

# Banyumas Folklore in an Ecocritical Perspective: Medium of Inheritance of Environmental Conservation Value

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**Abstract.** The world community's attention to environmental issues has been getting stronger lately. Efforts to explore local wisdom with environmental insight in folklore are part of environmental conservation efforts. This is so that the value of wisdom in maintaining the Environment is not interrupted to ensure generations. This critical analysis essay attempts to explain: (1) Ecocriticism in the study of folklore (2) The position of environmental folklore as a medium for environmental conservation (3) Banyumas folklore as a literary work with environmental insight and a conservative medium. This research is descriptive qualitative. This research utilizes the literature study method by utilizing references that are relevant to the theme of the writing. The data in this study are essential information related to the primary research problems contained in books, articles, newspapers, or other media. The data were analyzed descriptively analytically to conclude than to answer the main issues in this paper. The results of the study are as follows: (1) Folklore as one of the objects in ecocritical studies, (2) Environmental conservation with the medium of folklore in the form of human attitudes in viewing, utilizing, appreciating nature through ecological wisdom, (3) Banyumas folklore is included in the category of works environmental literature.

**Keywords:** ecocriticism, Banyumas folklore, ecological wisdom, conservation.

## 1 Introduction

The world community's attention to environmental issues has been getting stronger lately. Efforts to explore local wisdom with environmental insight in folklore are part of efforts to conserve the environment. This is so that the value of knowledge in environmental conservation efforts is not interrupted in certain generations. According to Dewi, including in Indonesia, literary experts and observers have begun to pay attention to exploring the wealth of wisdom in

conserving the Environment in literary works. This is because humanity plays a role in maintaining environmental sustainability [3].

The intensity of natural disasters in Indonesia is relatively high, especially the ecological disasters. Badan Nasional Penanggulangan Bencana (BNPB) through the Indonesian Disaster Risk Index report, throughout 2020 recorded the number of disasters events as many as 2,939 incidents. The dominating disasters were floods (1,070 events), tornadoes (879) and landslides (575). The impact of the tragedy in 2020 was that more than 6.4 million people suffered and were displaced, and 370 people died. Then, the number of infrastructures affected by the disaster included more than 42 thousand houses and two thousand facilities (educational, health, office, road, and bridge facilities) that were damaged [1].

Public awareness in terms of conserving the Environment needs to be improved. These efforts are to raise public awareness so as not to take actions that can damage the environment. The environmental crisis must be restored by how humans perceive the Environment and educate students about the Environment. Referring to Sari and Putra, that folklore can be used as a medium of education and pass on local wisdom across generations, it shows its relevance as a tradition because it continues to be used from the past to modern times as it is today. The nature of folklore varies, but the message about the wisdom of protecting the Environment remains universal [12].

Folklore is a form of literary work. Literature, in general, has a role in inspiring the human mind and mind to do better and be sensitive to the health of nature. Although so far, the availability of literature has not received much attention and is driven to provide lessons to the public about the importance of protecting the earth. Green literature, a term for environmental-oriented literature, is used as an educational tool for environmental conservation as a solution to overcome environmental damage [14].

Almost every region in Indonesia has a variety of folklore, including the legend in Banyumas. The folk tales are scattered, and many are rarely known to anyone. As is the case in Banyumas itself, many Banyumas people, especially the younger generation, do not know the folklore of their area. Therefore, it is essential to examine the possibility of the richness of Banyumas folklore as part of environmental literature [9]. So far, there is still minimal discourse on the study of Banyumas folklore, which focuses on studies of the Environment.

Based on the explanation above, this critical analytical paper attempts to explain: first, how is ecocriticism in the study of folklore? Second, what is the position of folklore with an environmental perspective as a medium for environmental conservation? Third, can the Banyumas folklore be categorized as a literary work with environmental insight and a medium for environmental protection?

## **2 Research methods**

This study is descriptive qualitative research. This research utilizes the literature study method by using references that are relevant to the writing theme. Library research or library research is a series of activities related to collecting library data, reading and recording and processing library collection materials without the need for field research. The data in this study are essential information related to the primary research problems contained in books, articles,

newspapers, or other media. The data were analyzed descriptively to conclude then to answer the main issues in this paper -6].

### **3 Results and Discussion**

#### **3.1 Folklore as an Object of Ecocritical Study**

Ecocriticism or ecocriticism as one model of literary text analysis is a recognized model of political commentary, compared with feminism and Marxism suggests. Ecocritics generally link their cultural analysis explicitly with a moral agenda and 'green politics'. In this regard, ecocriticism is oriented towards developing philosophy and environmental, political theory. Ecocriticism is trying to provide awareness or literacy about caring for the Environment as part of the sustainability of life [4].

One of the critical problems for human life today is the condition of the earth's environment. Environmental issues discussed in literary works have the aim of giving messages to readers about environmental conditions, causes of environmental damage, and solutions that can be chosen to protect and preserve the environment [15]. In terms of terminology, ecocriticism can study and explore ecological problems broadly. Ecocriticism has the function of representing attitudes, views, and responses to natural conditions. From this thought, ecocriticism departs from the relationship between social attitudes and nature. Attitudes, opinions, and human responses to natural conditions. So that all ecological problem solving is carried out with a particular perspective [10].

Folklore is a part of folklore. Folklore from Central Java with ecological content, namely the folklore of Timun Mas. The ecological scope of the Timun Mas folklore can be concluded that there are findings regarding the reflection of the environmental narrative of ecosystem destruction as follows: (1) Environmental pollution; (2) Habitat destruction; (3) Nature management. Folklore spread throughout the country has an ecological view relevant to environmental conservation. These facts provide an essential recommendation that attitudes towards the Environment must align with individual and group interests. Humans have a moral responsibility not only to themselves but also to other people and the Environment. Moral responsibility is necessary for human actions today and in the future [10].

Another ecologically-minded folklore in Indonesia, specifically from Bali, compares it to legend from Japan. The Bali Aga in northern Bali and the Ainu in the north of Japan are examples of indigenous peoples fortunate enough to be able to pass down a rich collection of folklore, where various moral messages promote desirable social attributes in community members, particularly about how humans should preserve their natural environment [8].

Based on some of the opinions above, it can be concluded that ecologically charged folklore contains a message to preserve the Environment wisely. In the folklore tradition in Indonesia, many findings have ecological content. The loading of characters from the names of plants and animals, the use of forest landscapes as a backdrop, or messages from the folklore itself are part of ecological wisdom. In the context of ecocriticism, where the centre of study examines environmental problems contained in literary works, then folklore should be part of the object

of study. Some of the things studied include natural elements, the relationship between humans and nature, messages about nature conservation, to how the damage to the heart is shown in his literary works.

### **3.2 Environmental Conservation with the Medium of Folklore**

Authors write literary works to answer various problems that develop in their society. These include social, cultural, humanitarian, psychological problems, women's problems, religious issues, and environmental issues. Environmental issues discussed in literary works aim to give readers messages about environmental conditions, causes of environmental damage, and solutions that can be used as a means of protecting and preserving the Environment [15].

Through its diverse representations of nature, literature allows humans to shape and expand attitudes about a sustainable environment. In addition, making problems and discussing environmental issues has urged a review of cultural values and assumptions of nature and its preservation. Therefore, the study of literature related to the representation of the Environment in the text can be a lesson and increase human awareness of the natural world [5].

The theme of research on local wisdom, especially related to the Environment, is essential. More people, especially the younger generation, are leaving traditional values and absorbing new values from foreign cultures that are not in accordance with the original character of the Indonesian nation. Generations do not understand the transition process, even consider their own culture as something that is outdated [12]. Contexted with the spirit of environmental conservation, the inheritance of local wisdom about environmental conservation is essential to the younger generation. This is because the attitude of humanity has a vital role in caring for nature from damage [3].

There are many findings in folklore in the archipelago that contain messages of environmental conservation. Folklore spread throughout the archipelago turns out to have an ecological view relevant to environmental protection. For example, stories from the regions of Kalimantan and Papua focus on human behaviour towards the environment and human behaviour towards themselves. An understanding of the importance of the Environment concentrates not only on how to treat the land, water, air but also on shaping human attitudes and habits. Attitudes towards the Environment must be in harmony with attitudes towards individuals and groups around them. Cosmological insight into nature must have relevance to existential understanding as individuals and groups. Folklore can also be used as an effective environmental conservation learning medium for readers, educational schools, and even in the practice of literary criticism in general [7].

Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that the study of wisdom in managing the Environment, including in folklore, is part of the effort to know and pass on the local knowledge, primarily related to the topic of environmental conservation. One of the fields of literary studies on the Environment or ecology is ecocriticism. Ecocriticism is an approach to studying literary works to see things related to ecology or the Environment. As a study, the ecocritical process begins with concerns over the declining quality of the Environment or environmental damage.

### 3.3 Banyumas Folklore as an Environmentally Insight Literary Work

Environmental conservation can be started by providing knowledge about the Environment through environmental-themed texts and understanding environmental wisdom obtained through literary works. With the provision of understanding and internalization of the values of ecological wisdom, it is hoped that the concern of the younger generation in maintaining, caring for, and preserving the Environment will increase [13].

Almost all people in Indonesia have folklore. Folklore is defined as a form of collective culture that is spread and passed down from generation to generation. Usually, folk tales have meanings and messages that are implied behind stories that are applied in the community. People's stories can aim to honour, worship, ask for salvation, and thank God through their ancestors and legacy. The district believes that the limitations possessed by humans can be overcome by the involvement of their ancestors and relics so that they finally believe in and believe in the folklore [2].

Banyumas folklore is passed down from generation to generation. Usually, folklore is dominated by the type of legend or the origin of a place. However, Banyumas folklore contains many environmental elements. This environmental insight is in the form of environmental conservation. This is for example, about protecting the Environment and not damaging the environment. This is as shown in the folklore entitled "Kadipaten Penyerang". Kadipaten Serangan tells about the journey of Mundingmalati and Ranggasena, who was ordered by his father named Prabu Ciung Wanara from the Kingdom of Pajajaran to go on an odyssey. In the odyssey, later, they will find a place that will be made a duchy. On their way, they found a lovely place.

Tanpa terasa, dua tahun telah berlalu. Selama itu pula mereka telah mengembara dari satu tempat ke tempat lainnya. Pada saat itu Ranggasena beserta keempat putranya sampai di tengah hutan yang penuh dengan pohon besar. Daun-daunnya yang rindang seakan menjadi atap sebuah alam yang terbuka. Di sela-sela kerindangan daun dan ranting terdapat banyak sarang yang menandakan kebebasan hidup burung di sana. Sementara itu, di balik pohon banyak hewan berseliweran ke sana kemari. Tampak sekali jika hutan itu masih asli dan belum pernah dirambah orang [6].

The quote above states that the forest as part of nature is still well preserved. Forests are not cut down indiscriminately. Trees are given the right to live by humans. In that atmosphere, trees become a place to live for other creatures such as birds. Meanwhile, in the folklore entitled "The Origin of Dusun Kedung Banteng", The legend tells about the origin of the formation of a hamlet named Kedung Banteng in the Cimanggu District, Cilacap Regency. The environmental conservation narrative that is highlighted is about human respect for nature.

Pak Mijo tinggal di Dusun Kedung Banteng yang terletak di Kawung, Cimanggu, Cilacap. Dusun Kedung Banteng merupakan hutan yang sangat luas. Hutan itu berada di tengah-tengah perkampungan penduduk. Banyak hewan penghuni hutan dan liar. Tetapi hewan yang paling banyak monyet dan banteng. Di dalam hutan terdapat banyak rawa-rawa atau dalam istilah Jawa disebut kedung. Pada suatu hari Pak Mijo beserta isteri mencari kayu bakar seolah-olah

disambut hewan-hewan penghuni hutan yang sangat akrab dengan penduduk. Penduduk yang setiap hari keluar masuk hutan [11].

In the quote above, it is written that there is a forest in the middle of a village. There are many wild animals in the woods. Every time there are many wild animals in and out of the forest, occasionally even heading to the village residents. However, the wild animal did not hurt anyone. These animals are described as friendly to humans. Meanwhile, the folklore entitled "The Myth of the Cubangkungkung Reservoir" gives a message of environmental conservation about human respect for nature. The Kubangkungkung Reservoir in the Kawunganten area, Cilacap Regency, is considered clean and sacred. Therefore, refrain from doing anything that can pollute the reservoir, such as urinating and talking dirty. In addition, it is also forbidden to catch fish in the pool. Behind the mythical claim, there is an attempt to protect nature. This is as embedded in the following quote.

Di sekitar Kawasan Waduk Kubangkungkung juga ada pantangan bagi masyarakat ataupun pengunjung bilamana ada kegiatan memancing, buang air kecil, dan masih banyak hal lain sebagaimana menjadi sebuah pantangan kalau berada di Kawasan Waduk Kubangkungkung. Tak heran waduk yang dikelilingi ratusan pohon bahkan ribuan pohon pinus dan ada pula pohon beringin putih menjadikan waduk ini terlihat cantik dan mempesona walaupun kadang setiap malam tiba menjadikan suasana yang merinding dan bau-bau di sekitar waduk pun sangat kuat [11].

The three examples of folklore above are from Cilacap Regency. Likewise, if you look at other folk tales from Banyumas, there are still many folk tales that are ecologically charged. For example, in the folklore about the kingdom of Nusatembini, which is said to be in the Nusakambangan Island Region. A kingdom ruled by a female king named Ratu Brantarara uses bamboo trees as a royal protective fence. This means that there is a thought to blend with nature; bamboo trees are used for walls. Or the story about the origin of the swallow's nest from Kebumen Regency can receive messages about environmental conservation using natural ingredients as medicines.

Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that the Banyumas folklore contains many conservative elements. Folklore is a part of folklore, which is a form of literary work that is environmentally charged. In other terms, Banyumas folklore is green literature. This is represented through several examples of folklore from Banyumas.

#### **4 Conclusion**

Ecocriticism is one type of approach in literary studies. Ecocriticism can examine various kinds of literary works, including folklore as part of folklore. The focus in ecocritical studies for folklore examines elements of nature (the Environment), forms of nature conservation, forms of environmental damage, and the relationship between humans and nature. Folklore is one of the objects in ecocritical studies. Environmental protection with folklore in human attitudes in viewing, utilizing and appreciating nature through ecological wisdom. Banyumas folklore as part of folklore is included in the category of literary works with environmental insight. Banyumas folklore can be used as a medium in conserving the environment. Environmental

conservation is meant to educate and internalize the values of ecological wisdom so that the level of environmental literacy of the younger generation can increase.

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