

Ecological Wisdom In Aceh Banta Barensyah Folklore

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Abstract. Folklore serves as an effective medium to instill life values in a community. Folklore often encapsulates messages that can serve as role models or lessons for readers, with a particular focus on ecological values in this article. This study uses qualitative methods and ecocritical approaches to analyze the ecological values that exist in the folklore of Banta Barensyah. The findings revealed that Banta Barensyah conveyed a strong message about the importance of preserving natural resources and maintaining ecosystem balance in social life. The narrative combines elements closely related to nature and the environment, such as water, wind, bamboo, rice, eagles, taro leaves, different types of vegetation, gold, huts, rain, fish, weeds, villages, shells, seas, beaches, natural landscapes, silver, islands, oceans, husks, soil, and weaving. This research shows that the ecological values contained in the Aceh folklore of Banta Barensyah can serve as valuable additional teaching materials to improve literary education in schools.

Keywords: Aceh; Banta Barensyah; Ecological Wisdom; Folklore

1 Introduction

Folklore is an integral part of cultural heritage that not only serves as a form of entertainment but also as a medium of moral and social education in society. One of the most famous Acehnese folklore is the story of Banta Barensyah. Like many folklore, Banta Barensyah contains important values that can be a guideline for life.

In this story, two main values stand out: ecological wisdom and religious values. The focus of this analysis is on the ecological wisdom presented in the story. The goal is to identify and understand how story elements reflect the harmonious relationship between humans and the environment, and how they can guide communities in building ecological awareness.

Ecological wisdom is a concept that embodies a thoughtful understanding and attitude towards the environment, rooted in local knowledge and experience. In the context of Aceh folklore, Banta Barensyah, the importance of preserving nature and utilizing natural resources wisely. Local knowledge, including that conveyed through folklore, plays an important role in supporting the sustainable management of natural resources (Turner and Berkes, 2006; Zheng, S., Han, B., Wang, D., Ouyang, Z., 2018; and Muda, R.F., Lieberknecht, K., 2019).

Previous research by Samsuddin has shown that folklore often reflects human relationships with nature, animals, and plants, which are passed down from generation to generation in various forms of people's lives (Samsudin, 2020). Endraswara (2016) also highlights that ecological literature, including folklore, contains messages that are closely related to environmental issues.

The values of ecological wisdom in Acehese folklore can be identified through the character's interaction with his environment and other living things.

In the story of *Banta Barensyah*, the main character treats the environment with respect. This illustrates that the people of Aceh have long integrated ecological wisdom into their cultural narratives. These values include sustainable environmental management practices, such as the wise use of natural resources, respect for animals and plants, and the preservation of forests and water resources.

The relevance of this ecological policy is even more significant given the current global environmental challenges, including climate change and ecosystem degradation. Keraf (2010) stated that ecological wisdom promotes important values such as respect for nature, responsibility, compassion, care for the environment, and simple living in harmony with nature. This perspective highlights the importance of the values contained in *Banta Barensyah* as an ethical guideline to maintain the sustainability of the ecosystem.

Research has shown that ecological wisdom exists in folklore in a variety of cultural contexts. One study highlighted that Panglima Laot, part of Acehese folklore, reflects ecological values through the application of customary laws that respect nature. The law regulates fishing activities by imposing special restrictions and encouraging sustainable practices, aiming to maintain the sustainability of marine and coastal environments. Thus, Panglima Laot not only functions as a cultural figure but also symbolizes natural resource management based on local wisdom that supports ecosystem preservation (Mujiburrahman, et al., 2021).

Further studies have revealed ecological values in Acehese folklore that are reflected in various aspects of culture. For example, Gumarpi et al. (2023) found that the fauna lexicon in Acehese proverbs reveals the mutual relationship between humans and nature. This saying emphasizes the importance of preserving cultural wisdom, which connects the younger generation with their environmental heritage while strengthening their awareness of ecosystem sustainability.

Some studies may not directly address ecological values in Acehese folklore, but they do focus on other aspects of local wisdom. Junaidi et al. (2023) highlight how folklore from Pidie and Pidie Jaya districts reflects values related to ethics, aesthetics, religion, and social inclusion, which are essential for fostering community harmony. Meanwhile, research by Masithah et al. (2022) emphasizes the importance of preserving folklore in Bireuen and North Aceh Regencies as a means of character formation rooted in local wisdom. These findings suggest that Acehese folklore not only serves as cultural heritage but also reinforces local values, including ecological awareness, social ethics, and character development. In essence, Acehese folklore is relevant to various aspects of people's lives.

Previous research has shown that ecological wisdom in Acehese folklore is an interesting topic to analyze, especially given Aceh's rich natural and cultural resources, which inspire the preservation of local cultural identity and beliefs. Research by Aswita et al. (2018) revealed that ecological values in Acehese folklore are expressed through local wisdom and customary regulations. These regulations guide interactions with nature, promote environmental conservation, and encourage sustainable practices, thus creating a balance between human needs and ecological sustainability. In addition, these values can support the development of culture and environment-based tourism.

In conclusion, Acehese folklore not only functions as entertainment but also as a medium of education, environmental conservation, intergenerational cultural relations, and increased

ecological awareness. This research aims to explore the values of ecological wisdom in the folklore of Banta Barensyah, driven by the ecological relevance contained in these stories, which serves as a foundation to further understand the potential of folklore in preserving cultural and environmental values.

2 Research Methods

This study uses a qualitative approach to analyze the ecological wisdom contained in the Acehese folklore, Banta Barensyah. According to Bogdan and Taylor (1975), qualitative research is defined as a type of research that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from individuals and observable behaviors. This approach was chosen because of its capacity to explore the meaning and context of the story thoroughly. The story of Banta Barensyah was chosen based on the study of various Acehese folklore, as it stands out for its popularity and its continued relevance to contemporary audiences.

The primary data source for this study is secondary data, consisting of the text of the Banta Barensyah folklore text, published by the Cultural Media Development Project of the Directorate General of Culture, Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia in 1976. This story analysis uses an in-depth textual approach, which includes: (1) examining the intrinsic elements of the story, such as themes, plot, characterizations, settings, and points of view; (2) identify symbols and metaphors related to nature and the environment; and (3) explore the values of ecological wisdom that exist in the narrative.

Data analysis was carried out using descriptive techniques with an interactive analysis model. The theoretical framework of this research is based on the concept of ecological wisdom developed by Greg Garrard (2004). The analysis process involves three main stages: (a) data reduction to filter and summarize relevant information; (b) the presentation of data in a systematic format to facilitate interpretation; and (c) draw conclusions based on the findings of the analysis.

3 Results and Analysis

The Acehese folklore "Banta Barensyah" embodies ecological wisdom that reflects the Acehese people's perspective on life, emphasizing the wise use of natural resources, living in harmony with nature, and viewing nature as a spiritual tool. A key concept of this story is respect for nature, which affirms that humans have a moral obligation to respect the universe and all of its contents. This understanding highlights that humans are an integral part of nature, which has an intrinsic value that deserves respect. The application of this concept is evident in how humans use natural resources wisely, thus maintaining a balance between their needs and the sustainability of the ecosystem.

3.1 Wise Use of Natural Resources

The narrative "Banta Barensyah" follows a boy and his widowed mother as they transition into adulthood. Their daily lives involve mashing and sticking rice at the house of Banta's wealthy uncle, Jakub. This story not only captures the social aspects of Acehese life but also conveys ethical values related to respect for nature and the harmonious relationship between humans and their environment.

(Data 1) *"To survive, the mother and child put the chaff in a rice mill belonging to her brother Jacob."* (p. 1)

The husks that are harvested in the rice mill are an example of the wise use of natural resources. This process highlights the handling of agricultural products (rice) in an environmentally friendly way, as it separates the husks from the rice, which supports their living needs. The practice describes the principles of responsible management, where humans use nature to meet their basic needs while maintaining sustainability. The daily activities of mothers and children show how ecological wisdom is woven into the lives of agricultural communities that rely on nature for survival while ensuring harmony with it. It illustrates how, despite living with limitations, mothers and children effectively use natural resources in ways that sustain their lives and reflect local cultural values that respect and protect nature.

3.2 Simple and Sustainable Use of Natural Resources

From an ecological policy perspective, the following statement describes a straightforward yet profound interaction between humans and the environment. Bamboo huts with thatched roofs and dry leaves realize the use of available natural materials that are relatively environmentally friendly. This approach features ecological wisdom, as people utilize local resources without disturbing the balance of nature.

(Data 2) *"The two mothers and children lived in a bamboo hut with a thatched roof and dry leaves with a condition that was almost collapsed. When it rains, water freely enters it".* (p. 1)

This situation reflects their dependence on nature and respect for limited resources. The deteriorating condition of the hut and the inability of the roof to fully withstand the rain symbolize the family's limitations in utilizing natural resources. In terms of ecological wisdom, it illustrates the values of simplicity and decency in life, in addition to the importance of preserving nature so that resources remain available in the long term.

Although the hut has physical weaknesses, its existence signifies the close relationship between humans and nature. Bamboo huts and thatched roofs are integral parts of the local ecosystem, making use of available materials. It signifies ecological wisdom by emphasizing harmony with the environment, even in the face of challenges such as inadequate protection of the elements.

In addition, the state of the hut that almost collapsed and the entry of rainwater highlighted the resilience of mothers and children in adapting to an often hostile environment. This shows the importance of resilience and fortitude in ecological wisdom, as they continue to evolve using what is available, despite the inconveniences and challenges posed by natural conditions.

3.3 The Relationship of Man with Nature: Physical, Spiritual, and Symbolic.

Banta's difficult life motivated him to seek a better future. News spread that the king's daughter was looking for a life partner. Prospective companions must present woven fabrics made of gold thread and atmosphere. This is illustrated in the following quote: "One day, Banta Berensyah heard from a villager that a king was holding a competition. The king has a beautiful princess named Princess Terus Mata, who will accept proposals from anyone who can find her clothes made of gold and spirit." (Rouf, 2013:4).

After hearing the news, Banta became determined to find the woven fabric. In his search, he prayed, and his prayer led to the discovery of a piece of taro leaf that had incredible power, allowing it to stand safely in the middle of the ocean.

(Data 3) *"Finally he got a clue to take a piece of taro leaf and his flute overseas". (p. 3)*

From the perspective of ecological wisdom, this statement reflects the relationship between humans and nature that is physical, spiritual, and symbolic. Banta's wise use of natural resources—particularly taro leaves and distillates—shows how he incorporated these elements into his life's journey meaningfully, not just for practical purposes. The taro leaf serves as a simple guide and symbol of strength in Banta's journey, while the flute acts as a link between humans and the natural and spiritual realms.

The selection of taro leaves serves as a symbol of sustainable and appropriate use of natural resources. In many communities, taro leaves are readily available in the local environment, illustrating the integral relationship between humans and nature. It reflects the principles of ecological wisdom, emphasizing the importance of understanding, respecting, and using available natural resources wisely.

The symbolism of nature as a guideline of life emphasizes that in the context of ecological wisdom, taro leaves and distilled rice serve not only as physical objects but also as spiritual symbols that guide Banta. This signifies that nature is more than just a living space or a resource; it embodies wisdom that can guide life. Many traditional cultures believe that nature has the power to offer direction to humans, illustrating the value of ecological wisdom in recognizing nature as a source of insight.

Banta's guidance, represented by taro leaves and flutes, shows that humans interact with nature on both a material and spiritual level. Ecological wisdom encourages a harmonious relationship between humans and nature, showing that individuals rely not only on nature for their physical needs but also for their inner and spiritual growth. It shows the mutual relationship between humans and nature.

3.4 Respect for Nature

Respect for nature is deeply rooted in local wisdom and cultural traditions. The use of materials such as gold and atmosphere is often accompanied by special rituals that show respect for nature as a resource. The ecological policy approach emphasizes that the need for resources from nature must always be paired with respect and responsibility, fostering awareness of sustainability in the management of natural resources.

(Data 4) *"Putri Terus Mata will accept applications for anyone who can find clothes made of gold and satin". (p. 3)*

The sentence highlights the content of the ecological wisdom approach, which includes the symbols of natural wealth and its utilization. The demand for clothes made of gold and atmosphere reflects people's perception of natural wealth as a symbol of status and value. In the context of ecological wisdom, it serves as a reminder that the exploitation of natural resources, such as gold and precious metals, must be carried out responsibly due to their impact on ecosystems, in particular the environmental damage caused by mining. It also illustrates how traditional societies view natural resources not only as a necessity but also as an indicator of strength, beauty, and success, revealing the complex relationship between humans and nature.

While this demand shows the human desire to display status and beauty through natural resources, ecological wisdom argues that the use of nature should be aligned with the principles of sustainability and not damage ecosystems. This emphasizes the importance of balancing cultural needs with environmental preservation. The story of Banta Barensyah, through the lens of ecological wisdom, can be interpreted as an educational tool designed to instill values regarding the critical need for wise management of nature as a resource.

3.5 Humans as Part of Nature

The encounter between Banta and a pair looking for shellfish can be seen as a form of interaction between humans in a socio-ecological context. Nature, represented by the beach, serves as a meeting space that facilitates human interaction and mutual help. Ecological wisdom-highlights how nature not only provides resources but also serves as a basis for social solidarity related to important aspects of life.

(Data 5) *"Meanwhile, Banta who was swept away by the current of the sea waves washed ashore on a beach and was found by a couple who were looking for shellfish". (p. 6)*

In this context, Banta's experience of being stranded on land symbolizes the human condition of being subject to the forces of nature. From the perspective of ecological wisdom, it illustrates the role of humanity as part of a larger ecosystem, in which nature plays a decisive role in human existence. The waves of the sea symbolize the forces of nature, teaching humans the importance of respecting and living in harmony with the dynamics of nature.

This sentence also reflects the wise use of resources; Couples looking for shellfish embody the traditional practices of coastal communities that utilize natural resources to meet their needs. The act of collecting shellfish, if carried out sustainably, is in line with the principles of ecological wisdom, which emphasize the use of marine products without damaging coastal ecosystems. In this story, the beach acts as a space that offers opportunities for new beginnings, both for the stranded Banta and for the couple looking for shellfish. This illustrates the importance of coastal ecosystems as an important resource for humans.

The ecological wisdom approach emphasizes the need to preserve beaches, as they serve as habitats for a variety of living organisms and support systems vital to human life. This narrative serves as a reminder of the importance of preserving marine and coastal ecosystems to ensure they continue to sustain human and other creature life. Shell collection activities, when carried out with full ecological awareness, embody the core principles of sustainability that are central to ecological wisdom.

3.6 Symbolic Relationship between Humans and Other Living Beings

Ecological wisdom teaches that nature communicates with humans in a variety of ways, often through natural phenomena, animals, or symbols. In this story, the eagle serves as an extension of nature's voice, expressing the truth and emphasizing the importance of listening to and understanding nature's "message."

(Data 6) "As soon as he had finished praying, suddenly an eagle flew in circles over the crowd of the feast, ringing." "Click ... Click... Click... the golden cloth and the atmosphere belong to Banta Barensyah...!! Click... Click... Click... the golden cloth and the atmosphere belong to Banta Barensyah...!!" the eagle sounded repeatedly. (p.7)

Ecological wisdom can be understood through the presence of the eagle in this story, which symbolizes more than just the physical elements of nature; it serves as a messenger. In the context of ecological wisdom, birds are often seen as representatives of nature, reminding humans to live in harmony with their environment.

In this narrative, the eagle acts as a spokesperson for justice, highlighting the symbolic relationship between humans and other living beings. The eagle hovering over the crowd and calling signifies how nature communicates important messages to humanity.

In addition, the actions of eagles reflect the principles of ecological justice. The introduction of the golden cloth of Banta and the surrounding atmosphere occurred through the mediation of nature, represented by the eagle. It shows that nature supports justice and truth, illustrating how humans can learn the ethical values of the ecosystems in which they live.

4 Conclusion

The folklore of Banta Barensyah studied in this study is rich in environmental themes. This conveys many messages about the importance of environmental conservation. The story incorporates various elements of nature that not only serve as a backdrop but also as an essential component of the narrative, conveying an ecological message to the reader. This ecological wisdom is manifested in activities that realize respect for nature, such as the sustainable use of natural resources, a simple appreciation for the environment, and viewing nature as a spiritual medium.

The folklore of Aceh Banta Barensyah includes significant values that can be an example for people's lives. The main value highlighted in this story is ecological wisdom, which promotes a respect for nature. It is essential to explore these values in a contemporary context to ensure

cultural sustainability while addressing global challenges such as environmental degradation. Thus, fostering an understanding and appreciation of the values presented in folklore should be an ongoing effort, pursued through both formal and informal education.

Folklore is an integral part of a nation's cultural heritage. They provide insight into the noble values held by society in the past and demonstrate their continued relevance to the present day. Through the study of folklore, we can improve our understanding of history, culture, and humanity.

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