

## CHILDREN'S LITERATURE OF MINANGKABAU IN CHARACTER BUILDING OF THE NATION GENERATION

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### Abstract

Children's literature is a literary works consumed and/or produced by children in their inter-action to the environment. This kind of literature tends to be marginalized in academic, productivity and the use of the literature itself. Compared to children's literature of other regions existing in Minangkabau territory seems almost forgotten. Children's literature contains ideology of the author and his collectivity which is unconsciously easy and straight will be absorbed by the children, and it will influence their character, for example, they want to become a figure of hero from the comics or story they read. So easy are the children absorbed in the story they read, therefore, we need an idea to offer and serve children literature texts containing local character, particularly Minangkabau, and generally Indonesia so that they do not go off their Indonesian root. The discussion on the children literature becomes urgent. Any children literature of Minangkabau having become tradition, how the production, and the use of them for children's world must paid attention on. The children's literature of Minangkabau may be said available in oral form, and may be covered in punning when they are inter-acting to the environment. The creation and production are quite saddening. Meanwhile the use of it tends to be marginalized either in daily life or in education. From academic point of view there is so little making use of it as a material of study as well as from production view there not many children's literature born in comparison to adult's, or juvenile's one. Let alone the use of it, the children tend to consume the imported one for they are more various, and packed more interestingly. In fact, the children literature may put on the foundation to form characterized national generation based on creativity, plurality tolerance.

**Keywords:** ideology, character, marginal, and children's literature.

### A. INTRODUCTION

This discussion leaves from the concern of phenomenon in Minangkabau society that is the low intention toward children's story (*carito anak*). The children's story belonging to the group of traditional children's literature tends to be marginalized either in academic perspectives, production, or use. Academically, there is little attention paid on to make the children's literature as a study or object. (Wicaksono, 2010). In fact, the children's literature has tremendous potentials as a foundation to form the character of national young generation to stimulate the reading intention, and to develop the aesthetic creativity through developing the children's imagination (Nurgiyantoro, 2005). Other than that the children literature may give a positive role to the development of children character. In Minangkabau, the children literature is called *carito anak*. The *carito anak*, some of which is written in other language whereas in Minangkabau language it is not found. The *carito anak*, in Minangkabau language is only available in spoken form.

The *carito anak*, in Minangkabau, may be grouped into traditional children literature having become the tradition. The one who composed the *carito anak* is anonymous and was orally inherited from generation to generation. The type of children story grouped into this genre is fable, folklore, mythology, legend, and epos (Nurgiyantoro, 2005:22). In general, from the production view-point, the children literature is less than the adult one. Just have a close look at the book stores, the comparison is very contrasting, predominated by the literature for adults, and the number children literature is quite few. If it is compared to traditional children literature, the imported children literature is obviously predominating, and the number of Indonesian children literature is fewer than the imported one. The imported ones are offered in a good quality appearance and interesting attention. These factors are very influential to the children's attention to read them that influence the children's appreciation to the children literature itself. It is quite ironical, the mind of Indonesian children is filled with the ideology of children stories from various directions of world. It is common, in the children minds, there develops the Japanese ideology, and a little bit Malaysian one through Dora Emon, Conan, and Upin and Ipin, and Sincan.

The terms of traditional children literature refer to anonymous children literature having become a tradition and orally inherited from generation to generation. There is a national awareness at the moment as to book and publish them. However, such awareness is not owned by Minangkabau community. Ethnically, there is found a children's literature in Minangkabau commonly called the *carito anak* booked or published in Minangkabau language. It is not rejected that there are a number of children's stories having been published. However, it has been localized in Indonesian such as the legend of Malin Kundang. Christiantiwati in 1993

already retraced various printing houses such as missionary publication, State owned printing house, Dutch private printing house, a half blood Chinese printing house, and native one. She only found a children's stories in Javanese, Sundanese, Malay, Madurese, Batakse, Balinese, and Kaili (Sarumpaet, 2010:10) there was no Minangkabau's Children's stories. Though the study has gone for a long time, it is possible that the children's story writing has been done but it is not significant. Such a statement is based upon a strong reason for the retracing library has not seen any Minangkabau children's story circulating in the market-place, book-store. Since the children's story is untouched it will results in teaching material in the educational curriculum especially local content for thereis no children's story book available. Compared to the other regions, for instance, West Java with its Sundanese literature, the children's literature becomes the formal education content in the subject Sundanes (Basic Competence Standard for Sundanese subject in Curriculum SD/MI). such a condition shows that West Sumatra with its Minangkabau is much left behind. It is strongly presumed that the young generation of Minangkabau will run off its root, and they do not know any more and make Minangkabau as the root of their culture.

The situation deteriorates since the children's stories are not well documented yet. The existence of the children's story at the present is available in oral form. This is very vulnerable to the loss along with the social dynamics tending to leave their cultural root. Based upon observation, at the moment there is only a few knowing the children's story of Minangkabau ever living and developing among the people of Minangkabau and even lot of the elders cannot be made encyclopedia of their knowledge. How come the children of today will recognize the children's story of Minangkabau. Let alone there is no transfer of knowledge done. Therefore, the existence and diachronic phenomenon of children's story should become an intensive discussion formally or informally for by having the role the young generation they will not lose their cultural root and bob up and down in the big waves of globalization.

## **B. PHENOMENON AND URGENCY**

The era of technology is just like two sides of one coin. It offers a convenience on one hand to the aspect of life and on the other hand it brings about destruction of cultural aspect of the society. People may access various information and ideologies from the other hemisphere of the earth in a high level of efficiency and effectiveness. All groups of people gain the great ease and opportunity by the same way. However, such a convenience will bring impact to local culture aspects. The hegemony of a greater culture through sophisticated technology may bring about the marginalized society to lose their cultural root, social dislocation, and ideological disorientation. Such a tendency is enabled by the weakness of supporting information technology and social communication so that they are not able to adapt quickly. Such a situation causes set back and even the death of cultural aspects as undergone by the children's story of Minangkabau.

Above all, according to Malinowski the death of a culture is something natural for the people of it do not need it any longer. Thus, gradually the culture will disappear from the cultural domain of the people it belongs to (1964:149). The traditional remains considered do not fit the present need and aspects of life will be left by the people. The situation is worsened by the young generation not willing to inherit it whereas the oldsters are powerless to generate and even most of them have passed away.

Many ways have been done as to reduce the impact, however, it has not shown maximal results whereas the assets keep losing along with the supporters caused by the people's mobility such as migration, economic reason, age, natural disaster, the change of thinking of the people. Therefore, the discussion on children's story of Minangkabau is absolutely important to do. Meanwhile, other regions and States have stepped forward packing up their children's story. A number of activities having been done by observers of children's literature either outside or Minangkabau or outside Indonesia has proved that their children's literatures are advanced. Such a reality can be compared to the children literature of Indonesia, and particularly to the children story of Minangkabau.

Most of children literatures circulating are the translated/adopted forms. This is possibly due to economic reason so that the authentic children story on Indonesia is subordinated to the imported one. There are many translated forms of children's story present in Indonesian market such as 29 titles Seri Pustaka Kecil Disney, 8 titles Seri Petualanganmu yang Pertama, 12 titles Seri Boneka Binatang, and 6 titles Seri Jennings. Furthermore, traditional children's literatures are not found in market place so that they are not known let alone Minangkabau one, it does not have any.

Japanese comics in various titles and themes are arranged orderly in book stores becoming consumption of Indonesian children at the present. In elementary schools, though Indonesian folklore has been introduced becoming one of the basis of children's literature genre, it is less in number. Among such many collections in school, few among which are folklores. The children at schools, hear the stories from their teachers currently widely known such as story of Malin Kundang, Batu Belah, Bawang Merah Bawang Putih, and Sangkuriang. In fact there are still a lot of folklores existing among the society.

Among the society, most of homes are filled with imported stories immersing the local one, so is at school. Though there is book provision, the books available in the market place are only imported or translated

ones, and they cost cheaper so that the books set in to schools. Needless to say the physical appearance of the books mentioned above is pretty enough accompanied with colorful pictures as well as good looking paper, and the price remains accessible. It is different from the traditional one published by disregarding the providing specification that results the books concerned are not sent to schools.

Such a condition is worsened by the absence of consumption clarification of literature that brings about the children come to consume the ones for adults. Traditional children literature is not introduced at schools, for example, through the subject of Indonesian language. What discussed there is adult's ones either old literature or the most recent one. It proves that there are many Balai Pustaka's era's literatures or Pujanggaga Baru's reproduced. Such a condition marginalizes more deeply the traditional children's literatures within children's domain.

Beyond the restlessness, there is a good enough attention toward traditional children's literature in Indonesia from some persons such as done by Budianta. He has written bilingual children's story titled *Si Bungsu Katak*, and the *Legenda Pohon Beringin*. The *Si Bungsu Katak* achieved International Award, and the *Legenda Pohon Beringin* achieved the Prime Award from Octogones 2002. So is the story from West Borneo translated into Japanese and brought on stage there by well known and professional theater group during one year. Budianta's works of 2003 titled *Indonesian Folktales* were demanded and have been published by US publisher. Budianta also initiated and published booklet for both children and readers beginning learning Indonesian. The book is consumed in both Singapore and Australia. It is quite heart comforting, it does not only can perpetuate the national culture it can also make financial profit for creative Indonesians. This illustration opens opportunity to Minangkabau traditional children's literature productivity.

As for example, there is an International Children's Digital Library in US. There recorded 274 books of world's best collections that can be accessed free by internet use. That collection consists of works on action, adventure, legend, short story, and drama. However, there is a worry for attempt to switch Indonesian folklores by Western authors. There is children's story which then was written by Ann Martin Bowler, and illustrator I Gusti Made Sukanada. This can also happen to Minangkabau traditional children story. Therefore, an action is needed to anticipate the treatment to admit unilateral rights of culture by other countries.

The documentation of traditional children's literature also becomes a part of folklore documentation. By doing so, the Minangkabau traditional children's literature documentation increases the Indonesian folklore collection. According to Danandjaja (1991:191), to document the Indonesian folklore is very important since Indonesia has not have any folklore documentation center since hundred years ago. This reality is also substantiated by Rosidi (1995:125 – 126) claiming that in advanced countries the folklore has already been well documented, recorded and then distributed through printing medium in form of book. The documentation done is treated as a further material for discussion for folklore is the window through which to see further the existence of a society. Besides, folklore is also a source of information concerning with culture (Ahimsa-Putra, 1999:78), and even in Finland, its folklore documentation is aimed at ordering national identity of chauvinism nation. This is closely related to the trauma of Russian and Swedish colonization. Meanwhile, Russian has done the documentation as to promote the dignity of proletarian group. Before becoming a communist country, China has done the documentation in order to create a practical modern culture. After becoming a communist State, the documentation is used to promote the dignity of peasant in the village (Danandjaja, 1991:191).

### C. THE CHARACTER IN *CARITO ANAK*

The conditions mention above remind us of how urgent the academic action is to eternalize the children's story of Minangkabau. If the present condition goes on and there is no step toward revitalization of *carito anak* is taken so it is useless to hope the Minangkabau children's story to exist, and it surely vanishes. The children's story contains both values and characters that can be made reference for society as it is understood by working sociologists that a work is created not only from the social reality of its society but the work is also able to create the character of its society. The values will change and disappear along with collective dynamics of the literature owner. It causes that there is the children's literature never last with its collective up to date and there is one which vanishes. Nowadays, many older generations who do not remember the children's story any more. This is quite common for the man-kind memory is limited. One of way how to revitalize it is to discuss the existing children's literature academically among the society.

Nowadays, the characterized education is strikingly promoted due to the children behavior that have no character. The discussion of character comes up and becomes the subject of hot discussion recently. The curricular center of National Education Ministry (2011:10) has defined the characterized education material covering the following aspects 1. Religious, 2. Honest, 3. Tolerant, 4. Discipline, 5. Working hard, 6. Creative, 7. Independent, 8. Democratic, 9. Friendly, 10. National spirit, 11. Patriotic, 12. Meritocratic, 13. Amiable and communicative, 14. Love peace, 15. Habitual reading, 16. Environmental concern, 17. Social concern/responsible. Whereas Suyanto (2009) viewed there are nine character pillars derived from the value of universal virtue namely 1. To love God and all what It creates, 2. Independence, and responsibility, 3.

Honesty/reliability, diplomacy, 4. Respect, and politeness, 5. Generosity, helpfulness/cooperation, 6. Self-confidence 7. Leadership, and justice, 8. Kindness, and modesty, 9. Tolerance, peace, and unity.

Related to that, the character formation may be done through literary activity. It does not only contain aesthetic element but functionally it means as a medium of educating, teaching as well as of giving guide. Literature in the past was educative and even it could be said it was parallel to religious books. Many things could be obtained from literature, particularly it is related to the advantage of 1. To strengthen the religious and ethical education, 2. to promote the sense of patriotism, 3. To comprehend the sacrifice of national hero, 4. To increase history knowledge, 5. Self-caution, and entertainment. Haryadi (1994) stated the nine advantages taken from old literature namely 1. It may play the role as entertainment and medium of education, 2. The content may grow love and national pride and ancestral respect, 3 the content may widen the horizon of beliefs, traditions, and national civilization, 4. Its show may grow sense of unity, 5. The creation process may grow creative, responsive, and dynamic mind, 6. It becomes the source of inspiration for creation of other art forms, 7. The creation process is the example of serious, professional work, and modesty, 8. The show gives the exemplary of compact and harmonious cooperation, and 9. The foreign influence it contains gives the pictures of how to makes friend and a wide way of life.

What described above indicate that literature is relevant to characterized education. In this respect, the literary work plays a strategic role in building characterized national generation. The literary works are full of ethical education values as meant in characterized education. The folklore *bawang putih bawang merah* contains educative values about humanity. The fable *pelanduk Jenaka* contains the education of self-respect, critical attitude, social protest. Whereas the poetry in the form proverb, pantun (Indonesian native poem), and *bidal* express the values are full of educative values. Therefore, the roles of academicians, and critics of literatue in expressing the values found in the children's literature is not a job in vain but a big one to be done together in bearing characterized national children in the future.

The *carito anak* is a literary work read by children under the guide and direction of adults whereas the writing may be done by adults or childrens (Sarumpaet, 2010:2) children, and adult literatures rest on literary domain covering all feelings, minds, and horizons of life. What differentiates one another is the focus giving the picture of life meaningful to the children described in the works. Other that that is displayed format could also become the literary feature such as pictured illustrations adding varieties in children's literature.

The *carito anak* is imaginatively creative form of literary works with particular language description picturing the fictional world, presenting certain comprehension and experience, and containing particular aesthetic values that can be done by both adults and children. Is children literature the one written by adults intended to children or the one written by the children and intended for the children themselves? Anybody composing the children's literature, it is not necessarily to be taken into account provided that the picturing of it is focused upon the reality of thinking to the meaningful life of children. The children literature is reflecting more feelings and experiences of the children through children's perspectives. Nonetheless, in the reality, the meaningful values for the children is sometime seen and measured from adult's perspectives.

Nugriyanto (2005) stated that the children's literature is the one discussing anything concerning with the problem of life so that it is able to offer better information and comprehension about the life itself to the children. Children's books and literatures posing the children's perspectives as a center of narrating and at the same time also offers a truth expressed in the proper elements and impressive language. The genre may be understood as a kind or a type of literary having a set of general characteristic of category of grouping the literary works which currently is based upon style, form, or content. This takes the comprehending consequences that in a literary genre there are some elements having something else. Admittedly, there often occurs an over-lapping. Lukens categorized the literary genre of children into six types namely realism, formula fictional, fantasy, traditional literature, poem, and non-fictional each of which has some more types. The drama genre is intentionally excluded for, according to him, the drama will not be complete until it is shown onstage and seen, and not merely a matter of literary language. The genre of children literature proposed is sufficiently differentiated into fiction, non-fiction, pictured book, and comic each of which has sub-genres.

*Dongeng* (legend) is one form of children's literature which was formerly narrated by the parents to their children especially before having a sleep. The *dongeng* has a very striking influence to the mental development of the children. Telling a *dongeng* may be used as an effective method to bring up the children. Besides, children are fond of hearing it, and through it, the educator may offer various advices, wise words, exemplary, or blessings through a figure of character in the story. Telling *dongeng* is an effective medium of communication to transfer idea and feeling to the children in an interesting package. Telling the *dongeng* is to inseminate the values contained within the story core could also enrich the children's vocabulary (Al Qudsy, 2010:86 – 89).

There are some advantages picked up from the *dongeng*. First, it is to sharpen the mind, and imagination. The children are given chance to cultivate their minds through the story listened to so that the children get used to enforce the potential of thinking ability and induced to imagine of a topic told in the story. Through the story they listen to, the children will form a self-visualization, to imagine what the ground, situation, time, and event

are like narrated through the characters appearing in the dongeng. Indirectly, the children get trained to imagine and to express creativity.

Second, the story is an effective medium to instill a variety of ethical values and characters to the children, and even to stimulate the emphatic sense. For examples, religious, honest, tolerant, discipline, hard working, creative, independent, democratic, curious, nationalistic, patriotic, to appreciate achievement, friendly or communicative, love peace, fond of reading, environmental concern, social concern, and responsible values, or about numerous daily habits such as to wash hand, or pray before eating meal, to keep cleanliness by taking bath, how important to eat both vegetables and fruits is. The interaction and behavior of the characters in the story is good exemplary so that the children do not have to be under instruction, or taught to behave like the characters of the story. The children are given chance independently to absorb various values in the story.

Third, to stimulate the children's reading interest. The dongeng is an initial step to enrich the children's reading interest. After hearing numerous dongengs, the curiosity will appear further so that the children will make an attempt to search for the story source such as children will read the books of legend story. Thus, the tradition is expected to stimulate their interest in both story books, and other books such as scientific, religious books etc.

In its development, there are lots of children literary genres that can be consumed by children. Sarumpaet (2010) stated the variety of the children's literature might be in form of reading materials for the children of early ages such as traditional stories, poetry reading, fantasy, realistic story, biography, historical fiction, children's non-fictional story in form of drama. As to give the significance to the children's literature, the adult's and literary critics play strategic roles so that it could be the medium of both socialization and filter. The studies of structuralism, sociology of literature, and semiotics might done by viewing the form of the children's literature formed in poem, prose, or pictured children's literature.

#### D. CLOSING

It cannot be denied that there are particular interesting things in the carito anak. On the other hand there occurs a *clishe* phenomenon that the children before they going to bed often listen to the story told by mother, grandmother or adult one. Thought could interpreted that te carito anak is not always pleasing, however, in reality the carito anak is easy to make the children fall asleep. Besides, the carito anak preserves constructive potentials to support the children's mental development. Telling story is having a lot advantages. Among others, the advantages are telling story is able to develop the children's thinking ability and children's imagination, speaking ability, develop the children's social capability, and particularly as the main medium of communication of the children to their parents, this is one form of direct interaction between both the children and their parents that will influence in forming the children's character.

Other than that, as a means how to bring up the children, the carito anak is one medium which is last but not least effective enough to give a human touch and sportiveness to the children. Through the carito anak, the horizon exploration children's mind will be getting better, more critical, and intelligent. The children are also able which is necessary to take example of which is the unnecessary one. This will help them identify themselves to the surrounding environment in they are. Then, it enables them to evaluate and position themselves among other group of society. On the contrary, the less imaginative children may suffer from less friend to socialize, adapt to the new environment.

Apart from those all mentioned above, a caution must be taken into account. There are many enough of the carito anak containing negative image becoming a bad exemplary to the children. For instance, the story of Sangkuriang explicitly telling that Sangkuriang own mother who swore of becoming a wife of the party taking the fell of looms then was compulsorily got married to a dog. Such a condition deteriorated in the story that after killing the dog which is just true Sangkuriang's own father then Sangkuriang fell in love with Dayang Sumbi, his own mother. So due to the cunning of Dayang sumbi deceived Sangkuriang in order to fail from fulfilling his demand as to accomplish constructing a boat within a single night. Since the local content of the story should be carefully taken into account of psychological condition which is possibly absorbed by the children, therefore it is good to prevent a misunderstanding of the story instead of having a good moral lesson we derive negative effect.

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