

Nature and social attitude in folklore entitled *timun mas*: Ecocritical study

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Abstract - This research traces the relationship between character's existence, ecological insight, and cultural values in folklore. Whether it is recognized or not, in Indonesia, folklore has the power to explore nature. To achieve that goal, this research approach is qualitative that is supported by content analysis method. The source of research data is *Timun Mas* folklore. The study of literary perspective (environment) in eco-criticism can construct the wisdom of the environment itself and the study of environmental literature perspective, can be focused on ethical studies (1) respect for nature, (2) responsibility for nature, (3) solidarity towards nature, (4) affection and care for nature, and (5) attitudes not to disturb the natural life displayed in literary works. Through this study, there are several findings obtained that are water environment pollution, habitat destruction, and management of nature or the environment.

Keywords: ecological insight, eco-criticism, folklore, literary studies

1. Introduction

Environmental cases have become important issues in the community in the past decades. Various political, economic, social, and cultural policies are driven by actions based on environmental insights. That is no different from the practice of criticism in the humanities. In terminology, eco-criticism can study and explore ecological problems in a broad sense. It has a function of representation of attitudes, views, and responses to natural conditions. Derived from these thoughts, eco-criticism departs from the relationship of social attitudes to nature. Attitudes, views, and human responses to natural conditions. So that all ecological problem solving is done with a certain perspective.

A number of previous studies have shown that how urgent it is to study literary works from an ecocritical point of view. In eco-criticism, nature is something that must be saved. How nature, especially the Earth is exploited. Related to environmental issues today, this is very important to study. Environmental issues have actually been alluded to in folklore in Indonesia. Therefore, the folklore becomes the source of data in this study. The folklore studied is *Timun Mas*.

The reason for the importance of folklore needs to be examined because of the fact that the studies of eco-critics have rarely been directed at concepts of myth, legend, folklore, and stories of ancestral heritage. This is proved by the studies that have been carried out by researchers so far.

Some of the researches that have been done relating to ecofeminism is the study from Tri Marhaeni in his paper entitled *Ecofeminism and the Role of Women in the Environment* (Astuti, 2012). She explains that the environmental conservation that requires the understanding of mindset from local people. In this case, eco-critics tries to make a breakthrough in justice for the nature by an analogy with society that the nature is always entrusted as a woman. Therefore, an eco-criticism study will understand the mindset of eco-phenists in ecofeminism that is friendly to nature, empathy for nature, develops equality and justice for a nature without exploitation and harms to the nature. There are some writers who make short stories as the sources of research data, namely, Anas Ahmadi entitled *Femininity, Ecofeminism, and Indonesian short story*, alluding to women as manifestations in the form of environmentalists. Manifestations of female femininity and environmental management are shown through short stories (Anas Ahmadi, 2018). Then, Safrudin in his paper entitled *Ecocritical Study of Literature in Short Story of Tiger Belang by Guntur Alam in the Short Story Collection of Kompas 2014, Karma and other Stories*, discusses Literary ecocritical study that is found in natural ecological elements where the author links literature in conservation efforts and nature as a source of life (Atfalusoleh, 2016).

Farida in her paper does not mention eco-critics in folklore. Her paper was about *Criticism Ecology of Women's Poetry in the Slopes of Mount Slope Ika Permata Hati in the Anthology of Women's Poetry in Ujung Senja*. She discusses in terms of the struggle of a woman in preserving nature (Farida, 2017). While Hu Chunyan, analyzes poetry and produces a hypothesis that women must have an ecological awareness to protect the environment and their rights (Hu Chunyan, 2018).

Besides, folklore has not been much studied through ecocritics. Some of the studies that have been carried out include research conducted by Yosi Wulandari entitled *Ecological Wisdom in Legend "Bujang Sembilan" (Asal usul Danau Maninjau)*. It discusses local wisdom by linking natural elements with the moral and

socio-cultural of the people in Minangkabau (Wulandari, 2017). Then, Fitra Youpika and Darmiyati Zuchdi in their research discusses the value of Character Education of the Pasemah Bengkulu Folklore Character and its Relevance as Literature Learning Material, examines the value of character education in folklore, there are nine characters found in the study (Youpika & Zuchdi, 2017). In addition, based on Ninuk Lustyantie's research entitled *Morality in Cultural Elements in Fairytale and Its Implication in Learning French as Foreign Language*, the study discusses the moral values of cultural elements and their implications in learning French through folklore or fairy tales (Lustyantie, 2015). Likewise, Rosmawati Harahap also does not associate ecological values in her research. His research entitled *Foklor Putri Hijau from the Deli Malay Region of North Sumatra* discusses the historical facts of the Deli Malay Kingdom which has mythological and legendary characters based on the *Putri Hijau* story (Harahap, 2018).

In short, the echo-critical study of folklore is still limited. That is why this research is expected to provide a relevant research model in echocritics of folklore. The reason for choosing Timun Mas's folklore geographically is that in Central Java there are a lot of natural damages that are gradually happening. Therefore, the wider community must be reminded to pay more attention to the nature. Considering the natural condition of Central Java which is currently increasingly alarming due to excessive exploitation of nature, it is necessary to have environmental ethics education early. It is hoped that through targeted education on this subject, the community will realize the importance of nature conservation.

In folklore, the work was born from a reflection of the life values of a society. This makes the relationship between literature and society affect each other so that, folklore becomes a means to change the conditions of society. The values of folklore usually permeate the subconscious parts of readers, especially children. Through folklore, it is expected to be able to become a means of inculcating positive values and characters, and to elevate children's critical and imaginative ways of thinking. Literature teaching is done with the aim that students can obtain the meaning offered by the author as a producer of literary works. The meaning taken will be used in real life as part of guidelines in life (Emzir dan Saifur Rohman, 2015, p. 223). The story does not only play a role in instilling the foundation of noble character, but also it has a stake in the formation of good character from early age (Noor, 2011). One effort that can be done is by selecting appropriate teaching materials related to this. Through learning to read, reading is an activity of information absorption of text that can be in print or other media. Reading is one of language skills that need attention because it supports other language skills (Erawati, 2018). Teaching material that can be used is folklore. In this case reading folklore, children are trained to increase their empathy and sensitivity by emulating the moral messages in each character and story content.

According to Rahman (1987: 75) nature is a developing and dynamic order, which is a part of God's behavior and makes it as a process of human activity that has aims. Then nature or the environment is interpreted as objects, conditions, conditions and influences contained in the space we occupy and affect living things including human life. The same thing is stated by Danusaputro (in Siahaan, 2004: 4) that states nature is all things and conditions including human beings and their actions, which are in the space in which humans affect the survival and welfare of others. Based on these explanations, it can be concluded that nature is the space and time in which living things exist and influence each other.

Then, Atkinson et al, as quoted by Taufiq (2008: 371), explained attitudes include likes and dislikes; approach or avoid situations, objects, people, groups; and other recognizable environmental aspects, including abstract ideas and social policy. Then Thomas and Ahmadi argued that attitude as an individual consciousness determines the actual or possible actions in social activities (Ahmadi, 2007: 149). Then he also mentions that social attitudes are individual consciousness that determines real and repetitive actions towards social objects (Ahmadi, 2007: 152). So, social attitudes are acts or a strict attitude of a person or group in the family or community (Sudarsono, 1997: 216). So, social attitudes can be defined as real actions and are done in a state of like or dislike by individuals towards social objects in the environment.

According to Hasanuddin (2003: 555), legend is taken from the English term, legend, which is a story that contains characters, events, or certain places that mix historical facts with myths. According to Emeis (in Djamaris, 1990: 98), legend is a part of folklore that is considered to have happened, it happened in the past, sometimes it is based on history and imagination. Then, according to Sugiarto (2009: 9), fairy tales are stories that are based on the imagination or someone's imagination who is then told from generation to generation.

This research also utilizes theories developed by Greg Garrard, especially from ideas developed in a book called *Ecocriticism* (Garred, 2004).

The ecocritic wants to track environmental ideas and representations, wherever they appear, to see more clearly a debate which seems to be taking place, often part-concealed, in a great many cultural spaces. Most of all, ecocriticism seeks to evaluate texts and ideas in terms of their coherence and usefulness as responses to environmental crisis (Garred, 2004: 4).

Then, According to Glotfelty and Fromm (in Sudikan, 2016: 9), that have the idea of ecocriticism intending to apply the concept of ecology into literature. The approach taken is to make the earth (nature) as the center of its studies. Then, Ecocritics has a basic paradigm that each object can be seen in an ecological network, and ecology can be used as a science in the approach (Harsono, 2008). In general, environmental discourse is not just asking what the theme of literature related to the environment, but how the environment becomes the soul of storytelling.

A literary work is not only seen part by part but as a whole. Garrard sees ecocriticism as follows:

Widest definition of the subject of ecocriticism is the study of relationship of the human and the non-human, throughout human cultural history and entailing critical analysis of the term human itself (Garred, 2004).

It can be concluded that it is a study that seeks the relationship between humans and nonhuman things like the environment in which he lives. Garrard also explains the problems that arise in the relationship between human activities, animals, plants, and the earth itself. At the end of the conclusion, he writes that this is a study that brings *great-souled vision with its feet planted solidly on the ground* (Garred, 2004).

Garrard's weakness is that the explanation of the methodology that must be done to conduct a research. As at the beginning of his monograph research, he explains it as a study. It is a must that Garrard also provides an operational framework for

conducting ecocritical development research. That idea can be specified that ecocritics will refer to. (1) Structure of the story, (2) story theme, (3) the relevance of the theme to the concept of environment. These three aspects are used as a handle to analyze the two objects of study.

2. Method

The data sources of this research are Kalimantan Folklore and Papua. From the folklore data was obtained through descriptive qualitative method. The data analysis was done by means of data analysis techniques, namely, (1) comparison of data, they are activities carried out by comparing verbal, either in the form of words, phrases, or a sentence; (2) categorization, that is activities carried out by grouping data in accordance with certain characteristics possessed; (3) presentation of data, that is a technique in narrative presentation; (4) data inference which means concluding, and comparing data found in folklore with supporting ecocritical data.

3. Results and Discussion

Folk story of Timun Mas tells the story of the struggle of a young woman named Timun Emas to free herself from the giant cannibal. This story takes the setting of Central Java Province and raises the main character Mbok Rondo. The term "mbok" is an abbreviation of "simbok" which means an old woman. Meanwhile, "rondo" is a "widow of a woman". An old widow is said to wish a daughter in the middle of the forest after leaving the market.

The wish was pronounced until the giant heard. The giant promised to give a daughter. Of course, Mbok Rondo is happy. However, the gift contains terms and conditions. The condition is that Mbok Rondo gives the golden cucumber to the giant after it is 16 years old. These requirements were fulfilled by Mbok Rondo. Then the Giant gave cucumber seeds to be planted in the back garden. Mbok Rondo obeyed. Cucumber seeds produced large cucumbers so they could be sold to a market.

Then, there was the biggest golden yellow cucumber. That's where she found a baby girl. Since then, Mbok Rondo had been caring for her until she grew up. Until 16 years later, the giant came to ask the promise, but Mbok Rondo tried to buy time. He said that Timun Emas was still small so it needed at least two years to grow big and could be eaten. The giant understood and agreed.

Before time ended, she looked for ways to resolve the problem. In her prayer, she got a whisper to meet an ascetic. The whisper led him to an ascetic and there she found cucumber seeds, needles, salt and shrimp paste. That could be used as a defence when the giant came. Finally, the giant came. Mbok Rondo said that Timun Emas had run through the back door. Then, the giant chased him. However, Timun Emas lost her speed. When the giant got closer, Timun Emas also spread the cucumber seeds. Instantly cucumber seeds turn into dense cucumber plants so that the giant fall asleep with cucumber fruits. After the ate cucumber and was full, the giant still chased her. Timun Mas also spread needles and then immediately they became a bamboo forest. The giant was injured, but he still managed to save himself and was getting closer to the Gold Cucumber. When about to be caught, Timun Emas spread salt and immediately it became a lake. The giant struggled to save himself from the lake and he arrived at the edge of the river. Finally, the shrimp paste was then spread in front of the

giant. The shrimp paste then turned into hot mud which sucked up the giant. Since then the giant burried in the mud. Timun Mas and Mbok Rondo finally lived happily ever after.

If it is seen from the setting of the story, Timun Mas Story uses the forest as Mbok Rondo's house. In the forest, Mbok Rondo can find wood and sell it to the market. The forest is a buffer of life. There is fertile soil, adequate trees and fruits. In other words, the setting means that the forest is the source of life for the character. Besides as a source of life, forests are a source of hope and threat. The giant is a symbol of threat while firewood is a symbol of hope.

In an effort to move the plot, Mbok Rondo who has a motivation to have a child must also be related to the environment. It can be seen from the quotation below.

*Kemudian Raksasa itu memberi biji mentimun kepada Mbok Rondo.
"Tanamlah biji mentimun ini di halaman belakang rumahmu. Kau harus rajin merawatnya, sirami setiap hari," kata si raksasa.
"Baik! Akan kulaksanakan."
"Jangan lupa janjimu."
"Jangan khawatir, aku adalah manusia yang bisa memegang janji."
Mbok Rondo segera pulang dan menanam biji mentimun di halaman belakang (Ikranegara, 2017: 10).*

Then the giant gave a cucumber seed to Mbok Rondo.

"Plant these cucumber seeds in your backyard. You have to be diligent in taking care of it, water it every day", said the giant.

"OK! I will do it"

"Don't forget about your promise"

"Don't worry, I'm a human who can keep promises"

Mbok Rondo immediately went home and planted cucumber seeds in the backyard.

The quote has the setting of a meeting between Mbok Rondo and the giant. The giant can give a child to Mbok Rondo who really wants a daughter. The motivation of Mbok Rondo is that to move the storyline towards an agreement between her and the giant. The flow of the story is still about the environmental motives, that is planting cucumber seeds. In other words, cucumber seeds are an important part of the story line as the cucumber will deliver a baby which is then called the Golden Cucumber. The baby was born from a large cucumber seed.

These events provide important clues about the relationship between humans and nature. When the Golden Cucumber was born from a cucumber, it means that human beings are actually very close to nature. Humans are born by nature. This is relevant to the ideas that have been developed by Fritjof Capra on a holistic approach to humanitarian problems faced by human beings. As human beings are from nature, human beings must take care of nature and must not destroy it. Capra believes, "The higher the technology, the greater the damage."

The tension between Mbok Rondo and the giant occur because of different motives; Mbok Rondo wants to save her child while the giant wants to eat her child. If it refers to the agreement that has been agreed by Mbok Rondo and the giant, then Mbok Rondo should give Timun Mas to the giant. At that time Mbok Rondo had agreed to

give Timun Mas after she was 16 years old. But after being given a child and she was 16 years old, Mbok Rondo tried to postpone two years. It is seen from the quote below.

“Bagaimana Mbok Rondo? Kau siap menyerahkan anakmu?”, tanya Raksasa.
“Aku tahu kedatanganmu kemari untuk mengambil Timun Emas. Berilah aku waktu dua tahun lagi. Kalau Timun Emas kuberikan sekarang, tentu kurang lezat untuk disantap. Tubuhnya masih kecil”.
“Apakah dia masih kecil?”
“Benar, dia masih kecil dan tidak enak untuk dimakan”.
“Benar juga kau Mbok Rondo!”, sahut raksasa.
“Ya sebaiknya kau kemari dua tahun lagi. Dua tahun lagi pasti tubuhnya sudah besar”.
“Baiklah, dua tahun lagi aku akan datang. Kalau bohong, kamu akan kutelan mentah-mentah”, ancam raksasa itu (Ikranegara, 2017: 14).

"What about your promise, Mbok Rondo? Are you ready to hand over your daughter?", asked the giant.

"I know that you came here to pick up Timun Emas. Give me time, two more years. If I give her to you now, she is certainly not tasty to eat. Her body is still too small".

"Is she still small?"

"Right, she is still small and not tasty to eat".

"It's true, that you are right, Mbok Rondo!", said the giant.

"Yes, you'd better come here in two years. Two more years her body must be big enough".

"Alright, I'll be back in two years. If you lie, I will swallow you raw," threatened the giant.

The giant is described as a stupid creature because he agrees to be given the promise that "the gold cucumber can be eaten after two years. What happens after two years later? Mbok Rondo was looking for a way not to fulfill her promise, that was, she intended to refuse to give Timun Emas to the Giant. Then, she asked for a help from other human beings so that her child could be owned.

On the other hand, Mbok Rondo intends to save her descendants from extinction. she betrayed the agreement that was agreed with the Giant. Mbok Rondo's betrayal was carried out because she already loved her daughter. She did not want to let her child go and found a way so that the child was not eaten by giants. With the help of an ascetic, then Timun Emas was given the following provisions:

- (a). Cucumber seeds that form a dense cucumber garden.
- (b). Needles that incarnate bamboo gardens that obstruct giant.
- (c). Salt that incarnates the lake so that the giant sinks.
- (d). Shrimp paste that incarnates hot mud.

From these metaphors, shrimp paste is the most powerful weapon because it can kill the giant. When the giant faced a cucumber garden, the giant ate the cucumbers. When he was in a bamboo tree, he was injured. However, the giant could chase Timun Mas. There is also a lake that can drown anything, but the giant can still go to the edge. This is a metaphor of an antagonist who tries to oppose the environment. Timun Emas is a metaphor of a human being who strives to sustain life by depending on nature. The

weapons used by Timun Mas are natural elements which are also the parts of the giant.

The giant really does not stand as a mere antagonist. It was obtained by an indicator about his awareness of nature. The case that the giant gives a cucumber seed to Mbok Rondo is a form of environmental awareness that must be sustainable. The giant is aware of the importance of preserving nature. His needs are eating nature and humans.

After seeing the character's traits, the following can be explained. In general, the characters of Mbok Rondo are as follows:

- Having a high desire
- Breaking a promise
- Protecting herself from broken promises.

Meanwhile, the giant character can be explained the following:

- A creature that makes an appointment
- A creature that eats everything include plants, animals and humans
- A creature that dies due to his own greed after being trapped in hot mud.

These two characters are very prominent in this story. The properties of both provide a description of identity, groups, activities, to the characters who appear as symbols. Therefore, let's not look at these characters literally. The picture of a human being is not always considered as a human and the picture of a giant does not always have to be regarded as a giant. How to treat these two characters? The most likely thing is to look at the characteristics of both explicitly then interpret into everyday life. To get a comprehensive picture, at the end of the story, the following events are presented:

"Syukurlah anakku, ternyata Tuhan masih melindungimu," kata Mbok Rondo setelah keduanya saling mendekat.

"Ini semua berkat pertolongan ibu. Ketiga bungkus pemberian ibu telah menghalangi niat jahat raksasa. Terakhir dia tenggelam dalam danau lumpur. Mereka berpelukan cengan rasa haru dan bahagia (Ikranegara, 2017: 28).

"Thank God, O my daughter it turns out that God is still protecting you," said Mbok Rondo after the two of them approached each other.

"This is all thanks to your help, mommy. All three packages given by the mother have obstructed the giant evil intentions. Finally, the giant sank into a mud lake. They embraced each other with a sense of emotion and happiness.

At the end of the story, the writer's affirmation shows that the giant is the one who has bad intentions. Collecting promises is not a malicious intention. It is the giant who has bad intentions as he wants to eat humans. Timun Emas and Mbok Rondo as symbols of reasoning give meaning to the effort to circumvent, avoid, solving problems, and making plans for the preservation of their own lives. The writer kills the giant and makes Mbok Rondo and Timun Emas live happily.

This story cannot be read literally because morally Mbok Rondo still has some mistakes for breaking promises. The giant comes to collect the promise. The dangerous giant ensnares the other party to keep humans for food. The giant tries to ask for a help from others. The assistance provided contains terms and conditions.

When it is reflected in human life, the giant's characteristics are also owned by human beings today. The giant eats anything from the environment and humans. It is the same with humans who also eat everything. Humans beings do not eat human beings, but employ and make human beings able to enrich themselves with the power of others. The term "homo homini lupus" is a description of the gluttony of human beings who trick other humans into their own wealth.

Human beings are giants who make various terms and conditions when doing something. In daily life, the terms and conditions generally apply through economic transactions. There is no offer that does not include terms and conditions. The description of humanity in the story only symbolizes fidelity, greed, cunning, and various ways of finding solutions to problems.

4. Conclusion

After conducting a study of Timun Mas folklore, it can be concluded that there are findings about the narrativeecological reflection on the destruction of the following ecosystem:

- (a). Environmental pollution;
- (b). Destruction of habitat;
- (c). Nature management.

Folklore that is spread throughout the country has an ecological view that is very relevant to environmental preservation. These facts provide important recommendations that attitudes towards the environment must be aligned with attitudes towards the interests of individuals and groups. Human beings have a moral responsibility not only to themselves, but also to others and to the environment. Moral responsibility is a necessity in human actions today and later.

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