

Kaba Minangkabau: An Ecocritical Study

1st Nofrahadi¹, 2nd Andayani², 3rd Suyitno³, 4th Nugraheni Eko Wardani⁴

{nofrahadi11@student.uns.ac.id¹, andayani@staff.uns.ac.id², yitsuyitno52@gmail.com³,
nugraheniekowardani_99@staff.uns.ac.id⁴}

Doctoral Student of Indonesian Language Education at Universitas Sebelas Maret¹,
Lecturer of Indonesian Language Education at Universitas Sebelas Maret^{2,3,4}, Indonesia

Abstract. Literature and the natural environment are two things that are interconnected. The natural environment is used as a source of inspiration for the birth of a literary work. Literary works contain a reflection of human behavior towards their environment. This can be seen in one of the regional literatures called the *kaba Minangkabau*. *Kaba* is a literary work that initially developed through an oral system and then as progress was published in writing into book form. *Kaba* contains many philosophies of life, education and teaching, social obligations, and advice whose duty is to educate listeners and readers how to live in a society and culture. Literature and nature need harmony, so that humans can live comfortably. Harmonization will be well maintained if living things, especially humans who have reason, can take care of nature properly and correctly. This research method is critical analysis. Validation using triangulation theory. The analysis technique uses flow analysis techniques.

Keyword: Literature, Natural Environment, *Kaba Minangkabau*

1 Introduction

Literature is a social practice whose meaning requires in-depth study. Literature sometimes tries to explain some facts about the real world. However, literature cannot be separated from the imagination factor. One of the advantages of literary research is the power of imagination. Imagination can provide clues to see any situation from a different point of view. Literary research is able to answer the anxiety in society and try to provide a solution because the power of imagination can exploit the past, present, and future. In some conditions, literature reflects the conditions of the rules, values, and norms that apply in society as in reality. In the process of the birth of a literary work, there is an interrelationship between the creation of literature and the phenomena of people's lives.

Currently, humans live by prioritizing personal life rather than common interests so that this individualistic human group does not care about the impact felt by people in the surrounding environment. Realist criticism of the practical natural environment continuously seeks the

integration of environmental consciousness with the conflict of environmental change [11]. The natural environment has experienced great threats caused by human behavior. Misuse of natural resources has put humans on the verge of an ecological crisis. The world is experiencing chaotic seasonal cycles, rainforests are being cut down, fossil fuels are rapidly depleting, and ecological disasters are happening all over the world [14]. One of the causes of natural disasters is human activity. Since the beginning, humans have lived close to nature in the natural environment. Humans live to create their own culture. This culture has been passed down from generation to generation since civilization began. The legacy in the form of human values is represented in his behavior so that it requires extraordinary love for the natural environment to continue to survive the changing times [15].

Literature, especially Minangkabau literature, is expected not only to survive in the midst of the times, but also to be able to carve out the history of civilization in the nations of the world. This belief is expected not only to give pride, but also loyalty to maintain and continue to love the noble values contained in Minangkabau literature. One type of Minangkabau literature that is interesting to study is *kaba*. There are many value elements that can be explored in the *kaba* to be exemplary. One of them is the local wisdom contained therein. This can be used as an important asset in building the character of the nation's children. Character building starts from the beginning of individual development by providing reading that is able to instill good values [7].

Kaba is a form of literary work that developed in the Minangkabau community through the oral system. *Kaba* is in the form of lyric prose. Then as civilization progressed, it was compiled into written form and published into books. This is because at the beginning of the development of Minangkabau literature, the people did not know writing, so the *kaba* was written in book form so that this tradition would not be swallowed up by the times. *Kaba* is one of the cultural heritages that grows and develops in Minangkabau society. *Kaba* contains a lot of philosophy of life, about customs, relationships, advice, and issues of social life of the Minangkabau people in general whose task is to educate listeners or readers how to live in a society and culture.

As previously stated, literature and the natural environment need harmony so that humans can live comfortably. Harmony will be well maintained if humans have the awareness for it. Some humans try to protect and preserve the natural environment and some of them also try to overexploit it. Someone is often greedy to take the natural products on a large scale without presenting a solution. Forests, seas, mountains, rivers, agricultural areas, historical relics, holy places, and various other forms of natural wealth tend to be continuously damaged.

Literature and the natural environment have a phenomenal relationship. The natural environment has been described differently in a literary work. Then critics created an interdisciplinary stream to discuss and criticize literary works called ecocriticism. Literature represents and helps to understand social problems and their changes that result in ecological damage. Ecocriticism is concerned with humanity being realized in its role as a species globally. Ecological thinking about the need for literature to be used as a form of criticism in human life, culture, and society [12]. Ecocriticism is known and consolidated as a critique of the early 1990's, which is actually a term that has emerged since the 1960's and 1970's. It was first used in 1978 by William Rueckert to refer to the way in which the concept of ecology is applied in literature [9].

Ecocriticism does not only focus on the study of nature. The study covers territorial boundaries, cities, special geographical areas, rivers, mountains, grasslands, deserts, living things, technology, garbage, and human beings. Ecocriticism broadly includes all things that include humans in the context of interior and exterior. One of the main things is the relationship between humans and their natural surroundings. Ecocriticism includes ecology, ecofeminism, social ecology, and environmental justice [5]. Ecocriticism can help define, explore, and even solve ecological problems in a broader sense [8]. Literature has the potential to express ideas about the environment. This can be realized because literature functions as a medium for representing attitudes, views, and public responses to the natural environment around them. Literature grows, develops, and originates from the community and the natural (ecological) environment. The natural environment requires literature as a means of preservation. This confirms that ecocriticism tries to apply the concept of ecology to the study of literature and makes the natural environment the focus of its study.

Thus, ecocriticism is defined as an investigation of the relationship between literature and the environment. There are a number of criteria that explain this relationship, namely (1) the non-human environment exists not only as a frame but as a presence indicating that human history is implied in natural history; (2) human interests are not understood as the only legitimate interests (legitimate); (3) human accountability to the environment is part of the ethical orientation of the text, and (4) some understandings of the environment are as a process not as a constant understanding or a gift that is at least implied in the text [3].

2 Research Methods

This research is a critical analysis conducted on the object of study, namely the Minangkabau *kaba* using an ecocritical approach. The ecocritical approach emphasizes human behavior towards the natural environment, population explosion, and the economy [10]. The data were validated using theoretical triangulation which tested the validity of the data using the perspectives of the theories referred to in discussing the problems studied so that complete and comprehensive conclusions could be drawn. Then, the analysis technique uses Flow Analysis Models where in this analysis model three components of flow analysis are data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing or verification are carried out flowing with each other with the data collection process [13].

3 Results And Analysis

In the daily communication process, the Minangkabau people use the Minangkabau language. The word *kaba* often appears in the process of conversation that occurs. For example, when a nephew has not seen his mother for a long time, when he does, he will say, “Baa kaba Mak?” or “How’s Mamak?”. The word *kaba* in the sentence means news with the intention of asking mamak's news regarding life, work, health, and others because we haven't seen each other for a long time. In addition, the word *kaba* also refers to folklore which is often referred to as the *kaba* Minangkabau .

Kaba is classified as folklore passed down from generation to generation which belongs to the community, not to individuals. The author of *kaba* is generally anonymous, *kaba* serves as entertainment, consolation, some are in the form of epics such as *kaba Cindua Mato* and *kaba Anggun Nan Tongga* [4]. Initially the *kaba* was conveyed to the public in the form of a show. Each region has its own genre of performance, for example in Padang there is a performance of *Dendang Pauah* (*kaba* dance accompanied by *saluang*, the text is in the form of a rhyme); in Pesisir Selatan there is *Rabab Pasisia* performance (*kaba* singing with violin accompaniment, the text is in lyrical prose), in Payakumbuh there is *Sijobang* performance (*kaba Anggun Nan Tongga* and *kaba Magek Jabang*) singing accompanied by a flick of a half-filled matchbox [2].

Kaba is used as entertainment to relax with family members. Usually the father would tell the *kaba* to his son so that the younger generation at that time understood well the stories of the *kaba Minangkabau*. This creates a sense of pride in the child because he can know and understand a story, then the child is told it back to his friend. *Kaba Minangkabau* is passed down from generation to generation in the form of oral literature which can be sung if accompanied by a *saluang* or *rabab* musical instrument by the *kaba* proficient. Then, for fear of losing this oral culture, and so that oral stories can survive in the development of community progress, the *kaba* stories are passed down in printed form.

Kaba is usually delivered at public and recreational events at night because during the day agrarian people work in the fields or gardens. In the delivery of *kaba*, the position of the *kaba* proficient is very important. It is not only a medium for conveying ideas and values, but also as the creator and composer of stories, so that the purpose of *kaba* as entertainment is achieved. To strengthen the appeal of the *kaba*, the *kaba* proficient usually give a variety of storytelling with rhymes as at the beginning of the *kaba*. Here is an example of one of these poems.

<i>Dibawok pikek dibawok langau</i>	Carried by grasshoppers carried by flies
<i>Kaba basambuang samo kaba</i>	The news continues with the news
<i>Sungguah tamasuak kaba bagalau</i>	It's really bad news
<i>Ujudnyo samo di nan pangka</i>	it looks the same as the original

Kaba as written literature in the form of books was published at the end of the 19th century, some of which were published by the Dutch government. Among them, *Kaba Mama Si Hetong* in 1892, *Kaba Si Ali Amat* in 1895, *Kaba Si Umbuik Mudo* in 1896, *Kaba Si Manjau Ari* in 1891, and *Kaba Cindua Mato* in 1891. In the 1920's to 1930's there were several *kaba* published including: *Kaba Si Rambun Jalu* in 1920, *Kaba Si Sabariah* in 1926, *Kaba Si Untuang Sudah* in 1930, *Kaba Si Saripudi* in 1935. Furthermore, in the 1950's to the 1960's publishers in the city of Bukittinggi and the city of Payakumbuh had published dozens of *kaba*. The leading *kaba* writer is Syamsudin Sutan Rajo Endah who wrote more than twenty *kaba*, Sutan Pangaduan wrote six *kaba* and Salasih wrote twelve *kaba*.

Kaba is expected to be a reflection medium for future generations in an effort to preserve the natural environment. This can be realized by transferring the following positive things contained in the *kaba* story. (a) Awareness, namely awareness of the need to maintain the balance of the natural environment and avoid pollution of river, sea and forest water. b) Knowledge, namely providing basic understanding of the function of the natural environment as a means of determining human welfare. (c) Attitude, namely exemplifying to get a set of values and responsibilities towards the natural environment and having the motivation to maintain and

develop the environment. (d) Skills, namely activities given to identify various natural environmental phenomena, investigate, and contribute directly to solving the problems of the natural environment itself. (e) Participation is helping to gain experience, use knowledge, and use thinking skills to solve environmental problems.

Kaba contains stories that require the conservation of the natural environment. The preservation of nature in the Minangkabau community cannot be separated from customs and traditions. Both of these things are still alive in the community in an effort to protect the natural environment. Therefore, it is not surprising that until now there is still a lot of forest in the Minangkabau region which covers the entire province of West Sumatra and several areas in the surrounding provinces. Although some areas have developed oil palm and rubber plantations, the forest ecosystem is still maintained and balanced. West Sumatra has great potential to build an even larger nature reserve, and the government is obliged to support it. West Sumatra is an example for the environment. The *Nagari Sungai Buluh* community can use the protected forest to be managed for 35 years, according to the term of the *nagari* forest management rights. The community can also carry out area utilization activities, environmental services, ecotourism, and collection of non-timber forest products. In addition, the community is also allowed to cultivate medicinal plants, ornamental plants, mushrooms, bees, and animal feed as well as captive wildlife. Together with the local government, the community determines partners for assistance activities from the government, non-governmental organizations, universities or other parties in community empowerment efforts.

The *kaba* texts are evaluated in terms of their harmful environment or beneficial effects. Many writers use the natural environment as a physical setting in their storytelling and choice of words, such as forest, sea, trees, and animals in the literary genres they make, including *kaba*. The writer makes a story with a description of the surrounding natural environment in an effort to describe the actual condition of the natural environment. Then from the use of the physical setting, it can also be seen how big and strong the writer's concern for the natural environment is. They also use characterization to study the characters in a story and the relationships between them. Next, they use setting elements to understand the time and place of a story text so that they can understand the various influences that these elements may have on their behavior, reactions, and actions.

Kaba Minangkabau text analysis is not something new. There are several previous studies that are relevant to this research to be conducted. Research related to the *Kaba Minangkabau* includes research conducted [7]. Fikri conducted research with the title "*Local Wisdom in Kaba Bonsu Pinang Sibaribuik By Emral Djamel Dt. Rajo Mudo: a Heuristic-Hermeneutic Analysis*". The study analyzed four forms of local wisdom found in *Kaba Bonsu Pinang Sibaribuik* (KBPS) by Emral Djamel Dt. Rajo Mudo. The four forms of local wisdom are (a) philosophy, (b) social attitudes, advice and messages, (c) traditional ceremonies, and (d) habits or behavior in social relations. The study was conducted using a heuristic and hermeneutic approach. The results of the study concluded that KBPS is a useful source to recognize and understand the local wisdom of the Minangkabau community so that it needs to be studied and preserved [7]. Abdurahman menyajikan laporan penelitiannya ke dalam bentuk buku yang berjudul *Nilai-nilai Budaya dalam Kaba Minangkabau: Suatu Interpretasi Semiotik*. The result of the research is that the Minangkabau *kaba* reflects cultural values which show that the essence of life is the destiny of Allah and in living it, the characters put their trust in Allah in the form of practicing cultural values that are based on Islamic views [1].

4 Conclusion

Literature and the natural environment are two elements that are closely related. Literature tries to be a solution to the anxiety that occurs in society. This can be realized because literary works reflect the conditions of the rules, values, and norms that apply in society as in reality. *Kaba* is a Minangkabau literary work that contains a lot of philosophy of life. This can be used as a source of learning for readers and listeners how to live in a society and culture, especially in an effort to protect and preserve the natural environment.

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