

## Representation of Functions of Natural Environment Settings in the *Kaba Minangkabau*: An Ecocritical Study

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### ABSTRACT

This research aimed to investigate the representation of functions of natural environment settings in the *Kaba Minangkabau* by using an ecocritical perspective. The natural environment in question was all living and non-living elements that occur naturally on Earth. Literary works stem from the love and admiration for the natural environment that fascinates, captivates, and inspires people with new perspectives to see the physical setting of everything they do. One form of literary work is the *Kaba Minangkabau*, a form of literature originating from the Minangkabau community that generally inhabits West Sumatra Province, Indonesia. This research was a qualitative study employing a phenomenological strategy. The research data were in the form of words, phrases, clauses, and sentences contained in the texts of *Kaba Minangkabau*, either delivered explicitly or implicitly and had undergone a translation process (from Minangkabau language to English). The sources of research data were the *Kaba Minangkabau* texts by Syamsudin Sutan Radjo Endah. The data were collected using reading and note-taking techniques. Data validation was conducted using a source triangulation. Data analysis was carried out involving interactive techniques, namely data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Based on the study results, the following research findings were obtained. Eight data of natural environment settings were represented by the descriptions of sounds, events, and natural phenomena. Four natural environment settings were represented as literary references. Six natural environment settings were represented as analogies to the human physical forms.

**Keywords:** Representation; Natural Environment; *Kaba*; Ecocriticism

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## INTRODUCTION

From the Classical Malay era to the present, many Indonesian literati have expressed their imaginative creativity as a form of intimacy and admiration for the natural environment. In writing literary works, the natural environment becomes their source of inspiration. Shoba and Ngaraj (2013) argue that there is a close relationship between humans and the natural environment, which ultimately contributes to literary thoughts or works. It is in line with Mhana et al. (2019), who studied one of the most famous poets in contemporary British poetry, Carol Ann Duffy. This study discovered the relationship between humans and the natural environment through an artwork entitled *Politik*. Duffy's experiences, memories, and feelings created a nonmaterial environment influencing her poetic imagination in interacting with nature. Furthermore, Alvi et al. (2019) also examined the relationship between humans and the natural environment in a cross-cultural context reflected in the poems by two well-known nature admirers in England and Malaysia, William Wordsworth and Ghulam Sarwar Yousuf. These two poets composed poems that strengthen the bonds between humans and the natural environment to inspire environmental awareness. The same thing can also be seen in the works of Indonesian literati, such as Muhammad Yamin ("*Tanah Air*" poem), Pramoedya Ananta Toer ("*Gadis Pantai*" novel), Andrea Hirata ("*Laskar Pelangi*" novel), Leila S. Chudori ("*Laut Bercerita*" novel), Sapardi Djoko Damono ("*Hujan Bulan Juni*" collection of poems), and many other Indonesian literati. Based on Indonesian literature studies, it is evident that the natural environment is an interesting theme to display. It can be seen in the description of the natural environment settings using dictions such as *forest, mountain, river, sea, plant, tree, animal*, and other living things in this universe.

The authors' concern for the natural environment in their works proves that literature and the natural environment have a close relationship. As an interdisciplinary science of ecology and literature, ecocriticism has become a bridge for literary enthusiasts to criticize irresponsible humans concerning the destruction of the natural environment nowadays. In contrast, such an environment has a vital role in human survival. However, the natural environment has now experienced a major threat due to human activities leading to natural disasters (Suwandi et al., 2017). Moreover, those natural disasters cause some new problems in human life. Research conducted by Sangeetha and Rathna (2021) explored the additional challenges women experienced as a result of natural disasters that required them to evacuate. Migration is carried out due to climate change resulting in droughts, sea level risings, and disruption of seasonal weather patterns. As leaders on earth, humans should be able to maintain and preserve the natural environment so that natural resources are not overexploited.

Hooti and Ashrafian (2014) conducted a study on one of the natural environmental researchers named Lawrence from America, who stated that it was necessary to conduct a critical analysis regarding the term "human" concerning cultural and human history. The study attempted to demonstrate Lawrence's belief in re-establishing the intimate relationship between humans with the rest of their lives and the natural environment. Humans live to create their own culture, which they inherited in their descent for centuries since the beginning of civilization. A good cultural heritage in the form of human values is reflected in their behavior. The overwhelming feeling of belonging and love for the natural environment becomes a stronghold to survive the changing times. Cultural, linguistic, and literary changes may occur because society is dynamic as the owner of culture. However, the changes must not be shifted apart from the roots so that it becomes the duty of those who care. Indonesian cultural products are reflected through their regional literary works, which continue to exist today. One form of regional literature is the *Kaba Minangkabau*.

A *Kaba* contains thoughts and feelings in the contexts of good and evil to assess the relationship between humans and their creator, humans and the other humans, and humans and the surrounding natural environment. *Kaba* is a form of literary work that is quite popular and developed in the Minangkabau community, which mainly inhabits the Province of West Sumatra geographically. At the beginning of its development, a *kaba* was conveyed orally in lyrical prose because the Minangkabau community had not understood written language. However, after they understood, *kaba* began to appear in the form of books. Nevertheless, it remains in the form of lyrical prose.

Sari and Putra (2020) examined the communities of Bali Aga (Bali) and Ainu (Japan) as examples of indigenous people who were fortunate enough to be able to pass down their collection of folk tales which were rich in moral values, especially about the way humans preserve the surrounding natural environment. As one form of folk tale, the *Kaba* contains stories comprising numerous comprehensions, teachings, and philosophies of life for both young and old generations. Through research on local wisdom in the *Kaba Bonsu Pinang Sibaribuik*, Fikri (2019) states that *Kaba* contains four forms of local wisdom: (1) philosophy, (2) social attitudes, advice, and messages, (3) traditional ceremonies, and (4) social customs or behaviors. It also contains advice, customs, life issues, household customs, etc. Additionally, *Kaba* describes social realities that can be used as a reflection and learning material for its readers. It is also rich in empirical knowledge and experience as an afterthought in social life. Since the beginning, *kaba* has reflected the identity of a high-cultural society. In the past, the Minangkabau community used *kaba* as entertainment while relaxing with the family. The father told a *kaba* to his son to make him understand the lifestyle, behavior, and habits of the Minangkabau people in the past. It was not surprising that the younger generation was known as wise in their attitude, and it cannot be separated from the life values they often heard from the *kaba* stories conveyed by their parents.

In the context of *Kaba Minangkabau*, the natural environment is represented from various perspectives. The Minangkabau community has a very well-known philosophy, namely “*alam takambang jadikan guru*,” which means that natural occurrences in the universe can be viewed as life lessons. Idrus et al. (2020) argue that the representation of how the human world relates to the environment shows practices and routines (context of youth), where each of their experiences reacting to their environment can illuminate problems so that they appear to the surface. Humans learn from natural phenomena. They can evaluate every event and phenomenon being experienced or seen. Barau et al. (2016) argue that what seems to be lacking is a practical knowledge of how humans can live a good life while facing challenges to have the practical wisdom to form a moral commitment in dealing with them. Creative stories like *kaba* can be an essential resource for engaging humans in an era of rapid changes in the local and global environment. Learning resources do not only come from the teacher but also come from nature. Nature becomes a learning source to shape the order of values and behaviors in the life of the Minangkabau community. Minangkabau traditional philosophy places knowledge as synthetic from the rationality and empirical aspects. For the Minangkabau people, knowledge results are not only derived from rationality and sensory but also from the heart, thus leading to an ethical-argumentative concept.

The natural environment has long been a source of inspiration for creating literary works. *Kaba Minangkabau*, a form of regional literature, is also inspired by the same thing. It must be recognized that the natural environment is very dominant, not only as a setting but also organically integrated with various forms of diction disclosure in literary works. Based on the results of document analysis, researchers found several authors of *kaba*, namely Sutan Nasarudin, Syamsudin Sutan Radjo Endah, Darwis Sutan Sinaro, Amba Mahkota, Ilyas Sutan Pangaduan,

M. Rasyid Manggis Datuak Radjo Pangulu, Sutan Mangkudun, and Datuak Penduko Alam. Of all the *kaba* authors, Syamsudin Sutan Radjo Endah is the one who is quite well known in the Minangkabau community for publishing many *kaba* texts; he wrote more than ten of them. His writings always contain the natural environment settings used as a source of inspiration. He was a famous author and cultural practitioner of his time. The present study employed seven texts of *kaba* written by Syamsudin Sutan Radjo Endah as data sources, namely 1) *Kaba Cindua Mato*, 2) *Kaba Siti Kalasun*, 3) *Kaba Sibuyuang Karuik*, 4) *Kaba Siti Baheram*, 5) *Kaba Tuanku Lareh Simawang*, 6) *Kaba Puti Nilam Cayo*, and 7) *Kaba Gadis Ranti*. The seven texts were chosen because they contained the dictions illustrating all phenomena, nuances, natural occurrences, natural environment settings being involved as a “foothold” in developing stories, and natural environment settings being represented as an analogy to the human physical form. So, this paper was a study discussing the representation of functions of natural environment settings in *Kaba Minangkabau*, using the ecocritical perspective. Based on the analysis of previous research, this study was considered a new thing that had never been done before. *Kaba* is interesting regional literature to be studied and introduced to the international community so that it will continue existing in society.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### ECOCRITICISM

Garrard (2004) argues that literary studies with an ecocritical perspective have been widely conducted in America in the 1990s. The term *ecocriticism* is an implication of literature and ecology. Rachel Carson, a marine biologist and Bachelor of English Literature, was named the first person to criticize the environment through her work entitled *Silent Spring* (1962). As civilization developed, a concern arose that the natural environment began to lose its beauty due to selfish and greedy human activities. Bertens (2008) argues that ecocritical studies have a particular characteristic: partisanship to ecological crisis and environmental damage. Ecocriticism is closely related to humans who realize their role as living things globally. Love (2003) defines *ecocriticism* as a study examining the relationship between literature and physical environment, rapid species extinction, population growth, wilderness loss due to illegal logging, and increased contamination of water, air, and soil on Earth. In line with that, Glothfelty (1996) also mentions that *ecocriticism* is a study connecting literature and the physical environment. So, ecocriticism is understood as a study that investigates the relationship between literature and the natural environment from multiple perspectives, particularly human commitment and engagement to prevent damage to the natural environment sustainably.

The birth of a literary work cannot be separated from the functions of natural environment settings. It can be seen from the majority of literati and poets who include elements of natural environment settings in their artworks. These two elements, nature and literature, are integrated. The natural environment requires literary works as a means of preservation. The ecocritical perspective can exploit, determine, and solve the ecological crisis in a broader sense. Kerridge and Sammells (1998) argue that ecocritical studies try to explore the ideas related to the environment and how they are represented. Literature has the potential to uncover the values of natural environmental wisdom in its function as a means of representation of people's attitudes, views, and responses to the conditions of the surrounding natural environment. All occurrence in the natural environment becomes the source of stories in literary works. Feder (2014) says that many myths tell of animal life with the subject of reality in the form of non-humans and the activities in the

form of human life. Furthermore, the ecocritical text contains pastoral and apocalyptic narratives. In general, Gifford (1999) defines *pastoral* as a literary work that describes the condition of villages and cities explicitly and implicitly in a contrastive manner. And then, Thompson (1997) defines *apocalyptic* literary works as underground works of literature depicting entertainment for the persecuted to strengthen marginalized communities' desires to give hope and a vision of freedom from their bondage.

Literary works represent the natural environment as an object or a circumstance by expressing it in reality from various sides and points of view. The fundamental principle of ecocritical discourse is that humans and non-humans have more kinds of a relationship than what is usually known (Jones, 2017). The ecocritical approach emphasizes human attitudes and behaviors toward nature, population explosion, and the economy (Goodbody, 2007). Vogler (2016) argues that the surge in population growth from 2000 to 2010 required a balance in economic growth by using coal. This condition caused carbon dioxide emissions leading to the requirement for energy efficiency. Over the past 40 years, environmental changes have emerged as a problem in literary criticism (Allister, 2003). This fact proves that there has been a significant change in the natural environment in recent decades, causing natural disasters. It becomes a concern for the authors and poets to campaign for their concerns. They focus on issues of the natural environment, climate, and green culture agenda. They represent the natural environment in their work by making nature the story's object using dictions to describe it.

Based on various theories above, this research led to an ecocritical perspective conveyed by Garrard; literature and ecology have a relationship in the form of interdisciplinary science called ecocriticism. It connects three things: literature, humans, and the natural environment. Ecocriticism focuses on revealing the functions of the natural environment settings in the literary map and the ecological messages contained in literary texts. The importance of ecological awareness is not only to see the stability of the environment but also to comprehend human attitudes, behaviors, and ethics. The ecocritical perspective aims to analyze literature based on ecology or environmental ethics. Rolston (2003) argues that environmental ethics is one form of effort to save the environment. Buell (2005) states that humans are not only present as natural devices but are related to natural history itself. In a broader sense, an ecocritical perspective can explore, assist, determine, and solve ecological problems.

#### **KABA MINANGKABAU**

Minangkabau people use the Minangkabau language in everyday communication. The word "*kaba*" often appears in their conversation. A nephew/niece who has not seen his/her uncle (*Mamak*; in Minangkabau language) for a long time will say "*Baa kaba, Mak?*" which means "How are you, Uncle?" when they can finally meet. In this sentence, the meaning of the word "*kaba*" is news, intending to ask the uncle about work, life, health, and others because they have not seen each other for a long time. Rahmat (2012) argues that the word "*kaba*" has the same meaning as the word "*news*." However, to the Minangkabau community, *kaba* also means one type of traditional oral literature. Then, from various expressions, the term *kaba* is often preceded by the term *curito* (story) so that it is finally called *curito kaba* (story of *kaba*). In general, *kaba* is considered fiction (Amir, 2006). From this argument, it can be concluded that *kaba* is one type of traditional literary work of Minangkabau in lyrical prose being passed down from one generation to the next. The inheritance was initially carried out orally, so it was oral literature. As a result of progress in science, it had begun to be written in book form, so it was also referred to as written literature.



*Kaba* belongs to the folktale, stories whose authors are unknown and considered common property. At the beginning of its development, *kaba* was conveyed orally for several generations. It is said to have oral characteristics since the existence of authentic data cannot be traced. As it developed, *kaba* was then poured into writing by several authors in the form of books with various versions. Djamaris (2002) argues that *kaba* authors are generally anonymous and serve as solace and entertainment. Some are in the form of epics such as *Kaba Cindua Mato* and *Kaba Anggun Nan Tongga*. *Kaba* was written in the manuscript using Arabic-Malay letters after Islam spread in Minangkabau. Kato (2005) argues that the Arabic writing system was very likely to be introduced in Minangkabau in the late 16th or early 17th century. After the 19th-century, *kaba* was printed in Latin letters. From the 1950s to 1960s, publishers in Bukittinggi City and Payakumbuh City had published dozens of *kaba*. Furthermore, in 2004, Kristal Multimedia publisher in Bukittinggi City reissued eighteen *kaba*. Those *Kaba* published in 2004 can still be found in West Sumatra bookstores.

## METHODOLOGY

This research was conducted by a qualitative method. Taylor et al. (2016) state that qualitative methodology aims to produce descriptive data in spoken or written words from people and all the behaviors they experience. The purpose of this study was to understand all the phenomena experienced by research subjects, namely motivation, commitment, behavior, events, symptoms, actions, and other things as a whole, in the form of descriptions of words, phrases, clauses, and sentences in a specific context that occurs naturally. Ritchie and Lewis (2003) argue that descriptive qualitative research identifies something existing in the social world and how it manifests itself. The strategy of this research was phenomenology. Creswell and Poth (2018) claim that phenomenological studies describe the general meaning of several individuals based on their life experiences in an event related to a concept or phenomenon.

In qualitative research, one of the most important things is the process of selecting, involving, and deciding what data to choose. Furthermore, after data are collected, the researcher must include them in an analysis (Yin, 2016). The data of this study were quotations in the form of words, phrases, clauses, and sentences, either delivered explicitly or implicitly, in the texts of *Kaba Minangkabau*. The source of research data was the text (book) of *Kaba Minangkabau* composed by Syamsudin Sutan Radjo Endah. The data were collected using reading and note-taking techniques. Validation of research data employed source triangulation, in which the data were checked through several sources such as informants, records, archives, and documents. Berg (2001) defines *triangulation* as a general term carried out by surveying, mapping, and practicing. What is included in the scope of data validity testing is the adequacy of references, namely the availability of literature or reference books, conducted by reading, understanding, and reviewing data sources related to the research topic repeatedly. The research data were then analyzed using the interactive technique. Miles and Huberman (2014) provide three stages in interactive data analysis: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing.

## FINDINGS

The research data were obtained based on the results of reading, note-taking, and analyzing the *Kaba Minangkabau* by Syamsudin Sutan Radjo Endah as follow, (1) *Kaba Cindua Mato* [KCM], (2) *Kaba Gadih Ranti* [KGR], (3) *Kaba Puti Nilam Cayo* [KNC], (4) *Kaba*

*Sibuyuang Karuik* [KBK], (5) *Kaba Tuanku Lareh Simawang* [KTLS], (6) *Kaba Siti Kalasun* [KSK], and (7) *Kaba Siti Baheram* [KSB]. The present research data were translated for easy understanding, given that *kaba* is delivered in a regional language, namely the Minangkabau language. Based on the study results on the representation of functions of natural environment settings in the *Kaba Minangkabau*, researchers obtained the findings as follows.

First, natural environment settings were represented by describing the natural events, sounds, and phenomena. As seen below, all these things were beautifully depicted in the *Kaba Minangkabau*.

[1-KCM]

*Mengelegar petir tunggal, berkokok ayam kinantan, mengaung kerbau si Binuang, meringkik kuda si Gumarang, berbunyi katak jantan, lahirlah anak Bundo Kandung, begitu juga dengan Kambang Bandahari, sama-sama melahirkan malam itu.*

A single thunderclap blared, the rooster crowed, Binuang the buffalo grunted, Gumarang the horse neighed, the male frog croaked, Bundo Kandung's child was born, as well as Kambang Bandahari's, both were born that night. (Endah, 1987, p. 11)

Data [1-KCM] describes natural occurrences in the universe, in which natural phenomena, humans, and animals are interconnected. Whatever happens in the natural environment shows the connection among their elements. In this context, it was represented through natural phenomena. It is indeed reasonable because all elements of the universe are God's creation. In the data [1-KCM], it can be seen that other elements responded to the event of human birth. However, it often goes unnoticed by humans. The Minangkabau people always learn and take lessons from every event and phenomenon in the natural environment as a lesson in living a life in harmony with the natural environment.

[2-KCM]

*Dua kali ayam berkokok, cukup ketiga hari siang, sudah siang kelihatannya, berjalan turun menuju sumur, berjalan dengan beriringan.*

The rooster crowed twice, at the third the day went bright, it was already morning, walking down towards the well, walking hand in hand. (Endah, 1987, p. 16)

[3-KSB]

*Benar malam itu, malam beralih dengan pagi, dini hari ayam berkokok. Sudah sekali ayam berkokok, dua kali ayam berkokok, cukup yang ketiga hari sudah siang. Berkicau burung murai di atas kayu, bangunlah bujang Si Juki, bangun juga Buyuang Gambuik, pergi ke sungai mencuci muka, dibeli rokok dari daun anau, teringat jasa Siti Baheram.*

It was night, the night turned into morning, in the early morning the rooster crowed. The rooster crowed once, the rooster crowed twice, at the third the morning turned bright. The magpie chirped on wood, Si Juki the bachelor woke up, Buyuang Gambuik woke up too, going to the river to wash his face, buying the cigarettes from palm leaves, remembering the kindness of Siti Baheram.

(Endah, 2004, p. 18)

[4-KBK]

*Sudah siang rasanya hari, menyong matakah dari timur, berkicau burung murai di atas kayu, sudah bangun si Buyuang Karuik, bangun juga Si Syamsiah, berjalan turun ke sungai, dicuci wajah, kemudian berjalan meminta izin kepada pemilik rumah untuk melanjutkan perjalanan.*

The day seemed already morning, the sun was coming from the east, the magpie chirped on wood, Buyuang Karuik woke up, Si Syamsiah woke up too, walking down to the river, washing the face, then walking to ask permission to the house owner to continue the journey.

(Endah, 2008, p. 17)

Data [2-KCM], [3-KSB], and [4-KBK] illustrate how the crowing sound of a chicken was used as a time marker by the Minangkabau community. For example, in *Ramadan*, the crowing sound of a rooster was used as a marker of Suhoor (pre-dawn meal) time, in which the first crow would be heard around three o'clock in the early morning. And then the second crowing would be heard at four o'clock in the early morning as a marker of dawn time and the end of Suhoor time. Afterward, when the rooster crowed for the third time, it signified that the morning had come. However, along with the times and technological advancements, loudspeakers and lighting replaced the function of the rooster's crowing sound. However, until today, Minangkabau people living in the countryside still use natural signs such as the crowing of a rooster as a time marker. In addition, based on data [2-KCM], [3-KSB], and [4-KBK], it is also described that the Minangkabau people made settlements close to water sources in the past. Their activity after waking up was cleaning their body, either washing their face or taking a bath, as illustrated in the data. It is considered environmentally friendly compared to the current conditions. Goudie (2013) argues that the development of human settlements, from agricultural to urban areas, makes the space for other living things increasingly narrow. Thus, irresponsible human attitudes that only prioritize individual interests disturb the natural environment ecosystem. In contrast, Razak and Sanusi (2010) state that although the development issues result in a deep and widespread impact on human life, environment-friendly sustainable development positively impacts human development. They conducted a critical study of the potential role of sustainable development as a concept of natural balance in developing human civilization.

[5-KCM]

*... takdir Allah masa itu turunlah hujan dengan angin kencang, seperti topan dan badai, gemuruh petir berapi-api, pohon pisang bertumbangan, badai dan topan bertambah parah, pohon kelapa dan pinang banyak yang tumbang, kilat dan petir tidak berhenti, air hujan yang turun dari langit menimpa kepala seperti akan pecah, datanglah gelombang air yang besar, pasang naik air sungai Ngiang, potongan kayu lusuh banyak yang hanyut, itik dan ayam habis mati, terlihat langit semakin kelam dari Istana, lampu tidak mau hidup, memanggil orang di halaman, si kerbau Binuang lepas, begitu juga dengan kuda si Gumarang, saya melihat dalam hujan yang deras, orang-orang berteriak, yang tidak pantas dilihat sudah terlihat, banjir besar di halaman, setiap orang merasa takut, sedangkan saya yang laki-laki merinding ketakutan, apalagi yang perempuan ....*

... because of God's destiny, it rained with strong wind, like typhoon and storm, fiery thunder rumbled, banana trees scattered, storm and typhoon got worse, many coconut and areca nut trees fell, lightning and thunderclap did not stop, raindrops falling from the sky hitting the head until it felt like it was going to burst, a big wave of water came, the tide rose in the Ngiang river, many shabby pieces of wood were washed away, ducks and chickens died, the sky was getting darker from the palace, the lights would not turn on, people called each other in the yard, Binuang the buffalo escaped, as well as Gumarang the horse, as I saw in the pouring rain, people were screaming, what was not worth seeing was already seen, there was a deluge in the yard, everyone was afraid, as a man I was shuddering in fear, let alone the women ....

(Endah, 1987, p. 67)

Data [5-KCM] describes the atmosphere when natural disasters occurred. Literary works are a wise means of showing people that nature can be very cruel if it is not maintained properly. The above quote provides an afterthought to always care about the natural environment to preserve the ecosystem balance. As leaders, if humans can carry out their functions properly, nature will surely provide natural resources to prosper their lives.



[6-KGR]

*Konon ceritanya si Gadis Ranti, sedang menumbuk di halaman, hari yang sudah beranjak tengah hari, sedang di kepala bayang-bayang, saatnya waktu beristirahat, sedang laparnya ayam-ayam, sedang ramainya orang di pasar, hari yang sedang panas-panasnya, membuat wajah yang putih menjadi merah, keringat di dahi bercucuran.*

It was said that Ranti the girl was pounding in the yard, it was already noon, the sun was directly overhead, it was time to rest, the chickens were hungry, the people in the market were busy, the day felt so hot, making the bright faces red, sweat on the forehead was dripping.

(Endah, 2004, p. 15)

The data [6-KGR] portrays the daytime atmosphere when the weather felt so hot. During the day, Minangkabau people used to do some activities in the yard. In the data [6-KGR], it is described that the character in the above story was pounding in the yard. Usually, when Minangkabau women have grown up, they often do rice-pounding activities in the yard. Although it has rarely been found, there are still those who do such activity today. In addition, it can also be seen in the data that the house of the Minangkabau people has a wide space of yard so that it can be used for various activities. Research by Yulisatiani et al. (2020) investigated the wisdom of Banyumas women in preserving the environment in Ahmad Tohari's novel. The results showed that women took part in activities to manage the environment wisely, for example processing natural resources into food and herbal medicines and utilizing the natural environment as a playground for children. It was indeed environmentally friendly compared to today's houses which look cramped, small, and barely have a yard.

[7-KNC]

*Burung alai terbang ke pohon,  
Terbang burung pipik dua tiga,  
Terbang ke atas bunga raya,  
Hinggap di kayu marapalam,*

....  
An Alai bird flew to the tree,  
Two to three sparrows were flying,  
Flying over the flowers,  
Perched on the Marapalam wood,

....

(Endah, 2004, p. 7)

[8-KSK]

*Anak burung memakan tumbuhan,  
Saling mencari buah untuk di makan,  
Hinggap di ranting pohon jambu,*

....  
Chicks were eating plants,  
Looking for fruit to eat,  
Perched on a guava tree branch,

....

(Endah, 2004, p. 41)

Data [7-KNC] and [8-KSK] describe the activities of birds flying, perching on trees, and looking for food. The story in *Kaba Minangkabau* contains many rhymes, as quoted above. Phenomena, events, and sounds in the natural environment are beautifully described as the first couplet in a rhyme. Again, the author portrayed his admiration for nature through this artwork.

*Second*, the natural environment settings were represented as a literary “foothold” in describing the geographical landscape, including the atmosphere, conditions, and activities of the

surrounding community. The natural environment in which humans live is a source of inspiration for literature to grow and develop. The Minangkabau tribe is a community who lives in certain areas, covering all districts and cities in West Sumatra Province (except the Mentawai Islands), the half mainland of Riau Province, the northern part of Bengkulu Province, the western part of Jambi Province, the western part of North Sumatra Province, and the southwestern part of Aceh Province. In general conversation, the Minangkabau people are often referred to as Padang people, referring to the name of the capital city of West Sumatra Province, Padang. However, these people usually refer to their group as "*urang awak*" (our people), the same as the Minangkabau people themselves.

[9-KCM]

*Adat lembaga dalam negeri, asal-usul cerita adat Minangkabau, sebarispun tidak boleh lupa, setetes tidak boleh hilang, pasti terpakai di alam ini. Sejak selaras batang bengkuang, sederet Gunung Merapi, kedua Gunung Singgalang, ketiga Gunung Talang, sampai ke Gunung Pasaman, itu di bawah perintahmu nak, genggam dengan teguh dan pegang dengan erat.*

*Dengar oleh anak batas-batasnya, yang bernama Minangkabau, sejak riak yang berdebur, sampai ke wilayah Sikilang Aia Bangih, durian dibelah raja, terus ke Siak Indopuro, sampai ke Siak ke Asahan, itu kekuasaan anak kandung. Jika dilihat wilayah rantainya, kurang lebih dua puluh, tiap wilayah rantau diberi raja, raja Siak raja Asahan, raja Nagari Pulau Punjuang, raja Tambilahan, raja Rengat.*

The customs of domestic institutions, the origin of the Minangkabau traditional stories, even a line must not be forgotten, even a drop must not be lost, it must be used in this world. From the yam's trunk, a row of Mount Merapi, the two Singgalang Mountains, the three Talang Mountains, to Mount Pasaman, it is all under your command, son, hold firmly and tightly.

Check out the boundaries of Minangkabau, from the crashing waves (the area to the Indonesian Ocean; Samudra Indonesia), to the area of Sikilang Aia Bangih, Durian Ditakuak Rajo, continue to Siak Indopuro, and Siak to Asahan, that is your territory. If you look at the overseas territory, there are approximately twenty of them, and each region is given a king, king of Siak, king of Asahan, king of Nagari Pulau Punjuang, king of Tambilahan, and king of Rengat.

(Endah, 1987, p. 13)

Data [9-KCM] illustrates the geographical landscape. The landscapes related to the boundaries of the Minangkabau tribe, geographically, were mapped in this context. The authors used place settings to develop stories, so it is not surprising that similar things (patterns) are often found in other literary works because literati commonly do it. They show their concerns by documenting them in the form of artworks, such as poetry, prose, and drama. These documents can be used as references for the next generation one day. Before reading this literary work, researchers, as the Minangkabau people, did not know in detail about the boundaries of the Minangkabau region. However, after validating the data with the head of customs, it was found that the boundaries of the Minangkabau region described in the data [9-KCM] were true.

[10-KCM]

*Cindua Mato dan Upiak Puti Bungsu, menempuh padang rimba semua, satu rumahpun tidak ada, setelah menurun kemudian mendaki, sampai di bukit Tambun Tulang, terdengar bunyi rentak Kuda, bunyinya terdengar sekeliling rimba itu, terdengar bunyi rentak kuda si Gumarang, terkejut para perampok, ....*

Cindua Mato and Upiak Puti Bungsu walked through the jungle, not even a single house was there, after descending and climbing, they arrived at the Tambun Tulang hill, they heard the sound of horse's hooves, the sound was heard all around the forest, the sound of hooves of Gumarang the horse, the robbers were shocked, ....

(Endah, 1987, p. 62)

[11-KBK]

*Dengarkanlah oleh tuan, kaba cerita orang masa lampau, dalam ranah Kampuang Dalam. Kalau dilihat masa itu, negeri belum seramai sekarang, belum ada kereta api, negeri masih penuh rimba pada masa itu, ada seorang perempuan, bernama Siti Jamilah, suami bernama Bagindo Baha.*

Listen, sir, to the ancients' stories in the realm of the Kampuang Dalam. If we look at that time, the country was not as busy as it is now, there were no trains, the country was still full of jungle, there was a woman, named Siti Jamilah, her husband was named Bagindo Baha.

(Endah, 2008, p. 9)

[12-KTLS]

*Terhampar orang dalam negeri, berbondong-bondong orang yang datang, ada yang dari lembah datang mendaki, yang dari bukit datang menurun, orang yang dari hulu sudah sampai, orang dari mudik pun juga telah datang, yang buta datang dibimbing, yang lumpuh datang digendong, semua orang sudah berbaris rapi saat itu, penuh sesak orang di lapangan, tidak termuat di tempat lapang, di tempat yang cekung sudah penuh pula.*

The people of the country were spread out, the crowds of people came, some came by climbing the valley, some came downhill, people from the upstream had arrived, people from the downstream had also come, the blind came guided, the paralyzed came carried, everyone had lined up neatly at that time, people were crowded in the field, they were not fitted in the field, the sunken place was packed as well.

(Endah, 2006, pp. 60-61)

Data [10-KCM], [11-KBK], and [12-KTLS] describe the situation and condition of the natural environment of the Minangkabau community in the past, which was still dominated by jungle or dense forests. Based on data from the Forestry Department of West Sumatra Province, approximately 2,380,057 hectares of the administrative area of West Sumatra are forests, according to the Decree of the Minister of Forestry No. SK.35/Menhut-II/2013 dated January 15, 2013. The area's function is to protect, conserve, and produce forests. It is good information because forest areas can be very beneficial for the survival of living things in the vicinity. Per data [10-KCM], [11-KBK], and [12-KTLS], community activities also portrayed the natural state of the Minangkabau region, which was dominated by hills, mountains, rivers, and valleys. They rode horses as a means of transportation. The author again proved that literary works reflect the natural environment.

*Third*, the natural environment settings were represented in literary works as an analogy to the human physical form. Other living things, such as plants and animals, were used as objects for learning and increasing knowledge by humans. It followed the philosophy of the Minangkabau community, "*alam takambang jadikan guru*" (all natural occurrences in the universe can be viewed as life lessons). Using the knowledge perspective, humans have advantages compared to animals and plants. They are given the advantages of reasoning, mind, and intuition. They can learn everything about animals and plants, but not the other way around. Through the analogy depicted in the *kaba*, humans increasingly understood how great the creator of the universe is for the beauty of His creation. So, literary works exist to represent the relationship among humans, animals, and plants to preserve and protect the natural environment. For more details, the following are quotations of *kaba* that can prove such circumstances.

[13-KCM]

*Inilah keistimewaan wahai Tuan, berminantu raja yang berhati mulia, luar bisa gantengnya, pinggangnya seperti bambu disusun, lubang hidung seperti gendang, betis seperti batang pohon sampia, kulit halus seperti biawak, mata kecil seperti tempurung kelapa, kumis tebal seperti ijuk, wajah putih seperti kuali, pantaslah menjadi pilihan hati si Bungsu.*

This is the privilege, O Lord, to have a noble-hearted king as a son-in-law, his good looks are extraordinary, his waist is like the arranged bamboo, his nostrils are like drums, his calves are like the Sampia tree trunks, his skin is smooth as that of the lizard, his small eyes are like coconut shells, his mustache is thick as palm fiber, his face is white like the cauldron, he deserves to be the Youngest's choice. (Endah, 1987, p. 58)

[14-KGR]

.... Berdesir darah di dada, melihat anak gadis itu, jarang ditemukan dalam desa, rendah tidak dan tinggipun juga tidak, rupanya kuning seperti buah langsung, mukanya bulat seperti daun pudi, pipinya seperti buah mangga, telinganya seperti jerat terpasang, dagunya seperti awan tergantung, bulu matanya seperti semut beriringan, jarinya seperti lilin yang dituangkan, dadanya jombang pinggangnya ramping, perjalanannya tidak jauh-jauh, dari pada pergi lebih baik tidak, semut yang terpijak pun tidak mati, jarang ada gadis sebaik itu, seperti bidadari turun dari langit.

... The blood [on the chest] rippled at the sight of that girl, a girl like her was barely found in the village, she was neither short nor tall, her skin was yellow as that of the Langsat, her face was round like a Pudi leaf, her cheeks were like a mango, her ears were like the attached snare, her chin was like a hanging cloud, her eyelashes were like ants walking hand in hand, her fingers were like the poured melted wax, her chest looked good and her waist was slender, she did not travel too far, it was better for her not to go than to go, the ants stepped on by her did not die, there was rarely a girl as good as her, like an angel descending from the sky.

(Endah, 2004, p. 12)

[15-KNC]

Jika dilihat rupa anak, anak terlihat berbulu penuh, rambut menghitam di kepalanya, badan putih seperti hati pisang, matanya mirip bintang timur, melihat anak serancak itu, senang hati sejuk pikiran.

If you look at the child's appearance, that child looked full of hair, having black hair on his head, his body skin was as white as a Banana Blossom, his eyes resembled the Eastern Star, seeing a child like him made the heart happy and the mind calm. (Endah, 2004, p. 17)

[16-KNC]

Menangis Nilam Cayo, air matanya bercucuran, seperti intan kehilangan pemilik, melihat rupa seperti tuan putri itu, rupanya rancak seperti bulan penuh, rambutnya panjang sampai ke kaki, kulit berwarna kuning dan mulus, pipinya buah mangga, hidungnya mancung seperti dasun tunggal, bibirnya tipis seperti asam diiris tipis, bulu matanya seperti semut beriringan, telinganya seperti jerat terpasang, dagunya seperti awan tergantung, lehernya seperti jenjang, dada kembang pinggang seksi, tangan seperti lilin dituang, jari seperti duri landak, pahanya seperti batang piladang, batinnya seperti perut padi, tumitnya seperti telur burung, ....

Nilam Cayo was crying, her tears welled up, like diamonds losing their owner, her appearance was like a princess, her look was as beautiful as the full moon, her hair was extended to her feet, her skin was yellowish and smooth, her cheeks were like mangoes, her nose was as pointed as Solo garlic, her lips were as thin as the thinly sliced limes, her eyelashes were like ants walking hand in hand, her ears were like the attached snares, her chin was like a hanging cloud, her neck was like a stair tread, her chest was puffy and her waist was sexy, her hands were like a poured melted wax, her fingers were like hedgehog's quills, her thighs were like Piladang stems, her calves were like rice stalks, her heels were like bird eggs, ....

(Endah, 2004, p. 40)

[17-KSB]

Orangnya rancak masih muda, kaya memiliki emas dan perak, kaya dengan sawah dan ladang, memiliki banyak hewan ternak di tengah padang rumput, memiliki kebun kelapa di tepi pantai, terlihat mencolok bila dilihat dari jauh, wajahnya seperti daun sirih, kulit putih seperti hati pisang, jarang ada orang serancak itu, tinggi tidak rendah pun tidak.

That person looked attractive and young, rich in gold and silver, rich in rice fields and fields, having much livestock in the middle of the meadow, having a coconut grove on the beach, looked striking from afar, having a face like a betel leaf, having skin as white as banana blossom, it was rare to find someone as charming as that, neither tall nor short.

(Endah, 2004, p. 37)

Data [13-KCM], [14-KGR], [15-KNC], [16-KNC], and [17-KSB] illustrate humans' physical form (which in this context were the story characters), which were analogous to the shape of plants, fruits, and other elements existing in the universe. In the data [13-KCM], the shape of the waist was analogous to bamboo, the legs were likened to a tree trunk, the smooth skin was analogous to lizard skin, the eyes were like coconut shells, and the thick mustache was like palm fiber. In the data [14-KGR], the visual appearance was analogous to that of a *langsat* fruit, a round face was like a leaf, curved cheeks were like the shape of a mango, a chin was like a hanging cloud, and eyelashes were like ants walking hand in hand. In the data [15-KNC], the bright body skin was analogous to a banana blossom, and the eyes were likened to the Eastern Star. In the data [16-KNC], the appearance was analogous to a full moon, curved cheeks were like the shape of a mango, a nose was like Solo garlic, thin lips were like partially cut limes, eyelashes were like ants walking hand in hand, a chin was like a hanging cloud, fingers were like hedgehog's quills, thighs were like tree trunks, calves were like rice stalks, and heels were like bird eggs. The data [17-KSB] showed that the face shape was analogous to a betel leaf, and bright skin was likened to a banana blossom. This kind of analogy makes the reader imagine the natural elements, reminding them how attractive God's creation is. The Minangkabau people always learn from nature, so they often make analogies in life, including this analogy of human physical form. This local wisdom can still be widely found in the Minangkabau community, which never stops taking lessons from nature.

[18-KSB]

*Juki dan Si Buyuang Gambuik, keduanya sedang bermenung, hujan rintik manambah risau, baju di badan sudah basah, bajunya habis dan tidak ada pengganti, kalau hilang dengan apa akan diganti, seperti kayu sedang layu, masa usianya telah datang, daun yang mulai berguguran, pucuknya pun gugur juga, menangis ranting mintak air, kulit di batang kayu sudah mengelupas.*

Juki and Si Buyuang Gambuik were contemplating, the light rain added to the feeling of worry, the clothes on the body were already wet, the stock of clothes had run out and the replacement was not there, they did not know what to replace them with if those were lost, like a withered wood, the end of its age had come, the leaves had begun to fall, the shoots had fallen too, the branches were crying for water, the bark on the logs had peeled off.

(Endah, 2004, p. 12)

Data [18-KSB] analogized the condition of the story character, namely Si Buyuang Gambuik, with withered wood, the leaves and shoots that began to fall, the dry twigs, and the peeling skin. In this context, the author analogized the story character's condition with a dying tree that had no hope of life. It was likened to the condition of the story character, where the clothes worn were wet while he did not have any replacements. This description proved that the Minangkabau community understands their function, in which they take lessons and position themselves just like other living things on earth.

## DISCUSSION

Research on the *Kaba Minangkabau* classified as a literary work was not considered something new. Several studies related to literature were also relevant to this research. Banerjee (2020) conducted a study on one of Rabindranath Tagore's works. The conclusion was that the relationship



between humans and nature looked like a symphony. The sound of a stormy day was represented by a cacophony of joy and charm that satisfied the human senses. The natural environment must be treated as well as possible since nature is an essential part of human life. Humans need the natural environment to grow and develop, and vice versa; the natural environment requires humans to maintain and preserve it.

Kakoty (2018) discussed the wisdom of the hunter tribe, namely the Onge tribe in India, who had "matured" in facing natural disasters. The tribe could survive when the massive tsunami hit Asia on December 26, 2004. Based on the study results, none of them became the victims because their folktale tells a story about a big wave followed by an earthquake, making them climb to a higher place. Thus, such a knowledge system can be an important way of life for modern human beings. The same thing was found in the *Kaba Minangkabau*, which provided much knowledge about maintaining, preserving, and developing the natural environment to obtain a calm and comfortable life in harmony with nature. The sounds, events, and natural phenomena portrayed in the *Kaba Minangkabau* could provide knowledge for humans to take lessons from everything that happens in the universe.

Habibi and Karbalaei (2015) investigated "*Solar*," a novel by Ian McEwan, which showed that imitating nature might be one of *Solar's* satirical techniques to overcome global disaster. This research was motivated by the distrust of scientists who prioritized money, although the world was trapped in the global warming problem that must be dealt with immediately. McEwan wrote the novel to make his readers aware of the absence of a strong collective desire to eradicate the global catastrophe, so he concentrated on the collective failure and discovering the causes. The results showed that it turned out to be human selfishness taking advantage of science instead of fulfilling the common interest of humankind. Today, humans live a life in a culture where moral ambiguity is often seen as more threatening than violence. Literary works tell that good can triumph over evil, even though real-life suggests otherwise.

Dewi (2018) conducted research on poetry teaching using the ecohumanism paradigm for students in Indonesia. The poetry teaching was implemented to investigate environmental issues. The study results emphasized that the ecohumanism paradigm with the ecological concept could be included in teaching language and literature, which provides continuous direction and habituation to respect the Earth. It was certainly in line with this research, considering that the philosophy of the Minangkabau community is "*alam takambang jadikan guru*." The concepts taught by the natural environment explicitly and implicitly in literary works improved students' insights to care and be aware of the importance of preserving the natural environment. God created nature with diverse contents, both those that can be felt and enjoyed and those that are invisible to the naked eye. Humans are equipped with the brain and heart to think, feel, accept, and adapt well to all natural environment conditions.

Ahmed and Hashim (2015) examined the Arabic poems in which Arab poets highlighted human and non-human relationships. Arabic poetry is rich in natural images described differently by the poets. This study used the ecocritical lens to explore how the natural environment has always been a "force" to shape individuals so that they can contribute to reforestation efforts. The natural environment contents in Arabic poems were used as a form of interactive resistance, where the existing ideas were expressed through the green images and symbols. As a literary genre, *Kaba Minangkabau* also displayed human and non-human relationships. In the context of *kaba*, the relationship could be seen from the natural environment, which was an analogy to the human physical form. Nevertheless, Arabic poetry and *kaba Minangkabau* as the forms of literary works

proved that the natural environment has always been an interesting topic of discussion for further study.

The discussion above indicated that literary works became an intermediary medium to campaign for the concept of caring for the natural environment. Literati and poets expressed their admiration for the natural environment as a source of inspiration to produce literary works, whether in *kaba* (prose), novel, or poetry. As part of society, poets and literati do not close their ears and eyes to the conditions and phenomena in their surrounding environment. All phenomena related to the natural environment that they hear, see, and experience becomes a source of inspiration, later expressed in literary works. Thus, people can gain an understanding related to natural environmental problems through the literary works they created. Literary works are a powerful medium to arouse human attention and thought on the future of the natural environment. This study was indeed different from some previous studies mentioned previously. The novelty of this research existed in the analysis being carried out, in which the *kaba* Minangkabau was studied using an ecocritical perspective. *Kaba* Minangkabau illustrates the relationship between humans and non-humans which is an interesting object to describe as a media to raise awareness of maintaining and preserving the natural environment. Furthermore, the *kaba* Minangkabau becomes a product of local wisdom rich in educational values. The readers will gain awareness that the natural environment should be God's creation that must be appreciated and loved for human survival in harmony with nature.

## CONCLUSION

Literary works and the natural environment are two inseparable elements. Literary works need the natural environment as a source of inspiration, creation, and interesting objects to describe. Meanwhile, the natural environment requires literary works as a medium of conservation and preservation. This fact was found in a traditional literary work called *kaba* Minangkabau. Based on the research conducted on the representation of functions of the natural environment settings in the *kaba* Minangkabau, 18 research data proved this circumstance. Thus, the existence of *kaba* Minangkabau as a product of local wisdom was considered an object full of cultural messages, moral values, and other relevant aspects that stemmed from the shared reality of life. Each *kaba* told the stories of the Minangkabau community, the atmosphere of their natural environment, and their behavior in interacting with the natural environment, which were then used to transfer knowledge, awareness, attitudes, and skills from one generation to the next. Generally, literary works in the form of *kaba* are considered pseudo-realities because the unity and reality contained in them are imitative. However, the Minangkabau community still highly values their ontological status. *Kaba* has a functional value in Minangkabau society as it is considered capable of bridging the existing rifts and moral gaps.

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