

Representations of Mother in Indonesian and European Literary Folktales

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ABSTRACT

Folktales are texts which have always been presented through generations. If literary texts are considered as social-cultural reflections and representations, the themes contained in folktales can surely become references which may be interpreted differently, in accordance with the time conditions of the people reading them. One interesting theme to discuss is the presence of mother characters in various texts of Indonesian and European folktales. This paper focuses on the mother characters in several folktales from Indonesia and Europe. Qualitative research method, theories of narratology and semiotics, and psychoanalysis concepts are used to analyze those texts. The data presents mother characters in various statuses, either as biological mother, stepmother, or acting mother. There are parallel ideas that become common threads of the stories. Mothers in those various tales become the characters that move the stories. In this case, mother characters will be analyzed from several aspects: in symbolic space contexts, from gender perspective, and in East and West social-cultural dimensions.

Keywords: *Mother, Social dimension – culture, Gender, Representation, Symbol*

1. INTRODUCTION

Albrecht [1] states that the relationship between literature and society has been based on three general assumptions: (1) it reflects society and culture, (2) it serves as a means of social control and (3) it influences attitudes and behavior of people in ways considered in some respects desirable, in others undesirable. Following the above statement, which is actually a restatement of older theorists' opinions, it can be said that a society will produce its own distinct works of literature and, in case texts are not easily accessible, oral traditions. Folktales, and fairy tales, serve as perfect examples of products of a particular society, since they are not the creation of a single, individual mind, but of many, possibly the whole group of people. The fact that they have been handed down through generations, each with possible additions and alterations, adds to the communal ownership of the stories.

Jungian psychologists like Birkhauser-Oeri [2] believe that "Those who created the traditional folk tales were mostly simple people living close to nature. The stories are not a result of conscious construction but emerged spontaneously and then grew to their present form through countless repetitions by many tellers. So, the themes they deal with are universal rather than individual, and the language used to express them is composed of symbolic

images typical of the unconscious (p. 9)." This 'universality' explains why similar stories and characters have appeared in different parts of the world throughout the ages. As human beings, regardless of the different places, times and cultures, we share the same dreams and ideals, or, as Jungians put it, deep down in the unconscious there is a fountain of knowledge, or common spiritual experience, which can enrich us if we have access to it.

Mother characters appear in various folktales from Indonesia (Malin Kundang [3], Bawang Putih dan Bawang Merah [4], Ande-ande Lumut [4], Timun Mas [5], La Upe dan Raja Ikan [6], Tampe Ruma Sani [7], Saledale [8]) as well as from Europe (Cinderella [9], Hansel and Gretel [9], Frau Holle [10], the Ungrateful Son [10], Rapunzel [10], Jack and the Beanstalk [11], Lazy Jack [11], Snow White [12], and The Red Shoes [12]). In other words, the presence, or even absence, of a mother figure that has a significant impact in the plot of a folktale can be said as something universal. What differentiates one mother character from another is the way they are represented in the story. This depends on the cultures that produce them.

In Rosliana [13], Cox (1893) studied *Three Hundreds and Forty-five Variants of Cinderella* spread in various countries; Thompson (1958), Propp (1968), and Sierra (1992) also found that the story of a poor orphan girl who was treated badly by her wicked stepmother and stepsisters and was finally rescued by a prince charming or a fairy godmother was found across cultures. Those

studies resulted in one general premise: that all tales have similar pattern with some modifications which make them varied but remain the same.

In *The Mother: Archetypal Image in Fairy Tales, Studies in Jungian Psychology* Birkhauser-Oeri [2] studied many kinds of mothers in fairy tales, each with an example of a mother character from European and American fairy tales. As archetypal images, the mothers in fairy tales are different from real mothers, "Often they possess subhuman or superhuman traits. For one thing they are better or more evil than the average human woman. In their appearance too they are often different. There are awful ugly witches with red eyes and enormous noses which they use for poking the stove, or ethereally beautiful fairies, like goddesses (p. 13)." The reason for this oddity is because these mother characters represent motherhood in its various aspects, not particular mothers, but symbols or archetypal images of mother.

Bernheimer in her article "*Fairy Tale is Form, Form is Fairy Tale*" [14] states that traditional fairy tales have four important elements: flatness, abstraction, intuitive logic and normalized magic. The first refers to the flatness of characters, the second to the lack of illustrative details, the third to the absence of explanations about incidents that happen in the story, and the fourth to the collapse of the day-to-day world when the world of wonders is present.

Examining how women are represented in traditional fairy tales, Nanda [15] in her article "*The Portrayal of Women in the Fairy Tales*" states that "Fairy tales embody the ways that societies attempted to silence and oppress women making them passive." The statement is based on the fact that much fairy tale literature reinforces the notion that women should better be wives and mothers, submissive and self-sacrificing. Good women in stories are to be passive, silent, without ambition, beautiful and eager to marry. While active, ambitious women are always portrayed as evil from within, ugly and scheming, wielding over other women and men. Looking at the patriarchal societies that produced the stories, we can easily agree with Nanda's opinion. However, there are always exceptions.

Comparisons of Indonesian and European folk tales have been done by several studies by Indonesians. These studies, in general, only cover very few Indonesian stories out of the plethora of the Indonesian heritage. To name one is Roslana's "*Women Archetype Characters and Motifs in Three Indonesian Folk Tales*," [13]. This article discusses three Indonesian female characters, namely, Dayang Sumbi (*Sangkuriang*), Nawang Wulan (*Jaka Tarub*), and Bawang Putih (*Bawang Putih dan Bawang Merah*). By considering them as archetype characters and valuing their actions in the stories, the article concludes that "Indonesian women are presented as more active and assertive compared to their European counterparts who are submissive and passive (pp. 27-28)." This conclusion, we believe, is too hasty and lies on a shaking ground. Firstly, the article does not provide any comparisons for Dayang Sumbi and Nawang Wulan. Secondly, the only comparison provided is between Bawang Putih and Cinderella; while in the realm of European folk tales, there is also the story of *Frau Holle* retold by the Grimm Brothers [10]. The stepdaughter in *Frau Holle* lose a

spindle when spinning by a well and tried to get it back by jumping into the bottom of the well, just like when washing by the river Bawang Putih lose some clothes and tried to get it back by chasing it following the river. Both characters then entered the magical world and met mysterious old women, whom they served well, and finally made their good fortune as rewards for their good behaviors. Based on the narrative structure, *Frau Holle* is more equal to *Bawang Putih dan Bawang Merah* than *Cinderella*.

Roland Barthes proposes a theory of five codes which helps readers to unfold and understand any narrative. In *S/Z* [16], he defines code as "... a mirage of structures ... the sign of virtual digression... one of the voices that can take over the text ... one of the voices out of which the text is woven" (p. 20-21). By this definition he indicates that the basic function of code is to decode the hidden messages/meanings which are inherent in literary language. According to Barthes all narratives have one or all the five codes that work as "weaving of voice" (p. 20). These codes are the *proairetic*, the *hermeneutic*, the *semic*, the *symbolic*, and the *cultural code* [17].

This paper discusses the presence of mother characters in several folktales from Indonesia and Europe. The mother characters discussed will be grouped in three categories, i.e., biological mother, stepmother and acting mother. Finding similarities and differences among the mother characters, by taking into considerations the cultures that produce them, is the aim of this paper.

2. METHOD

This paper employs qualitative study with content analysis approach. The data are analyzed through several steps. First, the mother characters from Indonesian and European folk tales are classified into three categories: biological mother, stepmother and acting mother. This categorization needs to be done to achieve a more objective comparison, considering the fact that the mother characters in both European and Indonesian folktales are not all real/biological mothers. Some are stepmothers and some others are older women characters who take the role of mothers. Second, the classified mother characters from both cultures will be compared based on the equalities of the narrative structures. Finally, semiotic analysis based on Roland Barthes' theory of codes, in this case the cultural one, will be used to discuss the cultural codes employed by the compared characters [16].

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Biological Mothers: *Malin Kundang, the Ungrateful Son*

Malin Kundang is a folk tale from West Sumatra which tells a story about an ungrateful son cursed into stones by his own mother. The tale began with a poor old widow living with her only son, Malin, in a small hut near a coastal area in West Sumatra. Wanting to change the family's fortune, the mother let Malin try his luck

overseas. He then worked on a merchant's ship, doing anything he could. After some time, being diligent, hard-working good-looking and smart, he managed to get attention from the merchant, who later took him as a son in law. When a few years later the merchant died of old age, Malin and his wife inherited all the wealth. Missing his mother, Malin took his wife to sail back to his hometown. As the ship docked in, the news about Malin becoming rich reached his mother's ears. Happy and eager to see her long-gone only son, the mother rushed to see Malin on board. To her surprise, Malin did not recognize her (or pretended not to know her out of shame) as she was older, poorer and uglier. After Malin sent her away, the angry, disappointed and broken-hearted mother prayed to god to punish her son. Thunder roared; a deadly storm suddenly came. The merchant ship was broken to pieces, and Malin, crying and regretting his action, turned into stone.

Actually, similar dramatic tales about ungrateful sons appeared in several regions in Indonesia, to name a few are *Sampuraga* from North Sumatra [18], *Si Lancang* from Riau [19], *Batu Menangis* [20], *Batu Hapu* [21] and *Batu Bangkai* [22] from South Kalimantan, *Amad Rahmayang* [23] from Aceh, etc. However, it is not easy to find an equal counterpart in European folk tales. The only available one is *The Ungrateful Son* retold by Grimm brothers [10], which is much simpler and shorter. In this German tale, the son is not being ungrateful to his mother, but to his father, and his only mistake was only caused by hiding a roasted chicken under the table in order not to share it with his old father. The chicken turned to a large toad that jumped on to his face and sat there for good. The punishment is not lethal, and the father never prays to god to punish the son.

The English tales *Jack and the Beanstalk* and *Lazy Jack* also have biological mother characters who are poor, old and widows. Both mothers told the sons to do things, expected them to feed the family and change their fortunes. Both Jacks were rather stupid, yet it was the same stupidity that finally made them succeed in changing the family's fortunes. The first Jack had been told to sell the family's only cow to town, but instead of coming back home bringing money, he brought some magical seeds he had got from a stranger in exchange for the cow. Angrily, the mother threw the seeds outside the window, and the next morning some giant beanstalks suddenly grew as high as the sky. Jack then started his journey by climbing the stalks until he arrived at an ogre's home, where he, with the help of the ogre's wife who pitied him, managed to steal a bag of gold and brought it home to his mother. When the gold was all spent, Jack repeated his action and succeeded in stealing a golden egg from the ogre. The third time he repeated his action, the ogre saw him stealing his golden harp. Jack ran as fast as he could and climbed down, but the ogre chased him. Out of fear, Jack cut down the beanstalks and the ogre fell down and died. Selling the golden egg and the golden harp, Jack and his mother became rich. Finally, he married a rich princess and said goodbye to his bad fortune.

The second Jack was even more stupid. Having been told by his mother to find a job, he helped a neighboring farmer and got a penny for his sweat. As he passed a brook on his way home, he lost the money. His mother got very

upset and told him to put it in his pocket the next time. Jack did so, but this time he helped a cow keeper and got a jar of milk for his day's work. Again, the mother got upset since all the milk had been spilled before he arrived home. "You should have carried it above your head," said the mother. Jack did so, but this time he helped another farmer, who gave him a cream cheese and the cheese melted down on his way home. "Carry it very carefully in your hands," said the mother. Again, Jack did as his mother's advice, but this time he got a tomcat and the cat scratched him and got away. "Tie it with a string and drag it along after you," said the mother. Jack did his mother's instruction, but this time he got a mutton, that became spoilt as he dragged it along the street. "You should have carried it on your shoulder," shouted the mother angrily. And Jack did so, only this time he got a donkey for helping a generous cattle keeper. He managed to put the donkey on his shoulder and walked home slowly. A rich man and his beautiful, but deaf and dumb, daughter happened to live close by. Seeing Jack with a donkey on his shoulder, the young girl, who had never laughed all her life, suddenly burst out in laughter and magically recovered her speech and hearing. The rich man was so thankful that he married his daughter to Jack. Jack changed his family's fortune and became a rich gentleman.

Beside nurturing, caring and loving, the mother characters in *Malin Kundang* and other similar Indonesian folktales represent power and authority, to which the sons are obliged to respect and obey. Rejecting to fulfill this obligation will result in getting severe punishments by God, the supreme authority. Going overseas or to other regions to find a better life is a common practice done by young people, especially male, in Indonesia, thus, the fear of having an ungrateful son who will forget their parents after they become successful persons seems to be reflected in *Malin Kundang*. The fact that similar folktales appeared in several regions in Indonesia only shows that the same fear is shared by parents from those regions and the folktales serve as some kind of warning for young people.

The biological mother characters in European folktales, as in *Lazy Jack* and *Jack and the Beanstalks*, also represent power and authority, as someone to tell the right things to do, however, they are not pictured as someone who will give severe punishments when the sons do mistakes. If, both Jacks have forgotten their mothers after they got rid of their bad fortunes, the punishments they would have gotten, perhaps, would have been like the one told in Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm's *The Ungrateful Son* [10]: big ugly toads would sit on their faces for the rest of their lives. The punishments are not from the parents, not from God either, but from the society, as they will have to carry the shame of being ungrateful sons.

It is interesting to note that in all the tales discussed above, both from Indonesia and Europe, becoming rich or marrying rich ladies are common goals of the main characters. In *Jack and the Beanstalks*, the passion to get material wealth even allows the main character to steal and kill for gold.

3.2. *Wicked Stepmothers and Beautiful Stepdaughters*

Tales about a poor girl mistreated and abused by her stepmother (and stepsisters) appeared in many parts of the world. All the girls are modest, innocent and virtuous, while all the stepmothers are cruel, wicked and evil. In Europe, *Cinderella*, *Snow White*, *Frau Holle* and *Hansel and Gretel* are famous stories that can be grouped into this category. The four stories end happily, both beautiful Cinderella and Snow White are saved by young, handsome, rich princes, and both Gretel and the stepdaughter character in *Frau Holle* brought back home the material wealth they got from their journey.

Some critics believe that the mother characters in *Snow White* and *Hansel and Gretel* were not stepmothers but biological mothers since in the early publications of the stories (1812) the Grimm Brothers did not state they were stepmothers. They became stepmothers only after the Grimm Brothers added some notes about it in the 1819 edition of the book. Tatar [24] stated that the Grimm Brothers added the note because "... audience of the tales changed, the need to shift the burden of evil from a mother to a stepmother became ever more urgent" and that the notion 'cruel, wicked and evil stepmothers' were more acceptable to most readers than 'cruel, wicked and evil mothers' (p. 142). It seems that the intended readers were originally adults, not children; however, since children turned out to be the biggest audience of the stories the Grimm Brothers felt the need to avoid having biological mothers as antagonists.

And where are the fathers? They are simply dead or too busy with things from outside the house. In the patriarchal society of the 19th century Europe home affairs was the domain of a mother, so it was more logical in a story to put the blame on a mother character for whatever went wrong in a home. While the fathers should have been as responsible, storytellers chose to create stepmother characters as villains and not to talk much about the fathers. Ashliman [25] stated that "In a strongly patriarchal society no one, not even in a fantasy tale, would be comfortable laying too much blame on male characters. Further, by placing other mother figures in bad light, the female storytellers could make themselves look good by comparison" (p. 280).

In Indonesia, *Tampe Ruma Sani* [7] from West Nusa Tenggara, *La Upe dan Raja Ikan* [6] from South Sulawesi, *Saledale* [8] from East Nusa Tenggara and, the most famous, *Bawang Putih dan Bawang Merah* [4] from Riau also have stepmother characters who are as cruel, wicked and evil as the European counterparts. All these stories, too, have happy endings. *Tampe Ruma Sani* ends with the victimized stepdaughter marrying a king, while *La Upe dan Raja Ikan*, in which the protagonist is not a stepdaughter but a stepson, ends with him marrying a princess. In *Bawang Putih dan Bawang Merah* and *Saledale* the stepdaughters (and stepsons) get material rewards in the end just like in *Frau Holle* and *Hansel and Gretel*. The parents in *Tampe Ruma Sani* and *Saledale* do the same action as Hansel and Gretel's parents: leaving the protagonists in the forests.

In all those tales, both from Europe and Indonesia, stepmothers serve as antagonists, and they all have to get

punishments for their wrongdoings so that happy endings can be created. The stepmothers in *Snow White* and *Hansel and Gretel* are punished by death, and the stepmothers in *Cinderella* and *Frau Holle* suffer as their biological daughters get physical punishments, in addition to having to swallow disappointments and humiliations. This kind of physical punishment also applies to *Bawang Putih dan Bawang Merah*, the stepmother and her biological daughter are bitten by snakes coming out from the pumpkin given as a reward by a mysterious old woman. In *La Upe dan Raja Ikan* the stepson does not need other characters to stand up for him as he finally is able to punish the abusive stepmother himself using the magic he got from the fish king. Death as a punishment also applies to *Saledale*, in which the wicked stepmother is killed by a buffalo. However, in *Tampe Ruma Sani*, what happens to the stepmother is not told by the story.

Again, in all stories discussed above, getting material wealth or marrying rich people are the common goals of the main characters.

3.3. *Acting Mothers: Ande-ande Lumut, Timun Mas, Rapunzel, The Red Shoes*

In tales where both good biological mothers and evil stepmothers are absent, acting/foster mother characters usually take the roles. Yet, these acting mothers can easily be grouped into good and evil, too. In the Javanese *Ande-ande Lumut*, Klething Kuning, the runaway princess in disguise, is treated by the old widow she lives with as badly as Cinderella is by her stepmother. She has to do all the house chores and serves the foster mother and her daughters. In the end, of course, she gets the prince, and the acting mother gets a punishment. The foster mother in *Timun Mas*, on the contrary, is protective, caring and nurturing. Even though she has an agreement with an ogre to give back the girl as she reaches maturity, for the sake of motherhood she chooses not to fulfill it. Instead, she tells Timun Mas to run away and gives her some magical things, i.e., chilly, salt and shrimp paste, to be used against the ogre. As the ogre finally dies, she can live with her adopted daughter, Timun Mas, peacefully and happily ever after.

In European tales, the acting mothers in *The Red Shoes* and *Rapunzel* clearly represent good and evil, too. In H.C. Andersen's *The Red Shoes* the foster mother serves as a good, nurturing mother for Karen, the orphan girl. She provides whatever Karen needs and gives her advice and guidance so that the girl can live a good life among other people. In the opposite, the old witch who raises and locks Rapunzel up in the tower never wants her to be happy and live a normal life. She stands between Rapunzel and the prince and tries to separate them. Although she fails in the end, and Rapunzel can finally reunite with the prince, what happens to her next is not told by the story.

Except for *The Red Shoes*, which has a sad ending, all the other stories employ the common pattern: after all the sufferings happiness will come. Klething Kuning in *Ande-ande Lumut* finally reunites with her prince and lives happily ever after, as Rapunzel does with her prince.

Timun Mas reunites with her adopted mother and lives peacefully. The source of happiness in *Timun Mas*, however, is not material gain or marriage to rich people, like commonly told in the other tales, but simply being together as a family.

Table 1. The Folktales Compared

No	Titles		
	Categories	Indonesia	Europe
1	Biological Mothers	<i>Malin Kundang, Si Lancang, Batu Menangis, Batu Hapu, Batu Bangkai, Amad Rahmayang</i>	<i>The Ungrateful Son, Lazy Jack, Jack and the Beanstalks</i>
2	Stepmother	<i>Tampe Ruma Sani, La Upe dan Raja Ikan, Saledale, Bawang Merah dan Bawang Putih</i>	<i>Cinderella, Snow White, Frau Holle, Hansel and Gretel</i>
3	Acting Mother	<i>Ande-ande Lumut, Timun Mas</i>	<i>Rapunzel, The Red Shoes</i>

3.4. References of Cultures

The *cultural code*, also called as the referential code (p.20) [22], refers to the elements which share a common knowledge of the world. Here, the reader focuses on the physical, physiological, psychological, literary and historical properties of characters of the story to identify a common knowledge. Since the objects used in Indonesian and European folk tales represent the cultures that produced them, similarities and differences can be seen in the use of those objects.

3.4.1. Wealth

In many of the tales discussed above, from both Europe and Indonesia, the protagonists succeed in getting material wealth and become rich. This change of fortune usually happens after they go through sufferings, making the endings of the story in contrast with the beginning. Possession of gold, precious stones and other material things become the common representation of wealth. The European *Jack and the Beanstalks* ends with Jack possessing gold stolen from the ogre. The orphan girl in *Frau Holle* gets a 'shower of gold' as a reward for her hard work. Hansel and Gretel discover a vase full of treasure and precious stones after the old witch dies. Bringing the wealth home solves the problem of poverty that becomes the initial conflict of the story. The Indonesian tale *Bawang Putih Bawang Merah* has the same ending as *Frau Holle*. The orphan girl *Bawang Putih* is rewarded with jewels and precious stones for her hard work. The three deserted children in *Saledale* gets a magical gong from a mysterious old man. The gong can give them anything they wish, including gold and precious stones. Although the common goal is the same, i.e. to become rich, the gong clearly represents Indonesian culture.

3.4.2. Bright future

The next common pattern of tales from both Europe and Indonesia is marriage to wealthy, noble people and, consequently, become rich. This kind of marriage refers to the bright future that the protagonists will have. Cinderella, Snow White and Rapunzel get married to their prince charming. And Both Jacks in *Lazy Jack* and *Jack and the Beanstalks* finally marry their rich ladies and become gentlemen. The Indonesian tale *Tampe Ruma Sani* ends with the main character marrying a king, the tale *Ande-ande Lumut* is closed by the marriage of Klething Kuning with her prince, and *La Upe dan Raja Ikan* ends with the protagonist marrying a princess. Malin Kundang also marries a rich merchant's daughter and inherits the wealth. It is clear that for both European and Indonesian societies that produced the tales, marriage to a wealthy, noble people were considered as a logical way to become rich and have a bright future.

3.4.3. Prosperity

Many tales from both Europe and Indonesia start with a family living in poverty. The father and stepmother leave Hansel and Gretel in the forest because they do not have enough bread to feed everyone. The mother in *Jack and the Beanstalks* tells her son Jack to sell their only cow to town to pay for their expenses. And the mother in *Lazy Jack* asks Jack to get a job so that he can earn some pennies. All these families are poor. Likewise, the three children in *Saledale* are left in the wood because the father and stepmother cannot afford to feed them. The main character Tampe Ruma Sani has to sell fish in the market before she is forced to leave home with her little brother as they do not get enough food at home, and later they survive by selling the spices found in a mysterious house in the forest. The family told in *La Upe dan Raja Ikan* is also poor that the protagonist La Upe has to go fishing if he wants to eat. And Malin Kundang has to go overseas to change his fortune because his mother is too poor to feed both of them. In short, poverty becomes the initial conflict for all these stories.

As the fortune of the main characters changes, some codes of prosperity need to be employed. Thus, bread, rice, spices, fish, cow, donkey and buffalo are used to represent prosperity. Hansel and Gretel find the witch's house of bread and cookies in the forest; similarly, Tampe Ruma Sani and her brother find rice and bags of spices in a mysterious house in the forest. Jack gets the beanstalks that lead him to his good fortune, and the other Jack gets a donkey that unexpectedly helps him change his fate. La Upe gets help from a magical fish, and the children in *Saledale* give their parents bags of rice and a buffalo after they become rich. Malin Kundang works on a ship and later owns the ship.

Bread refers to European culture as rice to Indonesian. Donkeys and cows are normally owned by European farmers, while buffaloes and also cows are owned by Indonesian farmers. Fish and ships refer to people living near the sea. And spices refer to the eastern part of Indonesia.

3.4.4. Kitchen work

The name Cinderella literally means ‘a girl of ashes.’ She gets that name since she is forced by the stepmother and stepsisters to sleep on the floor by the chimney corner in the kitchen. The kitchen is where she spends most of her time as she has to serve the whole family: cooking, washing, cleaning, etc. In Grimm Brothers German version, Cinderella is *Aschenputtel*, which etymologically means ‘a girl from the kitchen’ [26]. This metaphoric naming of character clearly refers to the patriarchal society of the 18th century Europe, on which a good woman was expected to be good in handling the house, especially the kitchen. In the Indonesian tale *Timun Mas*, the main character is saved by the chilly, salt and shrimp paste given by her foster mother. In Indonesian houses, chilly, salt and shrimp paste can only be found in the kitchen or on the dining table after they become *sambal* (chili sauce with shrimp paste). Thus, by giving those three objects to Timun Mas as weapons to defend herself from the ogre, the foster mother is like saying “do your homework in the kitchen and you’ll be saved.” Though in different ways, the two examples discussed above clearly reflect the patriarchal culture which produced the stories.

3.4.5. Nature

In both Indonesian and European folk tales, several elements of nature are used. Hansel and Gretel and the children in *Saledale* are left by their parents in the forests. Snow White runs away to the forest, and Tampe Ruma Sani and her little brother also go to the forest after they are forced to leave home. In all those stories the forest serves as a metaphor of mysterious, uncivilized, chaotic place where anything can happen. And in the forests, the main characters of those stories are able to change their fortunes, in different ways, of course. In the forest, Hansel and Gretel arrive at a witch’s house, and Snow White meets the seven dwarfs, both witches and dwarfs refer to European culture; while Tampe Ruma Sani and her brother arrive at a mysterious house with rice and bags of spices, which refers to Indonesian culture. Another Indonesian cultural reference can also be found in *Saledale*, with the children meeting a mysterious old man with a gong in the forest. In *Malin Kundang*, the sea takes the place of the forest. Being successful at sea, Malin comes back to his hometown as a rich man. The sea in *Malin Kundang* refers to the coastal society that produced the story.

Bawang Putih dan Bawang Merah and *La Upe* make their good fortunes after they go to the river. *Bawang Putih* meets the mysterious old woman, and *La Upe* meets the magical fish, both later become unexpected saviors. *Klething Kuning* reunites with her prince after she crosses the river, where she meets and tricks the villainous giant crab. In these three Indonesian tales the river functions as a borderline between good and bad fortunes.

The dramatic ending of *Malin Kundang* involves several elements of nature: thunder, storm, tidal waves, all represent the mother’s (and God’s) anger to the ungrateful son who later turns to stone. This clearly refers to the traditional Indonesian belief that a mother’s blessing is a

path to heaven while a mother’s anger is a shortcut to hell, as nature and God will usually take the side of the mother.

Table 2. References of Culture

No	References of Culture		
	References	Indonesia	Europe
1	Wealth	<i>Bawang Merah Bawang Putih, Saledale,</i>	<i>Jack and the Beanstalks, Frau Holle, Hansel and Gretel</i>
2	Bright Future	<i>Tampe Ruma Sani, Ande-ande Lumut, La Upe dan Raja Ikan, Malin Kundang</i>	<i>Lazy Jack, Jack and the Beanstalks,</i>
3	Prosperity	<i>Saledale, Tampe Ruma Sani, La Upe dan Raja Ikan, Malin Kundang</i>	<i>Hansel and Gretel, Jack and the Beanstalks, Lazy Jack,</i>
4	Kitchen Work	<i>Timun Mas</i>	<i>Cinderella,</i>
5	Nature	<i>Saledale, Tampe Ruma Sani, Bawang Merah Bawang Putih, La Upe dan Raja Ikan, Malin Kundang</i>	<i>Hansel and Gretel, Jack and the Beanstalks</i>

4. CONCLUSION

In the end, it can be concluded that the analysis of the narrative structure of the Indonesian and European folk tales shows similarities and differences. Biological mothers are commonly told as nurturing, caring and protective. They also represent power and authority, yet many Indonesian folk tales indicate that mothers are also threatening as they are capable of giving lethal punishments. Stepmothers in both Indonesian and European folk tales are commonly cruel, wicked and evil. None of the stories discussed shows loving and caring stepmothers. It seems that in both cultures, stepmothers are vulnerable of being the ones to blame for the wrongdoings at home. Acting/foster mothers can also be grouped into good and evil in both Indonesian and European folk tales. Some are caring and protective, some others wicked and cruel.

Looking at the references of culture in the light of Barthes’ cultural codes, some similarities and differences can also be found. There are many references that pertain to things, values, customs and perceptions in the Indonesian and European societies in the past.

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