

THE MYTH OF THE FISH GOD (*TOR DOURONENSIS*) IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF BIOCENTRISM

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Abstract

The values that lead to human exploitation of biodiversity are still dominant in the anthropocentric view. This type of environmental ethics puts the interests of humans first. Concern for maintaining ecological sustainability through cultural values fades with the times. People's culture creates certain beliefs to protect something. In Kuningan District, this cultural practice can be seen through the myth of the Fish God (*Tor douronensis*). The focus of the study in this study are: (1) finding the framework of the Dewa Fish myth circulating in society (2) examining the correlation between biocentrism ethics and these myths. The method used is normative doctrinal with a conceptual approach and a historical approach. The results show that (1) this myth describes the taboo that the god fish is the incarnation of the cursed Siliwangi warrior, and can bring bad luck if hunted or consumed. (2) the value system which considers the divine fish as sacred, provides a perspective which in biocentrism ethics is considered a moral extension, which means that humans recognize the inherent value in the divine fish.

Keywords: Myth, Fish God, Biocentrism

INTRODUCTION

The existence of myth cannot be separated from the culture of a community. Myths have existed in every tradition and are still largely preserved today. Myths are created / created to protect certain things that are considered important by society. Myths also have a control function to society to have certain attitudes according to mutually agreed norms. This norm can also be related to many other aspects such as religion, technology, economy, environment, and so on. Roibin (2016) states that myth comes from the Greek word *muthos*, which is literally interpreted as a story or something that someone says. In a broader sense, myth means a statement, a story or a plot of a drama.

Referring to Simon's (2006) opinion, myths have certain functions, including: a) The process of awareness of supernatural powers. Myths are not information about supernatural powers, but ways of anticipating, studying, and relating to them. b) Provide a guarantee for the present. Myths represent various events that have existed, and contain suggestions and anticipation for the present. c) Myth stretches epistemological and ontological horizons about reality. Myth provides a description of the world, of its origins, but not like modern history. Mythological space and time are only contexts for talking about the beginning and the end, or the origin and purpose of life, and not factual time and space.

One form of myth that exists in society, especially the people of Kuningan Regency, West Java Province, is the myth about the God Fish (*Tor douronensis*). This myth is in the form of a story about the origin and ethics of treating the God Fish. Some versions say that the Dewa Fish is the incarnation of Prabu Siliwangi's defiant warrior and will cause havoc if it is treated badly (such as being exploited, even consumed).

METHOD

This study focuses on two things, namely: (1) finding the mythical framework of the divine fish circulating in the people of Kuningan Regency, and (2) examining how biocentrism ethics have a

correlation with these myths. This study uses a normative doctrinal method with a conceptual approach and a historical approach.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

A. Myth

Timoer (1983) states that myth is a kind of superstition as a result of human ignorance, but his subconscious tells him that there is a power that controls him and his natural environment. The subconscious is what then creates a conjecture in the mind, which gradually turns into belief. Usually accompanied by a sense of amazement, fear, or both, which gives birth to an attitude of worship or cult. Such an attitude of worship, then some are preserved in the form of religious ceremonies (rites) which are carried out periodically at certain times, some also in the form of speech that is conveyed by word of mouth throughout the ages, hereditary and which are now recognized as folk tales. or folklore. Usually to convey the origin of a special event that will not be forgotten. This is what happened in the past, or underdeveloped areas where the human mind is still strongly controlled by orthodoxy. Myth can be interpreted as a proof of certain limitations for humans to understand reality. From certain limitations, parts that are not understood are then modified through packages that tend to be transcendental, magical, and irrational.

However, myths are not completely bad. It may be true from a scientific point of view that the validity of a myth can simply be refuted. But myth does not only want to bring a fact about reality to be proven, but to be lived. Because myth is a product of human reason that is adapted to the needs of a particular era and context, it still contains a value that may be relevant to the dynamics of the times, even though it cannot be scientifically validated.

B. The myth of the fish god (Tor douronensis)

Semah fish (Tor douronensis) are spread across Sumatra, Kalimantan and Java. Semah Fish in Indonesia has other names in each area such as: Jurung Fish (North Sumatra), Garing Fish (West Sumatra), Kerling Fish (Aceh), Hot Fish (Gayo), Gariang Fish (Padang), Semah Fish (Palembang), Lomi Fish (Kalimantan), Dewa Fish (West Java), Kancra Bodas Fish (Kuningan, West Java), Tambra / Tombro Fish (Java), Kelah Fish, Sultan Fish (Malaysia), Ika Mahser (International). The types of Semah Fish themselves have the same genus, namely four types of Torada, namely Tor douronensis, Tor tambra, Tor soro, and Tor tambroide.

At first glance, the god fish has a body shape similar to a goldfish because it belongs to one tribe, namely the Cyprinidae. But actually different genera and species, the scientific name of goldfish is *Cyprinus carpio*, while the God Fish is *Neolissochillus soro*. Both have scales on their bodies and there are two pairs of barbels around their mouths. The body shape of Dewa Fish tends to be cylindrical compared to goldfish. The cylindrical / aerodynamic body shape indicates that the god fish is a fast swimmer and is used to defying the current (Kiat, 2004; Haryono, 2006; Haryono, 2017: 8).

Dewa Fish is one of the sacred fish species in Kuningan Regency, West Java. This fish is better known as "Kancra Bodas". In addition, there are those who call it 'King Fish' which is associated with the custom of the royal family in the region who likes to eat the flesh of this fish. The locations are scattered in several pools, including Cibulan, Cigugur, Darma Loka, Linggarjati, and Pasawahan. These places are generally baths which are currently functioned more by the local government as tourist objects. One of the famous places and has become a tourist attraction that offers the sensation of bathing with the Dewa Fish is Cibulan.

Cibulan is the oldest bathing pool which was inaugurated on August 27, 1939 by the then Regent of Kuningan R.A.A. Muchamad Achmad. People in the Kuningan Regency area believe that if anyone dares to disturb the existence of Dewa Fish, they will get disaster or misfortune. In addition, there are those who say that the number of Deity Fish in one pond is fixed from time to

time. When the pond is drained, the fish disappears and will reappear when the pond is filled with water. This can actually be related to the habit of these fish in their natural habitat which has a hiding behavior in caves in the river's bottom (Kiat, 2004; Haryono & Tjakrawidjadja, 2009; Haryono, 2017: 8).

One other source states that the Fish God is the incarnation of warriors. Nicknamed the Fish Dewa because it is said that these fish were once soldiers who disobeyed King Siliwangi. As a result of his disobedience, this soldier was cursed by Prabu Siliwangi to become a fish. Surprisingly again, this God Fish never increased and decreased after the pool was cleaned. When cleaned, these fish swim to the Cigugur pond, after being drained they will return to the Cibulan Cold Water bath (Guideku.com).

C. Environmental Ethics

The interaction of humans and nature is of course not only conceptual, but also practical. At the practical level, human interaction as a moral agent that allows them to act and give a certain influence to nature, which is a moral subject that tends to be passive, is discussed in more detail in the ethical dimension.

Hamersma (2008) states that ethics or moral philosophy is a branch of philosophy that talks about human praxis, about action. The word "ethics" comes from the Greek word *ethos* which means "custom", "way of acting", "place of residence", "habit". The word "moral" comes from the Latin *mos* (*genetif moris*) which has the same meaning. Ethics is distinguished from all other branches of philosophy in that it concerns not the condition of man, but of how man acts.

Valezquez, et al (2010) in Hudha, et al (2019) divide the notion of ethics into two things. First, ethics refers to a well-defined standard of rights and obligations, determining what humans should do, usually in terms of rights, obligations, benefits to society, justice, or certain policies. Ethics, for example, refers to standards that impose a reasonable obligation to refrain from acts of rape, theft, murder, assault, slander, environmental destruction and other fraud. Ethical standards also cover those that promote virtue and loyalty. Ethical standards include standards relating to rights, such as the right to life, the right to be free from injury, and the right to privacy. These standards are adequate ethical standards because they are supported by consistent and reasoned reasons. Second, ethics refers to the study and development of a person's ethical standards. As noted above, feelings, laws, and social norms can deviate from what they should be. So, we need to constantly check someone's standards to ensure that they are logical and reasonable. Ethics can also be interpreted as a constant effort to study our beliefs and moral behavior, and to try to ensure that we and our institutions conform to logical standards.

In this paper, ethics is expanded in its discussion of how humans act in their interactions with nature which is manifested specifically in biocentrism theory, namely the moral discussion of each biotic community, and not limited to interactions within the human community. The framework is further discussed in more detail in the theory of environmental ethics, namely the theory of biocentrism.

Saleh (2020) states that environmental ethics or what is called broad ecological sustainability is an alternative discourse to save the environment, natural resources and ecosystems. This paradigm provides an idea of understanding the growth of economic life based on ecology which simultaneously provides an increase in the quality and standard of living, not only on economic factors, but also on social aspects. The paradigm of ecological and socio-cultural sustainability of the community, in order to ensure a better quality of life in a broader sense.

D. Biocentrism Theory

This theory assumes that every living entity has value in itself regardless of its benefits to humans, so that it deserves moral considerations. From this, biocentrism extends the reach of morality beyond human community alone.

Biocentrism, as expressed by Tom Regan in 1983, has an orientation to the idea that animals have rights because they have what is called inherent value or value-in-itself. This view then widened to the statement that humans should respect animals and have an obligation to interact with them. This respect is manifested in the attitude of not using animals as experimental materials for scientific activities and others.

Keraf (2010) states that the main characteristic of this ethic is biocentric, because this theory considers every life and living thing to have value and value in itself. This theory takes every life and living thing in the universe seriously. All living things have value in themselves and therefore deserve moral consideration and care. Nature needs to be treated morally, regardless of whether it is of value to humans or not.

Saleh (2020) reveals the contradiction to Tom Regan's view by stating that the classic biocentrism view is irrelevant to be applied in the continuity of life harmony between biotic communities itself. It can be imagined how, in the name of animal rights and plant rights, which is aligned with human rights, up to the food chain, which has existed as a natural reality of life, will be limited by rights that are protected imaginatively and excessively. It is not impossible that this will actually result in the extinction of every entity.

It is almost impossible to fully juxtapose the position of the biotic community and the human community. This discussion can continue, in the end, on the consideration or priority between vital interests and superficial interests. We may prioritize the vital interests of animals at the expense of superficial human interests, for example in the case of animal abuse. The vital interest of animals to survive deserves to take precedence at the expense of the superficial interests of humans to enjoy torturing animals.

Discussion

A. The myth of the fish god (Tor douronensis) in the Theory of Living Environment Centered on Life

This theory states that humans have a moral obligation to nature. Albert Schweitzer stated that the respect that humans must do is not only for themselves, but also for all forms of life (Susilo, 2019). This can be seen through how the views and treatment of the people of Kuningan Regency on the divine fish in the form of observations.

One of the observations made by the community regarding this Dewa Fish is the community's treatment of fish when one of the fish arrives at its death. Fish carcasses will be treated by the public as they treat human remains. The carcasses of the fish that are found will be washed, wrapped in a shroud, and then buried, like a funeral ritual in Islam, but in this case there is no funeral prayer. According to the Cibulan Pond guide, Pujiono (Pres.com), on certain nights, usually kliwon Friday nights, some of the fish in the pond will be on the land by the pool or "lost" and are not visible in the pond (Noerdjito, et al. 2009: 366).

From this review, human appreciation is not limited to the human community, but has been extended to the biotic community, namely the divine fish. It can be seen how the people of Kuningan Regency even treat the carcass of a divine fish and take care of it like a human corpse. With this, it can be interpreted that the divine fish are not seen as just fish at the food and economic level, but as creatures that have inherent value, and thus should be respected and treated equally.

B. The myth of the fish god (Tor douronensis) in the Earth Ethics Theory (Land Ethic)

The earth was seen not as property, as was the case with humans and their slaves in primitive times. However, like the human community, the earth and everything in it is a moral subject. Therefore, it is not an object and tool that can be used at will because the earth has many limitations with humans. Thus, the earth must be valued in its own right. This ethic is extended beyond community boundaries to include land, water, plants, animals or collectively on earth (Susilo, 2019).

The Dewa Fish in Cibulan Pond is considered sacred and people believe that those who interfere will receive the same consequences. According to the story circulating in the community,

during the Japanese occupation, one of the Japanese soldiers killed a God Fish using a katana; not long after the fish died in pieces, the Japanese soldier also died from a katana. Apart from Japanese soldiers, a Dutch soldier also experienced the same thing. Not only that, there was a theft attempt by someone, but when he managed to take a few fish he suddenly felt as if there was a great force choking him to death.

From this review, it can be interpreted how the god fish is associated with the law of causality or cause and effect. This story can be interpreted historically, meaning that it really happened, but it can also be interpreted through the perspective of the law of causality. This means that whoever disturbs the fish of the gods, then he will get a mamala (bad luck) in kind. This can be found in the theory of earth ethics, among others, (1) that every human behavior towards nature will create causality, (2) nature can provide "retribution" to human exploitative behavior in the form of disasters symbolized by death, and (3) that the essence of the relationship between humans and nature is harmony, that is, the principle of not harming one another.

C. The myth of the fish god (Tor douronensis) in the theory of anti-speciesism

At the heart of this theory is the rejection of anthropocentrism which is considered as speciesism. Just as racism considers certain races to be superior to other races, and always discriminates against races that are considered inferior, speciesism considers certain species (in this case humans) to be superior to other species (in this case animals and plants). Consequently, speciesism discriminates against lesser species. Or, species that are considered inferior are not morally valued (Keraf, 2010). The equality of species can be seen from the myth of the god fish, namely how the god fish is interpreted as a form of incarnation or incarnation of a warrior, which means that the god fish has a personal value or value that is considered to resemble humans.

The taboo that prohibits people from disturbing or even exploiting the divine fish illustrates that the divine fish is not limited to consumption fish. More than that, the god fish is considered as a medium that accommodates certain spiritual powers that can bring disaster if not treated properly. From this, moral considerations to fish species, which in speciesism are considered inferior to humans, become invalid. Because society has indirectly considered the fish god as an incarnation of warriors (humans), which is why it is morally equal to humans.

D. The myth of the fish god (Tor douronensis) in the dynamics of sociotechnology

Myths are mostly passed by word of mouth. As a cultural product, myth still exists in a particular community due to cultural inheritance activities. Warsito (2015) divides cultural inheritance into two. First, vertical inheritance. Vertical inheritance is the inheritance of culture by the older generation to the younger generation or from parents to their children or grandchildren. Second, horizontal inheritance. Horizontal inheritance is cultural inheritance that occurs in the community, namely from friends, from people who are smarter, people who are attractive, and so on.

Taboos or values traditionally adhered to by a society today are met by a large wall called globalization. Globalization moves through the development of technology, especially communication technology. With the existence of communication technology, the process of inter-cultural interaction has become increasingly intensive and tends to be out of control. Cultural interactions within the space of globalization, which then influence and deconstruct each other, are known as acculturation.

Acculturation is a phenomenon that arises as a result, when groups of people who have different cultures meet and make direct and continuous contact, which then causes a change in the original cultural pattern of one group or both (Warsito, 2015). The process of "meeting" and "direct contact" is no longer relevant in this age of sophisticated communication technology. The essential reason for previous "meeting" and "direct contact" was the exchange of information, so that a previously established culture was open to change. But today, the exchange of information has transcended time and space, and thus the various values, traditions, and culture of a society are becoming so dynamic and complex because of its limitless interactions with other cultures in the world.

Cultural inheritance, especially those that are vertical, will always be negotiated by new information from outside cultures because of the rapid communication technology. What is considered a myth will be criticized by other perspectives, especially modern ones, and then eliminated or actualized.

CONCLUSION

The existence of myth cannot be separated from the culture of a community. Myths have existed in every tradition and have been largely preserved. Myths are created / created to protect certain things that are considered important by a society. Observations made by the people of Kuningan Regency, West Java related to the Dewa Fish (*Tor douronensis*) were the people's treatment of fish when one of the fish died. With this, it can be interpreted that the divine fish are not seen as just fish at the food and economic level, but as creatures that have inherent value, and thus should be respected and treated equally.

In the dynamics of sociotechnology, cultural inheritance, especially those that are vertical, will always be negotiated by new information from outside cultures because of the rapid communication technology. What has been considered a myth will be criticized by other perspectives, especially modern ones, and then eliminated or actualized. The existence of myths can also be used as material for consideration of certain values to paradigmatically consider how humans should behave, in the context of the mythical fish god (*tor douronensis*), which is to behave towards animals as a moral subject. Furthermore, the meaning contained in this myth can be used as one of the considerations for making conservation policies and protecting biodiversity.

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