

Indonesian Literature and Traditional Knowledge: Interdisciplinary Perspective

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Indonesian Literature and Traditional Knowledge: Interdisciplinary Perspective

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Abstract

This research explained Indonesian literature in traditional knowledge perspective in narrative form. This research used Indonesian novels which have traditional knowledge as data source. This studies used qualitative method with descriptive techniques (words, phrases, and sentences). The result showed that there are two segments of traditional knowledge in Indonesian literature. First, traditional knowledge about boat intricacies (boat history, how to make boat, and tree types for boat). Second, traditional knowledge about mushrooms (mushroom history, treatment using mushroom, and mushroom as gods). These showed that Indonesian literature is like other universal literature that raises traditional knowledge as an alternative knowledge for modern society.

Keywords: Traditional Knowledge; Literature; Ecology

Introduction

Literature studies are currently growing and leading to interdisciplinary areas. Some researchers, like Baratta (2016), Ahmadi (2017), (2019), Hays (2013), and Randall (2017) showed that literature is a result of aesthetic and humanistic thoughts that can be studied through various perspectives. Interdisciplinary studies in literature cannot be separated from the influence of the disruption of knowledge that 'arises' and 'sinks'. The knowledge that is able to survive will arise, while the other that is not strong will sink and disappear. In connection with the interdisciplinary study, literature is expected to provide enlightenment that has more universal perspectives.

There are many interdisciplinary studies in literature, like the ecopoietic-ecocritical (Johns-Putra, 2016), ecopsychology (Ahmadi, 2017), gender, LGBT (Blackburn, Clark, & Nemeth, 2015) and animal studies (Evans & Moore, 2019; Boyde, 2019; Dunn, 2019). Those studies show that literature studies have developed dynamically and provide a breakthrough regarding the studies of contemporary perspective literature. This literature is expected to be able to contribute greatly to the development of the world of humanities. Thus, literature is now a cross-disciplinary studies and no longer only a monodisciplinary studies.

Starting from the presentation, this study aims to explore Indonesian literature by using traditional knowledge perspectives. There are only a few studies of traditional knowledge in literature because literary studies are usually related to the cytic. In addition, the study of traditional knowledge in literature is not very popular. Traditional knowledge is a scientific discipline in which it deals with things that are traditional, distinctive, and original in a society (Latulippe, 2015, Segupta, 2019, Menzies, 2006). Traditional knowledge is a new science in the society. Therefore, this study is considered to have proximity to anthropological and sociological contexts because traditional knowledge also about human problems in cultural and social contexts.

Traditional knowledge studies discuss things related to traditional farming methods, traditional medication, traditional social patterns, the psychology of local communities, traditional ways of fishing, and traditional parenting patterns. All things in traditional knowledge are peculiarities of a traditional society so that they cannot be found in other societies or have similarities with others. Thus, the similarity of traditional knowledge contained in one community with other communities, can be the same or different with different names.

Methodology

This research leads to literary approach using qualitative method. Through this qualitative method, the researcher exposes, explains, and describes the results of the analysis using narration. As qualitative studies, Astalin (2013: 1-2) showed that the framework is more on narrative-based data than numbers. The narrative framework is expected to be able to build a comprehensive studies in research. The studies used Indonesian contemporary novels as data source. The novel are *Laskar Pelangi* (2005) and *Maryamah Karpov* (2008) by Andrea Hirata and *Partikel* (2016) by Dewi Lestari. Those novels are chosen because they are about traditional knowledge.

Data analysis techniques that are used in this study through the following stages (1) the stage of identifying data by conducting intensive readings of the data used; (2) the stage of classifying data by selecting and sorting data. Selected data is entered in a table and encoded; (3) data reduction stage. At this stage the researcher sorted out the data and used what is needed; and (4) the stage of exposure. At this stage the researcher analyzed the data and described it.

Discussion

Novel as a literature is the result of the author's thoughts. The results of these thoughts are from the real world which are represented in the literature world. That way, literature cannot be separated from the real world as its mimetio. In the novel of *Laskar Pelangi* (2005), Hirata brought out traditional knowledge from the life's pattern of the characters in the novel. Some people in Sumatra are traditional fishermen. So, there is a traditional knowledge about boats. The life of being a fisherman cannot be separated from life that is very near to the sea, boats, fishes, nets, waves, and also the weather. Traditional fishing communities are people who rely more on nature as a form of traditional mindset. This traditional mindset is considered traditional knowledge. Through traditional knowledge, fishing communities learn how to become strong fishermen in facing the challenges in the ocean. Related to traditional knowledge about boats, *Laskar Pelangi* brings three things which are related to traditional knowledge.

First, knowledge of boats for children. In *Laskar Pelangi*, the character of Lintang appears as a boy who was an expert on boats. When he was a little kid, he was able to show his expertise in the field of

boats. He had been able to make a good boat design. In fact, he made a boat design using sago midribs (Hirata, 2005: 106). As a traditional person, Lintang was a boy who learned and understood everything about a boat so that since he was a little kid, he was able to design a boat. The technical calculations were also good so that the design of the boat he made could be used and the boat could move on the water. He also did not use modern media to make the boat. Lintang used sago midrib as its medium. This showed that he was able to design a boat using natural materials.

Second, traditional knowledge about boat history. In the international community, pirates are known as scary and evil blackmailers, so is in Laskar Pelangi. The pirates were the most disliked character by the fishermen because they could only stole the things from the fishermen. Historically, Sumatrans were known as experts in sailing. Therefore, they got the nickname as an accomplished sailor. They sailed and ruled the sea. As sailor, they were greatly feared by the pirates. In Sumatran terms, they were called 'lanun'. (Hirata, 2005, p. 243). This shows that Sumatrans with their fleets were feared and respected by people.

Third, traditional knowledge of boat making. In Laskar Pelangi, the characters in the novel understood the character of the trees. The character of the trees was related to the understanding of boat making. If making a boat without considering the character of the trees, the boat might not be the expected boat because the boat might sink because the wood was not suitable or the boat was not balance. If the boat was not balance, it would cause the boat to be unstable in reality the boat was not really balance (Hirata, 2008, p. 315). Knowledge of boats is very necessary for fishermen, starting from knowledge of wood, glue, the strength of wood, to the way of painting wood. With the understanding and knowledge of the boat, fishing communities can reduce the inheritance of traditional knowledge to the next generation.

These three traditional knowledge shows the understanding of Sumatrans in relation to boats and the sea. Traditional communities who live near to the sea will study, explore, explore, and reduce traditional knowledge about boats and the sea to the next generation so that knowledge is not lost to time. As is well known, nowadays traditional knowledge of the sea is decreasing because it has been defeated by modern knowledge of the sea. In fact, traditional knowledge of boats and the sea are original and distinctive knowledge belonging to certain communities.

One of the traditional knowledge in traditional societies is related to the environment. Nowadays, literature is popular to be studied in an environmental perspective (Bunting, 2015). Literary studies related to the environment have led to many new variants in literary studies as a form of the emergence of interdisciplinary studies in literature, for example literature and environment, literature and traditional medication, literature and local knowledge of society, and literature and indigenous studies. Regarding the environmental context, one of the focus of the study in this sub-section is traditional knowledge about mushrooms. In this context, mushrooms are part of the environment of traditional community. In the novel of Partikel by Dewi Lestari brought a narrative about mushrooms. The narration of the fungus is inseparable from the traditional knowledge of the community. In this regard, there are three things related to traditional knowledge about mushrooms.

First, traditional knowledge about the type of mushrooms. Mushrooms are plants that have grown since ancient times. Mushrooms are plants that are used as a treatment. Because of this, mushrooms are considered as one of the oldest plants equivalent to moss (Metzner, 2004). Mushrooms are unique and aesthetic plants, so these plants are also considered as plants that have spiritual value. Mushrooms are also considered as plants that can cure diseases. Because of this, some traditional societies also make mushrooms as sacred plants which are categorized as god mushroom. In Partikel, mushroom appeared as plant that lived around humans, in the garden, in the forest, or in the mountains. Zarah character, a little girl who loved mushrooms. From the very beginning, when she was a little kid, she had been introduced

to mushrooms by his father. She was introduced to the nature of mushrooms, the function of mushrooms, and also the characterization of mushrooms. Starting from that, Zarah finally understood everything about mushroom, from ordinary mushrooms to extraordinary mushrooms called god mushrooms (Lestari, 2012). Traditional knowledge of the mushrooms influenced Zarah's character to love mushrooms as plants that are unique when compared to other plants.

Secondly, traditional knowledge about god mushrooms. For modern society, many people do not know that mushrooms are plants that have extraordinary benefits or powers. Mushrooms are parts of the environment have extraordinary powers and considered gods. Therefore, mushrooms are referred as god mushroom by McKenna (1993, p 33). In the Partikel, the character of Zarah which was originally only introduced by the father that mushrooms were also something that had spiritual value, over time she loved it. Zarah also thought that mushrooms were something that has magical energy called the hierophany. Zarah also considered that mushrooms are god. Because of that, Zarah worshiped mushrooms. This was revealed by her to his friends and teachers in the school (Lestari, 2012). This showed that the knowledge of modern society cannot be separated from traditional knowledge. In the life's context, Zarah and his family were people who lived in the modern world like today. However, Zarah was a different character, she still held traditional knowledge that mushrooms are representations of gods.

Conclusion

Indonesian literature as other universal literature, it contains traditional knowledge. Traditional knowledge elements in Indonesian literature appear in two segments. First, traditional knowledge about boats (how to make boats, the history of boats, and the materials used to make boats). Second, traditional knowledge about mushrooms (mushrooms as medicinal plants and gods). Based on the findings, it appears that literature also strengthens the existence of traditional knowledge that has been passed down from the ancestors to the descendants.

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