

Human Harmony with Nature in Ahmad Tohari's Novels

Teguh Trianton^{1,*}

Corresponding author. Email: teguhtrianton@gmail.com

¹Universitas Prima Indonesia, Jl. Sampul No.3, Sei Putih Bar. Medan, Sumatera Utara, Indonesia

Abstract

Human relations with the environment and nature are influenced by the values of cultural wisdom regarded as the way of life within a community entity. These values are stored in various artifacts or forms, such as literary works. The values of local wisdom in the context of Banyumas culture are recorded in the novels written by Ahmad Tohari (AT). Therefore, this study aims to determine the concept of harmony in the relationship between mankind and nature in the cultural treasures of Banyumas. This is a qualitative and descriptive research analyzed using the content analysis method. The theory used is literary anthropology, and the study was conducted as a form of conservation of the values of Banyumas cultural wisdom. The result showed that the Banyumas people have a human harmony with nature that is simultaneously based on spiritual values. First, they are of the view that man must submit to the forces of nature. This philosophy is applied when nature shows its power surpasses humans'. Second, they try to conquer nature for the sake of survival and fulfillment of life's needs. Third, in terms of the conquest of nature, they consider aspects of the harmony and balance of the ecosystem.

Keywords: *Literary Anthropology, Harmony, Environment, Conservation*

1. Introduction

Human relations with the universe or the environment are essentially divided into 3 interactive patterns, namely (a) humans are subjected to the forces of nature, (b) they need to be at a certain level of harmony with nature, and (c) they always need to be in control of nature. The first interactive pattern is usually marked by attitudes that surrender to some unavoidable provisions, especially natural disasters. The second is characterized by attitudes and behaviors related to maintaining and preserving nature. Meanwhile, the third is based on the exploitative behavior towards the universe and its contents, resulting in unequal distribution of natural resources and disruption of biological systems and ecosystems (Tilaar, 1999; Koentjaraningrat, 2009; Sedyawati, 2014).

The environment is described as a space where all living, non-living and abstract objects interact. Humans depend on these natural resources to meet their daily needs. The excessive exploitation of these resources causes environmental damages. Human behavior towards the universe is an aspect of an environmental relationship. All living things have a close relationship with nature, and in addition, humans adhere to the values of cultural wisdom in dealing with the biotic, abiotic, and social environments (Mikols, 2004; Mcbeth, 2010).

Human relations with the environment and natural surroundings are influenced by the values of cultural wisdom adopted as a way of life in every community. This has long been a concern in several studies. Setiawan (2011) researched the values of Balinese environmental wisdom. Becford, Jacobs, Williams, and Nahdee (2012)

analyzed the values of Aboriginal environmental wisdom in Australia. Fahrianoor, Windari, Mar'i, and Maryono (2013) studied the values of environmental wisdom in the Dayak community. Meanwhile, Jayadi, Soemarno, Yanuwadi, and Purnomo (2014) revealed the values of environmental wisdom in Wetu Teli, North Lombok. Suyanto, Soetarto, Sumardjo, and Hardjomidjojo (2014) examined the role of environmental wisdom in the Purwokerto community based on supporting green programs. Furthermore, Nuraini (2015) discussed the value of environmental wisdom in North Sumatra. Hilda (2016) researched the Natolu cultural wisdom in maintaining harmonious relations between the Mandailing community and the environment.

Environmental wisdom is described as an aspect of culture. It is a form of ingenuity derived from people's knowledge in managing and preserving natural resources. This wisdom is perceived as the philosophy of life by those in a certain cultural environment (Thamrin, 2013; Jayadi, Soemarno, Yanuwadi & Purnomo, 2014).

In the Banyumas cultural context, the values of local wisdom are the main elements of the messages constructed in Ahmad Tohari's (AT) novels. Consequently, Tohari's works are a sublimation of life's philosophies that emanates from local wisdom. It further represents noble values in the socio-historical context of the community where they reside. Tohari's novels are earth-based literature with their specific contexts. Ahmad Tohari's works are mimetic and serve as a mediating factor between the Banyumas and their life philosophies. Therefore, in this context, the novel plays a significant role in the conservation of life philosophy that is rooted in local culture (Heryanto, 1985; Budiman, 1985; Saryono, 1998; Yudiono, 2003; Prakoso, 2006; Priyadi, 2007, 2013; Suhardi, 2013; Ratna, 2014).

The focus of this study is to unravel and describe the values of the Banyumas people's life philosophy regarding the relationship between humans and nature, presented through various ideas, views, and the characters' behaviors in Ahmad Tohari's novels. This study is one of the efforts to extract local cultural values as a form of conservation and preservation of the noble ones contained therein.

2. Research Methods

This qualitative research adopted a content analysis method to produce descriptive data and examine symbolic material (text). In literary works, the contents in question are messages that are in accordance with nature. Content analysis is an interpretive step or means of inductive data review. Conversely, interpretation is carried out using an interactive analysis model (Krippendorff, 1980; Milles & Hubberman, 1994; Moleong, 2007; Sugiyono, 2010; Creswell, 2012; Ratna, 2013).

The sources of data include the following novels (1) *At Kaki Bukit Cibalak* (abbreviated DKCB), Gramedia Publisher, Cet. 3, 2005, (2) *Kubah*, Gramedia Publisher, Cet.3, 2005, (3) *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk* (RDP), Gramedia Publisher Cet. 4, 2009, (4) *Bekisar Merah* (BM), Gramedia Publisher, Cet. 2, 2013, and (5) *Orang Orang Proyek* (OOP), Mahatari Publishing, Cet. 1, 2004.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Result

Harmony is a cordial relationship between humans and other surrounding elements. This is highly influenced by the values of local cultural wisdom. The concept of harmony becomes the way of life for a particular entity. The Banyumas' culture regarding human relations with nature is illustrated through ideas, ways of life, and tools used by the characters in AT's novels. In addition, the description of this philosophy is also narrated in several other novels. The characters portray exceptional moral messages, values, and civilized ethics.

The novel depicts that initially, Banyumas only abided by the power of nature. In subsequent developments and time movement and knowledge, the need for harmony between humans and nature was assumed to be relevant.

In the novel titled *Kubah*, the harmonious relationship between humans and nature is depicted by Kastagethek's life. This raftsmen delivers bamboos from the upstream to areas near the river mouth. The river currents aid Kastagethek to transport the bamboos arranged as a raft. In addition, Kastagethek also utilizes all available resources in the river to meet their daily needs.

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This dark-skinned man with slight posture is extremely good at carrying tens, even hundreds of bamboos tied into *gethek*, a kind of makeshift raft. Kastagethek carries the bamboo raft from Pangkalan village along the Sikura River to Muara, tens of kilometers away from the South coast. The journey lasts for relatively 2 days and nights. Kastagethek creates a fireplace on the raft for cooking rice. On arrival, the raft is dismantled and sold as pieces of bamboos.

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Kastagethek travels from Muara to Pangkalan by walking along the banks of the Sikura River. However, during the trip, which takes approximately 2 days, Kastagethek also engages in fishing. Kastagethek has practiced these 2 occupations for generations (Kubah, 146-147).

Therefore, Kastagethek tries to maintain a balance with nature by wisely utilizing its potentials to meet daily needs. Kastagethek adopted local wisdom by using the river current to transport the raft to the estuary. In addition, trees are not deforested to create paths or roads from the upstream village to the estuary. Kastagethek makes and delivers bamboo rafts to the destination without damaging the natural environment.

Furthermore, Kastagethek also utilizes the natural resources to sustain themselves during the journey by fishing and cooking their catches. Therefore, fishing is a manifestation of local wisdom in creating harmony. Maintaining the balance of nature is regarded as being highly valuable. The utilization of fishing nets is one of the potentials because it ensnares large fish.

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After mooring the raft, Kasta descended downstream, slightly away from Lubuk Waru. In a rather shallow part of the river, the raftsmen arranged the stones into circular bunds with a diameter of approximately 5 to 6 meters. Each part of the upstream and downstream acts as doors, furthermore the staggered riverbed was leveled. In addition, Kasta crushes lumps of dry soil, gotten ashore, and scatters them all over the creation. Subsequently, fish have strange instincts, and they usually mate at the bottom layer, which has just been exposed to sunlight.

However, immediately after the traps are completed, Kasta cleans up with the cold water before going back into the raft. A small light is turned on, while Kasta waits for dawn immediately, the moon sets. Based on Kasta's years of experience, it is at this time that fish mate. (Kubah, 149).

Kastagethek did not only use fishing nets, traps were also made by exploiting the gaps in the river's flow and making a circular niche in the middle. This method is effective when the river current decreases, such as during the dry season, when it becomes impossible for Kastagethek to cast nets because of its shallowness. The riverbed serves as a trap, therefore this is one of the potential ways to maintain the balance of nature because it does not damage the ecosystem. Kastagethek applies knowledge of the seasons and other natural phenomena to fulfill the community's essential needs.

This harmonious relationship between human and nature is also reflected in the Karangsoga people's way of life. The picture is depicted by residents' ability to potentially take advantage of nature by maintaining fish, bathing in rivers, etc.

Karangsoga is a village located at the foot of a volcanic mountain. The remnants are still evident in the form of hills with steep slopes, valleys, or deep ravines covered with various types of ferns. The black soil and thick humus are able to store water, thereby making it possible for small rocky rivers and natural ditches to flow throughout the year. Due to these, there are lots of footbridges that connect paths in Karangsoga. The people made bamboo pipes to channel water from high places to fish ponds, showers, or rice fields cultivated on non-acidic soil. This is due to the continuous flow of water and easy drainage. However, whenever it rains, water is quickly absorbed into the ground so that there are no puddles and the rivers remain clear (BM, 21).

Apart from farming, the majority of those from Karangsoga Village work as coconut and palm sap tappers. They are also described as living in harmony with nature. All their actions are carefully executed so as not to damage the environment. In tapping coconut sap, for example, they need not arbitrarily slice or cut *manggar* buds. Tappers have to always remember and say the name of God before climbing a tree to cut the *manggar*.

Always be prayerful and alert are warnings that are regularly conveyed to the tappers while working at great heights. Darsa has never forgotten this talisman. Like all tappers, Darsa understands the consequences of being careless in this job. Falling from the height of a coconut tree probably leads to such a calamity that only a few tappers are bound to survive. Therefore, Darsa understands the need to concentrate when executing this task. To maintain such a level of consciousness, tappers are always taught to pray, both with their tongues and heart, in the name of the Almighty (BM, 13).

The habit of remembering God's power before cultivating natural wealth is a form of wisdom and nobility. It shows the harmony between humans and nature as a representation of God's greatness. This is based on the fact that God is the one that gives salvation, besides the universe is an infinite gift. Therefore, natural resource

management is executed by considering balance and harmony between humans and the environment. People need not destroy the environment because they are bound to be affected by the negative impact in return.

Awareness means the state or quality of being aware of something or one's level of consciousness. "Being aware" is a Javanese phrase that refers to the highest level of human consciousness. It is remembered based on an understanding of the existence of an all-powerful God. The Banyumas distinguishes between the meaning of the words 'remember' and 'being aware.' Remember is defined as general awareness. Remembrance is only based on memory or information stored in the brain. The act of remembering means recalling information from memory. Conversely, being aware is the highest form of consciousness. Awareness is the comprehensive knowledge of something that is being remembered. That is the reason the phrase 'being aware' has a higher sense of value compared to simply remembering.

Adults usually work hard during the dry season because crops such as vegetables and tobacco need to be properly watered. At night, they relaxed while rolling tobacco with banana leaves or dry corn husks, and a little after midnight, they retire to bed. However, it is impossible for Dukuh Paruk women to get pregnant during dry season (RDP, 15)

The earlier described fragment illustrates the way and manner the Dukuh Paruk people worked in harmony following the will of nature. They always strive to use nature to meet their needs therefore, rational effort is required. During the dry season, they try to maintain plant fertility by digging wells in the middle of the rice fields. This is because, in the dry season, the ditches and rivers get dried.

Digging a well in the middle of a rice field during the dry season is the farmers' intelligence in dealing with natural conditions. They realized that it was impossible to force water to flow from the river to the rice fields. At that time, they were not familiar with water pump technology. Therefore, they dug wells to water the crops in the fields.

In terms of relations with nature, the Banyumas people inherited a noble character that needs to be preserved. They bequeath their character in order to preserve nature. Moreover, the people were advised to use natural resources responsibly. Banyumas people never broke the balance, and at the same time, they obeyed the will of nature as a manifestation of God's power, the Creator of the universe.

Mr. Tarya is busier because the *pelus* fish which ate the fishing bait is probably bigger than the one that was initially hi. Unfortunately, Kabul is only able to help out by highlighting the water surface. However, it's true, the *pelus* fish, which Mr. Tarya caught this time is bigger (OOP, 70)

One of the discernment in exploiting the potentials of nature is using a hook to catch fish. In the aforementioned text, Mr. Tarya and Kabul were reportedly fishing at night. The use of a fishing rod means maintaining the balance of nature because only big fish usually eat the baits on the hook. The number of fish caught with a hook is also less than the ones caught using a protease, poison, or electric shock.

The Banyumas, as depicted in AT's novels, really maintain the balance of nature. These suburban people are fully aware that all their essential necessities have been provided by nature. Humans need to be smart to responsibly process these natural resources, thereby maintaining a balanced nature.

The relationship between humans and nature is perceived as a simultaneity of an interactive pattern. First, it is understood that humans need to submit to the forces of nature. This philosophy is applied when nature shows that its power is much stronger than that of man. For example, people are unable to fight a natural disaster. Second, man needs to create a balance with nature. This view is embodied in their attitude and behavior in terms of utilizing the potentials of nature while preserving and maintaining its balance.

The Banyumas realized that the universe was created as a gift. Therefore, they absolutely maintain the balance of nature. They do not try to destroy nature by exploiting its contents. The people understood that its destruction leads to imbalances in natural resources, biodiversity, and disruption of ecosystems.

3.2. Discussion

Mankind is obligated to take care of nature and other living creatures by prioritizing the principles of managing natural resources and the environment in a balanced manner. Humans also play an important factor in their relationship with the environment. They need to be able to control their natural surroundings, which include other living components. Based on this reason, ecological literacy is needed to understand and translate human relationships with both living and non-living elements. The human that masters ecological literacy needs to be in control of environmental management.

Environmental management is a conscious effort to maintain and improve the quality of one's surroundings to properly fulfill basic human needs. Given that the basic needs for human survival are not the same for all societal groups as well as changes over time, environmental management has to be flexible. This creates an opportunity for certain people to obtain their basic needs (Soemarwoto, 1991).

Ecological literacy is a critical way of thinking about the happenings in the surrounding based on empathy and deep concern for the consequences of human behaviors. Everyone in a certain community needs to manifest ecological literacy derived from local wisdom, which is described as human actions and attitudes towards an object or event within a certain place and time. Its substance in ecological literacy involves applying conservation values believed to be true by the community, which is the basis of human attitudes and behavior towards the environment.

Ecological literacy or eco-literacy is described as public awareness of the principles and importance of environmental protection actualized through sustainable development, either at the global, national, or regional levels. A group of people that masters ecological literacy usually rely on awareness about the importance of nature. These principles emphasize the importance of networks, cycles, solar energy, partnerships, diversity, and dynamic balance (Capra, 1997; Capra, 2004).

Ecological literacy serves as the basis in determining the orientation of human relations with the natural surroundings. In this context, Banyumas is described as ecological literates because they are able to maintain the balance of nature. They view the relationship between humans and nature as the simultaneity of harmonious interactive patterns. In their view, people need to submit to the forces of nature. This philosophy is applied when nature shows that its power exceeds that of humans. For example, people are usually helpless during natural disasters. Therefore, it is also viewed that man needs to establish harmony with nature. This view is embodied in the attitude and behavior of utilizing the potentials of nature while preserving and maintaining a balance.

In some cases, intelligence or ecological insight is often associated with the indigenous groups' local wisdom. Several studies reported that the ecological insight and wisdom possessed by rural communities play an important role in managing natural resources, protecting biodiversity, and creating models on ways of living with the environment (Turner, Ignace, & Ignace, 2000).

Ecological intelligence is the ability to interact, adapt, control, regulate, care, maintain, preserve, and utilize the environment. It refers to understanding hidden ecological impacts and the strategies for dealing with them. According to Goleman (2009), ecological intelligence combines cognitive skills with empathy regarding all forms of life.

The Banyumas realize that the universe was created as a gift. Therefore, they sincerely maintain the balance of nature. They do not try to destroy nature by exploiting its contents. The people understand that such actions lead to imbalances in natural resources, biodiversity, and disruption of ecosystems. Ecological literacy or insight is presented through attitudes, way of life, and actions towards the environment. Besides, it has been passed down from one generation to the other as a form of local cultural wisdom.

Environmental wisdom is in the form of moral principles such as respect, an attitude of responsibility towards nature, cosmic solidarity, the principle of compassion and concern, the principle of not harming, living simply and in harmony, justice, democratic and integrity (Naess, 1993; Singer, 1993; Keraf, 2010).

Regarding the principle of respect for nature, it is a moral responsibility because ontologically, mankind is an integral part of the environment. In addition, this responsibility is collective. It requires people to take the initiative, make an attempt to be wise, and collectively protect nature. The preservation and destruction of nature is the responsibility of all people and is manifested in the form of warnings, prohibitions, and punishments for anyone that damages and endangers their environment (Keraf, 2010).

Local wisdom is based on 2 forms, namely tangible and intangible. This value is embraced and passed down from one generation to the other. It is reflected in the regional planning pattern (traditional houses, settlements, irrigation, rice fields, and forests), crop regulation based on natural phenomena, and the behavioral system translated into environmental, ethical values, which includes adaptiveness, prevention of disasters, ecological balance and harmony, sustainability, beliefs, and socio-culture. Etiquette discusses the values and moral principles adopted by certain communities as guidelines and criteria for behaving accordingly. In general, the value system, which is maintained as a good habit, is inherited through religion and culture, which is considered the main source of moral norms (Keraf, 2010; Suwandi, Yunus, & Rahmawati, 2016).

Ecological intelligence is needed to expand human capacity to all natural systems, both in modern and postmodern life. Meanwhile, those that live in the modern and postmodern geographical era need to be sensitive to various signs or symptoms of natural changes. Therefore, broad empathy is needed based on rational analysis of environmental elements (Koszegi, Botlik, Telbisz, & Mari, 2015).

To create awareness related to the impact of various natural phenomena, a disclosure explanation strategy is needed. Meanwhile, nature conservation efforts need to combine visual, audible, or auditory signs and other textural elements of irreparable damage online (Kolodziejski, 2015).

Humans are required to develop a harmonious relationship with nature. The quality of human life on planet earth is inseparable from that of the environment. Its improvement and population welfare are carried out by providing various options for the community through the management of natural and artificial resources with some touch of technology. The management of natural resources is carried out by taking into account the various impacts that have occurred. Human activities in meeting the needs of socio-economic life need to be carried out responsibly. Ecocentric views humans not only as social beings rather as biological and ecological creatures. Furthermore, they tend to live and develop in social and ecological communities simultaneously. Ecologically, there is no ontological separation between humans and nature. There is a relation and simultaneity between them and the universal (nature). The realization of these 2 is harmoniously carried out for economic development, and the human needs fulfillment (Awan, 2013; Miklós, 2014; Holm et al., 2015; Li & Ernst, 2015; Kretz, 2016).

The Banyumas realized that God created the universe as a gift to be properly managed for the fulfillment of human needs to live prosperously. Therefore, they are aware of the importance associated with maintaining the balance of nature. Ecological literacy or insight is embodied in attitudes, views about the environment, and behaviors. The majority of the Banyumas are farmers, and they are completely aware that nature is able to provide all their necessities. They are obliged to preserve it by not damaging the environment. This ecological insight has been passed down from one generation to the other as local cultural wisdom.

Environmental damages that occurred were closely related to human attitudes. This is based on the fact that is selfish and individualistic humans tend to destroy nature. They do not realize that nature is a place to unwind, besides egoism and individualism based on ego is justified in some cases, although this needs to be accompanied by the dependence on other providers so that they are able to participate in environmental management (Soerjani, 2000).

The value of character education related to environmental wisdom has to be explored from various sources. Literary works, including children's literature written in certain natural surroundings, can represent environmental wisdom values (Kanatsouli, 2005; Boudreaux, 2006). Moral values in environmental management are also developed and innovated from existing indigenous methods through conservation, recovery, and adaptation approaches (Kamonthip & Kongprasertamorn, 2007).

Humans as individuals tend to establish a harmonious invisible relationship with their surrounding environment. Although everyone has a different personality, unwittingly their love and even dependence on the environment causes humans to be different from one another (individual differences) (Rahardjo, 2006).

Islam has provided life guidance as a vital elan in the religious context to achieve happiness, success, and prosperity worldwide. This is the elementary purpose of human life. Ironically, it is difficult to obtain because of selfishness. To facilitate understanding ways to achieve these elementary life goals, there is a need to understand the hierarchy of relationships between God, nature, and humans. God is at the top of the hierarchy and guides humans through revelation, which needs to be applied daily. This leads to the development of a harmonious interaction between humans, nature, and God (Febriani, 2014).

Conversely, environmental management also requires the involvement of women. This ecofeminism perspective develops a holistic, integrative, non-reductionist, and participatory concept of caring ethics. Efforts to realize social and ecological justice are achieved, supposing the community reconstructs the patriarchal mindset and behavior and revives the values of femininity. Forests are bound to be sustainable, assuming everyone has a mother's heart and decides to be responsible for the biosphere and cosmic solidarity, maintain a harmonious connection with nature, establish equal relations, care, and simplicity (Suliantoro, 2011).

In the educational context, this insight has to be integrated into the school curricula. Conversely, schools need to integrate environmental education in a related field of study or adopt a monolithic approach (Mamat, Talib & Mohamad, 2011; Tsekos, Tsekos, & Christoforidou, 2012; Ismail, 2012).

In a spiritual approach, to overcome environmental damages, people need to get closer to Allah. This is achieved through ecological repentance, which is an effort to realize mistakes in taking care of nature and be committed to its repetition (Suwito, 2011). To overcome these damages, Islamic traditions emphasize the need to get closer to Allah, which also means developing a cordial relationship with other creatures. The creation of awareness in the community is, first, through the promotion of the green movement (green spirit). Second, idealize the environment as "the city of God" because everything in the universe belongs to God. Third, through eco-spiritual education to actualize human morals, they are not greedy in exploiting the environment (Anshoriy, 2012).

Developing a harmonious relationship with the natural environment as a manifestation of God's existence is actualized when there is a dialectic between the environment, humans, and God. Therefore, by protecting the forest or the environment, people also get closer to God because they carry out certain mandates as caliphs. Humanity's awareness to love, preserve and ensure forests are perceived as God's mandate continues to grow and becomes part of life principles which means competing in exhibiting good behavior (Anshoriy, 2013).

Meanwhile, moral values related to environmental wisdom reported in literary texts are explored or conserved by ecocritical studies. This helps to create insight between environmental wisdom and literary works, which are

the medium of education. Such studies have contributed positively to the cultivation of environmental care and values (Sahu, 2014; Septiningsih, 2015; Dewi, 2015).

Islam as a religion regulates human relations with their Creator and also with other creatures. It actually has a normative basis both implicitly and explicitly in terms of protecting and preserving the environment. However, through an alternative educational model, Madrasah Adiwiyata was selected as a solution. This is one of the efforts to increase capacity, knowledge, and understanding of environmental management and the protection of sustainable development through education (Hidayat, 2015).

4. Conclusion

In terms of relations with nature, the Banyumas inherited noble characters that need to be preserved. Therefore, supposing humans want to use natural resources, it needs to be carried out responsibly to avoid damaging nature. At the same time, they are also subject to the will of nature as a manifestation of God's power, the Creator of the universe (the masterpiece of the universe). These people apply the concept of conformity or harmony based on the spiritual awareness that nature and all its contents are God's creations.

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