

Woman as Muted Group (Case Study Of Woman In Sasak Ethnic Group)

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Abstract:

Women in Sasak ethnic group are minority who keep being muted in many forms, starts from its position in social stratification, patriarchal lineage, traditional architecture house design, masculinity tradition in merariq, and in customary law which female usually doesn't have inheritance right. This practice is still continuing up until now, in the era when women's emancipation and gender equality supposed to be part of the human rights to every woman wherever she is. Based on these backgrounds, author conducts a research in order to study and understand the muted process of Sasak's woman and how they fight it. This research use muted group theory as its basic concept. Qualitative approach with case study method through focus group discussion is chosen as the methods, and research object is Sasak's woman in Mataram region. The results of this study indicate until now Sasak's women remains a muted group who continue to live in traditional and cultural values. Resistance began to appear in the form of education, where women began to have a desire to study. In addition, the resistance is also can be seen from the bravery that women show in expressing her opinion or though in the household.

Keywords: muted group, woman, gender

Introduction

Research subject from this research is Sasak's women in the Mataram. Sasak's woman experience many forms of mute, starts from its position in social stratification, patriarchal lineage, traditional architecture house design, masculinity tradition in merariq, and in customary law which female usually doesn't have inheritance right. Author will describe each of forms in the following paragraph.

Wacana Nusantara (2010) stated that in the past Sasak's ethnic classified into two main social classes, i.e. the noble/royal called *Perwangsa* and *Jajar Karang* for ordinary/common people. *Perwangsa* divided into two classes, i.e. highly noble (*Perwangsa*) as leader and lowly noble (*Triwangsa*). *Perwangsa* used the title *Datu*. It is also called *Raden* for men and *Denda* for women. If a *Raden* become supreme leader, he will have the right to use the title *Datu*. *Triwangsa* usually use the title *Lalu* for men and *Baiq* for women. The second class *Jajar Karang* usually uses the title *Loq* for men and *Le* for women.

The patrilineal system cause Sasak's woman doesn't have inheritance rights. Hadijah (2013) mentions that Sasak ethnic obey to three legal systems: custom law, Islamic law which is sourced from the Qu'ran and Hadith, and the last is state law which is based on the decision of the District Court that supported by High Court and the Supreme Court. In custom law, Sasak's woman doesn't have any right to inherit her parents's wealth. It is consistent with patrilineal system occurs in Sasak ethnic. This condition also confirm the mute process experienced by Sasak's woman.

Muted process also seen in the architecture of traditional Sasak's house. Saturi (2013) wrote that traditional Sasak's house or *bale tani*, consists of three parts. The inner side is a place for girls, cooking and giving birth. The outer part (right side) is a place for the parent, and the left side is a place for boys and living room in addition. Based on these explanations can be conclude that girls are placed at the back of the house while the boys placed equal with the parent. It is

also means that according to architectural placement woman or girls are in the second position under boys.

Sasak's marriage tradition or *merariq* is also a form of muted for Sasak's woman. Adrian (2015) wrote in *merariq* the man will kidnap or flee the woman, hide her for a few days before officially marrying the woman. This tradition is still continuing to happen until now. *Merariq* proves that Sasak ethnic have a high masculine culture and also proves that man is a brave and masculine creature. While woman on the other side does not have any opportunity to choose, because if she had been kidnap or taken away, like it or not she must marry the man who had kidnap her. If she refuse and returned to her family, it will considered as a disgrace to the woman's family.

Things described above are proof that Sasak's women are minorities whose life is in the pressure of the dominant, the man. This research will focus on the muted process experienced by Sasak's woman and how their resistance strategy against it. As well as Sasak's woman perspective in looking at the world that filled by man domination. This study will also examine how Sasak's woman communicates with other community members. As social beings, woman has a need to socialize with each other. Therefore, woman also has a need to be able to participate in society.

Materials and Methods

The main theory in this research is the muted group theory by Cheri Kramarae and its relation to gender concepts. Cheri Kramarae studied how a minority group in structure and social hierarchy should follow communication system from the dominant group. One of the factor that determined minority and dominant position in structure and social hierarchy is gender, where woman is a minority and male is the dominant.

First, the discussion will be about the concept of gender itself, which often associated with the concept of identity. Question regarding the definition of identity is often associated to the question of who I am. Woodward (2004) stated

that identity is different from personality. Humans may have the same personality traits with others, but to have the same identity with others, it means to have active involvement of ourselves. Jenkins (2004) explains that identity is an aspect contained in every sphere of human life. The question of identity is not a new thing but it should be understood that the identity produce and reproduce within the scope of discourse (narrative, rhetoric, representation) or practice.

Martin dan Nakayama (2007) stated that identity may be understood differently depending on the perspective that people take. Identity also develops over a periods of time and always through interactions with others. How an individual's identity develops depend partly on the relative position or location of the identity within the societal hierarchy. Some identities have a higher position on the social hierarchy. Usually, people can identify with a multitude of groups: gender, age, religion, nationality, racial and ethnic, etc. Martin and Nakayama (2007) describe gender identity as the identification with the cultural notions of masculinity and femininity and what it means to be a man or a woman.

Then Edwin and Shirley Ardener, social anthropologists who interested in structure and social hierarchy, stated that the group construct the top position in social hierarchy determines the communication system of a culture. Groups with lower power such as woman, the poor, black people, must learn to work in a communication system that has been developed by the dominant group. (West & Turner, 2008)

Based on the work of Edwin and Shirley Ardener in developing the concepts of muted group theory, Cheris Kramarae (1981) in West & Turner (2008) build this theory to focus on communication. Kramarae forward three assumptions for this theory, i.e. (1) women perceive the world differently than men because men and women experience are different; (2) because of political domination owned by men, men's perception system are more dominant, obstruct the free expression of alternative models about the world's women; (3) in order to participate in society, women must transformed their model according to the model of men.

The core of muted group theory is minority group members considered to be muted and considered as unfluent speakers. West & Turner (2008) describes several methods that can be used to achieve silencing, ie teasing, ritual, control, and harassment. Teasing accomplished by stating that women conversations is not important, then give it a label as babble, gossip, and other disparaging things. Ritual usually accomplish in a form of marriage custom or ceremony. Control accomplished by men having more power or control in decisions making. In harassment women do not have any freedom in public sphere, where men control the public areas so women who are inside men control have the possibility to receive verbal harassment or sexual harassment.

Houston and Kramarae (1991) as cited in West & Turner (2008) suggests some strategies as a form of resistance against silencing that occurs. First is to declare silencing strategies as noted. Through this process, silencing could be a topic that can be discussed. Second is to take back, raised, and concerned about "trivial" discourse.

After discuss about the theory using in this research, in the next part author will explain about methods used in this research. Qualitative approach through case study methods using focus group discussion (FGD) were used in this research because it is considered as the most appropriate to describe the purpose of this study, ie to determine the process of silencing in Sasak's woman, strategies of resistance, as well as Sasak's woman to communicate in public life.

Definition of qualitative research by Creswell (2008), as cited by Raco (2010) is an approach to explore and understand a central symptom. Yin (2008) defines case study as a research method in which questions about how and why proposed in a study. Furthermore, Yin (2008) dividing case study model into three parts. First, *descriptive* in which case study focused on the decomposition of case. Second, *exploratory*, which is done by indepth investigation. Third, *explanatory*, the researchers provide detail descriptions and explanations of the cases.

The research itself is a case study using descriptive models. Descriptive model selected for this study because this research is an initial series about gender's cases in Sasak ethnic, in order before it can be developed further, it needed an extensive and complete case decomposition.

Primary data in this research obtained through in-depth interviews. In-depth interviews are conducted by using FGD. At data collection stage, researcher also makes an observation as additional data. Besides in-depth interview and observation, researcher also conducts literature study in order to obtain relevant data for this research. Literature study was obtained through a variety of sources, ranging from printed book and online sources.

The object of this research is Sasak's woman in Sade village, a traditional village of Sasak ethnic. There are several informants in this research. First is Mr. Awan, researcher's guide in Sade village. Then the key informants are Midun, Fanny, Rani, and Siumi who is a native Sasak's woman.

Results and Discussion

Data from the Development Control Center of Ecoregion Bali and Nusa Tenggara mention that Sade village is known as a village where traditional or cultural values of Sasak ethnic is still maintaining and applied. Since 1975 the village has been visited by tourists, both domestic and from abroad. The increasing number of tourists arises significantly since Praya International Airport is opening in November 2011. By any chance, the opening of new international airport in Lombok which located only 15-20 minute from Sade village has caused this village become more famous and become top destination for tourists. Nowadays, the average visitors or tourists who come to the Sade village reach 100 people per day. In holiday season or peak season the number will increase up to 200 people per day.

Government of West Nusa Tenggara (NTB) has appointed Sade village as tourism village according to the Decree of West Nusa Tenggara Governor No. 2 in 1989 on the establishment of 15 regionals tourism. There are some criteria or

requirements that need to be full filled if a village wants to become a tourism village, such as:

- A village must have a tourist attraction, which is everything encompassing nature, culture and output of human creation.
- Good accessibility, so it is easier for tourists to visit, using various types of transportation.
- Belief systems and social system are important aspect remembering there are special rules or local wisdom in a rural community.
- Availability of infrastructure; facilities and services include transportation, electricity, water supply, drainage, telephone and so on.
- The people and village official accept and give high support towards tourism villages as well as tourists who come to the village.

And all the criteria mention above are owned by Sade village. As a tourism village, the main attraction from Sade village is they cultural value. In a modern era like now, people of Sade village still hold their way of life to a traditional cultural value, which make them looks isolated from the modern era. The new international airport make Sade village have a good accessibility. The infrastructure is available but the people of Sade village refuse to maximize it because its has contradiction toward their cultural values.

Sade village located in Central Lombok, in this village the custom values and traditional way's of life were still preserved. In time, this village grow as a tourism village, which is not only sell culture in physical form, as can be seen through the house, language, clotch, but also sell the culture in the form of way's of life.



Picture 1 Traditional House in Sade Village (Source: Researcher Documentation)

Mr Awan as guides and informants explained all the houses in the village does not use ceramic for the floor and the roofs made from reeds. Sade village's citizens are not even cook using gas, they still use traditional firewood stoves. There are 10 houses in Sade village which have a toilet. The toilet itself doesn't located inside the house, as we are known in today's modern house, but the toilet was located in front of the house, separated from the house itself. The needs of water filled with wells. None of the houses in Sade village have a television or others electronic goods. There is only one television in Sade village, which is put at village hall and it was given by Mr. Harmoko former Minister of Information in the New Order era. Although, it looks like Sade village is far from technology and modernity, but Mr. Awan explained that almost every citizens own mobile phones and also understand about social media such as facebook.

Sade village's chief is Mr. Kurdap Silake, and 100% of the population is Muslim. Main language is Sasak's language. In fact, some aged citizens can't speak Indonesian language and illiterate. The education level in Sade village could be category as poor, there is no one ever from Sade village is ever achieves a college degree. The highest education level is high school.



Picture 2 Mr.Awan (Source: Researcher Documentation)

People in Sade village practiced inter-cousin marriage system. Mr. Awan as informant explained that all citizens in Sade village can be relates as one familia, and marriage between cousins is a something common and natural. Marriage with someone from outside the village is very rare, because it needs a large dowry (one or two buffaloes) if Sade village's men want to get married with women from outside the village. Meanwhile, if Sade village's men married with women from the village, it just needs a set of prayer tool, or some amount of money that can be given by the men.

There is a belief in Sasak that saying women who can't weave can't be married. Therefore, Sasak's girls are taught to weave as early as possible, ie since the age of 8 years and weaving skill become a crucial skills that must be acquire. Even after marriage, women will continue to weave and the income get from the selling will be used to fulfill household needs. The weaving tool used also remains as a traditional weaving tool.



Picture 3 Inaq Midun with Her Weaving Tool (Source: Researcher Documentation)

The main findings of this study indicate patrilineal system still has a strong influence on Sasak ethnic in Sade village. All of the key informants confirmed men positions are higher than women. Women have obligations to take care of all household domestic needs, such as washing, cooking, fetching water from the well, and to nurture the children. One of the key informants, Inaq (special term for women) Siumi revealed even in the pregnant condition, women should perform their duties as usual. While the main obligation of men is work for a living.

Although it is the obligation of men to make a living, but in fact, economically women have more important role compare to men. Men in Sade village majority are farmers with rain fed system and therefore relies on water and in the dry season the field cannot be planted which make men do not have a job in this times. At this time men are unable to make a living as their function and obligation. Usually at this time men only gathers and chat with other fellow men without worrying about income or trying to help women in domestic household work. All household need relies on income from women which earned through selling woven or other craft.

Women must perform their obligations and also have to work to find a living. Most of the women in Sade village sell her goods in the village, offer it to every tourist to see and buy. Although there are some women who is selling the goods into outside the village, such as Tanjung Aan beach, and if the women still have toddler, then the child will be carried along because it is the duty of women to take care of children. This continued even after the men started back to work. In addition, women have been married since they are teenagers, utmost at 17-18 years. In fact, there are some cases where women have been married since she was in elementary school. This causes many of Sasak's women can not finished their education until high school level.

Sasak's women as minority or marginal group can also be seen in merariq, Sasak's marriage custom. In merariq, man must kidnap woman in order to marry her. Inaq Fanny explains before the man kidnaps the woman usually they already made arrangements to meet at night. Woman usually pretending go to river to pee or go to well to fetch water as the reasons. When kidnapped the woman was taken to the man's house, and the next day a representative would come to the woman's parent, claimed their daughter had been kidnapped. After a discussion between the woman's parent and the man's representative, a traditional wedding ceremony will be held. If the discussion failed and marriage does not take place, the woman will be returned to her family, and if this happens it means mortification for the woman and her family. Therefore in order to avoid this mortification, the woman's family will approve the request of the man to marry their daughter, although perhaps they don't agree because their daughter was too young to get married. Merariq is still performed until now, because there was presumption that if a woman is proposed with a proper normal way, for Sasak ethnic it mean a humiliation for the woman and her family. For Sasak's ethnic, women are not an item who need to be request in advance if you want to marry her.

Then based on the architecture of Sasak traditional house, a daughter's room is located inside the house near the kitchen. Architectural model of terraced house causes the daughter's room was on the top of the house and and the deep inside it. At first, this condition can be seen as a sign that women are raised

because the location of her room was on the top level of the house, while the parent room was in the front which is the lowest level. In fact, the location of the daughter's room is only to provide protection to girls not to raise them. Due to merariq, parents put the girl in the deepest part of the house so they aren't easily to be kidnapped, because if the girls had been taken away, her parents surely will allow her daughter to marry even if she is too young or do not like the man. Protection is given, simply so that the girls or daughter does not cause embarrassment to her parents and families.

Based on all those findings, can be concludes that the muted process develop through ritual and control, just like Cheris Kramarae (West & Turner, 2008) explained. Ritual can be seen through merariq, meanwhile control can be seen through patriarchy system which put woman under man. Besides, the woman position as a breadwinners but still doing domestic household and let the man who is unemployment do whatever they want are a proof that woman is marginal group.

As long as the research takes process, author or researcher did not see any resistance strategy done by women to change their condition as muted group. The women are accustomed to accept the stigma that woman position is under man and assume it is a natural thing and supposed to happen. Sasak's women receive their condition as muted group with the notion that it is reasonable and in accordance with the cultural values held by the Sasak ethnic.

Sasak's women reception as a muted group is the way they participate in society. Women as the breadwinners when the man is unemployment, and still doing domestic household jobs, didn't dispute the position of the husband are also the way of participation in society for Sasak's women.

Conclusion

There are several things that can be inferred through this research. First, the muted process occurs through ritual and control. Ritual can be seen in merariq customs and architecture of traditional Sasak house. Control can be seen in the

position of women in the household who only take care of domestic jobs. Although, women are the breadwinner in the family, but this do not alter the position of women under men.

Then the strategy of resistance does not done by Sasak's women. For Sasak's woman, they current condition is normal and natural. Author assumes, the absence of resistance strategy is because level education of Sasak's woman is still very low. Many of the woman can not finish high school due to their marriage. Sasak's woman view that their condition as irreversible and as the way of life. How women participate in society is to be a housewife, weavers, and sellers of woven fabrics.

Based on those conclusions, author have several suggestions that can be used and develop for the future research.

1. Further research can be conduct by focusing on a study to find out or looking some explanation of why there is no resistance strategy.
2. Conduct a comparative study on the condition of Sasak women as a muted group among women living in the Sade village with women outside the village.
3. Research can also be developed in the entrepreneurship of Sasak woman.. Although women is a muted group but women is also in front line of Sasak ethnic in terms of entrepreneurship.
4. It is necessary to held a community service activities in the Sade village, particularly to women, teach the women about a simple management systems for their weaving business, teach about how to use internet to as a marketing tool to help them sell products, provide education about health and a good lifestyle.

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