

# Man and Nature in Minangkabau Folklore

## *Ikan Sakti: An Ecocritical Study*

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### ABSTRACT

Humans have a close relationship with nature either as guardians, explorers, or even nature waster. The relationship between humans and nature is also manifested in literary works, especially folklore. In folklore, the relationship between humans and nature is described as very intimate. However, this relationship is not only beneficial for nature itself. In the Minangkabau folklore *Ikan Sakti*, it is illustrated that the relationship is not too good between humans and nature which ultimately causes harm to nature and humans. This shows a criticism of the destructive attitude of humans towards nature and the environment in which humans live. In the folklore *Ikan Sakti* depicted local wisdom about how to maintain nature and the environment so that there is a harmonious relationship between humans and nature. In addition, the folklore of *Ikan Sakti* also voices the cultural aspects as well as the ecological aspects of the community behind the folklore.

**Keywords:** *Local wisdom, Minangkabau folklore, ecocriticism.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Humans have a close relationship with the environment, even humans are seen as the center of the universe that controls and conquers the universe for the sake of fulfilling the needs of human life itself [1]. This causes everything in the universe to be appreciated if it provides benefits to humans, so that nature is transformed into an object that is controlled and explored in such a way by humans.

The relationship between nature and humans is reflected in literary works. In a mimetic manner, literary works are seen as imitations of reality, in this case literary works imitate the universe. Authors of literary works are strongly influenced by natural and environmental factors in their work. The relationship between literary works and nature is a field of study from ecocriticism [2].

Ecocriticism is an English term derived from the terminology of ecology and critic. Ecology has the meaning of scientific study that examines the relationship of living things (humans, animals, and plants) to one another as well as the relationship of living things to their environment. Meanwhile, criticism is a form and expression of judgment about the good or

bad qualities of something in this case is about the environment [3].

Some literary works are manifestations of the author's criticism of how humans treat the environment. One example is seen in the research conducted by Andriyani et al. [4] which found that the latest Indonesian novels published from 2008 to 2018 discuss environmental issues such as global warming, illegal logging, illegal logging which ends in events that harm humans. Then in 2020, Andriyani also conducted research on Indonesian dramas from an ecocritical perspective. Andriyani's research found that literature is a criticism made by the author on people's behavior in protecting the environment as seen in the drama script the drama *Pasar Malam* untuk Brojo by Dhianita Kusuma Pertiwi, the drama script by Bakdi Soemanto *Arloji Saku Dari Perak, Bukan Orang Asing, Wajah-Wajah* (2017), and the drama script *Tidak ada Bintang di Dadanya* by Hamdy Salad [5].

In addition, research on environmental issues was also carried out on several short stories. The short story writers deal with environmental issues by pointing directly to the injured environment, especially trees/forests and water, or abstractly using imaginative symbols. Of the 25 short stories studied, there are 16 short stories that take trees as a theme (both preservation

and destruction), 8 short stories with the theme of water, and 1 short story that smells of mythology, especially the myth of the water horse [6]

The ecocritical problem is not only found in modern literature. In folklore or other traditional literature, many ecological issues are also discussed, even added to the local wisdom of the people who support the story. Several studies related to ecology in traditional literature have also been carried out, such as research conducted by Bahardur and Ediyono [7] which discusses ecological elements in the toothache treatment spell for the Belimbing community, Kuranji District, Padang City. The results of this study indicate that the involvement of ecological elements shows a picture of a society that is friendly with nature, and culture is formed naturally. That is, a culture can not be separated from nature and nurture.

The Minangkabau folklore *Ikan Sakti* also illustrates this. In the story *Ikan Sakti* depicted local wisdom that is naturally entrenched which colors the behavior of the community in protecting nature and the environment. There is no ecocritical study in the Minangkabau folklore *Ikan Sakti*. Thus, it can be said that the author is the first person to study ecocriticism in the folklore of *Ikan Sakti*.

## 2. METHOD

Ecological literature is a literary theory that discusses the relationship of literary works with society and the environment and the natural surroundings. Ecological literature emerged as a reaction and form of awareness towards nature conservation. That is, ecological literature is a theory that seeks to interpret the nature described in literary works.

According to Endraswara [8] there are two important things in the study of ecological literature, namely (1) literature describes a good relationship between humans and their environment, describes in detail how the universe becomes the background of an event, worships the beauty of nature, and describes nicely about change. natural; or (2) literature often runs away from its environment, wants to depict with beautiful language biases, polishes it with a style that is difficult to achieve, and is not able to be studied by ecological literature reviewers. This study of ecological literature is also known as ecocritical literature.

Furthermore, Endraswara [8] explains that literary ecology must be able to express: (1) the application of the concept of ecology in literary works, in this case

literature makes the earth an object of study when approaching; (2) perceive literary works as media that reflect ecological conditions, such as dirty, clean, flooded, and so on; (3) study the impressions of certain environmental communities on literary works; and (4) capture the role of the environment in literary creative creation. related to ecological literature are as follows: (1) Pollution, (2) wilderness, (3) disaster, (4) housing/dwelling, (5) animals, and (6) earth.

This research is qualitative research. Data were collected by conducting interviews with the owners of the folklore or active heirs of the folklore *Ikan Sakti* in Nagari Tabek Panjang, Baso area, Agam Regency, West Sumatra Province. There are two versions of the folklore *Ikan Sakti*. Researchers chose the story that contains the most ecological problems in it. analyzing research data using descriptive analytical research design, namely the design used to describe or analyze a research result but pi is not used to make broader conclusions [9].

## 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1. Synopsis of the Sakti Ikan Folklore and the Environment

*Ikan Sakti* folktale from the Nagari Tabek Panjang community in the Baso area of West Sumatra Province tells about a group of people who want to find new settlements because the settlement where they live is in a water crisis. One of the residents was sent to look for the new settlement.

In his search, the resident found a suitable place to live because it was close to a water source. Unfortunately the place is controlled by the Jin. After agreeing with the Jin people, finally the villagers were allowed to build settlements near the river on the condition that they were not allowed to cut down trees beyond the limits that had been determined.

Unfortunately, the villagers violated the agreement. Because the need for housing is increasing day by day, they also cut down trees beyond the predetermined limits. The felling of the tree caused the river water to become cloudy, and the Jin people became angry. As a result, the children of the immigrant population and the children of the Jin nation turned into fish in the river.

Until now, the people of Nagari Tabek Panjang Baso still believe in this story and consider the fish in the lake

in their area to be the incarnation of humans and the Jinn nation. This belief makes them really not want to catch fish and consume them. This causes the fish in the lake to be maintained, and the environment around the lake is maintained and clean.

The lake where the magic fish is now a tourist spot that is visited by many tourists. In addition to the many and tame fish, the cool environment around the lake makes visitors feel comfortable. Every time tourists come to the place, some local people will offer a sheet containing the story of the origin of the magic fish

### **3.2 Description of the Environment in the Folklore of *Ikan Sakti***

Refers to the literary ecology theory put forward by Endraswara [8] that the environment discussed in literary works is related to pollution, wilderness, disasters, housing/shelter, animals, and the earth. Five of these six things are depicted in the Minangkabau folklore *Ikan Sakti*.

The environmental problems depicted in the folklore of *Ikan Sakti* begin with the human need for housing and shelter, as shown in the following quote.

In ancient times, it was said that the origin of the inhabitants of the Tabek Panjang village in the Baso area came from the peak of Mount Marapi. Because the water supply in Mount Marapi is getting less and less, the idea arose to find a new place.

In the quote, it can be seen that the condition of the earth where the people live at the top of Mount Marapi, which has a water crisis, is the reason why they are looking for new settlements. The quote shows that the human need for water must be met, because water is the source of life. The availability of water is one of the conditions for a place to be said to be livable. So people will look for a place to live that has a water source. That is also what the residents of the peak of Mount Marapi do in the story *Ikan Sakti*, which can be seen in the following quote.

After a long time, Suta Basa found a place that had a river and a clear fountain.

Humans will instinctively look for natural resources to support life. These natural resources are also a tool to fulfill human needs. Water is a basic natural resource that must be available. The quote explicitly illustrates

that the place of residence sought has met the requirements, namely the availability of water sources. The depiction in the quote of the story shows the condition of the earth when the story was made.

In addition to the description of the condition of the earth, in the story *Ikan Sakti* also found a description of the wilderness which is described as the residence of the Jin people, which can be seen in the following quote.

The place was already controlled by the Jin nation. They are allowed to live in that place as long as they are willing to fulfill requirements such as protecting the **forest**, not cutting down trees, and not throwing the remaining waste from cutting down the forest into the river.

The word 'forest' in the quote describes the forest environment where living beings other than humans live. At the beginning of human life, forests are natural resources where humans meet their basic needs. Forests have wood that humans can use to make houses, bark can be used as human clothing to protect the body from cold temperatures and hot weather. In the forest, humans also find animals that can be eaten, as well as plants that can be consumed. Anyway, the forest is like a "supermarket" for humans. Everything humans need is in the forest. Therefore, forests must be protected so as not to cause disasters that harm humans.

The next environmental problem arises when humans begin to want to expand their living environment which results in excessive forest encroachment and logging. Excessive logging has resulted in polluted rivers and denuded forests. The bad behavior of humans described in the story *Ikan Sakti* causes environmental pollution, which can be seen in the following quote.

The people of Sungai Janiah cut down trees to build new settlements. They broke the taboo and the agreement with the Chief Jin.

The Jin tribe was angry, and they lowered large stones from the hills around the river. The falling rocks caused a big earthquake. Relations between the two nations were not harmonious. As a result, the son of Datuak Bagindo Nando as the chief of the tribe Humans Disappeared and became a fish in the Janiah River along with the son of the chief of the Jin *Ikan Sakti*.

The quote describes bad and greedy human behavior that results in natural disasters, such as earthquakes and river water pollution. The quote also shows the punishment given by nature (represented by the Jinn) to humans caused by humans not protecting nature (violating taboos). In this case, nature is described as giving what humans give to it. If humans give good things, then nature will repay with kindness as well. Alternatively, if humans treat nature badly, then nature will retaliate by giving disaster to humans.

In the story of the *Ikan Sakti*, several land and environmental problems are found, such as deforestation, opening of settlements, natural disasters, and pollution of water sources that have a negative impact on human life.

### 3.3 Ecocriticism in the Folklore of the *Ikan Sakti*

Folklore can be a warning sign for the people who have related stories about their behavior towards nature. That is, in folklore there are signs that must be given meaning about what humans can and cannot do to nature and their environment. The folklore of *Ikan Sakti* implicitly contains local wisdom that teaches how to protect the environment. This is in line with what was stated by Navis [10] who said that environmental wisdom is an awareness to be part of nature so as to create a unified harmony.

In the folklore *Ikan Sakti*, there is a picture of negative human behavior that harms the environment and nature, such as indiscriminate felling of trees and pollution of rivers or water sources. These harmful human actions get punishment from nature by giving them disasters and cursing them into fish. In this case, being a fish is a punishment for humans so that they feel the consequences of their behavior. Fish that live in rivers really need a clean water source which of course comes from well-maintained forests. If the forest does not exist, then the water will be difficult, as a result the fish will also be difficult to live. This confirms the opinion that the phenomenon of literary works is parallel to the phenomenon of organisms in their environment.

In the story *Ikan Sakti* also showed the human view of the environment. In this case, humans view the environment as belonging to a transcendent view which according to this view, the natural environment is only considered as a natural resource created to be exploited in such a way for human welfare. This exploitation can be seen from their behavior towards the forest around

them which they cut down to fulfill their need for a place to live.

## 4. CONCLUSION

The *Ikan Sakti* which is believed by the people of Nagari Tabek Panjang, Baso area, West Sumatra Province as a true story, contains local wisdom about protecting the environment. In the story there are ecocriticisms and descriptions of the natural environment such as the earth, forests, disasters, environmental pollution, and also human settlements. The cheerful people of *Ikan Sakti* also teach humans how to behave well towards the environment. Bad behavior towards the environment will cause harm to our own humans.

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