

# DUDUKUY PELENTUNG AND WOMEN

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## ABSTRACT

This research is titled “*Dudukuy Pelelung and Women*”. This poem is one of *kakawihan* poetry that tells about women in Sundanese culture. Functional-wise, *kakawihan* poetry is not only meant to entertain, but also possess didactic aspects that are heavy with valuable moral lessons that the public, especially children, needs to hear. This research is conducted through a descriptive analysis using Charles Sanders Pierce’s semiotic theory which formulates a triadic concept: ground, object, and interpretant. Based on this theory, the analysis will focus on signs, such as *representamen*, which consists of *qualisign*, *sinsign*, and *legisign*; *denotatum* which consists of *icon*, *index*, and *symbol*; and *interpretant* which consists of *rheme*, *decisign*, and *argument*. The result of this research shows that there are many icons contained inside the poem *Dudukuy Pelelung* which presents the role of mothers as a guardian and a live-giver for her children.

Keywords: *kakawihan*, *dudukuy pelelung*, Sundanese women

## ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini berjudul “*Dudukuy Pelelung dan Perempuan*”. Puisi *kakawihan* ini menggambarkan tentang perempuan di dalam budaya Sunda. Secara fungsional puisi *kakawihan* ini tidak saja mengandung unsur hiburan tetapi juga mengandung unsur didaktis yang di dalamnya sarat dengan nilai-nilai luhur yang perlu diketahui dan disampaikan kepada seluruh masyarakat terutama anak-anak. Penelitian ini dianalisis secara deskriptif analitik dengan menggunakan teori Semiotik Charles Sanders Pierce yang memiliki konsep triadik, yaitu *ground*, *object*, dan *interpretant*. Berdasarkan teori tersebut, analisis akan terfokus pada jenis-jenis tanda seperti *representamen* yang terdiri dari *qualisign*, *sinsign*, dan *legisign*; *denotatum* yang terdiri dari *ikon*, *indeks*, dan *simbol*; serta *interpretant* yang terdiri dari *rheme*, *decisign*, dan *argument*. Hasil dari penelitian ini adalah terdapatnya banyak ikon pada puisi *Dudukuy Pelelung* yang menciptakan makna ibu sebagai sosok pelindung dan pemberi hidup bagi anaknya.

Kata kunci: *kakawihan*, *dudukuy pelelung*, perempuan Sunda

## FOREWORD

*Dudukuy Pelentung* is one of Sundanese *kakawihan barudak* (songs meant for children) that the author found in a book titled *buku Kakawihan Barudak: Nyanyian Anak-Anak Sunda* written by Atik Soepandi and Oyon Sofyan Umsari in 1985. One of the appendixes of this book contains a compilation of 123 *kakawihan barudak* that serves as their research object.

From the 123 *kakawihan* (songs) attached, there are quite a number of *kakawihan barudak* that contain inherent sexual topics behind its prominent humorous themes. In Sundanese, this is widely known as *cawokah* and is characteristic to Sundanese culture, where it is tend to be considered as nothing more than playful jokes. Nevertheless, women are often put in the position of being the centre of the sexuality in the poems, so much so that female characters in this book's *kakawihan barudak* are often depicted as weak and meaningless.

However, such is not the case with the *kawih* titled *Dudukuy Pelentung* that becomes the focus of this study. This *kawih* tells about the strength of a woman through the portrayal of the mother character, whom in this story is said to banish her child because of his delinquency. The banished character of "*kuring*"/"I" deeply regrets his actions and tries to return to ask his mother for apologies and protection. Due to those aspects, *Dudukuy Pelentung* becomes an interesting poem to analyse due to its profound meaning and didactic elements that are valuable teachings for children and the public in general.

## METHODOLOGY

To deconstruct the meaning of *Dudukuy Pelentung*, the author utilises the semiotic theory formulated by Charles Sanders Peirce. The definition of semiotics comes from the Greek word *seme* or *semeion*, meaning "signs". In a broader definition, semiotics refers to a systematic study about production and interpretation of signs, how it works, and how it benefits human life (Ratna, 2012: 97). Peirce himself defined signs as something that represent other things, which can be experiences, thoughts, feelings, ideas, and others (Hoed, 2008: 18).

Charles Sander Peirce was a philosopher and logician who also dabbled in science, psychology, astronomy, and religion. He argued that signs are something that for one becomes a representation for something else based on some particular aspects. According to him, the process of meaning something occurs through three phases, namely *representamen* ("a thing") → *object* ("a subject matter within human cognition") → *interpretant* ("process of interpretation"), in which the relation between *representamen* and *object* results in three typology of the signs: icon, index, and symbol. Through these three elements, the meaning inside an object may be wholly revealed.

## ANALYSIS

### DUDUKUY PELENTUNG

*Dudukuy pelentung*

*digantung di kakaitan*

*ku indung abdi ditundung*

*ku bapa diceungceurikan.*

*Éstu lir daun nu garing*

*haté téh ngarebab jangkung*

*ari ras ku takdir diri*

*mung bati nalangsa*

*Keris ageman bupati*

*nya samping anggoan ménak*

*kaduhung abdi kaduhung*

*teu tumut kana piwejang*

*ka mana jalan ka gantung*

*ka gantung ngalangkung gunung*

*ka saha abdi nyalindung*

*upami sanés ka indung*

*Dudukuy Pelentung* is a work of literature in the form of a poem that consist of four verses. Each verse contains four lines. There are two verses with *purwakanti* elements, in which every last sound in every word is the same. This is apparent in the first and fourth verse. The last sound, “-ung”, is present in the first and third line of the verse, whereas the sound “-an” is present in the last word in the second and fourth line of the same verse. Meanwhile, in the fourth *purwakanti* verse the “-ung” sound is present in the last word of the first to the fourth line. In the verse’s second and third verse *purwakanti* is not present, but in turn the lines show a cause and effect relationship.

The poem also shows repetition of the word “ku” in the third and fourth line of the first verse, the word “kaduhung” in the third line of the third verse, the word “gantung” in the first and second line of the fourth verse, and the word “ka” in the second, third, and fourth line of the fourth verse.

*Dudukuy Pelentung* is a form of *kakawihan barudak*, which is sung by children. It can be seen from the definition of *kakawihan* that comes from the word “kawih” which means songs, and “barudak” comes from the word “budak” added with inflection “-ar” which signifies plural objects. Therefore, *kakawihan barudak* may be defined as “children songs”. In this research, *Dudukuy Pelentung* will also be treated as children songs because it contains signs that refer to a child character, specifically in the use of the word “abdi” that the poetic speaker uses to refer to himself. This “abdi” character tells the story that he was banished by his mother, as seen in the excerpt “ku indung **abdi** ditundung/ku bapa diceungceurikan/ka saha abdi nyalindung/upami sanés ka indung” (“mother banishes me”/“father cries for me”/“to whom I should take shelter”/“if not to my mother”).

*Abdi* in the sentence above is interpreted as a child with a mother and a father. When *abdi* is banished by his mother, his father can only cry for his child’s departure.

*Abdi* soon regrets what he has done, then he tries to find his way back to his mother to ask for her apology and protection.

Icons depicted in *Dudukuy Pelentung* are apparent from the diction “*dudukuy pelentung*”, which refers to a kind of hat made from wood that protects the head from the sun and the rain. Then, “*indung*” is what you call a woman who conceived and gave birth to a child. This term originates from and is commonly used in Sundanese culture aside from “*ema*”, “*amih*”, “*ibu*”, and “*mamah*”, which all refers to the same thing. “*Bapa*” is a term for an adult man or a married man. “*Daun nu garing*” (“the leaves that are dry”) speaks about an important part of plants that has a direct contact with the sun, is mainly coloured green with a variety of shapes and sizes. However, if we put it into the context of this poem, the leaves depicted here are those that lack water, which turns their colours into yellow or brown.

“*Keris*” (*kris*), is a kind of knife that is commonly used by men in the old times to fight. The knife has a thin, curvy shape, with sharpness in both edges and especially sharpened pointy end, which makes it necessary to be put inside a special box. “*Bupati*”, is a government official who serves as the head of a *kewadanaan* local region in West Java. “*Samping*”, is a long piece of cloth with batik pattern commonly owned by women and is used as a piece of clothing. Women wear *samping* by coiling it around their bodies to cover their waists right down to their ankles.

“*Menak*”, is a term for high-ranking members of the society or aristocrats with the title “*raden*” commonly used on the Dutch colonial era (also known as “*bangsawan*” in Indonesian). “*Gintung*”, is a type of trees with a fruits that look very sweet but have very bitter and extremely nauseating taste. “*Gunung*” (mountain), is a mound of soil arising from inside the earth that can reach millions of meter cubic in size, has a peak, slopes, and chasm, and usually full of various types of trees.

*Representamen* in *Dudukuy Pelentung* icon can be seen from the diction “*dudukuy*”, that functions as a kind of protection from the sun and the rain. In this context, the curved-shaped *dudukuy* that resembles an umbrella is hung on a place with a hook, indicating that the inanimate *dudukuy* is passive. Therefore in the case of the poem, the *dudukuy* is not actually useful; because instead of worn as a head protector, it is merely hung on a hook. This *dudukuy pelentung* in this context may be connected with the diction “*indung*”, which usually takes the role of a protector of her children. However, in this poem, the *indung* character banishes her child instead, as is seen from the diction “*ditundung*”. Therefore, there is a similarity between the characteristic of the *dudukuy pelentung* that is hung and the *indung* that banishes her son: both can be said to not function as it should do and might as well inanimate. Meanwhile, the character of “*bapa*” in this context becomes an active one, because he cries for his banished child as can be seen from the line *ku bapa diceungceurikan*. This means that there is a reaction from the father incited by the banishing of his child.

*Representament* in this poem can be seen from the icon “*daun nu garing*”. Leaves are normally green in colour and are refreshing to the eyes. In this poem, the leaves are dry and devoid of freshness and life, are not attractive to the eyes, and are useless because they are dead due to lack of water. The diction “*daun*” in this case may refer to the child character, “*abdi*”. *Abdi*, the child, is similar to a dry leaf once he got sent away

by his mother, devoid of life and cheerfulness that a child that young is supposed to have. His heart is miserable as he regrets his misfortune.

*Representament* in this poem can be seen from the icon “*keris*” and “*samping*”, which are tools that have special use. They also require special ways to treat and to store. *Keris* is used by noble men to fight. Due to its curvy shape and sharpness on all edges, *keris* requires a special storage. Such is also the case for *samping*, which is needed by women to cover important parts of their bodies. *Samping* even needs a special technique to be worn, so that not all social class can clothe themselves in it. The author of *Dudukuy Pelentung* connects the similarities between *keris* and *samping* with *bupati* and *menak* who have different social positions than commoners. Like the use of *keris* and *samping*, *bupati* and *menak* also possess their own specialities in some particular matters.

*Representamen* can also be seen from the icon “*gintung*”, which can be defined as a kind of tree with extremely bitter-tasting fruits, as portraying the wrath of *indung*. Trees are often associated with protection and life-giving characteristic, similar to *indung*. However in this context, the bitterness of the *gintung* tree speaks for the wrath of *indung*.

*Representamen* icon “*gunung*” is a large and mighty landform, usually filled with trees and even wild animals, complete with slopes, chasms, steep lanes, and peaks. In the case of the poem, *gunung* serves as a visualization for the journey that *abdi* has to go through. *Gunung* becomes a background visualization that depicts the hardship and struggle undergone by *abdi* in order to return to the *gintung* or *indung*.

*Representament index* in *Dudukuy Pelentung* can be seen from the diction “*nalangsa*” (misery) that the *abdi* character feels, feeling that he is similar to a dry leaf devoid of life after being banished by his *indung*. The prestige of the lives of *bupati* and *menak* sends *abdi* to sink deeper into his misery because of his divergence from their way of life, and that index is apparent in this verse. His mistake of disobedience and ignorance of his parents’ words, especially his mother, causes him to be sent away from his family.

*Representamen* index can also be seen from the diction “*kaduhung*” (“regretful”) in this following excerpt: “*kaduhung abdi kaduhung/teu tumut kana piwejang*” (the regret I have/because of my disobedience to my mother’s words). There is a cause and effect relationship in that line, in which his disobedience causes him the effect of his regret. The next index is shown in *abdi*’s attempt to return to his mother, as seen in the line “*kamana jalan ka gintung*” (where can I find my way back to *gintung*). Although *abdi* is aware that *gintung* bears bitter fruits, he still tries to return to it in order to receive his *indung*’s protection back.

The meaning that this *puisi kakawihan* tries to convey is that the power of *indung* is incomparable. The mother’s banishing of her son is a form of her wrath that is difficult to compensate, because *indung* is an honourable title where she holds the power to protect and to give life, especially in Sundanese people’s spiritual lives (Sumardjo, 2013: 611 – 612).

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