

Women Contribution in the Historiography of Banten: Exploration of Artifactual, Textual, and Oral Traditions

Moh Ali Fadillah, Muhammad Ilham Gilang*

Department of History Education,
Faculty of Education and Teacher Training Program,
Universitas Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa
Jl. Ciwaru Raya, Cipare, Serang, Banten - Indonesia

*Corresponding Author: milhamg@untirta.ac.id

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.14710/ihis.v4i1.7965>

Abstract

Some studies are emphasized on the gender perspective to compose the historiography of Banten. The facts show that the protagonist of Indonesian historiography is always played by men: in political, economic, and social history. In many historical discourses, women considered too important. They 'exist' in history, but their 'presence' is often ignored in the shadow of male domination. The expectation is that writing gender-themed history in this perspective will be able to trigger early research, especially in the history of Banten. A women's story may appear in the manuscripts in the form of chronic or legend. This article reveals the role of Banten's women in each historical event of Banten history and has the same right to be presented, so it should be 'rewritten'. The explanation of the mental structure of each historical event related to that theme has been presented whether it is or not easier to interpret each event. By discussing it from artifactual, textual, and oral tradition evidence, I tried hypothetically to identify the role of women in the historiography of Banten. It clears to know that oral history and artefactual data that are very important in analyzing the role of women in the historiography of Banten.

Received:
June 2, 2020

Revised:
June 7, 2020

Accepted:
June 8, 2020

Keywords: Historiography of Banten; Oral History; Feminism; Traditional Manuscript.

Introduction

Raising the theme of women in historical studies has not become mainstream. Various seminars are indeed often held, but historical phenomena dealing with the topic of discussion tend to be the rationale for raising the role of gender in contemporaneity. One of the reasons is the scarcity of information sources and there are no many monographs about the historicity of women in the historical literature of Banten. Even so, the spirit of emancipation never stops.

Various efforts continue to be campaigned in a variety of activities, namely through studies, publications and also cultural actions, such as *Dialogue of Leaders* with the theme "Reflecting Banten Women Struggle as an Effort to Link Historical

Memories” held on April 24, 2007 at Governor’s Hall of Banten, carried out by the Center for Preservation of History and Traditional Values of Bandung. This spirit does not seem to attract much interest among academics, even though historical subjects on women subjects are still limited. In fact, most studies emphasize the role of men in various periods and events, giving rise to the adage that history is the epic of man, since in many aspects, the protagonist is always played by men: in political, economic, and social history (Fadillah) , 2018: 1).

Ideally, if at the level of modern life there is an emancipation movement, it does not rule out the possibility of that subject in history. The spirit of gender equality is reminiscent of literary-historical works or historical works about important figures in Indonesia such as We Cudai, the antagonist of *Sawerigading* in the epic *Sureq / La Galigo*, Tribhuwana Wijayatunggadewi as the representation of the *Majapahit* dynasty, and in the colonial era in which the heroic stories were staged, namely Martha Christina Tiahahu (1800-1818), Cut Nyak Dien (1848-1908), R.A. Kartini (1879-1904), R. Dewi Sartika (1884-1947), Rasuna Said (1910-1965), and other female figures who represented the spirit of their respective times and their respective battlefields.

Given this importance, gender-themed studies in the perspective of historicity of Banten can evoke what is called the women’s silent history after living a long time in the silence of the past. Through the exploration of *babad*, *cariosan*, *pepeling*, and *folklore*, women subjects should be expressed in logical wisdom. In any position and role, all data have the same right to be presented in academic discourse, and certainly need to be reviewed. The issue raised in this study is the ability to find the mental structure of each historical event, this small paper tries to give meaning to some events that are considered relevant.

One of the factors that makes it difficult for historians to work is that there are many information sources in the form of ancient manuscripts with language and even letters that indicate locality (Endang Rochmiatun, *Manuskripta* Vol.8, No. 1, 2018: 107-127). The characteristics of traditional historiography contain many mythical and symbolic elements in Javanese and Sundanese languages. Those two local languages are the media for delivering messages of various thoughts and actions and important events in geo-cultural space of Banten, which have even penetrated the area of West Java. With limited resources, in addition to manuscripts, information about oral traditions and artifactual data commonly used in the archaeological domain needs to be explored. However, in this context it can also be used for the purposes of writing history.

Let's start from the archeological heritage, data assumed to be in the lower layers of the strata of time, going on from the end of prehistoric times to the beginning of the century BC, provided a number of Megalithic 'cultural' heritage at various sites since *nirleka*/prehistoric times. Beside, sourced from *Babad Banten* manuscript, borrowing the term *Djajadiningrat* in *Banten History (Sejarah Banten* or abbreviated as SB) finished written between 1663-1667, the speech began with Syarif Hidayatullah's arrival with Hasanuddin in Banten Girang. After visiting pre-Islamic shrines in the southern mountains of Banten, they gained spiritual legality to establish an Islamic power center

at the Cibanten estuary (Djajadiningrat, 1983). The story ended in the defeat of the Sultanate to VOC after going through war at the end of the reign of Sultan Ageng (Tjandrasasmita, 1982, pp. 110-120). There were at least five leadership figures who had ruled in the Banten Islamic Sultanate in each period by revealing details of important events, namely Sultan Hasanuddin, Maulana Yusuf, Maulana Muhammad, Pangeran Ratu (Abdul Mufakhir), and Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa (Muslimah, 2017: 136-162).

In addition to *Banten History (SB)* manuscript, the older stories should be sourced from ancient Sundanese manuscripts, including *Carita Parahyangan* (Noorduyn, 1962, pp. 405-432) and also *Wawacan Banten Girang* (Yusuf & Munawar, 1982). The first story focuses more on the conquest story of Banten Girang by Pakuan, while the second story (C.M. Pleyte Collection, 31, National Museum) is not directly connected with the reality of Banten's past. Expectations are given by Middle level (Madya) Javanese texts, for example *Purwaka Caruban Nagari*. This manuscript gives a genealogical illustration of the founders of Cirebon, Sundanese, and Banten dynasties; Syarif Hidayatullah or known as Sunan Gunung Jati is still described as a strong relative of the Sunda Kingdom. His marriage to Kawung Anten, the younger sister of the 'Regent of Banten', gave birth to Hasanuddin who was later ordained as the first Banten ruler (Pangeran Aria Carbon, 1720: Pupuh XIX, XXIV; Djajadiningrat, 1983, p. 33).

The other manuscript source, called the historical record, is written by P. A. Achmad Djajadiningrat (PAAD) which has been published in two languages (Javanese and Dutch). The article entitled *Herinneringen van Pangeran Aria Achmad Djajadiningrat* (1936) tells the story of small PAAD who received a Dutch education in Batavia, but did not forget the original customs and cultural traditions. Meanwhile, folklore preserved in collective memory which contains the story of *Nyi Pohaci* or also called *Sanghyang Sri* cannot be ignored. There is also an oral tradition originating from the valleys of Mount Pulosari and Mount Karang regarding the founders of ancient settlements in the legend of *Nyi Wangi* and *Ki Mandala* (Fadillah & Sujana, 2003). Then, another Sundanese fairytale, *Nyi Anteh, Sang Penunggu Bulan*, is interesting to review or *Puteri Arum* and *Ki Pande*, oral tradition that tells the story of women and men related to agriculture, *undagi*, and weaving.

Women in Space and Time

Sources regarding women require validity in the course of history. Nonetheless, from the available sources one can build hypotheses about the role of Banten women in several aspects.

Feminine Aspect

The existence of Megalithic traces in the rural Banten can be interpreted that human activities are still very dependent on the natural availability. With the heritage of dakon stones, mortars, and grinding stones and potteries, women contribution can be extracted from these artifact attributes. With contextual interpretation, women activities can be positioned in the gender function according to its nature.

Daily behavior in activities around water sources was shown by the traces of activities of mashing, grinding, thinning seeds, roots, and leaves, and especially to make *boreh* or potions which were practical purposes or ceremonial *ubarampe*. Mortar, dakon stones, and grinding stones found showed that they were used goods (Fadillah, 2001, pp. 58-66). Terracotta fragments were also closely related to these daily activities. In addition to being used to fulfill daily needs, terracotta could also be commodities for part-time work. There was a postulate that hunting, gathering food, and farming were men's work, especially after living a settled life. Aside from taking care of the household, women's work also continued the old tradition of making terracotta.

The activities never stopped by the space transformation until the early days of the historical period when a community experienced agricultural progress, from self-sufficiency to market-oriented characterized by technological advances from fields (*huma*) to rice fields. Although some community groups were able to buy imported ceramic containers, the need for local terracotta containers continued to be met. In the archeological studies in Old Banten and Banten Girang sites, terracotta fragments were found in large numbers (Mundardjito, Ambary, Djafar, 1986; Guillot, Nurhakim, Wibisono, 1986: 175-177) indicating how important women's role was in making terracotta containers. Some fragments revealed attractive taste through a variety of decorative motifs (Ambary, 2015, pp. 142-148).

Until the XX century, feminine activities still took place in several places. In Cirebon, for example, there were clusters traditionally called *panjunan* (from the infinitive *dyun* meaning crock). Likewise in Old Banten, the toponym was associated with Sukadiri terracotta cluster. The specialization was later inherited by terracotta artisans in Bumi Jaya Village, Ciruas. Although the inherited work has now been replaced by men, it proves that there is a continuity of the terracotta culture in Banten used personally or as a commodity.

In that context, the works of spinning and weaving were strongly associated with women. The samples of spinning equipment had been found at Banten Girang sites (Guillot, Nurhakim, Wibisono, 1986: 190), if the function was tested, it could be assumed that since the X century there had been that specialization. This can be proven by the tradition of weaving in the Baduy community that still exists today. The temporary hypothesis, if not too hasty, is that in their position as a housewife, the role of women has been steady since the prehistoric and prehistoric periods of Banten, namely since the agricultural system in the settled community began to know. Until historical times, even when the Banten Sultanate was victorious, terracotta making activities with various decorative motifs were increasingly prominent in Old Banten, which was already quite successful, despite having to compete with imported ceramic containers and Indian patola cloth and silk from China. The need for terracotta tools and clothing required supplies even though they were familiar with metal technology.

Aesthetic traces on terracotta and woven cloth had been found, initially made of glass beads or cornelian stone, then wrapped with precious metal materials for jewelry (Guillot, Nurhakim, Wibisono, 1986, pp.193-194). The discovery of bronze and gold jewelry, even since Banten Girang period, unveiled an urban lifestyle. Thus, in their

position, women played an important role. In addition to taking care of the family, they also did additional work. This function was quite dominant in Banten tradition. Hence, it was reasonable if female figures got special respect in the inter-gender interaction in Banten historical work.

Maternal aspect

Contribution of a mother in historiography of Banten was not so prominent. Nevertheless, its existence in certain aspects was very essential. The maternal role was evident in the granting of legitimacy to Syarif Hidayatullah as the founder of the Banten Sultanate. Besides being told to have the lineage of the Prophet Muhammad, he was also strengthened by the lineage of King Sunda-Padjajaran. The marriage of Sribaduga Maharaja to Subang Larang gave birth to three children, namely Cakrabuwana, Larasati, and Rajasanagara. Syarif Hidayatullah was born from Larasati's line. He was married to Kawung Anten, the younger brother of the 'Regent of Banten' (in another manuscript called the daughter of Panembahan Surasowan), the grandson of Mayang Sunda, the sibling of Sribaduga Maharaja (Iskandar et al., 2000, pp. 117-175). Therefore, based on the maternal line, Syarif Hidayatullah and Kawung Anten were the descendants of Pajajaran. Their marriage gave birth to Sabakingkin who was after becoming a ruler, he was known by the name of Hasanudin. To date, both of them are known as sacred people, both Sunan Gunung Jati and Kawung Anten as a couple who gave birth to the Islamic Dynasty in the Banten Sultanate.

Respect for a mother was more evident at the time when the Sultanate was on the verge of collapse. Sultan Syafiuddin who initially reigned in the Surasowan Palace still took his time to build a palace for his mother, Ratu Asyiah. In accordance with its designation, the palace was better known as the Kaibon Palace on the riverside of Cibanten which held limited power for Banten Kidul administrative area.

An important note was written by PAAD, who from the age of 15 was initiated by *elmu kejawen* (Javanese knowledge) to instill Javanese cultural values in balancing Western-style education in Batavia with Javanese pious stories (*pepeling*) from *Babad Banten* and *Serat al-Anbiya*. One of the poems ever developed by his mother are, "*Wedi asih ing wong toea, setia toehoe ing Sang Aji, Ratoe ingkang angreh praja, noehoni sakersa neki, soemoedjoed lahir lan batin, ikoe sadjatining elmoe, dadasaring kasatrian*", translated into, "Be obedient and love your parents, remain faithful to serve The Majesty, the Queen who rules the land, keep respecting all the commandments physically and mentally, that is the true science, as a basis for struggle" (Djajadiningrat, 1936, p. 71; Ensering, 1995, pp. 132-133).

Socio-political Aspect

The course of history of Banten does not always go straight. There were times when the glory of Banten experienced a 'bend' several times, beginning with the throne crisis when Pangeran Muhammad died in expansion into South Sumatra (1596). The problem was the heir to the throne, Abdul Mafakir who was not old enough, then the guardianship road was long as noted by Lodewijcksz (Rouffaer & Ijzerman, I: 1598).

It was during this time (1596 – 1609) that a guardian had to occupy the king's position. *Babad Banten* mentions Kiai Mas Patih Mangkubumi, a *Tumenggung* who occupied the position of *Patih Jaba* became the king's guardian (Tiele, 1871; Guillot, 1992, pp. 57-71); 'Ordinary people' tasked with managing the trade economy and foreign policy. After returning from the battlefield by sea, he was ordained 'the king's guardian' by *kadi*, the holder of the highest religious authority in the structure of Banten government.

He could won that position since he was considered experienced, but don't forget that he married Hasanudin's daughter (Ratu Wetan), meaning that he was the king's first son-in-law. With marriage, it was assumed that the guardian had legitimacy because it had entered into the line of royal power. However, *Babad Banten* tells us that the queen's mother named Nyai Gede Wanagiri (wife of the late Maulana Muhammad) had to decide to lead the guardianship. This means that he replaced Kiai Mas Patih's position. Then *Babad Banten* also recounted the emergence of Nyai Gede Wanagiri in the highest political position to cool down the social tension. In this important role, court advisers suggested that he remarry Pangeran Camara (Purchas, 1625) so that his legitimacy as a regent was recognized in the sultanate tradition.

A Dutchman, Rochus Pieterszoon who visited Banten (1596) told that the succession of regent by the Queen was preceded by an internal confusion that had taken place before (De Jonge, 1921). This can be interpreted that the change of guardian was due to the reaction of the "*pangeran*" (prince) clan facing the taking of power by the *ponggarwa* group, led by Kiai Mas Patih. Based on this source, it is enough for us to say that in fact the role of Nyai Gede Wanagiri, as the consort of the late king, made her the most senior figure when the throne crisis occurred (Colenbrander, 1920). Her appearance marked the authority of a woman who was able to resolve internal conflicts in the Banten palace.

When the Banten Sultanate was under the rule of Sultan Zainul Arifin (1733-1750) accompanied by a consort of Arab descent, Syarifah Fatimah, the sultan was in a dilemmatic position. The emergence of the Ratu Syarifah figure actually brought new problems for Banten, since she was considered a figure infiltrated by the Dutch government. The woman grew up in Batavia, got along with the Dutch community, and after divorcing with her first husband, worked in the Batavia VOC office.

In the oral tradition, it is told that, due to her beauty, intelligence, and sharpness of analysis in the fields of government and commerce, she could play the role of consort who was able to control the government in Banten (Tjandrasasmita, Ambary, Michrob, 1987, pp. 5-7). From textual sources and oral traditions, it gave birth to the hypothesis that the king was indeed in power, but the decision was in the consort's hands. In that position, Ratu Syarifah was assumed as a VOC agent to strengthen Dutch influence at the end of the sultanate era. Nonetheless, at the end her secret mission was open and gave a reason for the local noble clan to return the throne to the *sentana* (royal) group.

Dutch and Banten tensions continued from the first half and end of the XIX century to the beginning of the XX century, triggered by the colonial policies from the

enforcement planting to plantation capitalism. Many male figures were resistant to Dutch pressure, but it is interesting to note that in this period a novelty emerged, in this case the rise of women was to resist. Nyimas Gamparan in Cikande and Nyimas Malati in Tangerang were cases that have escaped historical studies. They appeared to begin the peak of tension, before "*Geger Cilegon*" incident that gave birth to protagonist Ki Wasid (Kartodirdjo, 1995, pp. 128-129).

In the episode, Nyimas Gamparan had to explore the vast rural Banten to avoid massive capture by the colonial government (Tjandrasasmita, Ambary, Michrob, 1987, pp. 28-29). In all the silence of the history of Banten, the woman's figure had drawn traces on the lines of resistance, before finally falling in the hills of Mount Karang, lying between Paburan and Baros. Likewise, Nyimas Malati, had to meet her destiny in the rural Balaraja. The historical footprints of those two female patriots are still remembered in the collective memory of Bantenese people.

Symbolic aspect

A popular female figure in the oral tradition in the rural southern of Banten is Nyi Pohaci or better known as Sanghyang Sri, especially in Sundanese local religiosity in Banten and also in West Java. Respect for this heavenly figure is based on the belief that Goddess Sri is the embodiment of the fertility giver for rice plants (Sukanda-Tessier, 1977). In the Baduy and Banten Kidul communities and even in the rural southwestern Pandeglang, respect for the Goddess of Rice is represented through the *ruwat bumi* ritual in a series of *Seren Taun* and *Kawalu* ceremonies (Baedhawiy & Wachyudin, 2013; Fadillah, Baedhawiy, Sujana, 2015: 44-45).

Symbolically, women also lived in the valley where three mountains met (Karang, Pulosari and Aseupan). The legend of Ki Mandala and Nyi Wangi was the forerunner of the Mandalawangi settlement. There were limited rituals performed around their graves in the middle of rice fields (Fadillah & Sujana, 2003: 17). Nevertheless, now, the current mainstreaming in the social media in Banten includes the important role of the fairytale surrounding the Pakuan Palace, Nyi Anteh 'Sang Penunggu Bulan' and the fable of Pandeglang, Puteri Arum. Both stories of the protagonists imply that weaving has always been a symbol of women's spiritual power. That belief is still preserved in the tradition of making *Janggawari*, a typical weaving done by a virtuous Baduy woman. This type of weaving is only intended as a hosting equipment in the rituals of the Baduy community in Kanekes.

Conclusion

The traditional historiography of Banten is far more complete than what is now revealed. The role of women in various positions has shown the breadth of dimensions in each episode of the history of Banten. The real role appears in the position of women according to their nature, namely in the feminine and maternal aspects. The existence of *Batu Bergores* archaeological heritage on the slopes of Mount Pulosari, with the female genital mark can be the oldest evidence of respect for women. Later it was discovered that there was an important role in the position as a political elite, in the

context of both the aristocracy and ordinary people. Nevertheless, women in public view, hypothetically, also have a special place in their symbolic position, both as a forerunner of the community and in the context of religiosity. This depicts the mental wealth of Bantenese people in positioning themselves in the metaphysical world. The harmony of human relations and the environment continues to be fought by the Baduy community and traditional unity in the southern mountains of Banten.

The various situations experienced by Bantenese people for decades have shown a dominant double track, namely a constant role in the context of feminine universalism and a local-situational role. All the positions of women in historiography of Banten have not stopped, even when the world has entered the modern era. Women have an essential position that still appears on the surface, especially in the spirit of post-modernism that requires balance in the natural and social ecosystem. Although, in the colonial era the manuscript evidence that illustrated the existence and role of women was eroded by political dynamics that made hegemony the role of men.

Space and time have indeed changed. Likewise, it occurs as well in the positional context of women in the public order, but there is always continuity in the spirit of how to position women in the positions and roles proportionally and professionally. When the position of women must be discussed in the context of local history as ancient manuscripts have shown that in the discussion of this paper, at the beginning of the first millennium, it becomes an important moment to continue to explore sources of local historical knowledge about Banten women throughout their history. As a result, the studies taking the women subjects of the historiography of Banten are new challenge for historians in general.

References

- Ambary, H. M. (2015). Ragam hias gerabah di Banten Lama. In Mundardjito et al. (eds), *Ragam Pusaka Budaya Banten*. Serang: Disbudpar Prov. Banten dan BPCB.
- Baedhawiy, R. A. & Wachyudin, N. (2013). *Nilai-nilai kearifan lokal dalam pelestarian lingkungan hidup masyarakat Baduy dan kasepuhan Cisungsang*. Serang: Disbudpar Provinsi Banten.
- Colenbrander (1920). *Bescheiden omtrent zijn bedrijf iz Indie*, II. S-Gravenhage.
- De Jonge (1921). *De Ompkomst van het Nederlandsch Gezag*, 3.
- Djajadiningrat, A. (1936). *Herinneringen van Pangeran Aria Achmad Djajadiningrat*. Batavia: G. Kolff & Co.
- Djajadiningrat, R. A. H. (1983). *Tinjauan kritis tentang sajarah Banten, sumbangan bagi pengenalan sifat-sifat penulisan Jawa*. Jakarta: Penerbit Djambatan.
- Ensering, E. (1995). Banten in times of revolution. *Archipel*, 50, pp. 131-160.
- Fadillah, M. A. (2001). Mitos gunung suci di Pandeglang, kontemplasi arkeologis, in Tony Djubiantono & Moh. Ali Fadillah (Eds). *Manusia dan lingkungan, keberagaman budaya dalam kajian arkeologi*. Bandung: Ikatan Ahli Arkeologi Indonesia.
- Fadillah, M. A. (23 August 2018). <https://www.rmolbanten.com/read/2018/08/23/2650/Sejarah-Milik-Laki-Laki>

- Fadillah, M. Ali & Sujana, D. (2003). *Tapak peradaban purba di lereng gunung Pulosari*. Disbudpar Kab. Pandeglang.
- Fadillah, M. Ali, Baedhawiy, R. A., & Sujana, D. (2015). *Mokaha urang Cisungsang*. Serang: Disbudpar Prov. Banten.
- Guillot, C. (1992). Libre entreprise contre économie dirigée, guerres civiles à Banten 1580-1603. *Archipel* 43, 57-71.
- Guillot, C. L. Nurhakim, S. Wibisono. (1986). *Banten avant l'Islam, etude archéologique de Banten Girang*. Paris: EFEO.
- Iskandar, Y. (2000). *Sejarah Banten (dari masa nirleka sampai masa pemerintahan Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa)*. Jakarta: TSA Corp.
- Kartodirdjo, S. (1995). Le leadership dans la révolte des paysans de Banten, 1888. *Archipel*, 50, 123-130.
- Mundardjito, H. M., & Ambary, H. D. (1986). *Laporan penelitian arkeologi Banten 1976*. Jakarta: Pusat Penelitian Arkeologi Nasional.
- Muslimah (2017). Sejarah masuknya Islam dan pendidikan Islam masa kerajaan Banten periode 1552-1935. *Jurnal Studi Agama dan Masysrakat* 13 (1), 136-162.
- Noorduyn, J. (1962). "Het begingedeelte van de carita Parahyangan. *BKI*, 118, 405-432.
- Purchas, P. (1625). *His pilgrimes*, v. I., London.
- Rochmiatun, E. (2018). Elit lokal Palembang dan polemik kebangkitan Kesultanan Palembang: Menggali sumber sejarah melalui manuskrip. *Manuskripta Jurnal Manassa*, 8 (1), 107-127.
- Rouffaer, R. & Ijzerman, I. (1915). *De Eerste Schipvaart de Nederlanders naar Oost India onder Cornelis de Houtman 1595-1597*, 's Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff.
- Sukanda-Tessier, V. (1977). Le triomphe de sri en pays soundanais. *Bulletin de l'École française d'Extrême-Orient*, Vol. CI.
- Tiele, L. (1871). *Tijdschrift van Nederlandsch-Indie*, II. Batavia.
- Tjandrasasmita, U. (1982). *Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa, musuh besar kompeni Belanda*. Jakarta: Depdikbud.
- Tjandrasasmita, U., Ambary, H. M., & Michrob, H. (1987). *A Guide to archaeological and historical monument of Banten*. Jakarta: Direktorat for the Protection and Develop of Historical and Archaeological Heritage.
- Yusuf, J. & Munawar, T. (1982). *Wawacan Banten girang (Alihaksara)*. Jakarta: Depdikbud.