



**DEFINING THE ETHIC OF THE IDEAL WOMAN IN DISNEY'S
POCAHONTAS AND INDONESIA'S DAYAKNESS**

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ABSTRACT

The ideal of feminist is highly influenced by the ethical code. Pocahontas, the daughter of the head of Indian tribes in Virginia, while Dayak is one of a tribe in Indonesia. In Disney, princess is a woman depicted by perfect skinny body, white skin, long hair and beautiful voice. However, either the Indian tribes in Pocahontas movie conducts the ideal of woman differently or the Dayakness indigenous woman images a feminist with their own sake than the most of woman's dream. This study exerts a descriptive qualitative research, applies a comparative study and gender approach. This literary research examines the ideal characteristics of woman in Pocahontas movie and Dayak indigenous. As a result, a ladylike characteristic based on Indian and Dayak ethics portray of the ideal woman lead to the masculinity traits. Keywords: Dayak, Ideal, Indigenous, Woman



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INTRODUCTION

There is no Disney without Princess. In Disney's folktales, every story has a princess or women as lead characters. Pocahontas, a daughter of the head of Indian tribes in Virginia, reflects masculinity traits as woman who is feminist. This becomes a precursor of this literary research in highlighting the character Pocahontas as the center of object of analysis. Meanwhile, Indonesia's indigenous woman in Dayak tribe, one of a biggest tribe in Kalimantan, Indonesia, performs the same issue of portraying the role of man, and having a similar identity as man. Henceforth, beyond the nature of feminist, the ideal woman in both tribes agree with the essential of beauty is what the tribe standardizes and determines the definition of a ladylike.

This literary research exerts the qualitative descriptive research. Qualitative research studies behavior in natural settings or uses people's accounts as data; usually no manipulation of variables (Hancock, Ockleford, and Windridge 6). As follows, it points to the records which are mainly taken from the movie and the articles. Likewise, since the characters to be scrutinized dealing with the manners, and appearances. It correspondingly takes secondary resources from film studies articles, thesis related to femininity and masculinity in order to provide a comprehensive understanding on the characters in terms of the nature of beauty.

As this research emphasis a comparative analysis between two different tribes of woman, the novelty of this research conducts an overview of defining the standard of femininity based on ethical codes including manners, and also the behavior. Henceforth, comparing Pocahontas to Dayak's woman, this literary research eludes the essential of beauty is relative. Moreover, as mostly Disney's Princesses images as having a good body, and white. This assumes as the westernized beauty standard that may be highly influenced all woman to define beauty by those perception. Moreover, as this research focus to reveal the essence of beauty based on ethical codes.

Ideal Woman Appearances in Pocahontas and Dayak's Woman

Gender has been defined by many but is not understood by all. Pocahontas and Dayak's woman illustrates the variety of the ethic of gender identity and roles.

Gender represents and reproduces certain behaviors, expectations and roles which are connected to males and females (Bradley, 2007). To put gender into even simpler terms, it is what it means to be a woman and what it means to be a man; the qualities and characteristics. These characteristics are not only physical but behavioral and sociological (qtd. In Benson 8).

Most of Disney's movie always has a princess and usually the princess take a role as major characters. Disney always gives detail and perfect princesses' appearance in every movie such as hair color, skin color, body image and the costume as well as the accessories of the princesses. In every film Disney portrays the character based on the theme, cultural identity and race that the film brings. Dorothy Hurley discusses the various underrepresented cultures and races in Disney animated films. She explains, "The problem of pervasive, internalized privileging of Whiteness has been intensified by the Disney representation of fairy tale princesses which consistently reinforces an ideology of White supremacy" (Hurley 223).

In *Sleeping Beauty*, *Cinderella*, *Beauty and The Beast*, and *The Little Mermaid*, have the similarity of the princess appearance, they have white skin and bright hair color such as blonde, red and brunette.

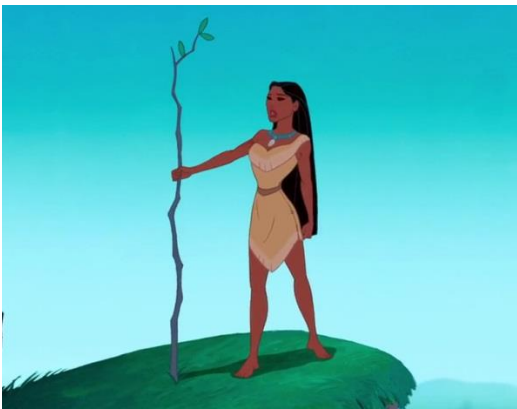
In the contrary of the previous films, Disney's *Pocahontas* (1995) brings the different concept of culture and race. If the previous film, most of them have brought the ideology of white supremacy and Caucasian race, in *Pocahontas*, it breaks the rule of ideal appearance of princess. *Pocahontas* as the main character has dark skin. It is because *Pocahontas* has

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different culture and race. Pocahontas is Native American race. She is an Indian tribe.

Pocahontas deviates from the ideal appearance of princesses. The body images of princess is slim, thin and so on. Towbin and her colleagues write, “In many films, both human and animal female characters are portrayed as overly sexual; they typically have unnaturally small

waists, large breasts, big eyes, and batting eyelashes (Chyng, 2001)” (35). Snow White, Aurora, Cinderella, and Belle have body images that are mentioned before but Pocahontas is different. Beside the skin color, their body images is also different. Pocahontas has athletic body, hefty arms, and strong feet. Her body depicts a masculinity.



About the costume and accessories, Pocahontas is quite different from the other Disney’s princesses. Her costume and accessories that she wears is appropriate to her cultures and races. Pocahontas has different costumes and the way she is clothing is such an up set down compare to other Disney’s princesses. Pocahontas wears the Indian tribe clothes. And the way she’s clothing is revealing. While the accessories that she wears are arm bracelet-like tattoo and necklace. Thus, Pocahontas reflects the masculinity traits as she is a woman. Though, to be beauty, tribe determines the nature of beauty and being the ideal woman.

Besides, in Indonesia’s *Dayakness*, a woman also portrays masculinity traits. Women are strong, and powerful, having a good stamina to work as men. Still, dealing with appearances, Dayak woman is different to other woman who assumes that beauty is all about good body, face, and skin. However, *Dayak* women use a big iron earring as much as possible to show their aura.



In Dayak ethnic, woman uses the iron earring since they were child. Woman describes as beauty, one of the point of view is using earring itself. Besides, using earring also symbolizes the clan in Dayak tribe. Mostly the one who use earring is a noble people, they use earring in order to perform their status and beauty.



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The Reflection of Manners in Dayak Woman and Pocahontas

Both men and women seem to balance each other out when it comes to these traditions. However, Dayak women have taken greater roles in biodiversity. Because Dayak men have left to find employment and the incidents of “logging and oil palm plantations”, women have had to show a more powerful presence in issues related to “food security and water shortages that affect their health” (Helliwell, 2001).

Dayak women are slowly becoming a stronger force in Dayak society. Like mostly woman prefer to stay home, Dayak woman is a hard worker dealing with biodiversity. Some of them work with men in farm. There no differences between men and women while they are at the working place, they do the same job in farm. This equality represents the women in Dayak describes their identity as a woman refer to the masculinity.

The attitude of women in Dayak tribe tends to look stronger than other woman commonly as they also capable of doing the man job professionally. “The notion of men and women’s work does not constitute a rigid division of labor: both men and women say that theoretically women can perform all of the work routinely carried out by men” (Helliwell, 2001). Hence, like hunting for animal, fishing, going into the woods are also a part of women’s world.

In one tribe which shows In Pocahontas movie, first manner that both Pocahontas shows in the movie is that she is stubborn but firm about her decision of what she wants to be no matter how people around try to restrain her. Sara Jones states, “To examine current cultural expression of “princess” is to truly discover a character made up to resemble a perfect idealized person—whether youth and beauty, or traits of tenacity and decisiveness—this is holistically a fictional character.” (Jones 11). This is shown in Pocahontas when she refuses to be married to Kocoum, the strongest male in the tribes, she wants to be free and do many things that

she has not done instead. Thus, Pocahontas reflects the essence of man that having a good decision and brave.

Dawn Elizabeth England & Lara Descartes & Melissa A. Collier-Meek say in their journal, “We expected that the princesses would show more traditionally feminine than masculine characteristics,” (England et al. 2011) shows that for ideal princess manner, feminine traits are needed. However, Pocahontas is not only feminine but also masculine. For example in feminine, Pocahontas is helpful. In Pocahontas film it is when Pocahontas tries to bring peace between her tribes and the intruders and also when she has to let go of the love of her life in order to save him so she sacrifices her feelings to help her love. However, Pocahontas does not have the feminine side from her behavior in her daily life because in the film she is an adventurous girl who tends to be wilder. It is like a quotation that says, “The characteristics of interest in this study include traditionally masculine (e.g., athletic, brave) and traditionally feminine (e.g., helpful, nurturing),” (England et al. 2011).

Masculine here represents a way of behavior which can be possessed not only by men but also by women. Two traits of masculinity that can be seen from Disney Pocahontas who is athletic and brave. “The characteristics of interest in this study include traditionally masculine (e.g., athletic, brave) and traditionally feminine (e.g., helpful, nurturing),” (England et al. 2011). Pocahontas as a tribal girl is athletic because she lives in the middle of forest. She knows how to row a boat, climb a tree and dive in the river from a high waterfall. Brave is also one trait of masculinity that Pocahontas shows in the film. Pocahontas is brave when she jumps without hesitation from a waterfall and when she meets John Smith for the first time, although she is a little scared of him in the very beginning. In the end, the princess ideal manners that are represented by Pocahontas leading to a new point of view as it is different from the common princess manners which are too feminine.



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CONCLUSION

Pocahontas and Dayak woman are different from ideal princess characters or woman's dream whether it is from the manners or the appearances. As in the manners both indigenous women show two traits of masculine and feminine which are brave, athletic, helpful and nurturing. Meanwhile from their appearances, they are completely different from former Disney princesses and common woman's world but still represent the graceful and lovely character of princess-like based on their cultures and races. Even though they are not born as real princesses as their title, these tribes show that to be a princess you have to be yourself first.

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