

ECOFEMINISM IDENTITY IN THE GAYO FOLKLORE*(Identitas Ekofeminisme dalam Cerita Rakyat Gayo)***Rismawati^{a*}, Wildan^b, & Giovanni Oktavinanda^c**^{a,c}Universitas Teuku Umar

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This study aimed at describing women's identity, which includes the role and position of women, nature, and the environment in Gayo folklore. It is a qualitative study. The data consist of written data from the 2008 Acehnese folklore manuscript. Data collection was conducted using reading and note-taking techniques, while data analysis employed content analysis with ecofeminism approach. The result of the study showed that the ecofeminist identity of Gayo women included (1) natural and sociocultural ecofeminism and (2) spiritual ecofeminism. This identity influenced lifestyle patterns and indicated that: (1) all Gayo folklore portrayed women as the main characters, (2) women's identities were never considered higher than men's in traditional society, as it was built on a patriarchal system, (3) women's identity in Gayo traditional society was determined by the type of marriage; and (4) the significant role of Gayo women was as mothers, responsible for educating and raising children.

Keywords: *ecofeminism, identity, Gayo***Abstrak**

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan identitas perempuan yang meliputi peran dan kedudukan perempuan, alam, dan lingkungan hidup dalam cerita rakyat Gayo. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian kualitatif. Jenis data dalam penelitian ini adalah data tertulis yang bersumber dari naskah cerita rakyat *Hikayatologi Aceh* tahun 2008. Pengumpulan data dilakukan dengan menggunakan teknik baca dan teknik catat, sedangkan analisis data dilakukan dengan teknik analisis isi dengan pendekatan ekofeminisme. Berdasarkan hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa identitas ekofeminisme perempuan Gayo meliputi (1) ekofeminisme alam dan sosiokultural, dan (2) ekofeminisme spiritual. Identitas ini telah mempengaruhi pola hidup dan menunjukkan bahwa (1) seluruh cerita Rakyat Gayo mengisahkan perempuan sebagai tokoh utamanya, (2) identitas perempuan tidak pernah lebih tinggi dari laki-laki dalam masyarakat adat, karena dibangun dengan sistem patriarki, (3) identitas perempuan dalam masyarakat adat Gayo ditentukan oleh jenis perkawinan, dan (4) identitas penting perempuan Gayo adalah sebagai ibu dalam mendidik dan mengasuh anak.

Kata-kata kunci: ekofeminisme; identitas; Gayo

INTRODUCTION

The intersection of ecological concerns and gender perspectives has given rise to the philosophy of ecofeminism, which emphasizes the interconnectedness of women and nature and advocates for environmental and gender justice (Mondal & Majumder, 2019). Within indigenous communities, traditional stories and folklore often reflect and reinforce these themes, offering a unique lens to understand cultural identities and societal values (Batool et al., 2023). The Gayo tribe, an indigenous group in Aceh, possesses a rich folklore tradition that encapsulates their views on nature, femininity, and cultural identity.

Gayo folklore is deeply connected to women's issues, such as life's struggles and hardships. The portrayal of women in these stories aligns closely with feminist theory, which views women as intrinsically linked to patriarchal values. Additionally, social movements, that unite environmentalism with feminism due to shared concerns about welfare of the Earth and all living beings are often referred to as ecofeminism studies. Ecofeminism itself is a feminist movement advocating for gender equality within environmental conservation efforts (Adawiah, 2023).

The ecofeminism movement was initially introduced by Francoise d'Eaubonne in her 1974 book *Le Feminisme ou la Mort* (Feminism or Death). In this work, she explores the interconnectedness between the oppression of nature and women. Ecofeminism aims to highlight the links between all forms of human oppression, particularly those faced by women, and the environment issues. It posits that women are culturally associated with nature, establishing conceptual, symbolic, and linguistic ties between feminism and ecological concerns (Khanal, 2022).

Manullang & Putri (2024) studied the relationship between women and nature in the novel *Kokokan Mencari Arumbawang*. This research revealed that the connection between women and nature manifests through direct physical and emotional closeness, as well as women's insights and perspectives about

nature. The relationship illustrates active effort by women to protect the environment from development-induced oppression, even though their conservation efforts often lead to their own suppression. In line with this, Badriya & Putikadyanto (2024) analyzed spiritual relationship with nature in the novel *Mantan Ledek Tayub* by Dandang A Dahlan. They found that spiritual ecofeminism involves a form of self-regulation in how human use and relate to the surrounding environment, with the aim of preventing domination over nature. It encompasses an awareness that humans must live in harmony with nature to stay connected to God and foster inner peace.

In many folklores, women are often associated with nature. Analyzing folklores through an ecofeminism lens reveal how the Gayo community views the role of women in maintaining environmental balance, as well as how this influences women's social and economic position. This perspective could uncover new aspects of Gayo women's role in social and economic spheres that have been widely studied, especially in relation to nature and environment. Furthermore, this research may deepen the understanding of cultural and gender dynamics within indigenous communities. As such, this topic is valuable as it combines cultural preservation, gender analysis, and contemporary environmental issues—topics that are all relevant to current social challenges. Ultimately, it offers insight into how Gayo folklore reflects and influences societal views of women and nature, while also contributing to the study of ecofeminism within the local Indonesian context.

The novelty of this study lies in its application of ecofeminism as an analytical lens for Gayo folklore, an interdisciplinary approach that connects literature, gender, and the environment within the specific cultural context of the Gayo community. This study also has the potential to generate new insights into the representation of women and nature in traditional narratives, as well as contribute to the preservation of contemporary gender culture and discourse. It aims to identify and

describe the role and position of women in Gayo folklore, with a particular focus on their relationship with nature and the environment, and to illustrate how the identity of Gayo women folklore reflects ecofeminist principles, especially in two core aspects: natural and sociocultural ecofeminism, and spiritual ecofeminism. Furthermore, the study seeks to understand how the ecofeminist identity of Gayo women influences the societal lifestyles, including social structure, the patriarchal system, types of marriage, and women's roles as mothers in educating and raising children.

It is hoped that this research will enrich the discourse of ecofeminism within the context of Indonesian local culture, particularly in the Gayo community, by linking the roles of women, nature, and the environment as represented in oral literary narratives. Practically, the study aims to contribute to the preservation of Gayo oral literature, raise awareness of gender inequality—especially within the patriarchal cultures—and foster discussion on gender equality. It also seeks to highlight the relationship between women and nature, providing a foundation for educating the public about environmental sustainability from a local cultural perspective. Ultimately, this study is highly relevant because it bridges traditional values with contemporary issues, offering new insights into the role of women and nature within Gayo culture.

THEORITICAL BASIC

The Concept of Ecofeminism

Ecofeminism is a school of thought that links environmental issues with feminism, emphasizing how both women and nature are subjected to exploitation under patriarchal and capitalist systems (Anurogo, 2023; Glazebrook, 2021). This movement is based on the understanding that domination over nature parallels the oppression of women—both symbolically and structurally. Women are often positioned in close association with nature through their domestic roles and the

spiritual or cultural values they uphold within their communities.

Women's Identity in Folklore

Folklore, as an expression of local culture, contains values that reflect the collective identity of a community, including the roles and positions of women in relation to nature (Kanzunnudin et al., 2018). In Gayo folklore, women are often portrayed as moral guardians, protectors of nature, or symbols of fertility. Thus, folklore serves as a significant space for representing and analyzing how women's identities are constructed in ways that align with ecofeminist principles, both narratively and symbolically.

Gayo Folklore as Ecological Expression

Gayo oral traditions are rich with natural imagery forests, water, animals which are closely linked to women's lives. Within an ecofeminist framework, these connections are not only ecological but also cultural and spiritual. Viewing Gayo folklore through an ecofeminist lens reveals how female identity is shaped in harmony with nature, while also serving as a critique of social systems that disrupt this balance.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative content analysis with an ecofeminist approach. Qualitative content analysis is suitable for analyzing Gayo folklore because it allows researchers to identify, categorize, and interpret themes such as the role of women, relationships with nature, and ecofeminist values in narratives. This analysis focuses on the implied meaning within the text, rather than merely quantifying text elements. Krippendorff (2018) explains the qualitative content analysis can be used to understand the social and cultural context within the text to explore women's identities and their relationships with nature (Lim, 2024).

Furthermore, the ecofeminist approach frames the content analysis by emphasizing the relationship between

women's oppression and the exploitation of nature (Mir et al., 2021). Shiva (1989) emphasizes the connection between women and nature within a sociocultural context, making her theory relevant for analyzing aspects of natural and sociocultural ecofeminism in Gayo folklore—particularly how women are positioned as environmental guardians or as victims of exploitation. Warren (2000), who developed the concept of ecofeminism, highlights the links between patriarchy, women's oppression, and environmental degradation. Her theory is useful for analyzing how the patriarchal system in Gayo society influences women's roles within folklore. Merchant (1990) discusses the spiritual relationship between women and nature, which is relevant for examining aspects of spiritual ecofeminism in Gayo folklore.

Data were obtained from the written text of the Acehese folklore (2008), particularly Gayo Folklore. The Gayo ethnic group inhabits the Gayo highlands, often called Tanoh Gayo. Currently, the Gayo community is found in five districts in Aceh: Southeast Aceh, Bener Meriah, Central Aceh, Aceh Tamiang, and Gayo Lues. According to Roeslan (in Abdullah, 2011), the Gayo population descends from the Old Malay tribe and was among the first tribe to occupy the land of Aceh. Data related to identity information, patriarchal control over nature, the environment, and women in the context of ecofeminist analysis were also collected. The data were recorded on a data card and were categorized according to the relevant themes.

Data analysis was conducted using interpretive qualitative discourse analysis with an ecofeminist approach involving stages of categorization, tabulation, and inference stages. Categorization grouped the data based on predetermined categories, such as the presence of ecofeminist awareness, evidenced in word choice, sentences, and discourses used in the folklore texts. Tabulation summarized all

data into tables for clarity. Inference involved interpreting and drawing conclusion from the data in relation to the research questions (Sugiyono 2020). Overall, the data analysis procedures included: (1) data preparation through reading and note-taking technique, (2) development of analysis categories based on ecofeminism, (3) data coding, (4) thematic interpretation, (5) validation of findings through triangulation, and (6) final report preparation. This procedure follows the qualitative content analysis approach as proposed by Krippendorff and Mayring, with the theoretical framework of ecofeminism from Shiva, Warren, and Merchant, ensuring a systematic, comprehensive, and relevant analysis aligned with the research objectives.

DISCUSSION

Based on the data obtained, there are several forms of identity, roles, and positions of women towards nature and environment in Gayo folklore. These identities are depicted in the form of natural and socio-cultural ecofeminism, as well as spiritual ecofeminism.

Natural and Socio-Cultural Ecofeminism

A patriarchal value towards nature in Gayo folklore, encapsulated in a local legend narrated as the Origin of Rice Seeds, tells the story of a woman who is willing to sacrifice her body and soul for the welfare of others. The story begins with a scene of a family facing a famine. To resolve their hardship, it is needed for a daughter to be sacrificed. Her name is Sri, the youngest of seven siblings who is willing to sacrifice her life for the preservation of nature and the well-being of others. In the story, it is mentioned that Sri's body was chopped up. Her flesh, blood, and bones were then planted so that various types of rice would grow.

"I want to support my parents, even if it means risking my own life. As long as my father and mother are pleased with me." Hearing his youngest daughter's words, the father was very happy, and he asked again. "My dear daughter, do you really agree that your flesh and bones will

be planted as rice seeds?" His daughter answered firmly. "Yes." (Rismawati, 2008)

mother-in-law's house more quickly" (Rismawati, 2008).

Based on the quote, it is clear that there is a view that nature and women are interconnected. To preserve nature and to grow seeds, women are sacrificed. Women convey the message of life, just as nature does. The unity of women and nature can also be seen in research that explores the relationship between women and nature, based on the character of protection and preservation. One specific study that is relevant to this concept is the work of Gandouz (2018), which states that nature is like a mother who protects and shelters her child. The personification of "Mother Earth" reflects the character of women in giving birth and nurturing life. This study analogizes the relationship between women and nature as a mutually nurturing, similar to the concept of Prakriti (Earth) and Purusha (Human) put forward by Hartawan (2020), emphasizing the harmonious and inseparable relationship between humans and nature.

Next, the story of Reje Kemala. This local legend tells about a woman who is willing to make sacrifice because she did not want to be embarrassed in front of her husband's family. Kemala was proposed by a king. After the ceremony, Kemala was taken by her husband to his parents' place because her marriage was a *juelen* type. When she was about to leave for her husband's place, Kemala was provided with a *Batil*. A *Batil* is a brass container that contains various spices such as betel nut, betel leaf, gambir, lime, cloves, etc which are ingredients for chewing betel. The *batil* is a souvenir that must be brought to her in-laws, and it is a custom among the Gayo people. However, the betel container accidentally fell into the river when they were taking shelter. Kemala, not wanting to be embarrassed, jumped into the river to look for her betel container. In a quoted text, it is stated:

"My child, now you belong to your husband, obey him, live your new life, and follow your husband's orders. On the journey, don't stop too many times, so that you can arrive at your

Next, there is a story entitled *Seven One Family*. A mother made a vow that if her seven children find a soulmate, she would marry them off—even if it meant marrying them to a tiger. The mother fulfills her promise, but her daughter's marriage is a double marriage, so she provides a place for the man to live and work. In the story, the mother plays a central role by vowing to marry off her children, even to a tiger, while the daughter provides shelter and work for the man. This reflects the role of women as decision-makers and family supporters. Research by Laili et al. (2024) shows how women play dual roles as mothers and providers within the family. This study is relevant because it explores the dynamics of women taking on major responsibilities in the family, similar to the role of the daughter in the story who provides material support for her husband.

Spiritual Ecofeminism

Inspiration in a dream convinced Sri Menjadi to become concerned about the preservation of nature, and she made herself as sacrifice. Then, the vow of a mother who married her child to a tiger, and a mother who gave her child to a dragon, also developed in Gayo folklore with its spirituality. There is also another vow stating that "do not eat brown catfish if you do not want to have striped skin".

The main question is: why did a woman have to be sacrificed, and why did it had to be done in a way that goes against human common sense—namely, the sacrifice of body and soul, as stated in the following text quote.

The first child then returned home. The father met the mother and asked, "Have you ever said anything about a tiger that caused it come here? Try to remember first." After they try remembered, it turned out to be true that they had said if, in the future, no one would propose to their child—even a tiger coming to propose, it would be permitted. "Maybe that was the purpose of the tiger coming, wanting to propose our youngest child," said the father again (Rismawati, 2008)

Based on the quote above, it can be seen that there is a relationship between women and nature. Women have faith, determination, and trust in their parents, which impacts the preservation of nature and the environment. The relationship between women and nature can also be seen in the following quote:

“The youngest treated her husband very well, serving him diligently. On the other hand, the tiger also behaved well as a son-in-law. Without realizing it, a year had passed, and the tiger asked his wife to tell her parents that they would temporarily return to the tiger's hometown to see his parents. Although it was difficult for the parents to let the youngest follow her husband, a wife must remain obedient and comply to her husband..” (Rismawati, 2008).

These are some data showing the relationship and connection between humans and nature.. Based on the description of the stories above, the existence of an ecofeminist identity in Gayo tribal folklore highlights the position and role of women in relation to nature and social environment. Paying attention to Gayo tribal folklore, a set of urgent and relevant values were found to be significantly owned by Gayo women. These values were not only related to self-sacrifice, but also purity, love, obedience, fertility, prosperity, and life. These values are united in all folklore developed in Gayo society, illustrating that women, nature, and culture share a mutualistic relationship. The strength of this bond becomes even more apparent when there is exploitation of nature and discrimination against women by men and patriarchal culture (Saxena & Joshi, 2024).

This case indicates the presence of ecofeminist identity that is emphasized in Gayo folklore. Examining the essence of women's struggle, researchers identified ecofeminist identities, namely natural and socio-cultural ecofeminism, and spiritual ecofeminism (Adawiah, 2023). These two identities are comprehensively integrated, united, and embodied in the female characters depicted in all Gayo folklore.

Natural and Socio-Cultural Ecofeminism

Gayo society places female figures as a central character who greatly influence the lives of the community. This is evidenced by the fact that almost all Gayo folk stories talked feature women as main characters. Gayo folklore reflects a very strong patriarchal culture. Culturally, society assigns a position of superiority to men and inferiority to women. This position strongly influences and determines men's power over women.

This characteristic is evident from the father's role as the head of the family, who agrees to sacrifice his daughter in the story of *the Origin of Rice Seeds*. *Keumala's* fear—or more precisely, her shame—her husband and his family arise because *the batil* containing betel nut, betel leaf, and lime has fallen. The shame is caused by the *batil* which contains natural products serves as a means of communication within Gayo culture and society.

In Gayo society, a man's decision— or more precisely, a father's decision— is absolute. The father's decision is carried out as an obligation by the other family member, as depicted in another popular Gayo story, namely the story of *Batu Belah Batu Bertangkup*. The father cut off his wife's breast because he was upset with her and the children. The child cried nonstop because he was hungry and wanted to eat meat. Since there was no meat available, the mother took grasshoppers from the barn, but all the grasshoppers escaped. At the same time, the father came home, saw the situation, and became angry. He then cut the mother's breast. Unable to endure his sadness, he sacrificed himself to be swallowed by the *batu bertangkup*.

Gayo folklore, as mentioned by Anti Aarne and Stith Thomson, is a *Cinderella-type fairy tale*. Fairy tales with this type have *unpromising heroines*—female characters with little hope in their lives. This story is also classified as a universal type of barbaric fairy tale. It typically revolves around the relationship between parents and children, involves prophecies, and features magical animals.

This depiction aligns with the view (Wellek & Warren, 2014) that regional literature is an expression of people's feelings, a repository of customs, and as a source of civilization, because these stories are not merely bedtime tales but also contain messages and lessons reflecting the development of human civilization. Therefore, the preservation and sacrifice of natural sustainability are reflected in the lives of people who generally work as farmers.

In culture and society, generalizations about women's situations and experiences are often viewed through the lens of women's limitations, especially regarding physical activities. Beyond physical activities, society still holds the view that women are unworthy of accepting social roles in maintaining the sustainability of customs and culture. Although societal perceptions regarding women's limitations in carrying out physical and non-physical activities have been established, generally, Gayo folklore about women indicates that Gayo women are women who do not easily give up on their circumstances. Gayo women are strong and resilient, and they do not limit their activities merely because of differences in physical strength. This is depicted in the story of *Inen Kebayan Mencari Ikan*, where she even works until night.

In Gayo society, the classification roles between women and men are clearly established. Regarding the social culture, all applications of natural philosophy, laws and regulations, as well as the authorities called *petue*, *imem*, and *gecik*, are clearly controlled and dominated by men.

The marriage ceremony (*ngerje*) in Gayo community of Gayo Lues is one of the factors that influence the cycle of women's roles and identities within Gayo society. The customary rules and procedures for conducting marriage have existed for a long time and are still practiced today. Marriage is a process that causes differences in women's roles. This is evident through the type of marriage practiced, which lead to differences in behavior, actions, and significant changes in roles.

The Gayo Lues community recognizes five marriage systems, each of which affects the roles and social classes of women. These five types of marriage are: (1) *juelen*, (2) *angkap*, (3) *naik*, (4) *mah tabak*, and (5) *murip ehe senang*.

Juelen is a marriage that follows the husband's lineage. Women become responsible to their husbands. All roles assigned women depend on the will and permission of their husband. In Gayo expression, if a woman had a *juelen marriage*, she will become *ken kaum biak oros senare jarum sarami we*. This means that women family is cut off, like 'one bamboo and one needle'.

Based on anthropological theory, this type of marriage is called a *patriarchate system*, where the father is the head of the family and the one who inherits the lineage. Men take their future wives from other groups and bring them to their own land to settle there. As a result, their descendants remain with them (Koentjaraningrat, 1984).

Angkap is a marriage that follows the wife's lineage. The man will live entirely with the woman's family. In this situation, the man is given property in the form of rice fields or gardens by the woman's family to guard as *murip ken penurip*, *mate ken penanom* (to support and be supported by the family). The man is completely devoted to the woman's family, especially in managing the property, nature, and environment.

According to anthropological theory, this type of *Angkap marriage* is similar to the *matriarchal* system, although in practice it is not always completely the same. In Gayo society, this *Angkap marriage* is indeed dominated by women, but it does not necessarily mean that women are the heads of the family and inherit the lineage. Example of *Angkap marriage* is found in the stories of *Seven One Family* and *Marrying a Snake*.

Illegitimate marriage usually does not occupy a high position in society. For example, if the child is a boy, he will not be able to become a *keuchik*, *imeum*, or other village officials because he is considered to come from a female lineage, even if he is from

a wealthy family. This illustrated that, although women's position may be regarded as high, they are still not socially acknowledged or recognized.

Naik is a type of marriage that occurs for several reasons: (1) *Arrested for ni belang*, meaning the arrest of a non-Muslim couple sitting together in a quiet place on charges of committing an obscenity. Even if the accusation is not necessarily true, they must marry according to customary arrangements of both parties; (2) They parties like each other, but face obstacles from one or both families. As a result, women may request to marry a man through *kecik*, *village imum*, or directly at the religious affairs office. In this type of marriage, the woman's position is very low and considered despicable in the eyes of society. In this situation, a man has the right to return his wife to her parents at any time; (3) Eloping, where both partners are equally happy, but there is resistance from their families. As a result, the couple agrees to run away and marry under the guardianship of a judge, at the religious affairs office, or wherever they choose.

Mah tabak marriage occurs when both individuals like each other, but the man's proposals are repeatedly rejected by the woman's family for various reasons. To win her over, the man begs, serves, and surrenders himself to the woman's family for marriage. In this case, the woman's status is considered very noble and valuable in society. The man typically comes to the woman's family by bringing offerings such as a machete, hoe, rope, etc. These items symbolize that if his request is accepted, they will serve as capital for his future life. Conversely, if rejected, the offerings are hoped to be used to bury him.

Murip i he seng marriage is a modern customary marriage that stipulates men and women are free to make their own choices. They settle down without differentiating the roles of their respective parents. This type of marriage is seen as tolerant and humanistic because it recognizes the right to choose and places men and women on an equal footing under customary law, positive law, and sharia provisions. That is why the *murip i he*

seng marriage model is the preferred choice for most Gayo people today, especially those living in cities or in the diaspora. This marriage system represents a form of modernization within the Gayo community. In the stories analyzed earlier, this type of marriage is not depicted because it is a newer and more popular practice.

The marriage of *murip i he senang* marriage is similar to the Bachofen parental system, as mentioned by Koentjaraningrat (1990), where patriarchal and matriarchal systems gradually decline and transform into a kinship system called the Bachofen parental system. At this stage, marriage is not always exogamous (outside the group), but can also be endogamous (within the same group). This condition allows children to have direct contact and knowledge of both their maternal and paternal families.

Practically, these types of marriages give women a significant role and influence over their lives. Marriage is seen as an education toward maturity in thinking and behavior. Furthermore, marriage marks the beginning of a willingness to learn about the balance of life in this world and the hereafter, social class differences, becoming an ideal human being, and demonstrating piety toward God Almighty. According to Sikana (1986), Karl Marx's sociological theory states that a group in society maintains dominance over others, and society is built on conflict. In Gayo society, psychological conflict is often observed. Each type of marriage can cause psychological conflicts for women, which greatly influence their future social status and roles.

Women depicted in Gayo folklore tend to be women who experience life's hardships. As James (in Danandjaja, 2007) mentioned, many women in Gayo society have endured hardships and bitterness. However, these hardships actually demonstrate that Gayo women are strong and resilient—women who obey the advice of their parents and husbands.

Spiritual Ecofeminism

One of the most important values in Gayo folklore is self-sacrifice. Almost all

stories in Gayo folklore end with a self-sacrifice. Regarding the essence of self-sacrifice, it actually occurs where the peak of the actualization of ecofeminist identity lies. In each story, the role of a mother is emphasized as a form of spiritual ecofeminism. A mother depicted in Gayo folklore seems to sincerely enjoy making vows as a way to solve her social problems. The vows made are always connected to nature. Spiritual ecofeminism can be seen in the fact that the mother is very fond of making vows, even in extreme cases. For example, as long as her wish is fulfilled, the mother vows to give her child to a dragon, marry the child to a tiger, or marry the child to a snake. The vows made by a mother can take the form of protecting nature, so that if people encounter the animals mentioned, they will not be disturbed, hunted, or killed, thereby contributing to animal conservation. The vows also can be in the form of health protection. For example, eating brown catfish is believed to cause white spots to grow on the skin. This is a form of protection often practiced by the Gayo community.

In many folktales, women's sacrifices are often associated with spiritual values such as devotion to God, nature, or higher interests, like the salvation of a nation. The sacrifices of female figures such as Potre Koneng or Dewi Ratnadi are often portrayed as guardians of moral and spiritual values. Their sacrifices, whether through suffering, struggle, or devotion, reflect the role of women as mediators between the human world and the spiritual realm. Additionally, Islahuddin et al. (2021) analyzed the folk tale "Putri Kemang," which mentions the self-sacrifice of Putri Kemang in fighting for her kingdom. This sacrifice is described as part of the struggle but can also be interpreted as a form of strong spirituality. In this story, Putri Kemang demonstrates courage and sacrifice to defend her kingdom, which can be viewed as a form of spirituality rooted in moral responsibility and leadership.

Windiyarti et al. (2022) studied three folktales from the north coast of East Java (Sri Huning, Panji Laras Panji Liris, and Nyai Ageng Tumengkang Sari). This study found

that women are often depicted as figures who make physical and psychological sacrifices, reflecting Islamic spiritual values such as devotion to family and society as acts of worship. These sacrifices are not only material but also spiritual, as they are considered pathways to virtue or reward. These studies indicate that women's self-sacrifice in folktales often has a strong spiritual dimension, either as devotion to God, nature, or community, or as a symbol of transformation and courage. However, feminist research also shows that this spirituality is often shaped by patriarchal social constructs, where women are expected to sacrifice themselves for others, thereby limiting their autonomy.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of Gayo folklore reveals stories in the form of fantastic fairy tales similar to Cinderella. The characteristic of a Cinderella-type story is about endless hardships in life, often experienced by women. Women in Gayo society generally exhibit an ecofeminist identity in terms of socio-cultural ecofeminism and spiritual ecofeminism. Based on socio-cultural ecofeminism, it is evident that women have a very low status. Regarding social relations, all applications of natural philosophy, laws, regulations, and the authority of traditional leaders called *petue* and *gecik* are heavily controlled and dominated by men. In general, women's roles are limited to inherent roles such as wife, mother, and child. In both social and economic aspects, the role of women as wives in Gayo society is largely determined by the type of marriage, namely *juelen*, *angkap*, *naik*, *mah tabak*, or *murip i he senang*. However, in the preservation of nature and the environment, women hold a very significant role. The identity of spiritual ecofeminism is often expressed through vows. The fears associated with these vows can serve as a means of protecting and conserving nature.

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