DEWI KILISUCI FIGURE: DISASTER MITIGATION IN THE ECOFEMINISM PERSPECTIVE

Eti Setiawati¹; Maulfi Syaiful Rizal²; Nadhea Arnisma Budiarti¹*  

¹-³Indonesian Language and Literature Education Study Program, Faculty of Cultural Sciences, Universitas Brawijaya Malang  
Jl. Veterans, Ketawanggede, Lowokwaru District, Malang City 65145, Indonesia  
¹eti64@ub.ac.id; ²maulfi_rizal@ub.ac.id; ³arnismanadhea@student.ub.ac.id

Received: 20th December 2021/ Revised: 06th April 2022/ Accepted: 07th April 2022


ABSTRACT

The research focused on the efforts of the Mount Kelud community in disaster mitigation from the perspective of the story of Dewi Kilisuci, one of the central figures of the legend of Mount Kelud. Ecofeminism viewed that nature as a symbol of women. Mitigation efforts could be carried out through the society’s cultural wisdom by carrying out various traditional ceremonies. The ceremony would be closely related to various legendary figures that the community believes. In addition, it could also be done through symbolic efforts. The research applied a qualitative descriptive research method. Data were obtained through interviews as well as content analysis, and descriptive analysis techniques used to explain stories and disaster mitigation efforts of society’s cultural wisdom based on symbolic ecofeminism. It is found that the story of the character of Dewi Kilisuci, where there are mitigation efforts carried out symbolically by her character, which until now is believed by the people. It also explains the role, value, and position of the figure of Dewi Kilisuci as a symbol of women in relation to ecofeminism. It is hoped that the research will be able to provide an understanding of the local cultural wisdom of the community and disaster mitigation efforts and find out how natural values are related to women.

Keywords: disaster mitigation, Mount Kelud, Dewi Kilisuci, ecofeminism, local wisdom

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia has mountainous and marine landscapes scattered throughout the archipelago. Many of these mountains are active volcanoes. One of the legendary active volcanoes is Mount Kelud in the East Java region. Administratively, this mountain is located in the Kediri regency. Mount Kelud has experienced several eruptions. The last eruption occurred in 2014 which was recorded as a fairly powerful eruption. The eruption in 2014 damaged facilities and houses of residents, and even the volcanic ash spread to Central Java and surrounding areas.

The eruption made the community and the government formulate mitigation efforts to overcome the eruption’s impacts. Wiguna (Sukmana, 2018) has stated that disaster management is a series of activities that reduce risk and emphasize the impacts that occur from disasters, both before and after. This effort is also enshrined in Law Number 24 of 2007 concerning the implementation of disaster management which is a disaster mitigation effort including the preparation and determination of development policies that have a risk of disaster occurrence, disaster prevention activities, emergency response, and rehabilitation.

The local government has been trying various ways to face disaster and anticipate of negative impacts of the eruption of Mount Kelud. Efforts have been made to establish a seismic monitoring post for Mount Kelud, which is in charge of observing the activities of Mount Kelud. This seismic monitoring post is also tasked with developing a mapping of areas prone to eruption impacts so that it can be seen which areas have a high order of impact from the eruption of Mount Kelud. They establish the Ampera tunnel, which functions to reduce the negative impact of the...
eruption of Mount Kelud, and the establishment of Badan Penanggulangan Bencana Daerah (BPBD), which is authorized to handle and control disasters.

In addition to mitigation efforts carried out by the government, there are also mitigation efforts related to local socio-cultural wisdom in the form of a series of traditional ceremonies aimed at expressing gratitude and asking for safety. Mitigation efforts based on socio-cultural wisdom are efforts made by the community based on their social values. Humans tend to use nature massively without paying attention to the impact of irresponsible use. Humans have an obligation to protect and preserve the nature around them. This is important considering that there has been damage to nature caused by the anthropocentric mindset.

Anthropocentrism is a human thought that feels higher or most powerful in humans over other people, including animals, plants, and other natural resources. From anthropocentric thinking, an androcentric view was born, which has created a new hierarchy, where men have the highest and most powerful position than women (Banoet, 2021). Both of these ideas receive criticism from social ecologists and feminists, who give rise to new ideas in the form of ecofeminism views.

Ecofeminism is a study that is motivated by social-feminist, peace, and ecological movements. Ecofeminism views that there is an important relationship between women's domination and nature which shows the relationship between forms of human oppression, especially women and nature. The link between feminism and ecology is historically causal. According to the philosophers of ecofeminism, the basic concept of the domination of nature and women is the dominance of a hierarchy that places women in a low position.

Keraf (Banoet, 2021) has argued that feminism and environmental ethics play a role in undermining the perspective of modern society, which then offers a perspective or forms the basis of its philosophical thinking. Therefore, ecofeminism studies always discuss issues related to the behavior or actions of the community towards women, which departs from the understanding of human actions against non-humans, especially the unjust nature.

The relationship between nature and women is conceptual and symbolic, so feminist and ecological issues cannot be separated. The issue of feminism becomes crucial, where women become objects of exploitation and inequality. Likewise, nature as an ecological object becomes the object of human exploitation. Feminism and ecology in this concept seek to fight against the injustice of nature and women as objects of unlimited exploitation. This relationship between feminism and ecology also can be seen through various folklores.

Folklore that developed in Indonesia has a description of the relationship between women and their environment. Mount Kelud itself has a folklore that is trusted by the community. This story develops with the central character, Lembu Suro, and a Kediri princess Dewi Kilisuci. Through this story, the community around Mount Kelud performs several traditional ceremonies which are believed to have been carried out by Dewi Kilisuci as an effort to mitigate the disaster from the eruption of Mount Kelud. In addition, there are various places or areas around Mount Kelud which are believed to be formed from Dewi Kilisuci’s shawl as a symbolic form of disaster mitigation efforts carried out by Dewi Kilisuci to protect the people of Kediri.

Local wisdom is a custom that is formed through knowledge, understanding, insight, and belief that can be a guide or reference for human behavior in living in an ecological community. In Indonesia, local wisdom is closely related to a system of culture and belief that applies in society (Findayani, Utama, & Anwar, 2020). The community’s local wisdom system gets a crucial influence from local views on mystical things wrapped in social values, traditions, and linkages to the environment.

The wisdom system mitigation knowledge is formed in the form of certain symbols that are associated with the local wisdom of the community. The community’s experience in dealing with disasters is accumulated into mitigation knowledge, forming a tradition in predicting natural disasters. Brigman (Hutomo, Ekomadyo, & Ameir, 2020) has argued that this cultural process certainly intersects with knowledge of the scientific process, but it is not easy to socialize it.

Widjanarko (2019) has explained that nature conservation is also part of women’s responsibilities. Humans, both men and women, are part of nature that has a role in preserving the environment. Herawati and Kartini (2019) have explained forms of disaster mitigation efforts oriented towards community efforts with various uses of existing variables. Wijayanti, Kusuma, and Pneumatica (2019) have discussed the efforts of ecofeminism.

The research seeks to describe the local wisdom of the Gunung Kelud community in carrying out disaster mitigation efforts from the ecofeminism perspective of the story of Dewi Kilisuci, a legendary figure from Mount Kelud. This effort is made to preserve the traditions and oral stories of the people of Gunung Kelud and to know about disaster mitigation efforts through existing stories. The research data uses qualitative methods to look for elements of developing oral culture. Research data are collected by interviewing techniques from cultural figures or actors/speakers who are directly related to a series of traditional ceremonies and know the legend of Gunung Kelud.

The research is important considering that there are still many people who do not know and understand that the local legend of Mount Kelud has a picture of a female character as a symbol of protection and ecofeminism. This protection symbol can be associated with disaster mitigation efforts based on socio-cultural wisdom.
The research is expected to be able to provide knowledge and understanding to the public so that they know more about the relationship between nature and women. The symbolic form of efforts carried out by Dewi Kilisuci is also a symbol of disaster mitigation based on socio-cultural wisdom so that a mutually beneficial balance is achieved that maintains and preserves each other.

METHODS

The research method applied is a descriptive qualitative with data collection techniques through interviews. Qualitative descriptive research is used to explain and describe the folklore of the legend of Mount Kelud and to explain the local wisdom of the people of Mount Kelud in carrying out disaster mitigation efforts from the ecofeminism perspective of the story of Mount Kelud through the figure of Dewi Kilisuci.

Data are collected through unstructured interview techniques by giving random questions to obtain much broader information (Herdiansyah, 2020). Interviews are conducted with community members consisting of village heads, village officials, and several community leaders. The criteria for determining the informants in the research are adjusted to the knowledge and understanding of the informants related to the legend of Dewi Kilisuci and direct involvement with Mount Kelud both in ceremonial and spiritual activities so that the key informants of the research are community leaders or caretakers from Mount Kelud. Determination of criteria like this is referred to as a purposive sampling technique, which is a method of determining informants who are determined intentionally based on certain criteria.

Interview data collection is recorded using a digital voice recorder. The recorded interview results are then transcribed to analyze the information obtained. This analysis shows what information needs to be deepened so that re-interviews can be carried out to obtain complete data information. In addition, the results of the interviews are also supported by reading several literature sources in the form of previous articles related to the research conducted.

The analysis technique of the research itself uses content and descriptive analysis techniques. The content analysis technique does not only use text analysis as a theoretical and methodological study but also utilizes library sources as study material. Content analysis is carried out by reading several works of literature related to disaster mitigation based on local cultural wisdom, ecofeminism, and mythology which are then used as material for discussion studies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Indonesia is a country that has cultural diversity. This diversity is reflected in the form of physical and non-physical cultures. Physical culture is a culture that looks like traditional dances, traditional clothes, and traditional houses. Non-physical culture is a culture that cannot be seen with the senses, including this type of legend, cultural literature, and oral and written folk tales. This cultural wealth is a feature and uniqueness of Indonesia. This cultural diversity and uniqueness attract many foreign people and researchers from various parts of the world to Indonesia to study folklore.

Mount Kelud is one of the legendary active volcanoes. Mount Kelud has a very famous oral story that is believed to be the origin story of the existence of Mount Kelud. Oral stories can be in the form of legends and myths, which have different meanings. Legend is oral narrative prose whose story is believed by the people who own it as a fact that really happened. Meanwhile, according to Iswidayati (Raharjo & Kholifatu, 2021), myths are sacred stories that support a belief system that is believed to be accurate but cannot be proven, whereas according to Rachman (Raharjo & Kholifatu, 2021), myths are stories that are considered to have happened, and sacred. This myth usually contains figures of gods or goddesses and demigods.

The folklore of Mount Kelud has a very legendary female central character named Dewi Kilisuci. According to local people’s beliefs, Mount Kelud is formed as a result of the betrayal of the daughter of the Kingdom of Kediri named Dewi Kilisuci against the love of two kings named Jatha Suro and Lembu Suro (Figure 1).

“The origins of Mount Kelud originated from the Punggawa or Patih of Kediri who had a daughter named Dewi Kilisuci. Kili Suci is a very beautiful Princess of Kediri. The story begins with Lembu Suro and Jatha Suro, who want to propose to Princess Kediri.” (Interview, 14 June 2021)

Figure 1 Suro Ox Statue

This story begins when Jatha Suro and Lembu Suro, who are the children of a powerful mandraguna named Ki Butha Ludaya, want to marry Dewi Kilisuci
or Tanggramawijaya Tunggadewi. A daughter of King Jenggolo Manik, who is the King of the Kingdom of Kediri. Dewi Kilisuci is famous for having a beautiful face. In addition, she also has a high position as the Crown Princess of the Kingdom of Kediri.

Her position as the crown princess requires her to have an equal and commensurate life partner; therefore, competition is held for all kings throughout the archipelago. The competition is conducted by colliding with kanuragan knowledge. Philosophically, kanuragan is a supernatural science or martial art (Widyanti & Tetep, 2019). Whoever among the kings who won the competition could marry Dewi Kilisuci.

Jatha Suro and Lemu Suro, who heard the news about the competition, fight each other to get married to Dewi Kilisuci. In the end, it is the ox that won the competition. However, it is not enough that Dewi Kilisuci still gives conditions to the oxen to build a well in one night.

“Putri Kediri wants to be married, but there are conditions that must be met by Lembu Suro, namely being able to build a well that can be heard in the universe below.” (Interview, 14 June 2021)

Hanafi (Wilma, 2018) has explained that there are several versions, one of which says that Lembu Suro is a cow-headed stealth countryman with magic and wants to marry Dewi Kilisuci. However, the princess who does not love him gives a request to Lembu Suro to build a well at the summit of Mount Kelud in one night. Through the contest that she makes, through this request, the princess hopes that Lembu Suro will not be able to fulfill it, so her application is not accepted because it does not meet the requirements.

However, it is unexpected that Lembu Suro is able to complete the conditions made by Dewi Kilisuci. Dewi Kilisuci again thinks about how to thwart Lembu Suro’s efforts so that the proposal could be canceled. Dewi Kilisuci asks for one more condition, for Lembu Suro to prove that the well he has made smells good. Lembu Suro again fulfills the request made by Dewi Kilisuci. Lembu Suro goes into the well he made. However, after Lembu Suro enters the well, Dewi Kilisuci orders his troops to bury Lembu Suro alive in the well he has made.

“When the well was not finished, Dewi Kilisuci ordered his soldiers to throw stones at Lembu Suro until Lembu Suro was angry. Lembu Suro said, ‘Remember tomorrow, Blitar is the backdrop, Tulungagung is Kedung, and Kediri is the river.’” (Interview, 14 June 2021)

Before the well is completely covered, Lembu Suro takes an oath that he will repay Dewi Kilisuci’s treatment. The oath is pronounced as follows, “Sesuk Kediri dadi Kali, Blitar dadi Latar, Tulungagung dadi Kedung,” which statement means that one day later when Mount Kelud erupts and releases hot ashes. This will make the Kediri area flooded, the Blitar area fills with ash and sand, and submerge the Tulungagung area like a lake. Hearing the oath spoken by Lembu Suro, Dewi Kilisuci runs until her scarf falls which then turns into a mountain, which is named Mount Umbik, while the other shawl is stuck until it becomes a river known as the Muling river. Dewi Kilisuci finally arrives at Mount Slengat or also known as Mount Pegat.

In the story presented, it is clear that the character of Dewi Kilisuci has an intensive role in the legend of Mount Kelud, who makes an oath for himself and the people of Kediri as a result of a trick she does to Lembu Suro. His selfishness and sense of power have put himself and his people in danger.

“When Dewi Kilisuci buried her alive, besides having supernatural powers, she was also a powerful woman where she was a queen who had many troops so that she could order her troops to bury the ox Suro alive.” (Interview, 17 June 2021)

However, behind it all, Dewi Kilisuci also thinks about the safety of the people of Kediri by fortifying the Kediri area with her scarf, which turns into mountains and rivers. This story shows that the relationship between nature and women is not surprising. Women are able to create a threat and a sense of security, such as how nature can provide benefits and also pose a threat if it is not accompanied by conservation efforts.

Karen J Warren (Yogiswari, 2020) has suggested that the relationship between nature and women is not surprising because society is shaped through values, beliefs, education, and behavior that use a patriarchal framework. Warren believes that the perspective and thinking that is patriarchal, hierarchical, dualistic, and oppressive is a masculine way of thinking that threatens women and nature. Ecofeminism also demands a replacement of the idea of hierarchical dualism with a holistic understanding used to explain organic holism (the web of life).

This life network concretely shows the kinship relationship between humans and living things and nature as a whole. This egalitarian holism is an awareness that nature is intertwined with the intention of equality to form uniformity, where each has its own role in the life network system (Ngahu, 2020). In this case, ecofeminism tries to negate the achievements of women and nature. It tries to break down the mythical, stereotyped, and female domination arguments by seeing them from a different perspective as an argument based on the awareness of feminism which has a balanced relationship in society and environmental discourse.

Indonesia’s natural landscapes are so beautiful and exotic. The series of mountains, beautiful coastlines, and the diversity of existing natural resources make Indonesia a country with a variety of unique and abundant natural resources potential. This condition certainly provides its own advantages as well as provides a weakness for Indonesia. The...
Disaster mitigation is an effort carried out both before and after a disaster occurs, but usually, this mitigation effort focuses more on efforts made before a disaster occurs. So far, disaster mitigation or disaster reduction activities have focused more on physical assessments but have yet to produce significant results, thus requiring an idea of resilience that emphasizes the importance of a community’s role in recovering and rebuilding without external assistance.

The form of disaster mitigation activities and efforts can be carried out with the background of culture, history, and natural conditions in each area which is called disaster mitigation culture. Disaster mitigation culture is a mitigation effort based on knowledge and understanding of disaster experiences that occur regularly so that it becomes a disaster management habit for the community. The experience is then integrated with the form of local wisdom of the community’s culture.

Disaster mitigation through the local cultural wisdom of the community is intended as an effort formed through the cultural habits of the community that are believed and carried out for generations in overcoming a disaster. Local wisdom is a manifestation of the development of knowledge and understanding of community groups from a long experience process in interaction with an ecological system and each other that forms a mutually beneficial relationship (Idris, Yugiantari, & Hadi, 2021).

The definition of the concept of local wisdom must be seen and interpreted through various perspectives philosophically, anthropologically, historically, or the built environment. Rahyono (Wiratmaja, Suacana, & Sudana, 2021) has suggested that, in general, the concept of local wisdom is the idea of a certain ethnic community that is wise, rich in wisdom, has positive values, through their experiences that are not shared by other communities. Furthermore, Sibrani (Wiratmaja, Suacana, & Sudana, 2021) has concluded that local wisdom is the original knowledge or local intelligence of the community that comes from noble values and has become a tradition because it contains the value of goodness, so it develops in society without any coercion. These ideas and embodiments of action grow naturally and develop along with the civilization of the people.

This local wisdom is not limited only to the knowledge and understanding of the community with each other but also concerns the relationship between the entire ecological community. Local wisdom manifests the development of knowledge and understanding of community groups from a long experience process in interacting in a system that forms mutually beneficial relationships (Idris, Yugiantari, & Hadi, 2021). Local wisdom that develops in the community can be an approach to building community preparedness and resilience in dealing with and overcoming disasters.

The Legend of Mount Kelud provides the value of local wisdom for the community. Through historical stories that are believed to be the community performs several ritual safety ceremonies which are always carried out every month of Sura. The Kelud people believe that salvation is a symbol of a prayer request for safety for the people of Kediri. The ritual of the first Suro was carried out long ago in the past kingdoms. The purpose of the ritual ceremony is as a symbolic form of thanksgiving and asking for salvation from God Almighty.

“The ritual of the first Suro has been carried out since the colonial era. During the ritual, there are offerings. The ritual aims to pray to the Almighty, asking for safety, because this area is a disaster-prone area.” (Interview, 14 June 2021)

This ritual ceremony is carried out by giving various crops. Each village or community member will make offerings which are then collected into one at the village hall. After the community has gathered, prayer is performed. After that, the offerings will be paraded to the crater, which is then carried out by making offerings to the crater of Mount Kelud (Figure 2).

This ritual ceremony is believed to be a form of mitigation effort, which is also carried out by Dewi Kilisuci after she hears the oath that is made by Lembu Suro. Where after the incident, Dewi Kilisuci performs austerities. This legendary story also provides symbolic disaster mitigation contained in the behavior of the character of Dewi Kilisuci. This shows that folklore told from generation to generation will often be associated with symbols of natural events or objects conveyed through story depictions.

“Her shawl was dropped into Mount Umbuk. Then he ran to the south, his yellow scarf got stuck in the river, became Kali Muling, until he arrived at Mount Slengat (mountain of Pegat).
Dewi Kilisuci meditated on Mount Slengat.”
(Interview, 14 June 2021)

The incident where Dewi Kilisuci drops her scarf to form a beat of cloth, now known by the public as Mount Umbuk, which is located in the south, and then meditates on Mount Slengat is a form of disaster mitigation that is symbolically carried out by Dewi Kilisuci. The incident of Dewi Kilisuci accidentally dropping her scarf, which becomes Mount Umbuk, is believed by the people of Kediri to be formed by a pile of scarves of Dewi Kilisuci dropped to protect the people of Kediri from the eruption and lava of Mount Kelud.

“Mount Umbuk is located in the south, as a water barrier so that Sugihwaras village is safe. The lava to the south passes through the bladak lava route and the Yellow River, Pulo there is also a lava path, to the north there is the Kunto River.”
(Interview, 17 June 2021)

Mount Umbuk is believed to function as a repellent of lava due to the eruption of Mount Kelud so that the lava will flow through the Bladak lava route and the Yellow River, Pulo, and to the north through the Kunto River. That way, the people of Kediri will not be affected by the lava from the eruption of Mount Kelud. In addition, the scarf is an embodiment of protection for women. The shawl has various functions, mainly to protect oneself, which has similarities with Mount Umbuk, a protector for the people of Kediri.

The figure of Dewi Kilisuci also shows a symbolic form of ecofeminism; at that time, women were marginalized in making the decisions they wanted. Women could not freely express their wishes or refuse an action that they did not really want to do. In addition, the concept of competition also shows that women are used as objects of male competition. This is in line with where the existing ecology is used massively by humans without paying attention to the sustainability of the existing ecology.

The marginalized position made Dewi Kilisuci formulate a strategy by providing various conditions as a form of rejection. The position and position of Dewi Kilisuci also become critical, where she is able to rule and formulate strategies as a form of women’s power.

This shows that women are able to provide both protection and destruction. Dewi Kilisuci’s actions when she traps Lembu Suro by burying him alive in a well make Lembu Suro angry, manifesting the destruction caused by Dewi Kilisuci’s actions. As a form of responsibility for Dewi Kilisuci due to the destruction caused, she also takes various actions in an effort to protect. Likewise, if humans use it without paying attention to its sustainability, it can have a negative impact, but if humans are able to maintain harmony and balance between living things, they will provide protection and various resources that are beneficial to humans.

**REFERENCES**


