

Ecowarriors bring back *Kumandra*: An ecofeminism study depicted in *Raya and the Last Dragon*

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ABSTRACT

This research discusses the study of ecofeminism found in the *Raya and the Last Dragon* movie. This research's objective was to reveal how the ecofeminist figures (Raya, Sisu, and Namaari) save their homeland called Kumandra. The ability of women to take care of nature is considered an important role. The attitude of mothering spirit, nurturing, and caring qualities are essential to keeping nature safe. Women have the energy to do the protest against environmental damage. The attitude of raising and caring for nature can also be brought in literary works with the study of ecofeminism. This research uses a descriptive qualitative method. The research data took from the storylines and dialogue in *Raya and the Last Dragon* movie. As a result, the ecowarriors have a meeting point by flocking and working together to achieve the same vision and mission to save Kumandra from Druun by uniting and trusting each other.



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1. INTRODUCTION

Literature has an essential role in human life. Although the movie is described as imaginative, it often represents real problems in society, particularly in this contemporary world. As a form of literature, a movie is an example of modern literature that frequently portrays social issues in its storyline. A movie's existence contains several purposes, such as entertainment and convincing information shown by the scriptwriter or the movie director. In addition, environmental awareness and messages about gender equality inherent in an ecofeminist view can be conveyed to the broader community through literature in the form of movies to understand the plot better.

Raya and the Last Dragon (2021) features a story of saving Kumandra, a vast fertile land completed with five marvelous tribes (Fang, Heart, Spine, Talon, and Tail) from the threat of the Druun, a plague born of distrust or human division that affects the balance of nature. *Raya and the Last Dragon* followed the contemporary Disney version of Princess Story as analyzed by the 3L article journal entitled *How Far the Ecowarrior Will Go: An Ecofeminist Reading of Disney's Moana by Mala Hernawati*. The orientation of traditional Disney storylines is always toward the stereotype of princess princes with the central female role on a mission to find her counterpart (Hernawati, 2021). *Raya and the Last Dragon* is packaged differently from traditional Disney animations by showing a progressive gender side that is not seen in other Disney princess animation works such as Snow White in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, Aurora in *Sleeping Beauty*, Cinderella in *Cinderella*, Ariel in *The Little Mermaid*, Belle in *Beauty and the Beast*, Tiana in *Princess and the Frog*, and Rapunzel in *Tangled* (Hernawati, 2021). Raya is far from the expectations that have been formed of traditional Disney princess main character, such as wearing a dress equipped with a

beautiful crown and often containing the story of a princess who is waiting for her dream prince to come to her rescue. Another previous study entitled, *Study of Ecofeminism in the Sawitri Dan Tujuh Pohon Kelahiran by Mashdar Zainal*, written by Afry Adi Chandra, Herman J. Waluyo, and Nugraheni Eko Wardani and published in Proceeding of the 2nd ICoLLiT, deduced the women's capability to carry out the nature well. The research findings reveal that there are three types of ecofeminism studies: natural ecofeminism, socialist ecofeminism, and spiritual ecofeminism, which means the figure of Sawitri, the main character of this novel, is a mother who emphasizes the significance of protecting the natural environment. This previous research, in line with the focus of this research which highlights the ability of women conducting nature well. Furthermore, another research entitled *Ecological Crisis in Into The Forest by Jean Hegland*, composed by Nirmala Khairunnisa Budi and Ali Mustofa was published in ELite Journal: International Journal of Education, Language, and Literature. The results of the study have similarity with this research that indicates the ecological crisis as the result of human activities that interrupt the natural environment. However, the center of this research is more to discuss the ecofeminism study conceived in the *Raya and the Last Dragon movie*.

Raya is the daughter of Benja, the head of the Heart tribe, who is depicted as a woman who is aware of the occurrence of natural damage as a result of the five tribes' greed for each personal gain which in the end became a disaster because Druun shook the stability of nature. The pattern of Disney movies always adds the element of a supernatural figure as the sidekick of the main character. Hence, *Raya and the Last Dragon* shows a woman guardian who collaborates with a natural balancing figure, namely a water dragon (last dragon) named Sisu. Besides that, other female characters also have an essential role in the story. Her name is Namaari, and she is a strong, challenging, and influential woman.

Ecofeminism sees the existence of both women and nature in equal occupation. The interconnection between women and nature with the background of the same thing, namely the acts of oppression experienced by both of them, becomes increasingly evident that both deserve recognition and equality, in line with Gaard (1993) said that ecofeminism can also be interpreted as a woman experiencing the same inequality with natural conditions, which are frequently mistreated. Thus, ecofeminism advocates for the abolition of all oppressions, arguing that no effort to liberate women (or any other oppressed group) will be successful unless an equal effort is made to liberate nature.

In everyday life, women are synonymous with affection and closeness to nature. Shiva (1988) claimed that women's role in productive capacity has been most developed and evolved significantly in ecological cycles in agriculture and forestry integrity. She continued that in the patriarchal project, 'development' destroyed sustainability and equity as like the forest detached from the river and the animals are separated from the crops. In contrast, the field and animals obtain fertility from the forest handled by women, and they bring fertilizer from animal waste for crops.

Vandana Shiva posed the terms of masculinity and femininity in a juxtaposed position. She said that the concept of women being considered 'the other' is a socially constructed masculinity that can be called a product of gender ideology. So, in an asymmetrical relationship, ideologically viewing femininity as everything that does not reflect masculinity must follow the direction of domination. In addition, she said the basic foundation needed for a life that has the character of togetherness, safety, peace, and love is a form of femininity as a perspective of sustenance. Otherwise, the character of masculinity as like exploitation, oppression, and domination is called the basic foundation of destruction (Shiva, 1988). Therefore, being aware of giving love to protect nature is the primary key to harmonious relations between humans and nature. Raising nature requires a mothering spirit, nurturing, and caring qualities.

Furthermore, *Raya and the Last Dragon* emphasizes the relationship between women and nature, which is sorely in the characterization plot. The dependence on humans and all-natural elements are articulated using the ecofeminism approach to the cause-and-effect relationships in *Raya and the Last Dragon*. The discussion regarding the ecofeminism issues in "*Raya and the Last Dragon*" has still underexplored. Thus, the analyst aims to reveal how the ecofeminist figures (Raya, Sisu, and Namaari) save their homeland called Kumandra.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

In conducting this research, the analyst used the qualitative method. According to Creswell (2014), "the inquirer constructs a rich, detailed description of the central phenomenon." In other words, the qualitative method deals with defining the meaning. Therefore, the analyst used the presentation of data in qualitative descriptive research because the explanation involves a descriptive summary that contains information from the data arranged in a logical and structured manner.

The primary source data of the research is *Raya and the Last Dragon* movie. The method of data collection employed is content analysis. According to Moleong (2014), content analysis is a valid and replicable research technique depending on the evidence in its context. The data validity technique utilizes triangulation of data sources and methods. Utilizing numerous data sources, triangulation of data sources is used to process data collection. In the meantime, triangulation methods are used to collect similar data using a variety of data collection techniques. In this study, the literature review, reading, and note taking techniques served as the triangulation method. The technique for data analysis employs the content analysis method. The data was collected in several steps. First, the analyst repeatedly watched the movie entitled *Raya and the Last Dragon*. Second, the analyst downloaded the English subtitle from the internet (Deadline.com). Third, the analyst focused on the dialogue and the storyline and classified the data based on the research problems. Last, the analyst analyzed the data by using ecofeminism perspectives. In this study, the ecofeminism approach was utilized. Ecofeminism emphasizes women's awareness and the environment in literary works (Endraswara, 2016). Ecofeminism is an offshoot of feminism that specifically addresses ecology from a feminist standpoint.

3. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

3.1. The Nature in *Raya and the Last Dragon*

Kumandra as The Representation of Harmonious Homeland

Raya and the last dragon narrative begins with a peaceful homeland named Kumandra completed with dragons as the balance of nature. Humans coexist with dragons who provide water, rain, and peace. The goodness of nature bestowed upon Kumandra was so beneficial. Raya said Kumandra has five unique and prosperous regions of the tribe: A sweltering desert with sneaky mercenaries who fight dirty called "Tail", a floating market famous for fast deals and fighters with even faster hands named "Talon", "Spine" is a frigid, bamboo forest guarded by gigantic warriors and their giant axes, "Fang" is a nation protected by angry assassins and their even angrier cats, and the last is "Heart" where the dragon gem placed safely with the cure of Raya's family. Dragon gem is a magical spirit assembled by the essence dragon to make Kumandra safe. The dragons forged the Dragon Gem out of the spirit of dragon magic. In the past, the five tribes lived side by side and helped each other create an extraordinary life until the other side of nature appeared in the form of a plague called Druun. The Dragon Gem can drive away evil spirits (Druun) and resurrect someone who has been turned to stone. It revived everyone except the dragons when it was initially developed and employed by Sisu (the last dragon) against the Druun for the first time. It eventually came into the custody of Heart, who kept it safe in a secret chamber (Estrada & Hall, 2021).

Druun as The Representation of Human's Greed

Druun, is a plague. It could turn everything in his path to stone. As a balance of nature, dragons have been made with all sacrifices, but all efforts are not enough to save themselves, so the dragons also turn into stone. Druun's disappearance was overcome by the last dragon figure named Sisu, a majestic blue dragon. She centers all her magic, and a magic explosion wipes out Druun. All creatures that had turned to stone have changed as before except all the dragons. Now all that is left to protect nature from Druun's wrath is the dragon gem that is well stored in the territory belonging to the land of the Heart tribe.

At the beginning of the story, Raya explains in her monologue, "It should have been this big inspirational moment where humanity united over her sacrifice... but instead - people being people - they all fought to possess the last remnant of dragon magic." (Estrada & Hall, 2021). The unwise human wishes assuming that if every tribe had a dragon gem would survive Druun was the worst opinion. In the end, all the efforts made by nature by the dragons were in vain by humans who only have personal interests without thinking about the negative impacts that will arise. According to Verchick (2004), "[Tribes' greediness], inequality in exposure to environmental harm flows directly from a failure to consider the experiences and values of these groups."

With all the strength to fight over, the dragon gem was deployed so that in the power struggle, the dragon gem fell and was divided into five parts. "Borders were drawn. Kumandra divided. We all became enemies. Furthermore, the gem had to be hidden." said Raya (Estrada & Hall, 2021). Each tribe holds a piece of the dragon gem, but it will not be enough to save them from Druun in long-term condition. The human only takes advantage of the power of nature, namely the gem dragon itself, for the sake and safety of their lives without respecting the efforts of the dragons that died and changed into stone while fighting Druun to save nature and life.

In contrast, human was still arrogant to have a dragon gem when nature told them to maintain stability, while what they do is the exact opposite. The human nature in the story is contrary to the opinion of Bestthorn & McMillen (2002) that: "issues of environmental degradation and concerns for a reanimated human/nature consciousness cannot be separated from those systemic forces that function to maintain all forms of injustice, whether toward nature or other human beings." After the destruction of nature, humans should have more sensitivity to the sustainability of nature by taking care of each other from two sides because disunity will worsen the situation.

3.2. The Female Ecowarriors in *Raya and the Last Dragon*

The dominance experienced by women and nature historically, theoretically, symbolically, and experientially shows a vital relationship position in the perspective of feminism and environmental ethics (Warren, 1990). She emphasizes the perceived cultural relationship between women and nature, the mother and mother earth, holding up women and nature.

Raya and the Last Dragon show that to live a harmonious life, it needs some feminine work (nurturing and protecting nature) because masculinity (power to rule others) has a destructive effect on nature and society. Therefore, instead of showing women as flawed characters, the main female character in *Raya and the Last Dragon* is complex. In other words, it offers both masculine and feminine qualities simultaneously. The solid female characters are a turning point in every women's right or nature that is oppressed. Other women's actions will accompany and play a part because women are considered more capable of feeling the suffering experienced by nature, which has something in common that is underestimated and as a second class. Thus, the analyst tries to elucidate the female characters appointed in the movie as the figure of a custodian of nature that represent ecofeminist role in *Raya and the Last Dragon*, as well as Raya, Sisu, and Namaari, all of them provide natural connections from solid female figures who can overcome problems.

Ecofeminist perspective in Raya

Since childhood, Raya has been responsible as the Guardian of the Dragon Gem. Raya has the privilege of being the heir to the Heart tribe, so she grew up in a very supportive environment. Raya is described as a very mature character, an independent, brave, persistent character who adapts very well to the situation. These things form Raya, who has a high leadership spirit like his father, Benja. Unfortunately, Benja turned to stone at the event of the Druun rampage at that time. Benja saves Raya by throwing Raya into the river because Druun is afraid of water, so little Raya is protected from the evil plague.

Raya's journey begins with her adventure as a woman who has a great desire to return things to normal. Thus, taking her to wander in search of the last dragon that is believed to restore the situation. Sherry B. Ortner claims the belief brought by the people who believe that women are closer to nature than men is absolute; therefore, talking about nature cannot be separated from the intervention of women (Tong, 2009). The belief and instinct of a strong woman lead her towards goodness to save nature. Raya, as the main character, represents ecofeminist issues in various storylines as follows:

First, Raya has been interested in being close to nature since she was little. Raya's friendship with animals shows respect for life other than humans. Although in Disney animated films, there are often companion characters in the form of animals. However, in the animation of *Raya and the Last Dragon*, this is not only used as a meaningless companion character. Raya has Sisu as a friend in the form of a water dragon. Raya said, "Someone could see you" (Estrada & Hall, 2021). She showed her caring mind to Sisu, who turned into a dragon and swam in the river. So, Raya was worried about this and said, "Sisu, I saw people lose their minds over a dragon gem. Can you imagine what they would do over an actual dragon? Look, we need you to make this all work" (Estrada & Hall, 2021). The previous conversation has shown the sense of concern embedded in Raya to protect non-human beings.

Second, Raya is trying to restore Kumandra to the way it was when everything was harmonious before it happened and Druun continued to plague. With all her mighty efforts to turn things around. So, she has a massive mission to collect four dragon gems scattered in several tribal areas, namely Fang, Spine, Talon, and Tail, where each region has its challenges taking from dragon gems. When the situation was very urgent, Raya tried to remember Sisu's advice that was given her, namely, "All I know is I trusted them, and they trusted me and so..." (Estrada & Hall, 2021). Then Raya ordered all representatives from each tribe who were holding the pieces of the Magic Gem to put them together, including gems brought by Namaari. At first, some of the tribe members did not believe in Namaari anymore because she was the one who killed Sisu.

Nevertheless, Raya still clings to the power of trust that will bring a good impact. Finally, everyone believes in Raya's persistence to unite the magic gems without Sisu's presence, who is believed to be able to

set the broken magic gems. With the power of belief, which begins with Raya and ends with Namaari, the miracle finally happens. Magic gems can fuse and restore nature to its original state. Druun disappeared, the dragons, including Sisu, came back to life, and everyone affected by Druun's curse came back alive, including Raya's father. Her effort to restore an intense state of service.

Third, in realizing Raya's mission to improve nature from Druun's rampage. Raya also has a decisive role in resurrecting Tong from the Spine tribe to join Raya's mission. Tong is a male character that loses his hope in fighting Druun because he lost all his family. Raya knew Tong's feelings because he was alone in the Spine after Druun turned all the Spine people to stone. Raya said to Tong: "Okay, Tong, look, you don't know me, I don't know you. But I'm sure that you know a back door or way outta here and it's really important that my friends stay safe. Okay? So, I am sincerely asking you, will you help us? Please." and he nods (Estrada & Hall, 2021). According to Tong (2009), she quoted Salleh's statement that the "deep ecology movement will not truly happen until men are brave enough to rediscover and to love the woman inside themselves." To rediscover and love the woman inside Tong, Raya helped him raise this concern by inviting Tong to help Raya.

Ecofeminist Perspective in Sisu

Sisu is a water dragon who can transform into a woman who always accompanies Raya. Sisu was the last dragon to protect Kumandra from Druun when the other dragons could not save themselves. She came with the dragon gem before it broke into pieces. In the end, it was Sisu who accompanied Raya to defeat Druun and save humanity. The act of Sisu that present as women have a straight contribution to humanity and nature itself, explains as follows:

Sisu creating the dragon gem was a final form bestowed on her. Sisu created Dragon gems for the sake of the balance of nature Kumandra after the guardians of nature represented by the dragons had lost against Druun in exchange for protecting nature, namely through the dragon gem.

A woman who has a high caring nature is also the main factor. Sisu always gives direction to Raya to have a sense of trust to trust Namaari after past events, so Raya is difficult to trust by anyone. Sisu's role here is very influential for the success of Raya's mission. In line with the ecofeminist perspective retrieved in King (1991) noted that "Ecofeminism makes a central place for values of care, love, friendship, trust, and appropriate reciprocity-values that presuppose that our relationships to others are central to our understanding of who we are (Warren 1990, 141, 143)" those values make a considerable contribution to uniting women power.

Ecofeminist Perspective in Namaari

Namaari is Raya's friend who loves a water dragon. She has represented masculinity that turns into ecowarrior that shows femininity at the end of the story. In a precarious situation, after Namaari made an unintentional mistake. She made Sisu die due to an arrow shot at Sisu by Namaari's carelessness. Allen (2000) said that "masculine" is to be aggressive, competitive, and in control. Namaari's masculinity wants to handle only in her hand, and she craves to dominate all the situations. Otherwise, Namaari's turning point happened when things got worse. Namaari saved Raya's friend Tuk Tuk from crushing Druun with his dragon gem pieces while saying, "what are you waiting for" (Estrada & Hall, 2021). In Namaari's heart, there is still a desire to save Kumandra by joining Raya, proving that Namaari still cares.

In addition, Namaari is also the determinant of the excellent fortune entrusted by Raya after an incident where she betrayed Raya. However, in the end, Namaari took the opportunity to put all the dragon gem pieces together. So, everything ends with a dragon gem explosion that can restore Kumandra as it should be. Namaari's participation in this matter is also a significant determinant of the success of the power of belief of all tribal representatives

4. CONCLUSION

In this research, the analyst concluded the final result from discovering the influence of ecowarrior characters in *Raya and the Last Dragon*. The occurrence of environmental problems caused by human greed as a representation of masculinity characteristics will be detrimental and impact a vast scope causing permanent natural damage. The capability of women to have a mothering spirit, nurturing, and caring qualities will build a better impact on nature. In addition, the ecofeminism study raises the interconnection between women and the environment.

Raya and the Last Dragon succeeded in describing or telling the new spirit of women in this era. The ecological crisis also soared. Women's real contribution was manifested as a struggle to preserve and protect the natural environment with the action shown by the female actors, namely Raya, Sisu, and Namaari, presented ecofeminist characters are very influential provides a solution. At the end of the story, it can be

clearly explained that the union of women with the fundamental femininity characteristic as a perspective of sustainability the intertwined bond between women and nature finally can save the world from the masculinity or the form of destruction. So, both are considered a relationship that will be the main problem-solving factor.

In short, the findings of this study can be used to further investigate the study of ecofeminism on various literary forms, such as novels, poems, and films. Using literary works, ecofeminism studies can be a means of environmental education. As a side note, the study of ecofeminism can also be used to promote equality between men and women because women can manage and protect the environment.

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