Prosodi: Jurnal Ilmu Bahasa dan Sastra
Vol. 20 – No. 2, Oktober 2026, pp.333 - 340
https://doi.org/10.21107/prosodi..v20i2.36541
Open Access:
https://journal.trunojoyo.ac.id/prosodi

ISSN 1907-6665 (Print)
ISSN 2622-0474 (Online)

EXPLORING THE POTRAYAL OF FEMALE CHARACTER IN MADURESE FOKLORE: AN APRAISAL PERSPECTIVE

Diah Ikawati Ayuningtias[1]*, Rif'ah Inayati[2], Sriyono Sriyono[3]
[1,2,3]Universitas Trunodjoyo Madura
**Corresponding Author:* diah.ayuningtias@trunojoyo.ac.id

Article History
Received : 16/10/2026
Revised : 01/11/2026
Accepted : 30/10/2026
Published : 02/11/2026

Keywords:
Appraisal System, Attitudinal System, Female Character, Madurese Folklore

Kata Kunci:
Sistem Apresiasi, Sistem Sikap, Karakter Perempuan, Cerita Rakyat Madura

Abstract. This study aims to explore the attitude, emotion, and evaluative value of the female character of the Madure folklore *Asal Usul Pesarean Aeng Mata Ebhu* by applying the Appraisal theory developed by Martin and White (2005), within the framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). The appraisal theory is employed to analyse the interpersonal meaning of the text, in particular through the main three subsystems – Attitude, Engagement, and Graduation. Data in the form of clause and narrative discourse which contain the evaluation of the female character, that is Syarifah Amb ami, who was also known as Rato Ebhu, were collected through the method of documentation, and analysed qualitatively. The result of the analysis shows that the representation of Rato Ebhu is dominated by the attitude type, particularly the affect, judgment, and appreciation category, which indicates that Rato Ebhu is presented as a woman who is obedient toward her husband, gentle, but is capable of making decision whenever facing moral conflict. Furthermore, the analysis on the folklore reveals that female character represents the center of morality and sprituality.

Abstrak. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji sikap, emosi, dan nilai evaluatif dari tokoh perempuan dalam cerita rakyat Madure berjudul *Asal Usul Pesarean Aeng Mata Ebhu* dengan menerapkan Teori Penilaian yang dikembangkan oleh Martin dan White (2005), dalam kerangka Linguistik Fungsional Sistematis (SFL). Teori penilaian digunakan untuk menganalisis makna interpersonal teks, khususnya melalui tiga subsistem utama – Sikap, Keterlibatan, dan Gradasi. Data berupa klausa dan wacana naratif yang berisi evaluasi terhadap tokoh perempuan, yaitu Syarifah Ambami, yang juga dikenal sebagai Rato Ebhu, dikumpulkan melalui metode dokumentasi, dan dianalisis secara kualitatif. Hasil analisis menunjukkan bahwa representasi Rato Ebhu didominasi oleh tipe sikap, khususnya kategori afek, penilaian, dan apresiasi, yang menunjukkan bahwa Rato Ebhu digambarkan sebagai seorang wanita yang patuh kepada suaminya, lembut, namun mampu mengambil keputusan ketika menghadapi konflik moral. Selain itu, analisis terhadap cerita rakyat tersebut mengungkapkan bahwa tokoh perempuan tersebut mewakili pusat moralitas dan spiritualitas.

How to Cite: Ayuningtias, D.L., Inayati, R., Sriyono, S. (2026). EXPLORING THE POTRAYAL OF FEMALE CHARACTER IN MADURESE FOKLORE AN APRAISAL PERSPECTIVE. *Prosodi: Jurnal Ilmu Bahasa dan Sastra*, 20(2), 333-340. https://doi.org/10.21107/prosodi.v20i2.36541

Correspondence address:
Correspondence address: diah.ayuningtias@trunojoyo.ac.id

Publisher:
Program Studi Sastra Inggris, Universitas Trunodjoyo Madura. Jln. Raya Telang, PO Box 2 Telang, Kamal, Bangkalan, Madura.
prosodi@trunojoyo.ac.id

INTRODUCTION

The position of women in various civilizations has historically been determined by patriarchal culture, which is typified by the dominance of men in social, political and economic organizations. Gender roles are strictly defined in the majority of patriarchal regimes, which confine women to domestic and reproductive duties while giving men power and public prominence [1]. The idea that males are born leaders and decision-makers and that women should be nurturing, modest, and submissive is reinforced by these cultural frameworks. Laws, traditions, religious interpretations that uphold male previlege and limit women's access to leadership, education and property all contribute to the institutionalization of this gendered power disparity. Globally, women's subordination manifests differently depending on historical and cultural

contexts, yet the underlying patriarchal logic remains consistent. In many parts of Asia, Africa and the Middle East, for instance, patriarchal values are reinforced thrrough kinship systems and cultural norms that emphasize female chastity, marriagebility and obedience [2]. Practices such as dowry, child marriage, and gender-based violence illustrate how women's bodies and labor are controlled for the preservation of family honor and social order. Meanwhile, in western societies, patriarchy has evolved into more subtle forms of gender inequality-visible in the gap, occupational segregation and the underrepresentation of women in political and corporate leadership [3]. Thus, despite regional variations, patriarchal ideology continues to structure women's social and economic opportunities worldwide.

The persistence of patriarchy is also evident in how cultural narratives and media representations reinforce gender stereotypes. Women are often depicted as emotional, dependent, or morally reposnible for maintaining social harmony, whereas men are portrayed as rational, assertive and capable of leadership [4]. These representation serve to normalize gender hierarchies and shape societal expectations about what constitutes appropriate behavior for men and women. Furthermore, patriarchal control extends to the regulation of women's sexuality and bodily autonomy, as reflected in debates over reproductive rights , dress codes and sexual violence [5]. Such mechanisms ensure the continuity of patriarchal values, even in societies that formally endorse gender equality.

Folklore, as a collective expression of culture, is a powerful tool for reproducing and sustaining gender ideologies. Bascom [6] defines folklore as a body of expressive culture that encompasses myths, legends, tales, proverbs, and customs, through which societies encode moral and social order. According to Propp [7], traditional narrative structures frequently assign female characters limited or secondary roles, such as the maiden, the wife, or the reward, while male characters fucntion as heroes or agents of transformation. Feminist folklorists have challenged this structural bias by emphasizing how women's experiences, emotions and voices are often arginalized or silenced in traditional narratives [8].

Globally, scholars such as Warner [9] and Zipes [10] argue that women in folklore are often idealized as symbols of purity, domestic virtue, and moral

restraint, thereby reinforcing patriarchal expectations. In Southeast Asian tradition, Abu-Lughod [11] notes that myths and legends are instrumental in maintaining social control over women's behavior by sanctifying chastity, obedience, and sacrifice. As a result, folklore fucntions as both a cultural archive of gender norms and a site of contestation where alternative identities can emerge. Feminist readings of folklore thus seek to uncover the hidden transcripts of resistance embedded within these narratives and to interpret them through the lens of women's agency and voice.

The study of women's representation in folklore plays an essential role in understanding cultural ideologies, since folklore functions not only as a source of entertainment but also as a cultural test that transmits values, beliefs, and social hierarchies. Within the madurese context, characterized by strong patriarchal norms, deep religiosity, and a social system rooted in honor and kinship, folklore serves as a medium that reflects societal expectations toward women's roles, virtues and morality. Previous research has shown that female characters in Madurese folklore often embody complex and ambivalent positions;they are portrayed both as obedient and morally virtous figures, and as bold, resistant characters who challenge patriarchal oppression. Therefore, it is important to review previous studied on the portrayal of women in Madurese folklore, situating them within broader feminist literary theories and cultural perspectives on patriarchy and gender.

Ethnographic studies reveal a nuanced picture of women's lives in Madura. Rachman [12] found that while women's participation in public spaces is limited, they play crucial roles in household economies and domestic decision-making. This paradox reflects what Kandiyoti [2] describes as a "patriarchal bargain", in which women negotiate their roles within a male dominated system to gain social and economic leverage. The intersection of gender, religion, and

Copyright (c) 2026 Diah Ikawati Ayuningtias, Rif'ah Inayati, Sriyono. This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

local custom creates a distinctive cultural landscape in which women's behavior, speech, and appearance are closely monitored. Folklore, therefore, becomes a mirror that both reflects and regulates these gendered expectation.

Scholarly research on women in Madurese folklore remains relatively limited compared to studies of javanese traditions, yet several important works have emerged in recent years. Zulfa et all [13] elaborates the findings that revealed a recurring pattern of patriarchal ideologies in which male characters were depicted as dominant, protective, and decision-makers. In contrast, female characters were relegated to subordinate roles, often portrayed as passive and reliant on male intervention. These representations reflected traditional Madurese societal values and contribute to the reinforcement of gender hierarchies. The study highlighted how narratives serve as tools for intergenerational transmission of cultural norms, shaping collective consciousness and perpetuating gender stereotypes

Despite the valuable contributions of these studies, most analysis work on the area of gender from feminist perspectives. There has been limited engagement with seeing gender portrayal from linguistic aspects, in particular from Martin & White's appraisal framework.

Appraisal theory is the extension of the concept of interpersonal metafunction in Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). Interpersonal metafunction, according Halliday [14], is related to the social function of language in social interaction. It concerns with the dynamic meaning of language expressed by speakers to show their relationship with the hearer and their attitude. Meanwhile, appraisal theory concerns with the linguistic element which is used by language user to express, and negotiate certain ideological position, social and cultural value. Further, this concept investigates how language of evaluation, attitude, and emotion is realized in text [15].

There are three domains in appraisal theory, i.e. attitude, engagement, and graduation. Attitude refers to the evaluation of feelings, including emotion, judgment of behaviour, and evaluation of object. Engagement regards to how the speaker engages with the audience. It covers the source of attitude and voices around the ideas conveyed. Graduation deals with gradability, referring to grading the evaluation. This includes any linguistic elements which strengthen or weaken the feeling, like "intensification, comparative and superlative morphology, repetition, and various graphological and phonological features" [15, p. 37]

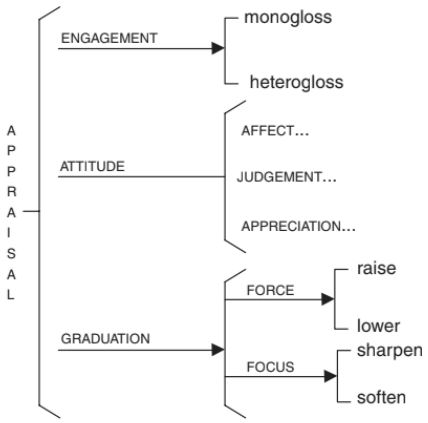


Figure 1. An Overview of Appraisal Resources [15, p. 38]

This study evaluates the portrayal of female character in Madurese folklore by using Attitudinal system as the main analysis tool. Attitudinal system within the appraisal framework

Copyright (c) 2026 Diah Ikawati Ayuningtias, Rif'ah Inayati, Sriyono. This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

is related to 'feelings, judgments of behaviour, and evaluation of things'[16]. Thus, attitude is subdivided into three subsystems: AFFECT, JUDGMENT, and APPRECIATION. Affect deals with the evaluation of feelings, which bases the interpretation on the common sense. For example, the word 'delighted' refers to positive feeling; while the word 'terrified' is negative feeling. Aspects of feeling frequently appeared are un/happiness, in/security, and dis/satisfaction. The second aspect of attitude is judgment, related to the assessment of people's behaviour from the point of view of social norm (social esteem and social sanction), involving admiration or critic, praise or condemnation. Judgment can be positive or negative, and explicit or implicit. The third subsystem is appreciation, referring evaluating object, thing, and natural phenomena in terms of the value and quality. The classification of attitude is presented in table 1.

Table 1. Types of Attitude

Affect	Judgment	Appreciation
Un/happiness	Social esteem; normality	Reaction; impact
In/security	Social esteem; capacity	Reaction; quality
Dis/satisfaction	Social esteem; tenacity	Composition; balance
	Social esteem; veracity	Composition; complexity
	Social esteem; propriety	Valuation

RESEARCH METHODS

This study is descriptive qualitative to explore the portrayal of female characters in Madurese folklores. The qualitative research aims to explore and understand social phenomena emphasizing on understanding meaning and interpretation [17]. The source of data of this study is four folklores from Madura island: *Asal Usul Pesarean Aeng Mata Ebhu,* and *Bangsacara dan Ragapadmi.* The two folklores are selected due to their popularity and similarity of the female characters. The data is the words or phrases referring to the female characters in the folklores – Rato Ebhu and Ragapadmi – that indicates affect, judgment, and appreciation.

The data analysis is carried out through content analysis method. It starts from reading the folklores repeatedly to gain comprehension on highlight content of the story and characterization of the two female characters. Finishing reading the folklores, the data is collected by identifying words and phrases describing the female characters. Then, they are classified into affect, judgment, and appreciation. The table is employed to present classified data. Lastly, interpretation on the data found and discussion on the finding are carried out to expose the portrayal of the female characters in the folklores.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From the analysis, it was found 21 data in the form of words and phrases which referring to the characterization of Rato Ebhu. The analysis of the data shows that the domains of judgment and of appreciation are dominated by positive category. Meanwhile, in the affect domain, negative

Copyright (c) 2026 Diah Ikawati Ayuningtias, Rif'ah Inayati, Sriyono. This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

feeling subdues positive feeling. The analysis of each domain is presented in the following sub section

3.1 Attitudinal System

3.1.1 Affect analysis

Affect refers to the evaluation of feelings. It is related to emotional reaction to other or undirected mood, which can be either positive or negative. In the folklore *Asal Usul Pesarean Aeng Mata Ebhu,* the emotional feeling of Rato Ebhu presented mostly negative feeling, like sad, fear, and worry. This feeling appeared when related to the interest of her husband, Pangeran Cakraningrat, and the kingdom.

[1] Di dalam doanya terselip **kekhawatiran**. Ia **takut** apa yang ia capai selama ini dapat rusak manakala pemerintahan dipegang oleh orang lain, bukan keturunannya [18]
(*in her prayer was hidden her **worry**. She was **feared** that what she has achieved could be destroyed when other people ruled the kingdom, not her descendants*)

The word *worry* and *feared* in the citation above represents the negative feeling of Rato Ebho about the future of the kingdom when the ruler was not from her descendant. This feeling appeared whenever Rato Ebhu thought about the future of her kingdom and her heirs. S

[2] **terkejut** sekaligus **takut** akan reaksi suaminya, Rato Ebhu hanya bisa tertunduk **sedih**. Ia lantas tidak bicara apapun karena merasa bersalah [18]
(*being **shocked** and **afraid** of the reaction of her husband, Rato Ebhu only could bow her head **sadly***)

The word *shocked, afraid, and sadly* show Rato Ebhu's negative feeling. This feeling of her unhappiness and insecurity appeared when seeing her husband's negatively reacting on her confession about the dream, that God would grant her prayer to let seven generations of her descendants rule the kingdom. Reacting to this confession, Pangeran Cakraningrat was disappointed. This made Rato Ebu unhappy and anxious.

Despite negative feeling, Rato Ebhu is also presented to have good moment which triggers the appearance of positive affect. Like the negative affect, the positive affect is related to the husband's interest. In the story it appeared when she knew that her prayer was granted and when she welcomed her husband's arriving home.

[3] Rato Ebhu merasa **senang** sekali mendengar berita tersebut [18].
(*Rato Ebhu felt **happy** to hear the news)*

[4] Sebagai istri yang setia, tentu saja rato ebhu menyambut kedatangan suaminya dengan **senang** hati [18]
(*As a loyal wife, Rato Ebhu welcomed her husband's arriving home with **joy***)

The word *senang* indicates positive affect in the category of happiness. The appearance of this positive feeling is form her husband's coming home. From this statement, it can be concluded that the source of Rato Ebhu's happiness is her husband.

The affect analysis reveals that in her life Rato Ebhu experienced to have positive and negative feeling. The source of the feeling comes from external factors, i.e. her husband, her heirs, and her kingdom.

Copyright (c) 2026 Diah Ikawati Ayuningtias, Rif'ah Inayati, Sriyono. This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

3.1.2 Judgment analysis

Judgment refers to the evaluation on the way people behave – their character. This domain subdues other domains (affect and appreciation). The evaluaton on the behaviour and acts of Ratu Ebhu results positive judgment. She is depicted as religious, loyal, faithful and smart.

[5] Meskipun seorang wanita, Ambimi sangat **pandai** mengatur pemerintahan [18].
(*Despite being woman, Ambimi was very **smart** in governing the kingdom*)

In citation [5] it can be found the evaluation on the act of Rato Ebhu in governing the kingdom. The word *smart* indicates that she was very competent in the field, which includes in positive social esteem – subtype of capacity .

[6] Selain kepemimpinannya, Rato Ebhu juga dikenal karena figurnya yang dianggap sebagai wanita yang **taat** dan **patuh** pada semua perintah suaminya [18].
(Besides her leadership, Rato Ebhu was also known because of her **loyalty** and **obedience** to all of his husband' orders)

Citation [6] conveys positive social esteem given to the behaviour of Rato Ebhu as a loyal and obedient wife. This indicates the element of tenacity of social esteem.

[7] Selama dalam pertapaannya, Rato Ebhu selalu **memohon** agar suaminya yang bertugas di Mataram diberi kekuatan dan kesehatan untuk menjalani kewajibannya sebagai abdi negara [18] *(during her meditation, Rato Ebhu always **prayed** in order that her husband who served in Mataram, be always given strength and health to carry out his obligation as civil servant)*

Citation [7] indicates positive judgment. The statement reveals that Rato Ebhu was a caring and religious woman. She always wished goodness for her husband, and to make her wish come true, she always prayed to God.

3.1.3 Appreciation analysis

Appreciation concerns with the evaluation of object, thing, and natural phenomena in terms of the value and quality. The analysis on the domain of appreciation construct a cultural myth about an ideal figure of woman admired due to her spirituality, gentleness and sacrifice. This strengthens the image of woman as the moral and spiritual center of society.

[8] Gaya kepemimpinan Ambimi yang keibuan dan baik hati **sangat dikenal** oleh masyarakat [18]
(*the motherly and kind leadership style of Ambimi was well known by her people*)

In citation [8] the phrase *sangat dikenal (well-known)* it reveals the positive appreciation on Rato Ebhu's leadership by her people. People in the kingdom respected Ambimi for her leadership which balanced between power and gentleness.

[9] Dalam tirakatnya, Rato Ebhu larut dalam kesedihan [18].
(*during her asceticism, Rato Ebhu was immersed in sadness*)

Citation [9] conveys implicitly aesthetic sacrifice and spirituality. The source of Rato Ebhu's sadness was her inability to understand her husband's wish. This caused deep sadness that made her do asceticism in order that God grants her husband's wish. She sacrificed her wish to make her husband's wish granted.

Copyright (c) 2026 Diah Ikawati Ayuningtias, Rif'ah Inayati, Sriyono. This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The analysis and the findings conclude that the characteristics of a character in the folklore can be examined by the selected linguistics items. The evaluation of the attitudinal system in the folklore *Asal Usul Pesarean Aeng Mata Ebhu dan Desa Buduran* resulted that the female character, Rato Ebhu, is mostly depicted by the evaluation on her behaviour, seen by the category of positive judgment and positive appreciation. Meanwhile, the affect category appeared both positive and negative feeling

The evaluation of the attitudinal system on the linguistic items invokes that as a wife, Rato Ebhu was portrayed as religious, obedient and willing to sacrifice for her husband's interest, despite her having power. Meanwhile, as a leader, she was depicted as motherly, gentle, and smart. In other word, this study strengthen the claim that the female character in the folklore is represented as the center of morality and spirituality of the society.

Folklore, as a collective expression of culture, can be a media for cultural inheritance, moral values, and collective identity of a society. The result media of the construction of social and gender values. In addition, through folklore, young generation can be introduced the noble value of the society. In the context of the folklore *Asal Usul Pesarean Aeng Mata Ebhu dan Desa Buduran,* the characteristics of Rato Ebhu, as the central character, is not only part of Madura history, but also as the symbol of religiosity, sincerity, and smartness, and thus is relevant to be used as a media of moral education.

REFERENCES

Abu-Lughod, L. (1999). *Veiled sentiments: Honor and poetry in a Bedouin society* (2nd ed.). University of California Press.

Azhar, I. N., Hani'ah, & Hartanto, E. C. S. (2019). *Mozaik careta dari Madhura*. Intelegensia Media.

Bascom, W. (1965). Four functions of folklore. *The Journal of American Folklore, 78*(307), 333–349.

Butler, J. (1990). *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity*. Routledge.

Connell, R. W. (2005). *Masculinities* (2nd ed.). University of California Press.

Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.

Haase, D. (2004). Feminist fairy-tale scholarship. *Marvels & Tales, 18*(1), 1–27.

Halliday, M. A. K., & Matthiessen, C. M. I. M. (2014). *Halliday's introduction to functional grammar* (4th ed.). Routledge. https://www.functionalmedicine.org/files/library/Intro_Functional_Medicine.pdf

Kandiyoti, D. (1988). Bargaining with patriarchy. *Gender & Society, 2*(3), 274–290.

Martin, J. R., & White, P. R. R. (2005). *The language of evaluation: Appraisal in English*. Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230511910

Nussbaum, M. C. (1999). *Sex and social justice*. Oxford University Press.

Owen, C. T. (2014). *Linguistic analysis of Tafataona Mahoso's African focus: Identity and ideology in argumentative opinion* (Master's thesis, Midlands State University).

Propp, V. (1968). *Morphology of the folktale* (2nd ed.). University of Texas Press.

Rachman, A. (2020). Women's role in Madurese family structure: An ethnographic study. *Antropologi Indonesia, 41*(2), 133–148.

Walby, S. (1990). *Theorizing patriarchy*. Basil Blackwell.

Warner, M. (2014). *From the beast to the blonde: On fairy tales and their tellers*. Vintage.

Zipes, J. (2012). *The irresistible fairy tale: The cultural and social history of a genre*. Princeton University Press.

Copyright (c) 2026 Diah Ikawati Ayuningtias, Rif'ah Inayati, Sriyono. This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

Zulfa, F. (2025). Gender representation in Madurese folktales: A critical discourse analysis. *Acitya Journal of Teaching & Education, 7*(2), 216–229.

Copyright (c) 2026 Diah Ikawati Ayuningtias, Rif'ah Inayati, Sriyono. This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.