
NARRATIVE FUNCTIONS IN BATU KARANG SERIBU FOLKTALE

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the study is to analyze *Batu Karang Seribu* using theory from Vladimir Propp. *Batu Karang Seribu* is one of the tourist destinations particularly in Kundi village West Bangka Regency hence it is important to study the folktales surrounding it to enhance the site's popularity. This study applies descriptive qualitative research method using a content analysis approach. This study employs certain characteristics of Propp's narrative model and applied them in the folklore which aim at finding the morphological reading of the narrative functions. The data were gathered and identified according to the forms of narrative functions. All the categorized contents were analyzed based on the narrative functions and symbols. Based on the analysis, there are 11 functions found in the story. There were the function of Absentation (β^1), Delivery (ζ), Reconnaissance (ε), Trickery (η^3), Complicity (θ^1), Villainy (A^{14}), Meditation (B^4), provision of a magical agent (F^6), Guidance (G^4), struggle (H), and Transfiguration (T). In short, the function is as follows: $\beta^1\zeta\varepsilon\eta^3\theta^1A^{14}B^4F^6G^4HT$. The function of Struggle (H) and Transfiguration (T) is unusual since the villain is not the one who have combat with the hero but a new character, *Pahit Lidah*. He defeats the hero by transforming him into a stone.

1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a vast country which comprise of more than 17.000 island and over 700 indigenous languages (Ethnologue, 2024). It illustrates the complexity of the nation and the numerous culture which inhibit the country. In spite of its challenges, the country contains scores of treasures in the form of the abundant number of cultures due to its vastness of its ethnicity. Ethnic groups in Indonesia have references to norms originating from their respective cultures, which are known as local cultural wisdom. Local cultural wisdom is reflected in the attitudes and views of people's lives in everyday life (Budiana et al., 2022).

One of local cultural wisdom in Indonesia is reflected in its folklore. No one can deny that the aforementioned country has abundant number of folklores. As a matter of fact, research on such topic is limited due to the difficulties in documentation of folklore in Indonesia. It is arguable that this country is lack of folklore documentation but the presence of limited research on the matter strengthens the negative opinion. Probably, the lack of

documentation is due to the nature of the folklore itself as a form of oral literature. Folklore is classified as oral literature because it is spread orally from time to time and from generation to generation. There are several definitions of oral literature, one of which is stated by Hutomo (Hutomo, 1991) that oral literature includes the literary expression of citizens of a culture that is spread and transmitted orally. On our mind, we might think that it is not always stories that passed down from our ancestor, that is why Rafiek (Rafiek, 2015) included folk tales, riddles, proverbs, folk songs, mythology and legends as a form of folklore.

Not only is it considered as a product of ethnic wisdom, folklore also performs as social functions such as a means of education, as a projection system; as a means of ratifying social institutions; and as a means of monitoring so that community norms are always adhered to and implemented by the local community (Hasanuddin et al., 2020). Criticizing a member of a community is more acceptable using folk tale rather than outright, in the face of criticism since folklore is not impersonal (Siegel, 1979). In accordance with Hasanuddin, Danandjaja, it is stated that the function of folklore which reflects traditional aspects are: (1) as a means of validating cultural institutions and institutions; (2) as a means of coercion and control so that the norms of society will always be obeyed by its collective members; (3) as a child education tool or pedagogical device (Danandjaja, 1994). Two things similar from Hasanudin and Danandjaja are the function of folklore as a tool to control over society and a tool to educate community's next generation.

Our discussion on folklore made its way into the function of it, but people might forget what the folklore truly means. Folklore was taken from the French term *Volksmarchen*, which means literary fairy tales. What makes fairy tales and folklore different is that scholars of the English language frequently use folktales to describe stories or tales from oral tradition, while fairy tales are intended to describe written stories or tales (Giolláin, 2014), (Haase, 1950), (Hammond et al., 2008). Having the case as an oral literature, folklore seems undocumented properly. The anonymity of folklore carrier makes it hard to identify the true original story of a certain folklore. Moreover, having the rules of its own,

folklore is far from reality, or one can claim that in folklore, reality is twisted and depicted in an unusual way, and this is what makes folklore interesting and attractive (Zamani, 2022).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Attractive yet difficult to digest, folklores have puzzled academia for many decades. Vladimir Propp (1895-1970) tried to study a part of folklore which is folk tales to identify its theme. He analyzed many of Russian fairy tales in order to identify common themes within them. He broke down the fairy tales into thirty-one “functions” that comprised the structure of many of the fairy tales (Dogra, 2017). He tried to broke down folktales into its component in order to define its theme.

“If we are incapable of breaking the tale into its components, we will not be able to make a correct comparison. And if we do not know how to compare, then how can we throw light upon, for instance, Indo-Egyptian relationships, or upon the relationships of the Greek fable to the Indian, etc.?” (Propp, 1968)

The practices of Propp are still being used worldwide and now are termed as morphology of folktale. Propp described that morphology in relation with folktale is the description of the tale according to its component parts and the relationship of these components to each other and to the whole (Propp, 1968). It is correct that Propp morphology mainly used as a tool to analyze folklore; but it is not only able to analyze folktale, Propp morphology is also applicable to be implemented to current novel such as Harry Potter Novels. Nurjanah & Shofa believe that J.K. Rowling’s novels which widely accepted as postmodern literary works are still relevant to Propp’s morphologic model of narrative functions approach. In short, Propp’s theory is applicable for the study of narrative not only for folktale but also other literary genres (Nurjanah & Shofa, 2023).

System of analysis from Propp is useful to identify theme of folk tales around the world. One of which is the study of Igbo folktales which were being analyzed by Ugwuoke & Onu. Their finding suggested that Igbo folktales comply with Propp model’s sequential

arrangement. It was also found in the study that thirty-one functions could not be anticipated to transpire in a story since their occurrence relies on the story's context. The study further identifies reward/punishment model as one of the striking structural pattern of Igbo folktale (Ugwuoke & Onu, 2023). Analyzing folklore in Asia using Propp's model generating an interesting result for instance in the comparison of function between *Si-Tanggang* folklore from two different region, Singapore and Mauritius. The comparison reveals divergences between form and field, in that between Singapore and Mauritius, storytelling as a cultural practice differs in its moralistic, nationalistic and ecological functions. The loss of an explicit geographical link in the Singaporean iteration of *Si-Tanggang* may be explained by how storytelling in Singapore has largely shed its ecological function (Choa, 2021). Other example of applying Propp's model to folktales is the study of Indonesian Panipi War folklore. Lantowa studied the folklore then come up with results which showed twelve main narrative functions, three story patterns, and four spheres of action in the Panipi War folklore (Lantowa, 2021).

Indonesia as a vast body of people and culture is a treasure point for a folklore to emerge. The wide variety of theme in Indonesian folklore attracting academic to study it. One of the examples is a study by Maraastussoaliha who analyzed three folklores namely Temba Kolo, Putri Tujuh, and Jaka Tarub. She found out that the theme of the story can be traced back to the amount of function shown in the story. Temba Kolo and Putri Tujuh have significant number of functions compared to Joko Tarub which indicates the differences in the theme and also overall plot of the story. The difference in the number of Propp morphological functions in the three folk tales is due to the folk tale of Temba Kolo and Putri Tujuh following his wife (an angel) to the land of Kayangan and picking her up to live on Earth while the folk tale entitled Jaka Tarub does not make such an effort (Maraatussoaliha, 2023). Another study was conducted by Nursary et al which stated that in Batu Naga Lampung performs most of the Propp's function. They then divide the twenty-six function into six action environments namely criminals, donors, helpers, sons and fathers, senders and heroes (Nursari et al., 2020).

Batu Naga Lampung folklore is a story that is believed to be still developing today. Traces of the story in the story still exist, even though the form is not as it was before because of changing times. Bangka island happen to have similar condition since the folklore/folktale in this remote island is still become an essential part of the communities live. Unfortunately, insignificant folkloric study has been done in this area. One of the studies that has been done is the study of Batu Karang Seribu by Sarman. He studied the folklore using act and functional structural analysis by A.J. Greimas. The result of the study revealed that the folklore comply with the Greimas theory since the steps were carefully structured and all the characters were fully engaged in the story (Sarman, 2017). Here, the author, wants to continue the study towards Batu Karang Seribu but using different theory which is the theory from Vladimir Propp. The reason for choosing the object is that the story, in terms of documentation, in regard of oral literature, is a complete story with a clear informant. Therefore, the validity of the study will be maintained. Moreover, Batu Karang Seribu is one of the tourist destinations particularly in Kundu village West Bangka Regency hence it is important to study it thoroughly.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study applies descriptive qualitative research method using a content analysis approach. Content analysis is a scientifical study of content with refers to meanings, contexts, and intentions found in a message. It is a technique to create inferences systematically and objectively identifying specified characteristics of messages (Holsty, 1969). Moreover, this study employs certain characteristics of Propp's narrative model and applied them in the folklore which aim at finding the morphological reading of the narrative functions in the object of the study. The data were gathered and identified according to the forms of narrative functions. Then the researcher selected the contents in the novels based on Propp's model. The selections were distributed into the functions using the nomenclature symbols. Lastly, all the categorized contents were analyzed based on the narrative functions and symbols.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The story started with the initial situation, mark (α) in Propp theory, with the description of Kundi village which has fertile land and strategic location. It is located not far from the beach hence sea product such fishes were abundant. In that location, Girang king rules the village wisely. The king had a prince named *Bujang Semayong* who had a handsome stature and polite manner. Long story short, *Bujang Semayong* fell in love with Urai Emas princess which he encounters on his hunting occasion. They were finally married in the most elegant manner for seven days straight.

The first function which appears in Batu Karang Seribu is the Absentation (β) Function. The indication emerges when the main character, *Bujang Semayong*, decided to leave the house, leaving his wife and unborn child. The decision came into mind when he wanted to gain fortune to make his wife prosperous.

The days passed one after another and Dewi Urai Emas was three months pregnant, how happy Bujang Semayong was and he vowed that if his wife gave birth to a child, he would have to wear a Kemban from Songket studded with gold thread as well as a child-carrying cloth. So, Bujang Semayong said goodbye to his wife to sail to the other country to get the goods he desired (Sarman et al., 2017).

The function of absentation then can be divided due to its details such as how the hero leaves or the purpose of his absentation. In this folktale, the author suggested that the absentation of *Bujang Semayong* fall into the (β^1) category since the hero leave his wife in order to obtain wealth. The categorization of (β^1) comes with several types such as parents leave for work, prince had to go on distant journey, hero going to work, to the forest, or to the war. Other form of absentation can be in the form of the death of the parents (β^2) and member of the generation absent themselves (β^3).

The second function which appear in Batu Karang Seribu tale is Delivery (ζ). The function appeared since the information of *Bujang Semayong* return had come to villagers's ears. The information was also received by *Dewi Urai Emas* and the future villain as well.

Soon there was news from the other country, that in three days Bujang Semayong sailing ship would soon arrive and the people made preparations to welcome the arrival of Bujang Semayong which of course brought a lot of merchandise as well. The good news had reached the ears of Dewi Urai Emas and she seemed very happy to welcome the arrival of her beloved husband who had been separated and she couldn't wait to wear the gold thread-encrusted Songket that she had longed for (Sarman et al., 2017).

The villain which was discussed in this article is *Dewi Urai Emas*'s eldest sister. Unfortunately, the name of the oldest sister was never mentioned in the story. Readers are only aware that there is some sort of jealousy between the two siblings.

The third function in Batu Karang Seribu fall into Reconnaissance (ε). Reconnaissance, according to Propp, has the aim of finding out the location of the hero or something precious from villain. The villain, in this story, the eldest sister, tried to search for the information to succeed her villainous plan.

Apparently without the knowledge of Dewi Urai Emas, her eldest sister had evil intentions to kill her because she was so in love and infatuated with Bujang Semayong since long ago, so she arranged a mischievous plan. In the morning she pretended to be benevolent to her sister preparing food and everything and invited Dewi Urai Emas to go to the beach to welcome the arrival of Bujang Semayong (Sarman et al., 2017).

There are several forms of Reconnaissance (ε) such as the inverted form of reconnaissance (ε^2) and also Reconnaissance by means of other personages (ε^3). The author believes that

the above data fall into Reconnaissance (ε) since after knowing the information of *Bujang Semayong* arrival; the villain arranged a mischievous plan.

The fourth function is Trickery (η). This function happens when the villain attempts to deceive his/her victim in order to take possession or belongings. In this story, Trickery which happen is the villain uses deception or coercion (η^3). The villain set up a trap then followed *Dewi Urai Emas* to come to the addressed trap.

Not far from the beach there were two large boulders supported by wood tied with ropes and when the rope was pulled, the boulders collapsed. All of this had been arranged and planned by the eldest to get rid of Dewi Urai Emas who was walking along the beach holding her child, while her eldest sister followed closely behind pretending to joke around (Sarman et al., 2017).

Trickery can be the form of the following criteria: 1. Trickery using persuasion (η^1), 2. Trickery using magical means (η^2), and 3. Trickery using deception (η^3). On the first form of trickery (η^1), the villain mostly using a magical voice which tries to persuade the hero to commit a wrongful doing. The second types (η^2), the villain usually uses spell or poison to make hero commit something bad. The last one (η^3) occurs when the villain set a trap for the hero.

The fifth function is the Complicity (θ). It happens as *Dewi Urai Emas* agree to take shelter under a boulder which eventually become her death-trap. In the story, it is explained that the protagonist willingly followed the villain order, therefore, it can be said that the function goes into the first type of Complicity (θ^1).

At that time, a hot rain pattered suddenly and the eldest hurried to invite Dewi Urai Emas to take shelter under a boulder which was indeed a place she had prepared. Without thinking, Dewi Urai Emas followed the eldest sister's orders and took shelter in the rock gap. The hot rain was pattering, Dewi Urai Emas breastfed her child in the rock gap while waiting for the hot rain while sleeping (Sarman et al., 2017).

Complicity falls into two types consisting of the hero agrees to the villain's persuasion (θ^1) and the hero mechanically reacts to the employment of magical potions or means (θ^2). The first type of Complicity seemed to be clear but the second type needs further explanation. The second type goes around when the hero reacted to the potion such as sleeping in the *Sleeping Beauty* tales.

The sixth function found in the story is the function of Villainy (A). The function occurs when the villain causes harm or injury to a member of a family. Within this story, the function which occurs is the villain commits murder (A¹⁴). The villain, in the story, makes the stone collapsed on *Dewi Urai Emas* and her son's body, make them die.

Without wasting any opportunity, the eldest carried out her evil intentions, so she pulled a rope tied to the stone supporting wood where Dewi Urai Emas and her son took shelter. No doubt, immediately the big stone collapsed and fell on Dewi Urai Emas and her son. Lightning and thunder came instantly as if to mourn (Sarman et al., 2017).

The Villainy can be in the form of the villain abducts a person (A¹), the villain seizes a magical agent (A²), the villain spoils the crop (A³), the villain seizes the daylight (A⁴), the villain plunders (A⁵), the villain causes bodily injury (A⁶), the villain causes sudden disappearance (A⁷), the villain entices his/her victim (A⁸), the villain expel someone (A⁹), the villain order someone to be thrown into the sea (A¹⁰), the villain cast a spell upon someone (A¹¹), the villain effects a substitution (A¹²), the villain orders a murder to be committed (A¹³), the villain commits murder (A¹⁴), the villain imprison someone (A¹⁵), the villain threatened forced matrimony (A¹⁶), the villain makes a threat of cannibalism (A¹⁷), the villain torments at night (A¹⁸), the villain declares war (A¹⁹).

The Meditation function (B) became the seventh function found in the story. It falls into category of misfortune is announce (B⁴) as the dead of *Dewi Urai Emas* and her son was announced by the eldest sister.

Then the eldest ran to the shore to find Bujang Semayong who had just got off his ship. She cried profusely with her false tears in front of Bujang Semayong and told him that his wife and son had been crushed to death by a stone. Hearing the sad news, Bujang Semayong drooped weakly, did not flinch a word, only his tears flowed (Sarman et al., 2017).

The meditation function takes several forms such as a call for help is given (B¹), the hero is dispatched (B²), the hero is allowed to depart from home (B³), the misfortune is announced (B⁴), the banished hero is transported away from home (B⁵), the hero condemned to the death is secretly freed (B⁶), a lament is sung (B⁷).

The eight function which occur in the story is the provision of a magical agent (F). The magical agent in the story is in the form of a magpie bird which told the grim fate of *Bujang Semayong*'s wife and son. This function within the story is categorized into (F⁶) since the magical being appeared on its own accord and directly helping the hero to gain the substantial information.

Suddenly a Magpie perched on the mast of a sailing ship above Bujang Semayong's head who was drifting in his reverie. The bird babbled incessantly, while wanting to convey something and was heard by a crew member who understood bird language, then conveyed the meaning of the Magpie bird language to Bujang Semayong. The bird said that if he wanted to know the cause of death of his wife and child come to the stone and ask directly to the stone that was crushed (Sarman et al., 2017).

The provision of a magical agent (F) can be in the form of the agent is directly transferred (F¹), the agent is pointed out (F²), the agent is prepared (F³), the agent is sold and purchased (F⁴), the agent falls into the hand of the hero by chance (F⁵), the agent suddenly appears on its own accord (F⁶), the agent is eaten or drunk (F⁷), the agent is seized (F⁸), various characters place themselves at the disposal of the hero (F⁹).

The ninth function which explain that the hero is transferred, delivered, or led to the whereabouts of an object of search. This function called Guidance with designation (G). There are several types of Guidance function such as the hero flies to the air (G¹), the hero travels on the ground or on water (G²), the hero is led (G³), the hero's route shown to him (G⁴), the hero makes stationary mean of communication (G⁵), the hero follows bloody tracks (G⁶).

Not wasting any time, Bujang Semayong came to the stone referred to by the Magpie bird and from the gap in the overlapping stone there were seven pieces of hair belong to Dewi Urai Emas, while grabbing the hair, Bujang Semayong screamed hysterically and crying uncontrollably. Suddenly from inside the stone came the sad wailing voice of Dewi Urai Emas followed by the sound of her son crying. "My Husband.... This is where our love and compassion end, we were killed by my eldest sister who wanted to get you.... My Brother..., if you really love us, leave this island....and visit us once a year" (Sarman et al., 2017).

The Guidance function in the story is categorized as (G4) since the Magpie bird led *Bujang Semayong* to his wife and son's dying body. There, the hero heard his wife voice which informed that the villain is the eldest sister. Then, *Dewi Urai Emas* made the hero promised to visit the island annually.

The tenth function is the function of struggle (H). Here, the hero and villain should embark in collision. In the story, funnily, the struggle is not between the villain and the protagonist.

Here, the villain is nowhere to be seen again in the story. Instead, there is a new character emerge named *Pahit Lidah* who happened to show up and had quarrel with the hero.

With hard steps, Bujang Semayong left the place and immediately boarded his ship and stood silent facing the open sea. He ignores the hot rain patter, sea breeze, and roar of thunder in the sea. At that time, a boat was boarded by Pahit Lidah. He greeted Bujang Semayong who was sculpting mute. "Hey young man, what's the matter? Standing regardless of this hot and strong rain?" Bujang Semayong ignored the greeting of the person, the look on his face was gloomy, three times Pahit Lidah greeted him but Bujang Semayong remained unmoved (Sarman et al., 2017).

The eleventh function is Transfiguration (T). It happened when the new character, *Pahit Lidah* (the Bitter Tongue), was annoyed by *Bujang Semayong* who did not reckon him. Therefore, *Pahit Lidah* who happened to have some sort of magical power turned the hero into a stone. Not only does *Bujang Semayong* turn to be stone, but also all the peripherals in the hero's ship is scattered into stone.

Because of this annoying behavior toward Pahit Lidah, words came out of his mouth "Ooooh, you are not human, I see ... apparently, a stone...." Suddenly thunder and lightning came instantly. Bujang Semayong's sailing ship became stone, while all the goods on board were scattered into stone (Sarman et al., 2017).

The story ended with the transfiguration of *Bujang Semayong*, his crews, and all the items in his ships. There was no punishment toward the villain and there is no more stories about *Pahit Lidah* as well.

There are 11 function found in *Batu Karang Seribu* tales, that is the function of Absentation/ hero who goes to work (β^1), Delivery (ζ), Reconnaissance (ε), Trickery / the villain uses deception or coercion (η^3), Complicity / the hero agrees to the villain's

persuasion (θ^1), Villainy / the villain commits murder (A^{14}), Meditation / misfortune is announced (B^4), provision of a magical agent / magical being appeared on its own accord (F^6), Guidance / the hero's route shown to him (G^4), struggle (H), and Transfiguration (T). Those function can be summarized into this function:

$$\beta^1 \zeta \varepsilon \eta^3 \theta^1 A^{14} B^4 F^6 G^4 H T$$

The function found in *Batu Karang Seribu* is quite common in folktales around the world, though function is relatively short when compared to western folktales or even folktales in Indonesia in general. But the realization of Struggle (H) and Transfiguration (T) is quite unusual since the villain is not the one who have combat with the hero but a new character who happen to pass in the site. Moreover, it became weirder when the new character, *Pahit Lidah*, defeated the hero by transform him into a stone. Not only was the hero transformed into a stone, but all of his crew and his items in his ship as well.

Pahit Lidah is a character in South Sumatran folktales who has the magical power to curse people. Once, Bangka Belitung province is a part of South Sumatra province; therefore, it can be said that *Pahit Lidah* story seep into Bangka Belitung stories. The proof is that there are numerous folktales in Bangka Belitung which suddenly related to or obstructed by *Pahit Lidah* character. But the provincial relation is merely an assumption and needs to clarified by the future research.

5. CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis, there are 11 functions found in the story. There are the function of Absentation (β^1), Delivery (ζ), Reconnaissance (ε), Trickery (η^3), Complicity (θ^1), Villainy (A^{14}), Meditation (B^4), provision of a magical agent (F^6), Guidance (G^4), struggle (H), and Transfiguration (T). In short, the function is as follows: $\beta^1 \zeta \varepsilon \eta^3 \theta^1 A^{14} B^4 F^6 G^4 H T$. The function of Struggle (H) and Transfiguration (T) is unusual since the villain is not the one who have combat with the hero but a new character, *Pahit Lidah*. He defeats the hero by transforming him into a stone.

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