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## FUNCTION, MEANING, AND MESSAGE OF THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT IN THE STORY OF KEONG MAS

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## **FUNCTION, MEANING, AND MESSAGE OF THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT IN THE STORY OF *KEONG MAS***

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### **ABSTRACT**

This research discusses the meaning and function of the natural environment in one folk tale that is well known in the Javanese community. This folktale is known in all circles of society, despite having social differences. An interesting problem in this folklore is the placement of functions and environmental meanings as the main elements of stories or tales. The focus of this research is to raise the function and meaning of the natural environment contained in one story of Keong Mas. This study aims to explain carefully the function and meaning of the natural environment which is the background of a fairy tale. The background story that uses the natural environment as the main object of the story often gets no attention. In the story of Keong Mas, it is precisely the setting that contains the natural environment that has functions and meanings that are very important to understand. This study uses a qualitative research paradigm procedure, which gives researchers the opportunity to interpret available data. The results of the study show that the story of Keong Mas is not just an ordinary folktale. Keong Mas folklore has a very specific story setting, which is a particular natural environment. Keong Mas or Pila ampullacea are animals that can live on land or in water. Rural communities who live on the banks of the river by cultivating crops such as rice, can find these types of animals around their environment. No wonder this animal is an inspiration to make a story in the background of the natural environment in the countryside

**KEYWORDS:** story, function, environment, meaning, message.

### **INTRODUCTION**

In the perspective of some experts, folklore is part of people's lives. Ancient folklore was delivered verbally, but after the community became familiar with the tradition of writing, so many folktales were made into written stories. Through technology writing, folklore can be documented as a cultural heritage (Agus Hartanto, 2010). In the development of people's lives, folklore is not only a simple story, but a story behind it which is full of the meanings and thoughts of its people. Traditional people think that folklore is the easiest means of communication to convey messages from generation to generation. That's why people in all ways convey messages through stories that are adapted to the natural environment.

The tradition of society in everyday life shows that people choose a location for living, based on the thought to fulfill their needs. As creatures that live in the world, people need food, shelter and clothing. These three needs have resulted in the community surviving in one

particular place of residence and trying, not only to fulfill their needs but also to pass on this knowledge to the next generation. The result arises what is called knowledge. At a certain age, knowledge includes knowledge of natural conditions and its surroundings, such as animals, plants, natural conditions, such as rain, storms, dry seasons and so on. But besides that there is also knowledge related to the body and social conditions of humans, such as knowledge of the health of the human body, kinship systems, social systems and so on (Achmad Warsidi, 2009).

In an effort to maintain the sustainability of human life, various ways are taken so that people can pass on things that are considered important in human life. In this day and age human effort to pass on all of his knowledge which is considered to be able to support his life is considered a cultural heritage. Cultural heritage is not only one but many cultural heritages, and one of them is folklore. Folk stories fall into groups of literary works. Literary works are filled with local wisdom values from the community. According to James Danandjaja (2007) folklore is indeed widely known by the public. In general, folklore can be grouped into three parts, namely folklore that is mythical, legendary, and fairy tale. Keong Mas folklore belongs to a fairy tale group. This folklore is a cultural heritage that lives from generation to generation. Until now the story of Keong Mas is still always attracting public attention.

This research tries to explore aspects of function and meaning that explicitly or implicitly become the main message of this Keong Mas folklore. Actually one story has two functions. The main function of the story is as a means of entertainment. The second function of one story is as a means of education. In traditional societies, stories that have a function as entertainment, of course, prioritize the description of characters who are ideal in their time. Especially in traditional Javanese society which is very strong in adhering to patrilineal thinking. Character figures must be in accordance with the applicable traditional rules (Alina Razak 2006). On the other hand the story not only serves as entertainment but also as a means of education. As a means of education folklore is filled with values of local wisdom about the various kinds of things that are to be conveyed from generation to generation. As a means of education, it is indeed not easy to understand the local wisdom behind a folklore. Especially in the situation of the development of Javanese culture, which prioritizes the principle of life in harmony, harmony and balance, in achieving a purpose in life.

Some important studies about Keong Mas have already been done. However, from a number of studies, the aspects of the function and meaning of the natural environment contained in the Keong Mas story often do not get attention. Irawati Setyoningsih (2009) conducted a study that discussed the processing of Keong Mas's theme in designing textile motifs and Muslim clothing design concepts that used the Keong Mas motif. Nurul Saidah and Adi Nursito (2013) discussed the role of character stories in fairy tales that cannot be separated from the attitude of life of the local community. Retnowati and Endang Ernawati (2017) who discussed the naratological structure or story style in the Keong Mas fairy tale as proof that a literary work cannot stand alone, but there is one part related to local history.

This research is an attempt to explain, that there is one thing hidden behind the function and meaning of this Keong Mas folklore. The knowledge that is to be conveyed to the younger generation is knowledge based on experience in the lives of local people, but how to convey it is indeed not easy. The way to deliver it does look very simple but understanding

the things hidden behind the delivery is very complicated (Indah Kristuti 2007). There are two knowledge that you want to convey. The first is knowledge about the function of the natural environment reflected in the story of Keong Mas. Second, the meaning of the natural environment reflected in the story of Keong Mas.

This research is an interdisciplinary study of literature and culture. Research that discusses the function and meaning of the natural environment in this Keong Mas story is a study that involves the approach of story texts as an oral literature. Then in the former oral literature there is a storyline that contains a series of events complete with story characters and story settings. It is through this character and story setting that deepening critical analysis is conducted to find the meaning behind the use of the natural environment in the story.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

In tracing the function and meaning of the natural environment in one folk tale, this study uses a qualitative research paradigm procedure. Qualitative research is research that utilizes all data collected by inductive and deductive methods. The data can be intrinsic or extrinsic. By using qualitative research, researchers can interpret the available data, especially in relation to research on oral literature (Moleong, Lexy J, 2000).

To complete the analysis of the content of the story, a review of the structure of the story in which there is a storyline is needed. The storyline contains a series of events related to the character of the story and the background of the story (Nurgiyantoro, 2002). To understand it as a whole, the function and meaning of folklore also requires an approach to the natural environment reflected in literary works. With the eco-literary approach it is intended that the functions and meanings of the natural environment in folklore can be fully understood as a cultural monument (Garrard G 2004). Furthermore, the function and meaning of the natural environment will be analyzed philosophically based on the local wisdom of the local community (Keraf S 2014).

## **FUNCTION AND MEANING OF KEONG MAS FOLKLORE**

### **Structure of the Keong Mas folklore**

Like most folklore in the world, that is always created from the ideas of the people of the culture. Folk stories are created from the experiences of everyday life, which then imprints on the mind and perspective on social life. Folk stories are created with one structure of thought is the way people see things. As in general, the story always starts with a flow of life in which there is a shelf of events involving the character of the story. The selection of story characters is certainly adjusted to the idealism of society towards something. In a folk tale the character of the story is adapted to the cultural background of the community (M. Subekti 2006).

For Keong Mas fairy tales, the main character that is always considered wise and able to provide a good example is the character of an old woman. Old female characters are created as characters that are able to provide protection. The character of the old woman was

created because in the public mind an old woman is a character who has very much life experience. By having a very long life experience, the character is considered to have a patient nature, full of affection and is able to appreciate fellow beings.

In general, the character of this old woman is usually given the identity of mbok randa. As its equivalent, for the character of this old woman, a companion character was created which is the character of young women who face life's difficulties. This old woman's character will be a protector for the character of a young woman. The whole series of events in the story has a background that is adapted to the character of the story. Story background, everything happens in a natural environment that is very familiar with the life of the people supporting the story. The natural environment raised in the Keong Mas story is the riverbank area, the river with its contents, namely water and rocks, and the environment around the river namely rice fields, forests and agricultural areas, as well as the seasons of the rainy and dry seasons. Description of everyday life, the community associated with the natural environment is manifested in the form of stories that have a connection between character traits and the natural environment in the story (Iskandar W. 2010).

### **Function of Keong Mas Folklore**

In general, folklore actually has a certain standard. The same thing happened to the Keong Mas folklore. Pakem or benchmark story from this folktale, is divided into two parts. The first part is the story must be in the form of a fairy tale that provides inner and outer entertainment. The meaning is folklore, must have any elements related to the real life of everyday society, while the inner entertainment of folklore must have elements related to desires or hopes or ideals in the life of the people supporting the story. Arranging a story that gives birth and inner satisfaction to the community is indeed not easy, because this is related to the cultural conditions of the community (Endraswara S 2016).

Keong Mas folklore is also formed in one standard. With the formation of a standard, the folklore of the Keong Mas is not only famous in ancient times, but is also well known today. Use folklore that has been ingrained in the community supporting this story, making this rakyat Keong Mas story able to penetrate space and time for quite a long time. Thus the story of Keong Mas is not just a function of birth entertainment but also an inner entertainment for the community. Expertise composes a standard story that can penetrate space and time long enough because people are aware of raising local wisdom that exists in their environment, especially the natural environment. Apart from functioning as an inner and outer entertainment, the story of Keong Mas also functions as a means of education. As a means of education the story of Keong Mas explains about the natural conditions of human habitation, if it is not properly maintained it will cause a big problem, namely natural disasters that afflict human life.

In the story that tells the life of the people in the countryside, it is illustrated that the story of Keong Mas occurred in a very long dry season and caused drought in the entire village. Water in rivers and lakes dries, many plants die from being hit by torrid weather, resulting in crop failures in all villages. The consequence is that people's lives are very difficult. Mbok Randa, who is usually able to fulfill her daily needs by selling at the market,

is now unable to sell anymore, and even Randa must eat tubers because of the difficulty in getting the main food. After working hard to face a very dry weather situation and always pray to God, finally an event came that could bring about changes in the weather, namely the fall of rain. The fall of heavy rain was marked by the meeting of Keong Mas or Limaran with her husband. Since this time the river has started to flow profusely, the lake has begun to fill with water, plants have begun to grow and animals have started to appear on the river. The atmosphere of life and the natural environment returned to normal. Thus the story of Keong Mas has an educational function for every human being to care for and maintain the natural environment where humans live on earth.

### **The Meaning of Keong Mas**

Besides having a function, this Keong Mas story also has a meaning behind the story. The main meaning behind this Keong Mas story is 2 things. The first meaning is to exercise patience. Humans are creatures that have properties that are not unlimited. This means that humans have good, bad, sad, happy, angry, happy and others. In everyday life, this trait will arise when someone interacts with other people. In interacting with others, conflicts of interest arise that often make someone show their true nature. The ability to control physical behavior and emotional behavior is the main thing in human life. Through the example, the life of story characters such as mbok randa, which in the story must struggle to face the vicious weather changes and damage to the natural environment, is expected that people who listen to this story can realize that life is not easy. Examples of characters that are described as having a patient nature, being able to control feelings and always reversing all the difficulties they face to God. In interacting with other people, randa is able to love Limaran who lives in her house even though she is also having trouble.

The second meaning is to practice respecting the lives of humans and other creatures. Javanese people believe that living in a natural environment must pay attention to the elements in the natural environment. The community must realize that the natural environment and its contents are the main buffer for the needs of human life. Therefore, the natural environment available on earth must be considered carefully in using it. The natural environment consists of soil, water, air, and the fire of its manifestations can be in various forms. For example water will be found in rivers, lakes and seas. The land forms land that is sloping or hilly or mountainous. For air, it can be in the form of wind gusts, and the easiest fire is to see the glowing lava that is still burning. Furthermore, the community must also realize that there are plants and animals that also live on earth. Plants and animals form an ecosystem of life in the environment that contributes to the needs of human life. The Javanese people adhere to the idea that the natural environment in its entirety must not be treated arbitrarily. There must be a limit that is obeyed by every member of the community. Therefore look for ways that people can remember and realize that maintaining the natural environment is very important for human life on earth (Ismail Daryono 2005).

For the Javanese people, natural conditions can be an inspiration for the creation of a story. The first step used is usually to make a complete whole story called the standard. Through this standard, it was later developed into a whole story about the life of the Javanese

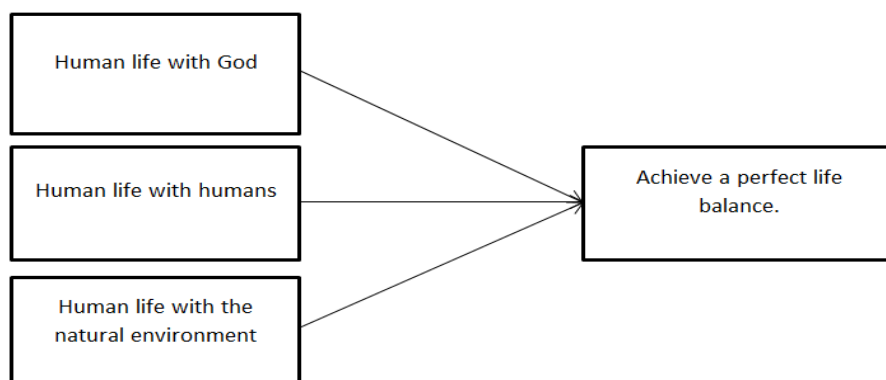


people. By realizing that the element of the natural environment is very important for human life, it is hoped that people will want to maintain the conditions of the natural environment, do not damage arbitrarily. The story is usually made in a standard which can be developed in various versions provided the red thread is not changed. This kind of story is then widely used to raise issues that exist in society. One of them is the problem of the natural environment.

### **The Message of the Story of Keong Mas**

As in most folklore, the Keong story also has a message to be conveyed to the people. In the form of story structure, this Keong Mas story has one form of storyline which is referred to as a forward flow. In certain parts there is indeed a flashback or highlight path behind the story. But the highlight of the story is actually used to explain that this story is part of Panji's story. As a folklor, the Keong Mas story has many variants of the story. That's because folklore like the conch story is folklore can be used as a propaganda tool. This happens because messages in folklore such as Keong Mas stories can be included in certain messages for the community.

The Keong Mas story is a story widely known by Javanese people. Some people say that this story is part of Panji's story. There has been a lot of research on the Panji story itself, while the story of Keong Mas itself has many variants of the story. In the work of the satra or the story there is always a message and meaning in it. Message is all forms of communication, both verbal and non verbal. The message can be delivered verbally or in writing (Barsimal Djuwita 2003). Messages can be symbols, signals, or other forms that can be understood by the recipient community. In one story the message is entered in accordance with the interests to be conveyed. Keong Mas's story wants to convey a moral message about, human life related to God, human life that is related to humans and human life related to the natural environment. If illustrated in the form of a diagram it will be like this



*Diagram 1:  
Achieve a perfect life balance.*

This diagram shows that the first moral message shows that human life is always related to God as the creator. God is a strength that is the hope of humans to get help. Humans as God's creatures placed on earth are encouraged to ask only God for help. Therefore there is a relationship that occurs between humans and those who create humans. The second moral message is the relationship between humans and humans. Humans cannot live alone. Humans live with their respective groups. Humans in their daily lives interact with other humans, or humans need each other. That's why humans develop in one of their respective cultural groups. The third moral message is that humans in their lives on earth need a natural environment. This condition of the natural environment supports all human life. Both those that are the main needs and those that are further need (Margono Asmanto 2007).

These three moral messages show that humans already have knowledge of human beings, human life itself and the natural environment that is a buffer for their lives. This knowledge is a clue that through the Keong Mas folklore, the community already has a very comprehensive way of thinking and a very broad perspective in placing their lives as the ultimate creatures of God. With this diagram it can be seen that the main moral message to be conveyed is to achieve a perfect life balance.

## **CONCLUSION**

A story has a dual function, which functions as entertainment, and functions as a means for education. As a folklore that functions for entertainment, the story is created not only as physical entertainment but also as an inner entertainment. Through these stories all the hopes, desires and ideals that exist in society are included in either explicitly or implicitly. In addition to functions there is also meaning. A folklor is created with the meaning behind the story.

The story line that contains a series of events shows that there is a long journey to understand each meaning behind the series of events. The meaning can be seen from a series of events that are related to each other. The main meaning behind Keong Mas's story is to exercise patience for each individual in the face of trials. The last part of this story is the moral message behind the story of Keong Mas. The main moral message that exists is that humans must be able to achieve a perfect life balance. This needs to be realized because humans cannot live without the natural environment that exists on earth. Humans must also realize that the natural environment on earth is the main buffer for human life and inner life on earth.



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