma's daughter). *Jaro* and Ambu Misnah's leadership form and meaning are depicted through scenes. Before Ambu Misnah invited Fatma and Nona to drink in the house (See Figure 1), Hapsa conveyed a story. As a little friend, Hapsa (Fatma's little friend) was happy

that Fatma had returned to the Baduy tribe. The dialogue between Hapsa and Fatma at Ambu Misnah's house is described below.

Excerpt 1

- Ambu : *Ngajorag naon ka dieu?*
[What are you doing here?]
- Fatma : *Hayang panggih jeung Ambu*
[I want to meet you, Ambu.]
- Ambu: *Ku naon karak ayeuna? Salaki manéh geus ninggal?*
[Why now? Did your husband leave you?]
- Fatma : *Tapi, kami geus ceray Ambu*
[We have had divorced, Ambu.]
- Ambu : *Mangkana karak ka dieu*
[That is why you came here again.]
- Fatma : *Lain ku kitu, Ambu.*
[It ain't like that, Ambu.]
- Ambu : *Manéh teu meunang asup ka dieu deui!*
[You cannot come in here!]
- Fatma : *Kami, kami, kami, panggihan Jaro.*
[We want to meet the *Jaro*.]
- Ambu : *Keur naon? Manéh rék lila di dieu?*
[What do you want? Want to stay here longer?]
- [Ambu/Data 1/Minute 15:15-21:08]

The dialogue excerpt above highlights the exposition of the story, in which Fatma tries to regain her place in Baduy society after her marriage falls apart. Textually, the dialogue above shows Ambu's authority despite the more common notion that women's roles often focus on household duties which are seen as natural and unquestioned (Hyunanda et al., 2021; Prasetyo, 2018). In this dialogue, however, "you cannot come in here!" clearly shows that Ambu is in charge of both public and family affairs regarding social acceptance. With such a dialogue shown in the beginning of the story, it helps the audience to understand that Ambu's roles are unique and that her voice carries authority.

The dialogue is a series in the structure of complications. Ambu Misnah's anger towards Fatma can be viewed from three perspectives: (1) the disappointment of a mother because her child chose to marry an outsider; (2) during her marriage, Fatma never visited her mother. For the first and second reasons, Fatma's cultural status has been considered as an outsider to the Baduy. Therefore, the causes of these various conflicts do not only require a sociological reading but also tend to be symbolic and cultural. From a sociological perspective, Fatma's marriage is not approved, resulting in Ambu Misnah's disappointment becoming internal family issues. On the other hand, on the symbolic and cultural dimensions, inter-ethnic marriages impact Fatma's status as a member of the Baduy tribe. Thus, marriage outside the Baduy people has implications for not recognizing marital status according to local customary law.

Figure 1

Ambu Misnah Receives Fatma and Nona on the Terrace of his House (Sosoro)



Fatma's symbolic and cultural consequences make Ambu Misnah unfriendly even though the relationship between the two is mother-and-child. Such problems place the knowledge system in the Baduy community more prioritizing symbolic and cultural ties. In other words, symbolic and cultural ties bind the social cohesion of the Baduy community. This bond is something sacred for the Baduy people. However, the following scenes lead to an attitude of reconciliation. Ambu Misnah gradually accepts Fatma's factual situation. Therefore, Ambu Misnah's leadership as Fatma and Nona's only parent and grandmother has overcome the symbolic problem. This role also implies the construction of Ambu Misnah's character who is not only a biological mother but also the leader of women in her family. The role acquires its relevance to the Sunda Wiwitan knowledge system, religious teachings with elements of ancient monotheism, which regards Ambu as an anthropocentric female subject (Holil, 2020; Ramadhani et al., 2021).

The role between women and men, especially shown by Ambu, can also be considered equal. Visually, this equal role can be seen from the sitting position between Ambu Misnah and Jaro, who incidentally is the head of the Baduy tradition (see Figure 4). In Sundanese ethnic culture, the role of women tends to be integral in every cultural practice and tradition (Sidik & Fitriawati, 2018; Sujatna, Heriyanto, et al., 2019; Sujatna, Suryadimulya, et al., 2019) The view that the Sundanese ethnic community always places women's roles under men is a groundless and irresponsible justification. In this film, Ambu Misnah plays an important role as a mother who negotiates and determines deliberative decisions after dealing with traditional leaders. For example, the expression of the traditional head "*ayeuna ku kami dibalikkeun ka Bu Misnah. Ieu urusan kaluarga* (we returned to Ambu Misnah because this is a family matter)" shows there is trust for Ambu Misnah to make a decision. Ambu Misnah

represents the mythological figure of Sunan Ambu who is the ruler of heaven according to the Sunda Wiwitan belief. This is also supported by the absence of a father figure in Ambu's family, which makes it possible for Ambu Misnah to be the head of the family. The plot of this film also focuses on the relationship between Ambu Misnah, Fatma, and Nona.

Meanwhile, the last structure of the Denouement, the closing scene, shows the purification ceremony of the Baduy tribe, where the customary leader performed a purification ceremony for Fatma and Nona; this purification is not only normative but also cultural because Fatma and Nona are again accepted as part of the Baduy community (Hernawan et al., 2021; Maulina et al., 2021; Rusady & Munawarah, 2021). The procession has a discursive value so that Fatma and Nona are accepted as part of the Baduy community's discourse. As a discourse, this ceremony is a conversion held solemnly so that the community entirely agrees with the cultural identity of Fatma and Nona. This process also shows the role of Ambu Misnah as an anthropocentric subject of the Baduy tribe, which also provides direction to Fatma and Nona during the purification ceremony. Purification in an anthropocentric context is also related to caring for nature (Lewis & Maslin, 2015; Löwbrand et al., 2020; Terradas, 2019).

Unlike at the beginning of the film scene, Ambu Misnah, in the purification procession, seemed to smile at Fatma and Nona. As a mother and grandmother, Ambu Misnah, who was initially not accommodating to their arrival during the purification, showed otherwise. Ambu Misnah has culturally accepted Fatma and Nona to be part of the Baduy tribe. This acceptance has ideological meaning because there are implications for women's power in the Baduy civilization system. The film shows Ambu Misnah's acceptance of her children and grandchildren. Meanwhile, this acceptance

presupposes leadership based not only on the mother-daughter-grandchild relationship but also on women's leadership over their cultural environment. Nonetheless, this film does not project the extent to which women subvert male leadership but tends to the process of taking on tasks that can be said to be equal to the customary local head.

Ambu Misnah and Sunan Ambu: Anthropocentric Subjects Guardians of Harmony

Etymologically, the word 'Sunan' means someone who is glorified. Sundanese people call this word the term 'order'. Mother, as someone celebrated for Sundanese beliefs, shows her role as an anthropocentric subject. Madjid (2005) defines anthropocentrism as derived from two words, namely *anthropos* (human) and *kentron* (center) so that the essential explanation positions humans as the center of the universe and the values they believe in. Therefore, Sunan Ambu is the epicenter of Sundanese culture, including belief systems and traditional practices. Sunan Ambu's role throughout the film is conveyed symbolically through Nona's words to pinpoint the extent of the importance of the Ambu Misnah.

Excerpt 2

Nona: *Hanya ibu yang selalu menatap kita dengan kasih bahkan ketika mata kita dibutakan oleh kebencian, hanya ibu yang hanya bisa memeluk kita bahkan ketika tangan kita tak mampu membalas karna kelelahan, hanya ibu yang selalu memaafkan kita bahkan ketika hati kita tertutup oleh kemarahan kepada diri kita sendiri. Terima kasih, Ambu...*

[Only mothers who always look at us with love even when our eyes are blinded by hatred, only mothers who can only hug us even when our hands cannot reciprocate due to fatigue, only mothers who always forgive us even when our hearts are covered with anger to ourselves. Thank you, Ambu]

[Ambu/Data 2/Minute 1:51:08-1:54:17]

Figure 2

Ambu Misnah carries out the Baduy Custom Purification Process



Sunan Ambu's role as an influential woman for the Sundanese people shows an anthropocentric awareness (Hufad & Ambarwati, 2016; Igarashi, 1988; Suryadi & Kusnendi, 2016; Williams, 2003). This role is in contrast to the view of liberal feminism, in which even though women do not have an equal physical place in front of men, they are immediately considered gender-conscious

(Dosekun, 2021; Genz, 2006; Gill, 2016). The Sundanese people in the belief system above adhere to the belief that the mother's role is the center of values, traditions, ethics, and etiquette. Although women tend to work in the domestic sphere, this activity does not mean that the Sundanese ethnic culture applies a patriarchal system. However, the Sundanese ethnic culture gives a place of honor or the highest for women, as projected by Sunan Ambu as described above. In addition, many of the traditional practices carried out by Baduy women are at the forefront.

Figure 3

The Women do the Routine (Pounding Rice) in the Morning



For example, the *seba* ritual in which selected Baduy women are the main actors in making *laksa* or *ngalaksa* (Hakiki, 2013). Figure 3 above shows how Baduy women carry out the rice-pounding process. This process is part of the *ngalaksa* activity, or bringing the harvest (rice), used for consumption by residents and traditional ceremonies. During the ritual process, several Baduy women will fast. In addition, there are also daily rituals such as *ngahuma* (farming). This practice shows gender equality for Baduy women. Practices carried out in the afternoon, such as taking care of children, cooking, and washing are done mainly by men. Often represented as women's work, domestic work is the opposite for the Baduy community, even though men or women do not entirely own the division of these activities because both are negotiating.

In other words, the Baduy ethnic culture tends to produce agreements in a dialogical manner. For example, the division of tasks between women and men in the film is shown through the delivery of traditional leaders in the previous dialogue. The traditional leader said that matters between Ambu Misnah and the family should be discussed internally. Meanwhile, Ambu Misnah agreed with the opinion of the adat head, although he still followed the advice of the Bedouin customary leader to follow the existing customary process. Equality between men and women in the Baduy community is also marked by farming activities or huma processing. Before carrying out these activities, the Baduy community will hold traditional rituals. From rituals to field processing, both men and women carry out their activities equally, in balance or harmony (see Figure 3).

The equal participation of women and men in the implementing traditions in the Baduy tribe shows gender equality. In the Sunda Wiwitan belief system, which is still adhered to by the Baduy tribe, the role of women is basically because they are anthropocentric subjects (Biswa, 2012; Erten, 2008; Rabardel & Beguin, 2005). One of the reasons why Sunda Wiwitan is the belief system of the Baduy people is the respect the Baduy people have for the environment around them. The sacredness of nature marks the respect of the Baduy people for the environment as something true, basic, first, and original. Therefore, the word *wiwitan* itself means authenticity. By maintaining the authenticity of the natural surroundings, the Baduy people tend to reject everything that interferes with, changes and damages their environment. Maintaining authenticity is embodied in a system of ideas and the manifestation of daily life practices for the Baduy people. Therefore, Sunda Wiwitan as a belief system has become a worldview (Geertz, 1983). In other words, women are the center of a system of values, beliefs, ethics, and etiquette maintained from generation to generation.

The maintenance of this generation through marriage with fellow Baduy people simultaneously shows how sacred they are to inter-ethnic marriage. The conflict built at the film's beginning shows this tendency: Ambu Misnah does not approve of Fatma's marriage to someone outside Baduy. Apart from that, there is also evidence that Hapsa is the same age as Fatma but already has grandchildren. In other words, the role of women and marriage is sacred for the Baduy tribe. Jacobs (2012) explains that adherence to customary rules and the belief system of their ancestors is a determining factor for the integration of the Baduy community.

In addition, Ambu's role in solving conflicts also uses the symbolism of harmony guards. The discussion on reconciliation between mother and child was only possible with the approval of the head of the Baduy tribe. Jaro's role as a traditional leader in the film *Ambu* (Dermawan, 2019) is crucial because it decides whether Fatma is allowed to stay back in the Baduy tribe. After the scene above, Ambu Misnah invites Fatma and Nona to the house of the traditional leader to confirm the case, as shown in the following data.

Excerpt 3

Jaro : *Ayeuna ku kami dibalikkeun ka Bu Misnah, arék kumaha? Ieu urusan kaluarga. Sanajan ceuk aturan, Fatma geus lain urang dieu deui. Anggap aé Fatma sémah anu hayang ngilu cicing di Ambu Misnah. Seberaha lila Fatma di dieu?*

[We returned to Ambu Misnah due to this is a family matter. According to traditional rules, Fatma is not from here anymore. How long has Fatma been here?]

Fatma: *Abdi teu acan apal.*

[I do not remember yet.]

Jaro : *Hmmm, kumaha Bu Misnah? Sanajan lamun Fatma hayang jadi urang dieu deui, kudu dihukum heula! Salila opat puluh poé, terus kudu diselametan.*

[What do you think, Ambu Misnah? If Fatma wants to stay here, she must be punished first! For forty days, then there will be a *slametan* ceremony.]

Ambu: *Teu kudu! Manéhna cuma sémah.*

[No need! She's just a guest.]

Jaro : *Tapi diijinan pan, meuting di imah Ambu Misnah?*

[But it's permissible to stay at Ambu Misnah's house?]

Ambu: *Rék di mana deui?*

[Where else?]

Fatma: *Hatur nuhun Ambu.*

[Thank you, Ambu.]

[Ambu/Data 3/Minute 21:53-23:18]

The excerpt above not only highlights Ambu's authority as a central figure in the society but also shows her indifference towards Fatma. Despite being her daughter, Ambu pinpoints that "she's just a guest", acknowledging the fact that what her daughter did was culturally unacceptable in the Baduy society. This dialogue is a primary example of her central role in the Baduy society despite the fact that the man she is talking to is the leader of the Baduy tribe.

Figure 4

Ambu Misnah meeting with Jaro (Customary Leader)



Before conveying the regulations as shown in the data fragment above, Jaro stated that more of the problems they faced were family problems. Therefore, Ambu Misnah, as the head of the family now, is the party that has the right to decide the middle way. For the Baduy community, decision-making does rely on the tribal chief, but during the process, each party concerned is still invited to consult. It conveys a form of the reciprocal relationship between leaders and cultural solidarity. The two elements, leadership, and cultural solidarity, are not separate entities but a whole that builds interpersonal relationships. The meeting between Jaro and Ambu Misnah was held at Jaro's house, as shown above.

The arrival of Ambu Misnah, Fatma, and Nona at the traditional leader's house is a form of cultural consensus. Ambu Misnah asked the conventional leader to decide whether his children and grandchildren could live in the community. The

sitting position of Ambu Misnah and the traditional leader looks equal. Ambu Misnah's sharp eyes also show this equality in traditional leaders. Both of them were sitting cross-legged with their backs straight, even though the floor where they met tended to be layered like a stage. This sitting position shown in a visual mode taken from the film may indicate that the characters have the same eye level, signaling equality in power, balance and shared status in communication, and avoiding a hierarchical relationship (Kress, 2006).

In addition, the head of the Ambu Misnah does not bow before traditional leaders who symbolically show gender equality between women and men. The scene also shows gender equality when negotiating between women and men. Therefore, the discourse on gender equality in this context is projected through physical interaction (Glapka, 2018; Kramer, 2021; Litosseliti et al., 2019).

Besides the traditional leader being an essential element in the social system of the Baduy tribe, Ambu also has a role as a leader, at least for Fatma and Nona's internal families. Moreover, Ambu's role in the Sunda Wiwitan knowledge system has a symbolic-transcendental value in which women rule the cosmology of the sky, and in this film, Ambu Misnah has power over his family to comply with the customs regulations. Ambu Misnah's decision to complete licensing for customary heads is a form of a decision maker at the family level who must follow the rules of the Baduy tribe. The assertiveness of Ambu Misnah is a manifestation of the socio-cultural balance of the Sundanese society, which prioritizes customary law rather than family egocentrism.

In this context, Ambu Misnah is not only a construction of individual names, namely the mother of Fatma and Nona's grandmother but also represents a discourse on the nobility of the Sundanese cultural universe. Ajip Rosidi (as cited in Ekadjati, 2009) stated that Sunan Ambu has the highest figure in Sundanese society and is believed to be the guardian of harmony. In the history of Sunda Wiwitan, Ambu is the decision maker for all the problems faced by the Sundanese. Likewise, according to traditional Sundanese belief, Ambu has a female gender identity and represents an honorable goddess.

The name Ambu Misnah projects top-notch roles, both for the Baduy community and for the film *Ambu* (2019). This highest role is represented by Ambu Misnah's strong belief in the value system closely held by the Baduy tribe. The return of Fatma and Nona, which was received directly by Ambu Misnah illustrates acceptance and nobility. Although the initial approval was not as friendly as the relationship between mother and child, Ambu Misnah had the sovereignty of the cultural discourse produced by the Sundanese people above. The nobility of Ambu Misnah's attitude also shows her

social attitude as an independent, firm, and persistent woman. Such inclination was demonstrated through the process of accepting Fatma and Nona, who no one except Ambu Misnah represented.

Gender Equality Awareness of Baduy Ethnicity Against Liberal Feminism

In general, cultural representation in the Baduy community is a relevant example showing gender equality in ethnic culture in Indonesia. This tendency is often not captured as cultural capital to see the role of women in indigenous people. The opposing view of indigenous people in Indonesia, who are more dominant in adopting a patriarchal system, is a biased perspective of liberal feminism only because the role of women is more in the domestic area. The part of women is not only in the front or back but is in the belief system that the Baduy community places as anthropocentric subjects through the figure of Sunan Ambu (Lacassain-Lagoïn, 2018; Lee et al., 2016; Leontyeva, 2016)

Although gender equality is displayed in every scene in the film *Ambu* (Dermawan, 2019), one scene shows that men should lead women. However, the role of women behind men is based on the etiquette of manners commonly believed by the Baduy community. Further dialogue is delivered as follows. This dialogue takes place when Nona invites Jaya to tour the Baduy village. However, on the way, Jaya scolds Nona for walking in front of her. This warning indicates that in Baduy society, morally, men should walk ahead of women.

Excerpt 4

Jaya : *Tapi tolong, jalannya di belakang saya yah. Di sini mah kami lamun (meskipun) jalan berbaris. Supaya nggak ganggu orang jalan yang jalan berlawanan arah. Saya mimpin jalan. Berarti saya jalannya di depan.*

[But please, walk behind me. Here we are marching. So it would not disturb people walking in the opposite direction. I lead the way. That means I am in front of you.]

Nona : *Biasanya pulang dari toko jam berapa?*

[What time do you usually come home from the shop?]

Jaya : *Sore.*

[Afternoon]

[Ambu/Data 4/Minute 33:49-36:21]

The dialogue above shows that despite being morally acceptable for men to walk ahead of women, the dialogue spoken carries both authority yet spoken with great care. This highlights that despite the fact that there are some roles accommodating male leadership, this does not mean that men should also speak without composure and great care, even more so towards outsiders who are not familiar with local customs,

Figure 5

Jaya's Request to be in front of Fatma



The words in bold above do not explicitly imply gender inequality. However, Jaya's request to Nona to walk behind him shows good manners and with the purpose to not hinder people walking from the opposite directions (Dermawan, 2019). On the one hand, it still implies gender equality; on the other hand, it may accommodate male leadership. Moreover, this scene is not a primary element that forms the thematic medium of the film. This is because the film does not have a unified plot with a series of previous plots, which center on the conflict between Ambu Misnah and Fatma. Furthermore, in terms of liberal feminism, the principle of men leading the women is not endorsed in this particular feminist movement. The liberal feminism promotes gender equality and emphasizes individual autonomy, equal rights, and opportunities for both men and women (Friedan, 1963).

With regard to anthropocentrism, the film *Ambu* (Dermawan, 2019) shows the role of women as anthropocentric subjects. Ambu Misnah, as the main character in the film, is also a representation of Sunan Ambu, who, to Sunda Wiwitan's belief, has been considered a decision maker for various problems faced by the Sundanese people. As a policy maker and provider of solutions to problems, Ambu Misnah has at least provided a way out for his children and grandchildren, who were no longer considered Baduy insiders because they had long since left the village and married outsiders. At the end of the film, as shown in Figure 2, Ambu Misnah symbolically represents the figure of Sunan Ambu, who is considered the provider of solutions to the problems faced by the community. This cultural symbolism reinforces the view of gender equality in Sundanese society and is even regarded as the foundation for maintaining harmony in the Baduy tribe.

On the other hand, the construction of Sundanese culture, especially practiced by the

Baduy tribe, shows women as the center of balance. This balance is the main marker of how the discursive practice of constructing gender equality has been practiced in the local Sundanese culture. This article tends to choose the term 'gender balance' rather than 'gender equality' because the latter term tends to be biased towards the ideology of liberal feminism. *Ambu* (Dermawan, 2019) is one of the films that shows the tendency of gender 'equality' in Sundanese society.

CONCLUSION

Along with the development of human rights discourse, gender equality has become a universal value being fought in places where patriarchy is prevalent. Gender equality, according to this research, does not only originate from the production of Western discourse on the struggle for women's rights. However, the source of the value of gender equality has also been inherited, even being practiced, by indigenous people who are not contaminated with Western-style discourse on women's rights. This research proves that the Baduy tribe, in particular, and the Sundanese people, in general, already have a view of gender equality. Even so, the intended terminology of gender equality differs from Western views because Sundanese culture recognizes it as a gender 'balance' discourse. The film *Ambu* (2019), used as data analysis for this research, plays a significant role in presenting social and cultural documents about the role of women as anthropocentric subjects.

As a study of critical discourse analysis, this article concludes with three points. First, the representation of the main character, Ambu Misnah, in the film shows the value of gender equality in the local Sundanese culture compared to the contrary beliefs stating that women's roles often focus on household duties which are seen as natural and

unquestioned (Hyunanda et al., 2021; Prasetyo, 2018). Subsequently, the film also highlights that Ambu Misnah has a symbolic connection with the figure of Sunan Ambu in the Sunda Wiwitan belief system. In addition to bearing almost the same name, both figures are considered sacred because they are guardians of the balance between nature and society in Sundanese culture. Third, this film presents an alternative discourse in viewing gender equality that originates from local culture on the one hand, and this film seeks to emphasize resistance to the view of liberal feminism in which women must subvert men on the other (Coté, 2005; Dent, 2020; Prasetyo, 2018). Thus, the film produces a new discourse on gender, which tends not to use gender 'equality' but gender 'balance.'

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