

**LITERATURE AS A SOURCE OF TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE: THE ECOCRITICAL STUDY OF BALI AGA FOLKLORE****Ida Ayu Laksmi Sari**

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**DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.2528762****Abstract**

The Bali Aga community has many folktales that are still known until nowadays. More than just a tale for entertainment or solace, the stories told from generation to generation also convey moral teachings and life advice. This paper analyzed the Balinese Aga folklore by identifying the traditional knowledge contained in it. The object of the research is the folklore of Bali Aga collected in the book *Ceritera Rakyat Bali: Desa Tenganan, Pedawa, Tigawasa* (1987). The focus of the analysis is on the forms and benefits of traditional knowledge contained in the story, especially those relating to living livelihoods and those that are useful for preserving nature. The text is analyzed using ecocritical studies, an approach that analyzes literary texts with a multidisciplinary environmental approach. This paper concludes that Balinese folklore contains a lot of traditional knowledge that people live and practice as skills for livelihoods and maintain their harmonious relationship with nature.

**Keywords:** folktale, Bali Aga, traditional knowledge, ecocritic**Introduction**

Folk stories do not only function as entertainment or solace but also as a means of understanding the values and local knowledge that is owned and used by the community. This paper takes the object of Balinese folklore research in the anthology of *Ceritera Rakyat Bali: Desa Tenganan, Tigawasa, Pedawa* (1987) and several stories from resource persons that contain elements of local knowledge related to nature.

This paper aims to provide an overview of the use of natural resources as revealed in the Bali Aga folklore. Geertz states that traditional societies have great knowledge about nature to the extent that the knowledge is related to the well-being of their lives (Geertz, 2003: 138). This empirical knowledge is certainly obtained through a very long process including trial and error. Knowledge gained based on their later experience is widely disseminated, inherited in a cross-generation manner. One media that effectively inherits local knowledge is through folklore.

This paper discusses what traditional knowledge is contained in Balinese folklore; how folklore describes people's dependence on nature; how people interact and preserve nature as a source of life; and how is the narrative structure in conveying stories and traditional knowledge about nature or livelihoods sourced from nature.

**Approaches and Methods**

In this study, the text was analyzed using an ecocritical approach, an approach that analyzes literary texts with a multidisciplinary environmental approach (Glottfelty and Fromm, 1996; Oppermann, 1999). The idea of an ecocritical approach began to emerge in the 1970s, which was later strengthened in the 1990s with the emergence of a collection of books written by The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology (1996) edited with Cheryll Glottfelty and Harold Fromm. Cheryll Glottfelty writes that "ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment" (1996: xviii). In his analysis, the application of ecocritics questions various matters relating to nature and the environment, for example how natural wisdom is expressed in literature; does the metaphor about the environment present the meaning of the importance of nature conservation; and how literature builds care for the ecological crisis.



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The ecocritical approach opens up innovative ways of interpreting literature. Oppermann (1999: 15) stated that all this time, literary criticism considered more about the cultural dimensions of text. As the cultural dimension of society is determined by environmental issues (nature), so that the understanding of cultural dimensions and environmental dimensions in the analysis of literary works need to be integrated. Ecocritics presents to integrate cultural-criticism and ecocritical approaches.

Based on the arguments from ecocritics, the object of research in the form of Bali Aga folklore, especially Tigawasa and Pedawa Village, Buleleng Regency, was discussed by observing the themes, topics, or discourses related to the nature told in the story. The analysis was carried out on the meaning of the expressions and messages implied explicitly and implicitly behind the story. The meaning of textual analysis was reached by examining the narratives about nature reflecting local wisdom in preserving nature and the environment.

### Discussion

A total of 15 stories from 59 titles in the *Ceritera Rakyat Bali: Desa Tenganan, Tigawasa, Pedawa* which were the object of this research (see table) show a variety of traditional knowledge of the community related to the livelihoods and natural breeding and its contents. The story, for example, illustrates how to grow rice, uses sap for making sugar, and hunting techniques.

*Tables of Pedawa and Tigawasa Folklore*

Number	Title	Village	Activity	Local Knowledge
1.	<i>I Rasa</i>	Tigawasa	Planting rice with intermittent plants: corn, cassava, taro, ginger, <i>kencur</i> , <i>botor</i> , pumpkin, <i>ucu</i> , peanuts, red beans, sweet potatoes, <i>biyaung</i> , <i>jawa</i> , <i>jail</i> , <i>godem</i> .	Farming
2.	<i>Celeng Alasan Ngamatiang Macan</i>	Pedawa		
3.	<i>Pan Tumpit</i>	Pedawa		
4.	<i>Pan Sudama</i>	Tigawasa	Making sugar and palm wine from the sap tree	Domestic industry
5.	<i>I Culung</i>	Pedawa		
6.	<i>Satua Anak Matuwakan</i>	Pedawa		
7.	<i>Dane Banjah</i>	Tigawasa	Hunting animals with a tool called <i>tulup</i> and bullet named <i>getah ancar</i>	Hunting skills
8.	<i>Pan Pagut</i>	Tigawasa		
9.	<i>I Culung</i>	Tigawasa		
10.	<i>I Racen Nampah Samong</i>	Pedawa		
11.	<i>I Belog</i>	Tigawasa	Proposing a girl, and being eaten as a tooth strengthener	Various betel functions
12.	<i>Men Lenggeroh</i>	Tigawasa		
13.	<i>I Calang</i>	Tigawasa	Catching shrimp and eel with <i>bubu</i> and <i>tuba</i>	Fishing skills
14.	<i>I Gesah Ring Ni Gesih</i>	Pedawa		
15.	<i>Cening Belog</i>	Pedawa		

In the table, it appears that folklore related to traditional knowledge is known in various villages of Bali Aga. In Pedawa Village, for example, there is a story called "I Culung" and "Satua Anak Matuwakan" which contain knowledge about how to make sugar from the sap. How to grow rice with intercropping or alternating with *palawija* (secondary crops) is found in several stories known in Pedawa and Tigawasa Village.

While listening to the stories of Bali Aga, the reader do not only gets to know the life stories of the characters in the narrative world, but also gets to know the local knowledge of Bali Aga that is still practiced in everyday life.



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In the stories studied, farming or catching animals does not mean exploitation, but preserving them in order to provide sustainable results.

The following two stories were discussed specifically with ecocritics to show how a folktale contains knowledge of life skills. The two stories are *I Rasa* from Tigawasa Village and *Satua Anak Matuwakan* (Story of making palm wine) from Pedawa Village. Both of these stories reflect the livelihoods of some people in both villages. That is, folklore that is a part of the oral tradition, which has existed for a long time, continuously reflecting the dynamics of the socio-cultural life of the community.

The story *I Rasa* tells about how to plant rice *gaga*, season-dependent rice. The following quotation shows the details of the process of planting rice *gaga* or *ngaga*.

*Ubakéto was men amene nyilih kuum pagagaan. Baanga kéndésané... Apan melah bikas I Rasané kéto ngaga lantás ya ngabasin men ya. Ubaya ngabas ngetuhang abasan lantás ya. Ubatuh abasané ngenjutin lantásya, ubaya ngenjutin gagané to, ngarabag men ya, uba galang gagané, nyilih men padi kén pisagané kalpamulana, ubamaan ya nyilih padi, ngingsak men ya. Ubaya najuk antinga men padiné to, ngaekubu menya di gagané, uba pragat kubuné, ditu men ya nongos di gagané.*

*Mamula-mulaen man ya ditu, mamula jagung, kesawi, keladi kenang jaé cekuh. Bin botor, waluh, ucu tekéning kacang, undis bin ubi, biyaung, jawa, jail, godem, to sakancan isin gagané, mekejang pamulana kén I Rasa ayang méméné* (Rata et al., 1987: 62—65).

Translation:

After that he left to borrow the forest for planting. Permitted by villagers ... Because of I Rasa's good behavior in planting rice. He started to clean the land. After it is dry, then he burns it, then cleaned it again, then he borrows the rice seedlings from his neighbors to plant, then he stomps (trampling on the rice). Then he plants the rice and waits for the rice, makes a stronghold in the rice fields, after finishing, he lives in the rice fields.

He plants corn, cassava, taro and ginger, then *botor*, pumpkin, *ucu* and peanuts, red beans, sweet potatoes, *biyaung*, *jawa*, *jail*, *godem*, all kinds of things in rice fields, all planted by I Rasa and his mother.

In the past, the residents of Bali Aga Village used the *ngaga* (intercropping) method to grow rice and other crops. Simpen A.B explains in sufficient detail on the book *Catur Desa* about the process of *ngaga*. The process of *ngaga* begins with finding *pegagan* forest (Simpen AB, 1986: 16).

The process begins in the second month in Balinese Calendar (*sasih karo*). After the *walukustar* (*tenggala*) is seen, 7 days later they begin to *nakdak* (clean the forest), after it is cleaned, the land is dried for a month. When it is dry then it is burned. When they are about to burn it, they will first plant a *puhung* (bamboos consist of water and being plugged around). After that it is burned with the saying “*enduh sempulung, enduh sempulung, enduh sempulung*” for three times. This is intended to make invisible spirits move away from there. The next day, the remains of unburned wood are burned again. The work is called as *ngrabag*.

On the fifth month or the beginning of the sixth month, the community will start planting rice. The first thing to do is *ngingsak*, which is to stomp on the rice to be made as grain. After they have grain, they will *nganjan*, asking for a help from young people to *metajuk* (planting the rice). To supervise the paddy later, they make a *ranggon* (hut), about 5 meters high, containing halls as a place to sit (Simpen AB, 1986: 17-18).

Plants that accompany rice also vary as in the text, I Rasa plants corn, cassava, taro, ginger, *kencur*, *botor*, pumpkin, *ucu*, peanuts, red beans, sweet potatoes, *biyaung*, *jawa*, *jail*, and *godem*. In a village ceremony, only rice originating from this process of *ngaga* can be offered at the temple. Planting rice by the process of *ngaga* (intercropping) is very dependent on rain so this method has been abandoned. In addition, from an economic standpoint, many people have switched to growing coffee or cloves (Interview, 8 April 2017). If later this process of *ngaga* is no longer practiced in people's lives, but the knowledge of *ngaga* is still stored in the folklore.



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The *Satua Anak Matuwakan* text (Story of making palm wine) is a story from Pedawa Village. This text is interesting because in the title there is the word "satua" but the story inside is not a narrative but an exposition.

*Malu ngalih dangul aggen mangulin jakané totona. Uba mabangul, mara penéke jakané totona, teked ya babuan, telaina dangul pujiné totona, pah-pah jakané totona gediange, madan mahpahang. Mara man dangul jakané e totona, telahina, madan melutang. Ubakento, mara man yanebukang. Nebukangé totona ngalimang dina, sebelah dina manis, dadine bukange totona. Ada ba pang pitu, pang kutus liuna, mara man melah tugelang jakané totona, dadi pujiné ulung man. Di puncuk dangulé totona pesu tuwak...(Rata et al., 1987:122).*

Translation:

First of all [the palm wine maker] looks at the palm trees which have *dangul* (palm fruit stalks) to be used as a source of palm wine. After the *dangul* is found on a palm tree, then the tree is climbed, up to the top, then the *dangul* is cleansed, then is tied. This is called as the *mahpahang* process (cleaning the petals process). After that, the *dangul* is enumerated, enumerated every five days, every *Umanis* day (5 cycle day in Balinese Calendar). After doing it seven / eight time, then get a nice palm oil. At the top of the *dangul* it will trickle down wine.

In the story of *Satua Anak Matuwakan*, there are no figures or conflicts in it, only steps in how people in Pedawa Village make palm wine and make *nira* sugar. In fact, there is also explained about the sale of sugar in the market and the price. The entire contents of the text are social knowledge aspects of Pedawa community life, but the title is called 'satua' (story). Anyone who reads this story will get knowledge of how to make palm wine starting from the tree to making it as sugar. The palm wine here is made not for drinking, but for making sugar.

There are special terms in the process, i.e. *mahpahang*, *melutang*. After describing how to make palm wine, it is described how to make sugar, with a process that is quite detailed including the length of time to cook palm wine into sugar. The typical palm sugar of Pedawa Village has a distinctive taste, currently (2017) the price of sugar is Rp35,000/kg. It is more expensive Rp5,000-10,000, - compared to palm sugar in other regions. The farmers in Pedawa Village make palm sugar as their breakfast accompanied by a cup of coffee. At the present the expertise in making palm sugar is still inherited from generation to generation, but many Pedawa Village youths are reluctant to work on this job (Interview, 8 April 2017).

From an ecocritical point of view, the stories above clearly show the natural and cultural dimension because what is told is not only how the community cultivates but also how the tradition or agrarian culture is promoted and practiced by the community. At this point it is possible to portray that the Bali Aga folklore describes the local knowledge as an integral part of the narrative.

## Conclusion

This study concludes that Balinese folklore contains a lot of traditional knowledge that people live and practice as skills for livelihoods and maintain their harmonious relationship with the nature. From the 15 examples of stories and two stories specifically analyzed show that the nature is not merely a place of living but also a source of life that is conserved so that it can become a source of sustainable livelihoods. From the ecocritical point of view, this folklore successfully reflects the awareness of how important nature is to humans as a source of life.

In this story a reader gets two interesting matters. First, the reader gets the story of the characters and their livelihood knowledge. Second, the reader gets a close connection between nature and human culture. In short, it can be emphasized that the folklore of Bali Aga has distinctive characteristics, namely as a narrative that presents stories as well as local knowledge related to the nature, especially as a source of livelihood and life in general.

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