

## ROLE EXPRESSION AND POSITION OF *BUNDO KANDUANG* IN *MINANGKABAU* NOVELS DURING THE NEW ORDER

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### Abstract

The research is carried out to describe the role and position of *bundo kandung* as woman who was instrumental in the formation of the next generation character in the local Minangkabau's novels during the new order. The novels of the research subject are *Warisan* by *Khairul Harun*, *Bako* by *Darman Moenir*, *Orang-Orang Blanti* and *Negeri Perempuan* by *Wisran Hadi*, and *TamboSebuah Pertemuan* by *Gus Tf. Sakai*. The research uses qualitative description method, and content analysis approach. The result shows that the role and position of women as *bundo kandung* have been carried out well enough both as a wife and a mother. However, some might just take advantage materially from spouses in which the women or wives cannot stay when things go wrong in their family. The role of women in father's family is more talked about in *Bako*, rather than being a woman as a birth mother because Man's mother, one of the characters in the novel, is mentally ill. Therefore, it is reasonable for *bako* (sister of father) to take over his mother's responsibility and build a virtuous personality based on religion and culture in Minangkabau society to nurture him. Even so, the role of women as *bundo kandung* is shown through *bako's* attitude in taking care of their brother's children. In the novel, *Orang-Orang Blanti*, *bundo kandung* is supposed to be taken into account of the Minangkabau tradition. But, their position does not work as it is. The reason for this is men who get the title as *penghulu* or *mamak* hold more power than *bundo kandung* does. *Negeri Perempuan* also shows that *bundo kandung's* authority is getting lessened in the eyes of Minangkabau community. *Bundo* is simply a people's symbol, but not to own full rights in the formation personality children and children in his family. The novel *Tambo* describes women as *bundo kandung* have a great responsibility for their family, community, and husband's community. In this novel visible that women are not only responsible for the formation of children's personality, but is also able to protect her husband's family.

**Keywords:** *bundo kandung*, novel, Minangkabau tradition, new order.

### A. BACKGROUND

As a unique and powerful culture, *Minangkabau* has become an ideology which is based on manners and prioritized in civilized and religious life. In other words, culture is every aspect that organizes life and its people to be in order and peace without leaving other aspects such as religion, law, and social behind. This means that *Minangkabau* becomes the unwritten laws which must be obeyed by its people.

*Minangkabau* culture that commonly applied in the society is also elaborated in the literatures (novels). Novel is a kind of literature that employs an opportunity for the authors to convey every single issue that has been observed, found and felt by the people. This simply happens for the author himself is social beings. *Mursal* (1988:12) states that Indonesian authors are artists of two worlds: the local culture and the New Indonesia. The literatures that are created is about the influence of cultural systems where the authors come from.

So, it is common to find authors of Minangkabau ethnics in Indonesian literatures, who mostly talk about the Minangkabau ethnics, even when some of them educated outside the land of Minangkabau. In fact, the ones who graduate outside Minangkabau usually bring progress and creative contemplation in improving Minangkabau literatures for example, novels. Among the authors who adopt Minangkabau culture are Marah Rusli (*Siti Nurbaya*), Tulis Sutan Sati (*Sengsara Membawa Nikmat*), Hamka (*Tenggelamnya Kapal Van der Wijck*), AA Navis (*Kemarau*), Wisran Hadi (*Orang-Orang Blanti*) and many more.

Novels that talk about Minangkabau society as matrilineal also bring up women who get involved in the Minangkabau system, has come up to the surface since the 1920s, where the first roman term was actually used in Indonesian vocabulary for the very first time. *Siti Nurbaya* dan *Salah Asuhan* are among two biggest roman titles during that time. It is simply for the sake of debates that might be raised since *Minangkabau* is quite a controversial ethnic. By reading those novels, it is afraid that people might change their point of views and cultural orientation to be more opened. It actually proves that novels are not necessarily from the authors' imagination, but also the reality.

Many Minangkabau literatures have been published and awarded; consequently, the writer is willing to examine Minangkabau expression which focused on the role and position of women as *Bundo Kandung* on those literatures, especially novels. The novels are chosen from cultural issues on Minangkabau society. The

analysis of these novels which was famous during the new order aims to see the roles and position of women as *Bundo Kandung*.

## B. FRAMEWORK

### 1. Literatures and Cultures

Literatures describe the social life of people where they come from for the authors simply socialize with them. Luxemburg (1989:5-23) also describes literatures as a creation, not just an imitation. The object can be about our daily lives, especially social culture. Therefore, literatures is viewed as a social aspect of a society because it is directly connected with the norms and customs in a certain society.

Junus (in Atmazaki, 2005:59) suggests that the relation between the literatures and society is an assumption that literatures is the reflection of the states of a particular society or period; literatures is a social reflection; literatures is viewed to imagine or bias the people's life. According to Teeuw (1980:226), in understanding literatures as a reflection of reality, we also need to consider it as a trick of realities through the creative-imaginative process of the authors.

Literatures is based on real events that actually take place around us. It is an entertainment, and it is also expected to extend moral values to the readers. Consequently, a novel is literary product expected to reflect how people act as social beings. If the aim is achieved, literatures will become a piece that is valuable for the readers.

### 2. The cultural form of *Bundo Kandung*

*Bundo kanduang* is how people call older women in Minangkabau. *Bundo* means mother; *kandung* means genuine. So, *bundo kanduang* is a genuine mother who is motherlike and wise. Based on the Minangkabau rules, Gouzali (2004: 60) *bundo kanduang* is the mother who gives birth to the children.

Idrus (2004:69--70) suggests that *Bundo kanduang* is a mother who continues the ethnic generation of Minangkabau which is composed from this phrase; *Bundo kanduang, limpapeh rumah nan gadang, umbun puruak pagangan kunci, umbun puruak aluang buniang, pusek jalo kumpulan tali, sumarak di dalam kampuang, hiasan dalam nagari, nan gadang basa batuah, kok hiduik tampek banasa, kok mati tampek baniaik, kaundang-undang kamadinah, kapayuang panji ka sarugo*, Idrus (2004:70)

From the previous phrase, we can conclude that, a *bundo kanduang* has multiple roles. The first one is she is the central force of her thrive. The second one, she is a wife for her husband. Third, she is the one who sets everything in motion in the motion and for her ethnics. Fourth, she must be sociable in the neighbourhood. Fifth, she is the symbol of pride and glory who is also the mediator of generation which is raised and respected, so that she is demanded to acquire good personality. And sixth, she has to lead her people to a better life.

Idrus (2004:77--80) says that *Bundo kanduang* must have leader's wisdom as well as mother's, as the following:

- 1) True  
True means she speaks and acts right or appropriately. She also has to teach people around her to be true, and maintain it.
- 2) Honest and reliable  
Honesty, both in her words and actions are important, she needs to teach her people to acquire these attitudes and refuses everything against them such as stealing, deceiving, etc.
- 3) Clever  
*Bundo kanduang* must be knowledgeable and smart. Knowledgeable means she knows which are rights or wrongs. While smart means she develops her knowledge about household, neighborhood, education, womanhood, culture, religion, and the country. Being smart requires her to set everything in their places, and sociable with everyone. Clever, knowledgeable, and smart are some of many qualities which should be acquired by a *bundo kanduang*.
- 4) A great talker  
Talking is her specialty because she has to be an appropriate teacher for both household and the neighbourhood.
- 5) Shy  
Being shy in this context means she is a well-mannered woman who knows rules and her roles in the society, as the following phrase describes; *rarak kalikia dek binalu/tumbuhan sarumpun jo sikasek/kok lah hilang raso jo malu/bak kayu lungga pangabek*. It means that if *Bundo kanduang* is not aware of being shy, she will lead her people to destruction, then she will come inappropriate role model to them.

## C. DATA AND SOURCES

The object of the research is every event that takes place in the stories which describe the roles and position of women in Minangkabau local novels during the new order. The data includes words, phrases, clauses, sentences containing the roles and position of women as *bundo kanduang*. The data is intuitively

chosen from by the researchers and triangulated to the experts. The sources are novels of Minangkabau ethnics which were written during the new order by authors who were from the same ethnics, Minangkabau.

#### D. EXPRESSION OF THE WOMEN'S ROLES AS *BUNDO KANDUANG*

Expression of women's roles in Minangkabau as *bundo kanduang* in Minangkabau novels during the new order will be elaborated in the following review.

##### 1. Expression of women's roles in Minangkabau as *Bundo Kandung* in the novel, *Tambo: Sebuah Pertemuan* karya Gus Tf. Sakai.

*Bundo Kandung* is a surname of women in Minangkabau. *Bundo* means 'mother', *kandung* means 'genuine/real'. So *bundo kanduang* is a real mother who is mother like and wise. According to Minangkabau rules, in the novel *Tambo: Sebuah Pertemuan*, the author tried to explain the roles and position of *Bundo Kandung* as a mother. It can be seen through the description of 'mother' from one of the characters' point of view, *Rido's*.

How are you doing, honey? I'm in good health and happy here, I pray the same for you, son. I wish you will always be blessed with the energy and cleverness.

From the quote, we can see that a mother loves her child wholeheartedly. Even her son is old enough to take care of himself she never stops to pray for his best. She also tells him that she is fine so that her son does not worry about her so much. This is described from her letter which she confirms that she is in a good health and currently happy, although her condition might be in the opposite. *Bundo kanduang* must have the courage to defend herself, her family, and her people. She also needs the capability of becoming a single parent if her husband has passed away.

It is also found in the following quote.

... you are the only woman in our place who delivers people's messages during the civil war. You are the only widow who do not need no man after her husband's death, even when she is still young and beautiful. (Sakai, 2000:21)

Next quote

And from my mother, *Bundo*, I learned that she is a strong woman covers with compassion. She is the most amazing woman who has been forged by history and this cruel world and that makes her different from any women in this world.

Women also listen to the issue and problems of children and her ethnics first hand, before she delivers them to men, or *mamak* to be solved. It is described in the following quote.

Whenever a wife becomes a mother, she takes the lead and controls everything. She listens to every problem of her children, then informs it to her brother (*sang mamak*/uncle) (Sakai, 2000: 54)

In addition, *bundo kanduang* also takes some roles in her husband's family like in the following quote.

For women or wives, marriages do not only mean to be a spouse and give birth of her husband's children, but also to become the representative in the husband's family. (Sakai, 2000: 53---54)

On the other hand, there are a few cases where women are taken for granted by their husbands. It is described in the following quote.

Everytime I look at *bundo*, my sister Siti Jamilah, and other girls in this world, I can see men's domination ruins them. They scream, and become a form of entertainment for men. Ironically, the legitimate thing that makes them so is so called power. (Sakai, 2000: 39)

The quote reflects how *Rido* looks at his mother and sister who have done a lot of thing both for their family and ethnics, but the power of men still take them for granted in. Women are not positioned where they have to belong. They are nothing more than an object that can be put on the bet, and entertainment, and victims of battle for power.

We can conclude that, in novel *Tambo: Sebuah Pertemuan* by Gus Tf Sakai, *bundo kanduang* is described to be responsible for her family, ethnics, and husband. Therefore, women needs to be respected and gets involved in the social cultural system. In Minangkabau, women set the decision as the owner of the heritage. They are not simply fragile beings that can be put to bet.

##### 2. Expression of Women's Roles As *Bundo Kandung* in *Warisan* by Chairul Harun

*Bundo kanduang* must be a good wife. She takes care of everything and becomes the role model for her ethnics. She is demanded to lead them to lead them into a better world and hereafter. *Warisan* also shows roles and the positions of women as a mother. We can see it in the following quote.

When the mother is about to leave, she reminds her son to not talk or get involved in the family's heritage. " Raf, we don't have to expect your father's heritage" mother said. (Harun, 1979: 70)

From the quote, we can see that mothers must teach her kids that being greedy is absolutely forbidden. Rafilus's mother reminds her son not to worry about his father's heritage. Rafilus's mother just wants him to take his father to get medical treatment in Jakarta. She just wants her husband to be healthy.

The next one also describes women as mothers and wives. As a wife she must take care of her husband mentally and physically in good or the bad times. If she is willing to be with him only at the good time, she will be judged as affiliated women.

If she becomes a widow for her husband's death she will maintain her flawless image. People will accept her as women who are well-mannered for she does not leave him even in the bad times. (Harun, 1979: 69)

Women's roles as *bundo kanduang* are also described in the following quote where *Asmah* leaves her husband when he was dying.

"your husband screamed out your name, last night. Where did you?"

"*Mak* said you have to go home" (Harun, 1979:71)

Based on those quotes of *Warisan*, the women's roles have been applied well enough whether it becomes wives or mothers. Some of them, however, do not run her roles very well for she only takes her husband's wealth and do not accompany him during the bad times.

### 3. Expression of Women's Position as *Bundo Kanduang* in the novel, *Bako* by Darman Moenir

In *Bako*, women's roles stand out as *bundo kanduang* in her husband's family rather than being a mother in her own family. In this novel, *Man* has mental illness; consequently his *bako* (his father's sisters) whom he calls ummi, and she does not have any child. The women in this novel takes care of her brothers'/sisters' children; they also have been educated in formal schools and get themselves involved in political and social organizations. So, ummi has a better way of thinking. Her thought improvement makes her donates her wealth for children education even when they do not come from the same ethnics as hers.

Being educated at Thawalib was a once in a lifetime opportunity, especially when you're a girl. (Moenir, 1983: 30)

The next quote,

Women in my village are rather old fashioned, but pretty much actual because whenever they begin to have their period, their parents will start to find them husbands... and they will not mind to be the second wife, third wife, and so on, they will just stay at home cooking and looking after their children. At least, ummi did not want to be one of them. She encouraged herself to be a part of the society where men commonly are. (Moenir, 1983: 59)

Ummi donated her wealth for children's education even when they did not come from her blood line, but her brother's children. This shows that she has developed the way she thought. We can clearly see that women as *bundo kanduang* also need to take care of her family. Ummi has performed her roles pretty well. It is described in the following quote.

If it's not because ummi, her children might have been abandoned. She holds a vital role, she takes care of them, feeds and prepare their needs even tucks them in bed every night. (Moenir, 1983: 88)

Those quotes of *Bako* describe that *bundo kanduang* is not simply an ordinary woman. Ummi pictures a different image of *bundo kanduang* where she becomes a mother for her nephews and nieces, she also concerns about education both for herself and her family. She also takes part in fighting women's rights directly and marginally.

### 4. Expressions of women's positions as *Bundo Kanduang* in novel, *Orang-orang Blanti* by Wisran Hadi

*Bundo Kanduang* as the one who settles up every decision in Minangkabau. In the novel, *Orang-orang Blanti*, *bundo kanduang* holds influence in the cultural system. But she does not run her role as she should do for men as *penghulu* or *mamak* who is more powerful. We can see it in the following quote.

...she has nothing to say. It was a great fight between a grandmother and her own brother, Datuk tuo, to take over the hereditary land. Grandmother gave up and accepted whatever they decided.

The land was finally divided as well as the workers. (Wisran, 2000: 41)

The quotes clearly show that as a woman, the grandmother does not have the power to keep the land. It is her right to keep the land so that it will not be on sale or given away. Because of Datuk Tuo whose job is to preserve the land, but chooses to give it away instead. *Bundo Kandung* seems to be powerless even though she has the power to keep it.

##### 5. Expressions of women's positions as *Bundo Kandung* in novel, *Negeri Perempuan* by Wisran Hadi

*Bundo Kandung* in this novel, is a heir of *Nagariko* royal. She has the right to be on the high position of the cultural system. She even deserves the highest position as the chief of her kind. The following quote describes it.

In *Bundo's* family, the oldest family member must be crowned as the chief of the tribe. It was *Bundo*, the oldest among them all, but she refused it because of gender issue and gave it to *Engku*, her brother. (Wisran, 2001: 5)

We can conclude that *Bundo* is *Bundo Kandung* who does not end up on the top of cultural system, even the family rule might make her to do so. However, she has to toss the idea and gives the crown to her brother, *Engku*. This event clearly shows that women in *Minangkabau* should not be the leader.

Even so, *Engku* seems to be merely a symbol of the leadership for every decision is settled up by *Bundo*. The fact that *Bundo* does not have the power to do that, but still she holds the power explicitly in making decisions. This novel shows that *bundo kandung* influences the decision making in the cultural system. The following quote describes.

*Bundo* called all panghulus a week later. *Reno* was sent home a day before the meeting. They finally held the meeting about the mistakes in building *Rumah Limo Ruang* which *Merrajuti* made. Many people were curious was *Bundo's* decision going to be. The meeting was attended by all people including panghulus, the elder, and the young people.

Basically *Bundo Kandung* protects and preserves family heritage from extinction. As a real mother, she set her household in motion and keeps her family's heritage. She has to create and maintain harmony in her family, blood line, relatives and the society around her. In novel *Negeri Perempuan*, *Bundo* is pictured as a friendly and caring person who does not view people from their social status and a total selfless.

... she was called a lot. She was advised, fed and sent home with money in her pocket. It was a relief for no one would do what *Bundo* had done to her. The fact was *Bundo* was not her real mother, she was a generous woman, a royal family, and the owner of *Rumah Sembilan Ruang*. (Wisran, 2001: 50)

*Bundo's* nature makes her a lovable person. *Bundo Kandung* has to solve every issue in her neighborhood. She is not selfish, but actually cares about her people.

*Bundo* has done a great job as *Bundo Kandung*, but the people of *Nagariko* sees her as an old lady who will stop anything they plan to do. They slowly take advantage from *Bundo* and only respect her whenever they need her. They do not even think that she is one of the royals anymore. The following quote will describe it.

They do not see *Bundo* as their mother, but just an old rich woman who happens to heir the royal heritage. They think that those royal members do not have any connection with them. Even so, they will find *Bundo* when they are in desperate needs of help. They cry so hard to *Bundo* as if she was their own mother. And when they get what they want they will get back to *Puri Alam* and forget everything they tell to her.

But, for of them *Bundo* is a *Bundo Kandung* that needs to be obeyed. They think that disobeying her means being vile to the elder. They hate those people who make fun of her even if it is discreetly.

*Bundo Kandung* is the central of social control. However, the role is no longer functioned as it is supposed to be. It is not because her incompetence in doing her job, but people do not view her as a role model, especially teenagers. As the following quote describes.

...*bundo* used to be the central of moral monitoring and controlling. Today, young men and the girls only obey her in front her. When she is not around the lose it again. (Wisran, 2001:12)

Those quotes clearly show that *Bundo Kanduang*'s authority has got lessened every single day. Bundo is simply a symbol of Nagariko people which speaks a lot about people's point of view about *Bundo Kanduang* nowadays. Her advice is listened but means nothing to them.

#### E. SUMMARY

The roles and positions of *bundo kanduang* as lead woman character in the Minangkabau novels during the new order has been described properly and prioritized, but those simply symbols. They have to do their jobs as women for her blood line, her husband's family and her neighborhood. But, in the novels *Negeri Perempuan* and *Orang-Orang Blanti*, she has not gained her power yet for the men take over everything including her rights to lead a thrive. While in the novels *Tambo*, *Warisan*, and *Bako*, women have more space to develop their ideas and make decisions of her own life. They are not bound to the laws of Minangkabau culture, they have the courage to refuse everything that they view harmful for their kind and be independent.

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