

## THE MEANING OF MADURA PROVERBS AND STEREOTYPES OF VIOLENCE IN MADURA ETHNICITY (A Stylistic Review)

*Anandika Panca Nugraha*

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[anand.nugraha@gmail.com](mailto:anand.nugraha@gmail.com)

Universitas Airlangga  
Surabaya, Jawa Timur, Indonesia

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**Abstract:** This article studies the meaning of Madurese proverbs commonly associated with violence stereotype of the Madurese. The analysis is conducted by using a stylistic approach while the data are collected by means of documentary method. The findings show that Madurese proverbs represent a number of meanings related to violence, that is, physical violence, robust conviction and advice on violence. Those meanings do not necessarily justify the violent nature of the Madurese. Rather, they must imply the principles of Madurese people to strongly uphold self-dignity, courage and righteousness. Further research using larger data of Madurese proverbs and other types of Madurese proverbs is suggested in order to obtain comprehensive depiction about Madurese values.

**Keywords:** proverb, stylistics, foregrounding, violence stereotype, ethnic Madurese

### INTRODUCTION

Proverbs are short expression advice or something that is reasonably considered true or wise. It emerges as a product of practical experience of human relationship (Efawati, 2013, p. 13). Specifically, Mieder (2004, p. 3) defines proverbs as short sentences known to the public containing values of wisdom, truth, morals and traditional views in a metaphorical form, standardized, easy to remember and passed down from generation to generation. So, it can be said that proverbs are a form of oral tradition (folklore) that can represent the local wisdom of a community/ ethnic group.

The main element of proverbs is figurative language. With figurative language, proverbs will be more able to give aesthetic and emotive effects to the listeners. Figurative elements in proverbs include poetic means that get around the external structure, such as alliteration and parallelism as well as means that enhance rhetorical effects, such as metaphor, hyperbole, synecdoche and metonymy. Among

these elements, metaphor, is the most significant element because it conveys meaning *indirectly*, which is in line with the characteristics of proverbs as oral folklore whose main features are *indirectness* and *non-literality*. (Grzybek, 2014, p. 78). Thus, there is a semantic *foregrounding* effect that makes proverbs memorable.

Indonesia as a multi-ethnic country is rich with local proverbs. Each ethnic group has its own distinctive forms of proverbs. In Javanese society, for example, there are Javanese *paribasan*, in Malay ethnic society there are Malay proverbs, in Sundanese society there are Sundanese proverbs, in Madurese society there are Madura *ca'ocak'an*, and others. This article will specifically only examine proverbs in the Madurese ethnic community. Then, the proverbs in question are only focused on proverbs that have relations with violent stereotypes. Meanwhile, the perspective used is a stylistic perspective because it is expected that with this approach, the proverbs will be analyzed

the role of figurative language as the central element of proverbs in expressing meaning aesthetically/poetically can be understood.

Proverbs and stereotypes of violence in Madurese society are interesting to study because in practice proverbs that have moral messages about courage, defense of dignity, and truth are actually misused by some Madurese themselves to justify acts of violence or often known as *carok* which they do to solve problems.

In Madurese society, this proverbial term is known as *ca'-oca'an*, which literally means "speech". *Ca'-oca'an* is also thick with the use of figurative language styles, both playing with external structure and deviation of meaning. For example, the parallelism *ta' atane ta; atana'* (no farming, no rice cooking), simile *akanta bulan kaseyangan* (like the moon in the morning) and others. As a product of oral tradition, *ca'-oca'an* reflects a number of things, including values, character, behavior, appearance, the nature of work and work ethic, interactions with others, the physical environment and social environment as well as the worldview and life struggles of the Madurese tribe. (Rifai, 2007, h. 198).

So far, there have been a number of studies on Madurese proverbs from various perspectives. Among them are studies conducted by Rifai (2007), Efawati (2013), and Misnadin (2012). However, these studies did not specifically focus on studying Madurese proverbs associated with violent stereotypes. Rifai (2007) uses an anthropological sociological perspective in describing the Madurese's disposition, behaviors, work ethic, appearance, and outlook on life as portrayed in their language. Efawati (2013) emphasizes more on semantic studies while Misnadin (2012) tries to understand and reinterpret Madurese proverbs with various themes in order to revitalize the values contained therein. In fact, the study of the relationship between proverbs and violence is very important to

understand and respond proportionally to the phenomenon of violence committed by ethnic Madurese. Thus, the stereotypes that have been formed about Madurese being violent can be evaluated.

### Stylistics

It has been explained that the proverbs in this article are studied from the perspective of stylistics which is the science of language style. This discipline is a linguistic attempt to objectively analyze literary texts through the perspective and linguistic elements of the literary text. In its development, stylistics is also applied to analyze non-literary texts, both oral and written. (Wales, 2011, p. 401).

The main purpose of stylistic studies is to show how a text conveys its meaning by describing its formal elements, such as diction, sentence structure, etc. and explaining the functional impact of each element on the process of interpreting the meaning of the text (Wales, 2011, p. 400). These formal elements collectively form the *style* characteristics of a text. The more distinctive and effective the selection of elements, the more effectively the text conveys its meaning while creating an aesthetic effect on the audience. Therefore, the writer Jonathan Swift *style the proper words in proper places* (Crystal, 1987, p. 66).

One way to create an interesting *style* is by utilizing figurative language. Figurative language generally includes all forms of stylistic language that are different or unusual semantically or grammatically, for example involving patterns and sentence structure as well as idioms of meaning. (Wales, 2011, p. 161). Thus, figurative language refers to: (1) figures of speech involving deviation of meaning (*tropes*), such as **metaphor** (implicit comparison of an object or *tenor* with another object or *vehicle* that is perceived to be the same); **simile** (explicit comparison of two objects using words such as, *like, like*, etc.); **hyperbole** (an expression that exaggerates something); **synecdoche** (the linking of something that is part of something else); **metonymy** (the use of the word "metaphor" to describe something that is part of something else)

a word to express another object that has a relationship of proximity, cause and effect, etc.); etc. and (2) figure of speech that create phonological, morphological and syntactic sentence structure patterns (*schemes*), such as **alliteration** (repetition of the same consonant); **parallelism** (parallelism of grammatical functions of words); **assonance** (repetition of the same vowel); and other forms of repetition.

Utilization of language the use figurative language determines how a text expresses meaning differently (not cliché), which in stylistics is known as **de-familiarization**. The concept refers to the belief that when the *style* of a text is familiar, it is no longer interesting because there is nothing new or fresh in it (Norgaard et, al. 2010, h. 95). For this reason, unusual and more artistic elements are needed so that the audience will be interested in reading it. The power that attracts the audience is known as the concept of **foregrounding** or highlighting *style* elements, both in the form of **deviation** (deviation from grammatical or semantic linguistic norms such as the use of figurative meaning, etc.) and **repetition** (investigation of sound patterns, structures, diction, such as alliteration and parallelism) that deviate from standard language techniques. (Wales, 2011, h. 167).

## Methods

This article uses a descriptive qualitative approach because it tries to describe an object or phenomenon as it is (Sugiyono, 2010, h.59). The phenomenon is linguistic in the form of proverbs that are popular in Madurese society.

Since the number of Madurese proverbs is large, then in accordance with the scope of the problem, the data of this article are Madurese proverbs that have relevance to the stereotypes of violence in the Madurese tribe. The proverbs are obtained from two written sources, namely the Contemporary Madurese-Indonesian Dictionary by Muhri Mohtar (2010) and a book entitled Madurese Man by Mien Ahmad Rifai (2007).

Based on the type of data source, the data collection methods used is

*documentary method* with listening technique. According to Merriam (2009, h.86), The *documentary method* involves collecting data from written and other relevant materials, such as books, records, personal documents, visual and popular culture documents, and artifacts. Furthermore, according to Kesuma (2007, h. 43), The listening technique is a way of collecting data by categorizing written materials, both from document sources, books, newspapers, magazines, and others. The proverbs in the two data sources above were read, scrutinized and selected based on their meaning relevant to the theme of Madurese stereotypes of violence. The data that has been obtained is then classified based on the meaning theme and recorded in a table.

To analyze the data, the first step is to identify the type of figurative language style used and its elements. The next step is to identify the *foregrounding* aspects that become the stylistic characteristics of each proverb and describe the meaning built by these characteristics. After the description of the meaning is done, it is then connected to the stereotype of violence in Madurese ethnicity. At that stage, an interpretation is made about whether the message carried by the proverbs supports the stereotype of violence against Madurese ethnicity.

## THE MEANING OF MADURA PROVERBS AND STEREOTYPES OF VIOLENCE

Based on the data analysis conducted, it was found that in Madurese society there are five proverbs related to stereotypes of violence. The five proverbs were chosen because they have meanings that represent the Madurese cultural perspective on the form and meaning of violence itself. When classified, the five proverbs represent three categories of meanings that explain violence, namely: (1) physical violence; (2) violence in opinion; and (3) advice about violence. In table 1, the five Madurese proverbs are shown along with their respective lexical meanings.

Table 1. Madurese proverbs and their lexical meanings

No	Meaning Category	Proverbs and Lexical Meanings
1	Physical violence	<i>Etembhang pote mata ango'an pote tolang</i> (Instead of white eyes it is better to be bone white) <i>Lokana dhaghing bisa ejhai', lokana ate tada' tambhana kajhabhana ngero' dara</i> (The wound of the flesh can be stitched, the wound of the heart has no cure except drinking blood)
2	Hard in stand	<i>Kerras polana akerres</i> (Loud from chunching) <i>Pakoh ngenneng ka kajuh</i> (Nail driven into wood)
3	Advice on violence	<i>Mara ola' samennet</i> (Like a minute caterpillar)

Furthermore, each proverb will be studied with a stylistic approach through the description of its formal elements, such as diction, sentence structure and others as well as explaining the functional impact of these elements on the process of interpreting the meaning of proverbs related to Madurese ethnic violence stereotypes.

### Physical violence

A Madurese proverb that is strongly stereotyped with Madurese ethnic physical violence is *etembhang pote mata ango'an pote tolang*. In content, this proverb can be likened to the Malay proverb "It is better to die on the ground than to live reflecting on a carcass". However, the Malay proverb stylistically sounds "as is" because the words are not winged. Unlike the Madurese version, the metaphorical power is more prominent because the meaning is hidden behind the words *pote mata* and *pote tolang*. Thus, it can be said that from the aspect of *foregrounding*, this proverb clearly has a semantic deviation because the intended meaning is intensional (connotative) rather than actual (denotative). This is what makes it **de-familiar** than the Malay version of the proverbs.

Connotatively, *pote mata* or eye white here symbolizes a person's shame because he feels his self-esteem has been undermined. Considering that human dignity is highly upheld by Madurese people, any form of violation of this becomes something

that causes a feeling of deep shame (*malo*). This shame may arise from certain circumstances, such as a spouse's infidelity or issues related to debt. Feeling profoundly humiliated, a Madurese person becomes anxious about being mocked by those around them. This condition is metaphorically described as an eye without the black parts (the pupil and iris). Anatomically, the pupil and iris are parts of the eye that regulate the amount of light entering the eye to be processed by the lens and then transmitted to the brain's nerves. In other words, without these two parts, the human eye cannot function properly as a visual organ. Thus, the Madurese people use the analogy of a white eye to describe a state where a person cannot bear to look at or face anyone because their dignity has been deeply insulted.

If *pote mata* is more metaphorical because it compares the feeling of being humiliated with the whites of the eyes, then *pote tolang* or bone white is stylistically a form of metonymy. The visible color of human bones can be caused by a gaping wound that tears the flesh until the bone is visible. Such wounds are certainly caused by fighting or physical fights that may cause the parties involved to experience injuries to extreme conditions. Thus, "bone white" semantically has a causal relationship with fighting as the referent. In other words, this phrase represents the message that Madurese are not afraid of getting hurt let alone dying from fighting. As long as the fight is done manfully, it is more honorable than losing face due to bearing shame (*pote mata*).

In addition to semantic deviation, the foregrounding feature in this proverb is also characterized by repetition, namely the repetition of the word *pote*. This aspect of word repetition also makes this proverb stand out and unusual (just like the Malay proverbs above). Thus, the use of the means of deviation and repetition makes this proverb have maximum aesthetic effect so that the meaning expressed gets more attention.

The next proverb that can also give rise to negative perceptions about the hard character of Madurese is *lokana dhaghing bisa ejhai', lokana ate tada' tambhana kajhabhana ngero' dara*. The diction in this proverb does sound dramatic and hyperbolic so that it has the potential to be perceived as justifying the stereotype that Madurese are violent, violent or perhaps even barbaric. Stylistically, this proverb is a metaphor that explains how heartache is something so serious for Madurese that it is described that there is no cure other than *ngero' dara* (drinking blood) or fighting until one of the conflicting parties dies.

This proverb utilizes two combinations at once. Therefore, it needs to be divided into two clauses. The first clause *lokana dhaghing bisa ejhai'* or the wound of the flesh can be stitched is a combination of synecdoche and metonymy because the word flesh is a part/representation of the human body while stitching is one of the means or ways of treating wounds on the human body. Stylistically, this clause does not contain transference of meaning like metaphor. The meaning carried can still be understood without comparing with other entities.

On the other hand, the next clause *lokana ate tada' tambhana kajhabhana ngero' dara* is more metaphorical because the foregrounded aspect is semantic deviation. Clearly, there is a deviation of denotative meaning here. Although one of its elements can be categorized as an obsolete metaphor (*loka ate or luka hati*) just like the word hurt that is already common in everyday language, the phrase *ngero' dara* here is a very strong metaphor and cannot be interpreted literally that the cure for heartache for Madurese is to drink blood. However, the practice of drinking blood is a vehicle that transfers the meaning of the tenor element, which is to fight or at an extreme degree to kill the party that has degraded one's dignity. For ordinary people, of course, this proverb can be interpreted that Madurese people are cruel and barbaric because when killing up they drink the blood of their opponents.

In fact, this is not the case. The phrase *drinking blood* here is just a hyperbolic expression that illustrates how Madurese feelings are very sensitive so that if very disturbed and hurt, anything will be done by Madurese to take revenge.

Aside from the semantic deviation due to maximization, the foregrounding aspect of this proverb is also the repetition of the word *lokana* as the subject at the beginning of both clauses. Thus, the parallelism form of this proverb is very prominent. Moreover, the repeated word is *lokana* or wound. In other words, this proverb emphasizes the message that you should not play with your feelings, let alone hurt them.

### Violence in Opinion

The next proverb to be discussed has a different perspective in viewing violence. The proverb *kerras polana akerres* when interpreted literally will provide justification for the Madurese who are identical with sharp weapons. In fact, the intentional meaning is that the Madurese's hardness is necessary if he is right. A truth must be defended with courage and consistency. As with proverbs that are thick with *figures of thought*, this proverb features semantic deviation because the message cannot be understood based on the denotative meaning. The harshness in this proverb does not solely refer to the nature of violence especially by using sharp weapons (*keris*). *Keris* here must be understood as a representation of the principle of truth. The *kris*, which is physically a long and sharp notched iron, is a depiction of an ultimate truth. The absolute and indisputable truth is imaged as strong and sharp as a *keris*. This means that the courage of the Madurese is not blind courage but has a powerful basis or "weapon" which is the truth. The *kris* functions as a *vehicle* that carries the message of the *tenor* (truth). The word hard also does not mean violent but firm and consistent. So, whatever is considered true, Madurese will firmly and steadfastly defend it.

Structurally, the alliteration and assonance styles are very strong in this proverb because there is a repetition of consonant sounds *kerras polana akerres* dan vokal *kerras polana akerres*. Stylistically, the use of such a pattern greatly accentuates the unusualness of the (de-familiarisasi) language creates a strong poetic effect and the message becomes memorable.

In line with *kerras polana akerres*, peribahasa *pakoh ngenneng ka kajuh* clearly contains semantic deviation as its *foregrounding* element because it cannot be understood literally. This proverb suggests that the Madurese's firmness in holding beliefs and stances must be as solid as a nail that has been driven into the wood. Once stuck, the nail will not waver and come off. This is the case with the Madurese's stance and attitude. Thus, the consistency of speech and action must be as strong as a nail driven into a piece of wood.

The use of a comparator (*vehicle*) in this proverbial metaphor as an object of comparison for firmness of attitude also shows how Madurese preferences in using figurative means. Functionally, *nails* and *wood* are carpentry tools that are synonymous with manual labor. This means that the selection of the two objects as a comparison can indirectly illustrate the background of Madurese people who are no strangers to work as difficult/rough as anything.

In addition to the metaphorical aspect, the alliteration (repetition of consonants) /h/ on the *pakoh* and *kajuh* also makes these proverbs aesthetically pleasing and memorable. The result is a rhyming proverb that, when spoken, will make the meaning conveyed get more attention.

### Advice on Violence

The fifth proverb that is the focus of study in this article is *mara ola' samennet*. Due to the presence of the word *mara* (like), this proverb is a form of simile in which the *foregrounding* effect is a semantic deviation in the form of explicit comparison of two things: *ola' samennet* or a minute caterpillar with a person who has a temper. Compared to

the previous proverbs that contain metaphorical imagery, this proverb is more explicit. To know how a high-tempered person is characterized, just imagine how a caterpillar, when touched just a little, will wriggle its body. And if a human touches it, in a short time (here described as within a minute) the skin will immediately itch. This is how Madurese people liken someone who is easily angered or easily ignited. The slightest disturbance, it will immediately react like a caterpillar. In fact, it can also hurt the party that is considered to disturb or make him angry.

Of course, contextually, proverbs generally always function to teach wisdom and morals. In this case, the proverb *mara ola' samennet* tells us not to be like a caterpillar. Do not want to be compared to a small animal that is usually a crop pest. The use of an animal like a caterpillar as a vehicle also gives the effect of a negative meaning association whose purpose is social control: control your emotions if you don't want to be compared to a caterpillar. Thus, stylistically, this proverb uses deviation of meaning as its *foregrounding* feature.

### THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MADURA PROVERBS AND STEREOTYPES OF MADURA ETHNIC VIOLENCE

According to Wardhaugh & Fuller (2015, h. 418), A stereotype is a generalization about a group of people that all its members share the same personal characteristics. In other words, stereotypes include assumptions, judgments or external views of a group. So far, the stereotypes pinned on the Madurese tribe are mostly negative, causing misunderstandings among Madurese outsiders. The stereotype of the Madurese tribe has been formed since the Dutch colonialism era which was more intended to support the interests of colonial domination and hegemony. With these stereotypes, it is difficult for ethnicities in Indonesia to unite. Unfortunately, some of these stereotypes still persist today.

One of the negative stereotypes still identified with Madurese is violence, especially the culture of solving problems with *carok*. Generally, violence in the form of *carok* is carried out by Madurese because they highly uphold their dignity/self-respect and good name. When their dignity is denigrated or harassed by others, then at a certain level Madurese will feel humiliated and insulted which is culturally known as the concept of *malo* or *malu*. As a result, for conservative Madurese, there is no fairer way than to fight *carok*. In line with the concept of folklore, according to Rifai (2007, h. 204), One of the striking characteristics of Madurese people for outsiders is their attitude and behavior that seems *gherra* or stiff and rough, which is believed to be one of the causes due to the influence of the natural conditions of Madura Island which is arid and barren. This character has the potential to survive, especially in rural communities that are still conservative and have an inadequate level of education. Because the Madurese are *gherra* (rigid and rough) and *bangalan* (brave), if not controlled properly, negative traits and behaviors of the Madurese will emerge, such as being easily offended, getting angry and fighting. (Rifai, 2007, h. 280).

In fact, for people outside Madura who have interacted and lived with Madurese people, although they admit that Madurese people are basically “hard”, Madurese people can also be polite, polite, respect people and uphold brotherhood (Wiyata, 2012). Although the practice of violence in Madura needs to be viewed objectively and not generalized, the occurrence of cases of violence and murder involving ethnic Madurese such as ethnic conflicts in Kalimantan to small-scale cases that have recently occurred seems to justify the perception of Madurese who are easily emotional, violent and cruel.

Is it true that Madurese people are violent? If we refer to the analysis of the five proverbs above, it cannot necessarily be answered in black and white. First, acts of violence such as *carok* committed by Madurese are not without cause. There must be a very strong reason that makes Madurese

use violence to solve problems. And, the most basic reason is self-esteem so that it is related to the concept of *malo* or shame that is strongly believed by the Madurese community. When self-esteem is violated, for example when his wife is taken by another man, Madurese people feel that it tarnishes his dignity as a man. He will feel *malo* or hurt to the point of not being able to meet anyone face to face (*pote mata*) before he shows an effort to defend his dignity and masculinity.

As described in the theoretical basis, Madurese people believe that self-esteem or good name is something that must be maintained and can be seen from a Madurese folk expression “*nyama se sae paneka kodu esare ghu-ongghu, kodu eparlowaghi panyareepon, lebbiyaghi parlo than panyareepon kasoghiyan*” which means that good name (self-esteem) must be pursued seriously, more than property. (Imron, 2012). Thus, the concept of self-esteem has been internalized in Madurese thinking. However, reactions to self-esteem abuse certainly cannot be generalized. Especially if it is associated with the message of the proverb *mara ola' samennet*. For people with a high temperament, the reaction can be excessive to the point of committing murder. Especially in rural communities where the outlook on life is still conservative and the level of education is low, there is no fairest way to defend the abused self-esteem other than *ngero' dara* (fighting). However, not all Madurese are temperamental. Especially in urban communities that have come into contact with the modernization of lifestyles and mindsets, they will certainly choose to react based on rules, for example through legal channels.

Thus, the violence that occurs in Madurese society must be based on a strong cause, especially because of self-esteem abuse, such as defamation due to

infidelity, verbal slander, property struggles, debts, etc., which are casuistic in nature and cannot be considered that Madurese culture legitimizes acts of violence blindly.

Secondly, hard character in Madurese culture cannot always be identified as physical violence, let alone *carok*. Violent behavior that refers to the attitude of facing everything with full emotion and ignoring reason and ethics is certainly very contrary to the message of *mara ola' samennet*. However, what is more appropriate is violence in the sense of firmness and consistency in the defense of truth values as shown by the proverbs *kerras polana akerres and pakoh ngenneng ka kajuh*. These two proverbs show how the values of truth and consistency are highly upheld in Madurese culture. Madurese people will steadfastly defend something they believe to be right and to a certain extent anything will be done to defend it. If necessary, hard behavior is shown but of course it must be crusty (*akerres*), meaning that it must have a clear reason and basis. When someone does not have a logical basis that legitimizes his hard behavior, then the action is blameworthy. And when the belief has been chosen, the Madurese will firmly hold it, as firmly as a nail stuck in a piece of wood.

In another context, the reflection of Madurese assertiveness is also reflected through the choice of colors. As is commonly seen, the typical colors preferred in Madurese society are assertive colors such as *mera* (red), *celleng* (black), *bhiru* (green) or *koneng* (yellow) while almost never Madurese choose "soft" or less assertive colors which even if forced, are usually chosen only as additional accessories (Wiyata, 2012).

## CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussion above, some conclusions can be drawn about the meaning of Madurese proverbs and their relationship with Madurese ethnic violence stereotypes. First, Madurese proverbs are thick with figurative elements, both in the form of meaning deviation such as metaphor, simile, metonymy, synecdoche and

hyperbole as well as structural manipulation such as alliteration and parallelism. In addition, of the five proverbs analyzed, the first four proverbs use the means of semantic deviation and parallelism or structural repetition to bring out the foregrounding aspect while the fifth proverb only uses the means of semantic deviation. The figurative language elements of the first and second proverbs express the meaning of the importance of maintaining self-esteem which once harassed must be defended vigorously and if crucial at the cost of one's life. The figurative language elements of the third and fourth proverbs highlight the meaning that violence does not necessarily refer to physical violence but firmness and consistency in fighting for the truth and values believed. While the figurative language element of the fifth proverb highlights the meaning that temperamental or emotional disposition is something that should be avoided.

Second, the violent stereotype attached to Madurese ethnicity is not entirely appropriate because the violence that occurs in Madurese society is always based on strong reasons and reasons, especially for defending one's self-esteem or dignity. Hard stereotypes also cannot be interpreted solely as physical violence or fights but as a form of assertiveness and consistency in making choices and defending and fighting for what is already believed to be the truth. The harsh stereotype addressed to the Madurese cannot be generalized to all members of the Madurese community let alone attached to Madurese culture because based on the fifth proverb, being easily emotional and offended in Madurese culture is also an attitude that should be avoided.

In closing, we urge the general public to be wiser and more proportional in judging a community group. Do not let the community group be judged by stereotypes that do not necessarily represent the exact situation of the group. Positive and negative behaviors must always exist in every community group, whatever and wherever. Due to space and time constraints, this article



suggests the need for a more in-depth study of the figurative language of Madurese proverbs by using a larger sample of proverbs. It could also consider other forms of Madurese proverbs.

In addition, it is also necessary to identify its relationship with other Madurese ethnic stereotypes, both positive and negative. Thus, a more complete picture of Madurese cultural values will be obtained.

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