

## COMPARATIVE LITERATURE OF INDONESIAN FOLKLORE *BAWANG MERAH AND BAWANG PUTIH* AND RUSSIAN FAIRY TALE *VASILISA THE BEAUTIFUL*

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### ABSTRACT

Folklore has several similarities and differences, especially in the folklore of *Bawang Merah and Bawang Putih* and the fairy tale of *Vasilisa The Beautiful*, even though the two stories come from different countries. In finding the similarities and differences between the two folktales, the researcher uses a structural and comparative literary approach. This study aims to describe the similarities and differences between the two folktales. The method used in this research is a descriptive method. Data were analyzed using a qualitative approach with more emphasis on content analysis techniques. The approach used to analyze the two folktales is a structural approach and a comparative study. The results of the study show that the folklore of *Bawang Merah and Bawang Putih* and *Vasilisa The Beautiful* has several storylines, but has a similar conflict through the role of the stepmother which is represented through an evil character.

**Kata Kunci:** Comparative Literature, Folklore, Fairy Tale

### INTRODUCTION

A social community's folklore can be used to determine their way of life. This is because folklore reflects people's lives at the time, intriguing mindsets, and fantastical ideas, creating attention and providing moral lessons. Folklore is a form of the traditional story that people use to describe or comprehend the outside world and their own cultural history. Sarie [1] stated the purpose of folklore is to pass on to future generations the finest ideals of a community. According to Dananjaja in Wardarita & Puspo Negoro [2], myths, legends, and folktales are the three main types of folk prose stories. Legends are folk tales that resemble myths and are believed to have occurred, but they are not considered sacred. Folktales are stories that the storytellers do not believe happened and are not limited by space or time.

Setyorini [3] stated that each country has its own distinct culture, which is reflected in its folklore, which is an oral history passed down from generation to generation. There are certain similarities between many literary masterpieces. Even the mythology of different nations might be similar. Lantowa [4] said that depending on the features of each location, folklore is a type of oral literature that can be found there. Folklore is classified as oral literature due to the way it is shared, which is through oral communication. A region's folklore represents its culture in a special way. Because of this, regional folklore varies from one place to another (Nurhuda, [5]).

In the process of spreading folklore, similarities and differences will emerge because the narrators are different. There are even times when two folktales that live and develop in different communities have the same motive or storyline. However, because the two stories were born, lived, and developed in different societies, the two stories that have similarities must have differences. One of the contributing factors is that a literary work cannot be separated from the social environment that surrounds it. To examine the two stories, a researcher can use a comparative literary approach.

As in the folklore of *Bawang Merah and Bawang Putih*, and *Vasilisa The Beautiful*, folklore contains a number of structural similarities and differences. Despite coming from different countries, the two folktales have a similar structure. To find similarities and differences between the two folktales, the researcher applied a structural and comparative literary technique. Based on the theme, plot, characters, and setting, the two folktales have similarities and differences. As oral literature, most folk prose, including fairy tales, does not have standard storytelling rules. Thus, each speaker

can freely give a title, or other additions deemed necessary to the story he is bringing so that the same story can have a different name in each region.

According to Sibalan & Hadi [6], comparative literature does not only "compare" literary works, although at first literary critics and historians in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries did indeed create literary works by comparing them. However, in subsequent developments, comparative literature has a broader meaning and scope. Comparative literary studies examine the many universal similarities and differences found in the literary works under study, such as those relating to their genres, structures, styles, themes, or overall contents. Comparative literary studies' primary goal is to investigate or identify specific characteristics or features of the literary works under comparison (Noor [7])

According to Remak in Masofa & Sumarsono [8], Comparative literature is the study of literature from outside of one particular nation, as well as the connections between literature and other fields of study and belief. Comparative literature contrasts two works of literature with other forms of human expression. Remak also stated that comparative literature studies beyond two cultures. Damono in Laily [9] states, that comparative literature is a literary approach that does not generate its own theory, in the sense that any theory can be applied in comparative literary research. The theory employed as a comparison tool in this situation is a structural theory. Thus, the entire meaning of the literary work will be obtained through structural analysis. Sumiyadi [10] also stated that comparative literature is comparing the literature of a country with the literature of other countries and comparing literature with other fields as a whole expression of life. Comparative literature is a scientific area of literature that studies the relationship between literature and the comparison of literature with other fields as a universal expression of life.

Surya [11] stated that in folklore, the words folk and lore are combined. Folk in this context is refers to a people, group, or nation that can be recognized by their physical, social, and cultural characteristics. Lore, on the other hand, refers to a practice and a wealth of information that is passed down orally or via action from one generation to the next. Folklore itself has meaning as a part of culture that is passed down verbally or via actions (behaviors) from one generation to the next. According to Zufahnur in Larasati & Sareng [12], fairy tale (folklore) is a fantasy story whose events do not really happen. Fairy tales are presented by oral speech by storytellers. In general, fairy tales are related to primitive society and culture's belief in supernatural things and their manifestations in human life, such as animism. Fairy stories serve as entertainment, didactic beliefs, especially moral instruction and representation for everyday life, and a source of knowledge for people. Folklore is developed and disseminated orally or through word of mouth. Saddhono & Erwinsyah [13] defined folklore is a traditional story that has been passed down from one generation to the next. Folklore is a source of local wisdom that must be conserved since it can be utilized as a subject to ensure its long-term viability.

*Bawang Merah and Bawang Putih* is a popular Indonesian fairy tale. The author of this story is unknown because it was passed down orally from ancient times. This folklore is often adapted into films and story books. While, *Vasilisa The Beautiful* is a Russian fairy tale, although it was also told in Poland, Yugoslavia, and Romania. It was first passed down orally before being written down by Alexander Afanasyev in his book, *Russian Fairy Tales*, in the mid-nineteenth century. The researcher use *Bawang Merah and Bawang Putih* and *Vasilisa The Beautiful* as a subject of this study because both of those stories are popular in their country. *Bawang Merah and Bawang Putih* is a popular Indonesian fairy tale that has been adapted into many short movies and story books. *Vasilisa's* story has been adapted into several literary works such as films, novels, comics, graphics, and books. The story can also be found in *Vasilisa The Beautiful: Russian Fairy Tales*, a collection of Russian fairy tales first published in 1966 by Raduga Publishers. Irina Zheleznova edited the collection and translated many of the stories, including *Vasilisa The Beautiful*, into Russian. The novel has also been translated into Hindi and Marathi.

Several studies that are relevant to this research are '*Birds of a Feather Flock Together*': *The Comparison Between Two Folklores Bawang Merah and Bawang Putih and Putri Arabella* by Asmawati, Yeni Hayati, Indah Galang Dana Pertiwi, and Muhammad Adek in 2020. The goal of this research is to analyze folklore comparisons using comparative literary theory. The moral aspects of the two folklores are compared in terms of individual moral, social moral, and religious moral. Other than the moral aspects of the two stories, the study shows the essential elements of *Bawang Merah*

and *Bawang Putih* stories share various connections with *Putri Arabella* from Malaysia. However, there is some difference between the two stories, particularly in the ending part of the story (Asmawati et al., [14]). Another study that is relevant to this research is conducted by Lusi Novita Sari entitled “In Cinderella and Bawang Merah dan Bawang Putih: A Comparative Analysis”. The research is to analyze the concept of moral value in two stories *Cinderella* by Grimm Brothers and *Bawang Merah and Bawang Putih* is originate Indonesian’s traditional folklore. Both stories have the same moral value, plot, and characteristics. Based on the situation in many countries, especially Germany and Indonesia have the same foundation to teach the readers or people how we act and to meaning something as an orientation throughout life (Sari [16]). The differences between the previous studies and this study is about the subject.

Those two studies have similarities with this research related to comparative literary studies, but different in the object of comparison, namely the characters and characterizations, setting, plot, and conflict in the two stories that are the subject of study. This study examines comparative literature, especially the comparison of the folk tales, *Bawang Merah dan Bawang Putih*, and *Vasilisa The Beautiful*.

## RESEARCH METHOD

The method used in this research is a descriptive method. A qualitative methodology was used to study the data, with a focus on content analysis methods. Krippendorf [16] states that content analysis is a technique for drawing conclusions from valid information by taking into account the context. A structural method and a comparative analysis were used to investigate the two folktales. According to Teuw (in Saputra [17]), the purpose of structural analysis is to analyze carefully, in detail, and in depth the relationships between elements so that a perfect meaning is obtained.

The data taken from this study is a comparison of folk tales. The data source in this study is the folklore of *Bawang Merah and Bawang Putih*, and *Vasilisa The Beautiful*. This study utilized library study techniques, reading, and note-taking procedures. Data analysis will use a comparative approach, namely comparing the two folklore as the main data. In this study, the researcher will compare the two folklore with a structural theory which includes theme, setting, characteristics of characters, and plot.

## RESULT

Based on the data acquired by the researcher, the researcher discovered significant parallels and differences between the two folktales. The following are the findings of the researchers:

1. Theme

The theme contained in the folklore of *Bawang Merah and Bawang Putih* and the fairy tale *Vasilisa The Beautiful* have in common that the two fairy tales both tell about the struggles in life. The main character of both fairy tales explains it clearly in the story. When their mother passed away, their father, who had a habit of traveling far, forced them to struggle for their life while being abused by their stepmother and stepsisters.

2. Setting

The similarities between the setting of the folklore *Bawang Merah dan Bawang Putih* story and the fairy tale *Vasilisa The Beautiful* are found in the place setting, social setting, economic background, and time setting. The similarity in the setting of the place seen in the two tales is the house. The next equation is in the social background. The social setting depicted in the two tales is the belief in myths or supernatural beings. The economic background in two stories is that they come from a family of merchants. Finally, there are similarities in the time setting written in the two-fairy tales. The similarity of the time background is day and night.

3. Characteristics of the characters

The similarities between the folklore *Bawang Merah and Bawang Putih* and the fairy tale *Vasilisa The Beautiful* is the similarities in the characters. Among the characters referred to are Bawang Putih and Vasilisa the main characters who have the same character, namely being kind and hardworking. Other characters who have similarities are the figures of father, mother, stepmother, and stepsister. The stepmother and stepsister have the same

characteristics that are evil and insidious. They were also jealous of the beauty of Bawang Putih and Vasilisa. They always torture them and make them do all the housework.

#### 4. Plot

In both two stories, the father of Vasilisa and Bawang Putih married a widow. Vasilisa's stepmother hates her deeply and frequently tortures her by making her clean the entire house so that she has no time to do it herself. Her stepmother and two stepsisters are extremely envious of Vasilisa's beauty, but despite the torture, Vasilisa always told her stepmother the truth. Similarly, in the Indonesian folktales Bawang Putih and Bawang Merah, Bawang Putih's stepmother and stepsisters would make her clean the house as a form of punishment since they were so envious of Bawang Putih's beauty. She was always truthful with her stepmother despite the fact that Bawang Putih tormented him often.

### DISCUSSION

Russian folklore, *Vasilisa The Beautiful*, and Indonesian folklore, *Bawang Putih Bawang Merah*, both have similarities with the tragedies of life. The two folktales' approaches to solving conflicts and revealing lies can be seen to be comparable. The life of Vasilisa's stepmother and stepsister, who were very cruel to her and who wanted to hurt her, but it turned out that they were the ones who were hurt. Similarly, in the tale of *Bawang Putih and Bawang Merah*, Bawang Merah, and her mother wanted to hurt Bawang Putih because he had sent her to the forest, but even the poor were hurt.

The similarities are also found in the lies shown in both stories. In Russian folklore, *Vasilisa The Beautiful*, Vasilisa's stepmother and stepsisters, lied to Vasilisa's father when he was at home. Vasilisa's stepmother and stepsisters claimed to be kind, but when Vasilisa's father left for work, they tortured her. The *Bawang Merah and Bawang Putih* folklore of Indonesia is similar. When Bawang Putih's father was at home, her stepmother and stepsister, Bawang Merah, pretended to be kind; but, when he was away at work, they mistreated Bawang Putih.

Some of the differences in storylines in the two folktales is a miracle that happened. In the story of *Vasilisa The Beautiful*, Vasilisa's mother gave her a magic doll. The magic doll helps with all the housework that Vasilisa does. Meanwhile, the magical incident that happened in the story of *Bawang Merah and Bawang Putih* was when the old woman gave a pumpkin to Bawang Putih which contained jewelry. If in the story of *Vasilisa The Beautiful*, Vasilisa's stepmother sends her to Baba Yaga, then Baba Yaga orders Vasilisa to work day and night for her. While in the story of *Bawang Merah and Bawang Putih*, Bawang Putih met an old woman while looking for her stepmother's shawl. The old woman who found and kept her stepmother's shawl. But the old woman will return the shawl if Bawang Putih does the old woman's homework.

The difference between the two folktales is that at the end of the story, if the Russian folktale *Vasilisa The Beautiful*, the difference is in the end of the story, Vasilisa's stepmother and stepsister died because their house was on fire. At the time, Vasilisa was sent to meet a witch named Baba Yaga in the forest in the hopes that the witch would kill Vasilisa. Because of Vasilisa's being kind, the witch chased her away, gave her stepmother and stepsister the skull, and eventually set their house on fire, but Vasilisa survived. Whereas in the folklore of *Bawang Merah and Bawang Putih*, her stepmother and stepsisters did not die but they regretted that they had treated Bawang Putih badly. When Bawang Putih demanded a large pumpkin but the old woman refused, the incident occurred. Later, the old woman gave her the large one. Her mother was impatient when she got home. The pumpkin was broken on the ground by her. The people were yelling. The pumpkin was filled with many snakes. They were very frightened. They feared getting bitten by the snakes. Feeling regret at the actions of Bawang Putih is expressed by Bawang Merah. They finally recognized the mistakes they had made. They felt regret, and Bawang Putih pardoned them. The family is no longer in poverty now. Bawang Putih made the decision to sell every piece of jewelry and utilize the money earned to support her family.

### CONCLUSION

*Bawang Merah and Bawang Putih* folklore have some similarities and differences with Russian folklore, *Vasilisa The Beautiful*. The similarities between them are the theme of the struggles in life, the setting that is found in the place setting, social setting, economic background, and time

setting, the main characters that have the same characteristics, namely being kind and hardworking, and the stepmother and stepsister who are evil and insidious. The differences between those folklore is the miracle that happened in the story. If in *Vasilisa The Beautiful*, the main character helped by magic doll, while in *Bawang Merah and Bawang Putih* have pumpkin which full of jewellery. The ending of each story is also different. *Bawang Merah and Bawang Putih*'s ending is about the stepmother and stepsister regret about what they have done to Bawang Putih and they live happily. While in *Vasilisa The Beautiful*, the stepmother and stepsisters died when their house caught fire due to the skull of Baba Yaga. So, even *Bawang Merah and Bawang Putih* and *Vasilisa The Beautiful* come from a different country, it has several similarities and differences.

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