

The harmony of nature in Ahmad Tohari's thoughts through the novel *Di Kaki Bukit Cibalak*

Keselarasan alam dalam pemikiran Ahmad Tohari melalui novel Di Kaki Bukit Cibalak

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Abstract

Awareness of the importance of natural harmony as an ecosystem for human life has become an important topic to study. The phenomenon of natural damage triggers this condition due to the actions of unscrupulous people in the community. Forest clearing for industrial purposes is one of the triggers. Apart from that, the increasingly complicated management of plastic waste due to a lack of public education about this impact also triggers the destruction of natural balance. Therefore, through this article, the researcher attempts to link this paradigm with the message conveyed through the novel *Di Kaki Bukit Cibalak* by Ahmad Tohari. The method used in preparing this article is genetic structuralism with a literary sociology approach. The results of the research show that based on the story structure found, the author's worldview about the importance of maintaining natural harmony is embedded in the story being told. This view also shows that the harmonization and harmony of nature is an important foundation for Indonesia's golden generation. Therefore, the author's worldview can be an important pillar as an alternative environmental education material delivered through school education.

Abstrak

Kesadaran akan pentingnya keselarasan alam sebagai sebuah ekosistem kehidupan manusia menjadi salah satu topik yang penting untuk dikaji. Kondisi ini dipicu oleh fenomena kerusakan alam akibat ulah oknum masyarakat. Pembukaan hutan untuk kepentingan industri menjadi salah satu pemicunya. Selain itu, semakin rumitnya pengelolaan limbah plastik akibat kurangnya edukasi masyarakat tentang dampak ini menjadi pemicu juga rusaknya keseimbangan alam. Atas dasar itu, melalui artikel ini, peneliti berupaya mengaitkan paradigma yang terjadi ini dengan pesan yang disampaikan melalui novel "Di Kaki Bukit Cibalak" karya Ahmad Tohari. Metode yang digunakan dalam penyusunan artikel ini adalah strukturalisme genetik, dengan pendekatan sosiologi sastra. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa berdasarkan struktur cerita yang ditemukan, terdapat pandangan dunia pengarang tentang pentingnya menjaga keselarasan alam yang diselipkan pada kisah yang diceritakan. Pandangan tersebut juga menunjukkan bahwa harmonisasi dan keselarasan alam menjadi fondasi penting bagi generasi emas Indonesia. Oleh karena itu, pandangan dunia pengarang tersebut dapat menjadi salah satu pilar penting sebagai alternatif materi pendidikan lingkungan hidup yang disampaikan melalui jalur pendidikan persekolahan.

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A. Introduction

Collective awareness about the importance of maintaining natural harmony is now starting to be expressed. In a scope related to public education, a ban on single-use plastic shopping bags has now been announced in various cities in Indonesia. This effort is in line with the Indonesian Government's commitment that starting January 1, 2030 (*Regulation of the Minister of Environment and Forestry of the Republic of Indonesia Number P.75/MENLHK/SETJEN/KUM.1/10/2019 concerning the Roadmap for Waste Reduction by Producers*) has committed to ban single-use plastic nationally. These single-use plastics include plastic sachets, straws, bags, and disposable containers or cutlery (Napitupulu et al., 2021). This effort should be appreciated because the reminder about maintaining natural harmony has begun. Real action to raise awareness of the importance of this can start from each individual and can also be done starting from various cross-professionals, social organization backgrounds, and various scientific fields, including through literary works (Apriyani & Nalurita, 2023; Hidayah et al., 2022; Restiyani & Rusdiarti, 2023; Rokhmansyah et al., 2023).

In the field of literary studies, especially novel literary works, the development of awareness of the importance of natural harmony has been voiced by many authors, and one of them is Ahmad Tohari. In his novel *Di Kaki Bukit Cibalak* (hereinafter abbreviated as DKBC), Tohari conveyed the importance of environmental harmony in the opening part of the novel. The DKBC novel was first published as a serial story in the daily Kompas in 1979 and then published in a book by Pustaka Jaya in 1986 (Yudiono, 2003). It means that the message about the harmonization of nature was conveyed by Ahmad Tohari long before the paradigm of protecting the environment was voiced on a massive scale. It is one of the things that makes researchers interested in conducting an in-depth analysis of the DKBC novel. It is done with a literary sociology approach based on the theory of genetic structuralism.

The literary sociology approach was chosen because the stories conveyed through literary works are essentially social events that reflect a portrait of people's daily lives. Literature and society are social structures whose relationship is very dynamic. Interaction among humans is also a real picture of existing reality. Literary works are a social institution that places social variables as important to discuss (Supriyanto, 2021). Meanwhile, genetic structuralism is used as a theoretical basis because, through this theory, the author's worldview can be traced as one of the doors to finding the background of the emergence of the author's message. To find this message, researchers carried out an in-depth analysis to find the structure of the existing story. It is done because, according to the theory of genetic structuralism, understanding the world, including literary works, must be done by understanding its structure, and efforts must come down to finding existing structures (Faruk, 2017; Goldman, 1981).

Many studies have been published in various journals in connection with themes of natural harmony in literary works. Some of these are studies of concepts that lead to the study of literary ecology, the literary ecological paradigm, and ecocriticism as a concept and its implementation (Kaswadi, 2015; Shinde, 2016; Sutisna, 2021; Zulfa, 2021). In this concept, according to the researcher's point of view, natural harmony is the physical harmonization of the environment with the implementation of personal thoughts that surround it, and that is one of the concepts that is part of the author's ideological thinking (Khasanah & Prakoso, 2023). Therefore, to reach this stage, apart from using a literary sociology approach, it is necessary to carry out studies using the theory of genetic structuralism. Jurij Lotman's semiotic theory about culture as a hierarchy in Jan Mukařovský's literary semantic and aesthetic system is also a basis for analysis because, according to him, the meaning of literary works cannot always be separated from existing cultural codes (Lotman, 1977, p. ix; Mukařovský, 1970, pp. 1–3). Awareness of the importance of the environment represents the spirit of the times, which is a semantic system. For example, the movement not to use plastic straws manifests the increasingly unbalanced ecosystem due to plastic waste, and a way out must be found.

In line with this, in the last two years, two research articles have discussed the novel DKBC. First, Pritojosoa, et al. (2022) discuss the imagery of the novel DKBC (Pritojosoa et al., 2022). Second, Yulisatiani et al. (2020) analyzed the wisdom of Banyumas women in environmental conservation in AT novels (2020). However, neither researchers Pritojosoa nor Yulisatiani conducted studies focusing on natural harmony. Research that raises issues such as this article has not been carried out. The object of Yulisatiani's study is all AT novels, not just focusing on DKBC.

B. Method

This research article is an article with a literary sociology approach based on Lucian Goldman's theory of genetic structuralism, Jurij Lotman's cultural semiotics, and Jan Mukařovský's literary aesthetics. Meanwhile, the method used includes two things. Because the database used is the text of the DKBC novel, the researcher uses heuristic and hermeneutic reading to reveal the existing meaning in finding the story

structure. Meanwhile, to link the story's structure with the former worldview, the researcher uses a dialectical method related to Ahmad Tohari's thoughts and aspects of environmental education. The data used is the results of interviews with the author. Researchers link the DKBC text with other extrinsic data sources, including existing social and cultural structures (Faruk, 2017).

C. Results and Discussion

As an article with a literary sociology approach based on the theory of genetic structuralism, the discussion of this article begins with story structure. After that, an analysis of the worldview can be obtained and continued with the social structure of the background, as well as the role of environmental education in building natural harmony.

1. DKBC Story Structure

As a product of collective subjects and human facts, the characters studied in the DKBC novel are all involved in the stories being told. Of course, this series is in order to build unity. These figures include Pambudi, Mbok Ralem, Pak Dirgamulya (Pak Dirga), Poyo, Pak Barkah, Topo, Sanis, Pak Modin, Pambudi's father, Bu Runtah, Pak Camat, Bambang Sumbodo, Eyang Wira, Mrs. Wibawa (Oei Eng Hwa), Mulyani, and others. Pambudi is the figure that is most talked about. The built story is centered on him but unites with other elements. The series of stories became a basis for researchers to determine the built environments and the form of oppositional relations.

a. Natural Environment

The natural environment of the DKBC novel is a depiction of a rural environment. The natural atmosphere of the village is told against the backdrop of the hills that flank it. Some shrubs were also found, as told at the beginning of the DKBC story. Ecosystem awareness has been conveyed to the introduction of nature, including plastic dangers (Tohari, 2014, p. 7). The simplicity of its inhabitants also supports such a natural atmosphere. They are residents of Tanggir Village, Kalijambe District, where most residents' livelihood is tapping coconut sap (Tohari, 2014, pp. 113–114). Thus, the natural environment of Cibalak Hill accurately describes a hill in the countryside. Lichens provide a fertile means for the growth of ferns. These fern forests leave behind a thick layer of humus. It makes Cibalak fertile (Tohari, 2014, p. 67). Several parts of Cibalak are called teak forest areas (Tohari, 2014, pp. 5, 6, 69, 70).

b. Cultural Environment

The cultural environment built in DKBC is village culture combined with the community's attitude, which still upholds Javanese customs and culture. Respectful attitudes towards residents entrusted with certain positions, such as village heads (*lurah*), become part of their culture (Tohari, 2014, pp. 62, 135). Among the residents of the community of Tanggir Village are devout Muslims. However, some others also believe in mystical things, as shown by the existence of the figures Pak Dirga, Bu Runtah, and Eyang Wira (Tohari, 2014, pp. 61, 66, 87, 141).

c. Social Environment

The social environment described in DKBC is the social environment of village communities. They live in harmony based on the teachings of their religion. They are hard workers. Every morning, the Tanggir people go back and forth to the rice fields or Cibalak Hill to look for anything they can sell at the market. The penderes also went up and down the coconut trees to get the bamboo tubes that could hold the sap. Those active in the market had left for that place before sunrise (Tohari, 2014, pp. 113–114). Tanggir people are also very aware of their respective social status. It was proven when Pambudi's father advised Pambudi to step aside when it was discovered he conflicted with Pak Dirga (Tohari, 2014, p. 75). However, in general, the community's ecological awareness is still lacking. Among them, some still do not have good habits regarding defecation (Tohari, 2014, p. 116). Their habit of burning dry Angsana leaves remains (Tohari, 2014, p. 70).

d. Ideological Environment

The ideological environment in DKBC combines Islam wrapped in Javanese philosophy. The Pambudi family shows several Islamic attitudes and behaviors. The calm attitude shown by Pambudi when his father died shows this (Tohari, 2014, p. 159). An exciting thing is shown in the presence of Akiat, Mrs. Wibawa, and Mulyani figures. The appearance of these three figures of Chinese descent shows the renewal of the diversity ideology conveyed by Ahmad Tohari. The divide between natives and non-natives is tried to be interpreted as heterogeneity as a normal thing.

e. Oppositional Relations

The oppositional relationship in DKBC is a relationship formed in an imaginary universe. Oppositional relations are created based on the environments formed, including cultural, "natural", "social", "ideological", and human opposition. First, cultural opposition. Cultural opposition in the DKBC novel can be identified based on the religious-nonreligious attitudes shown by Pambudi and Pak Dirga (also Poyo) and the rural-urban culture. These two cultures are stereotypes that are very easy to recognize. The religious-nonreligious opposition boils down to a good attitude versus a bad attitude, an honest attitude versus a corrupt attitude, and an attitude of justifying any means versus giving in to win.

The second is "natural" opposition. The natural opposition shown in the DKBC novel can be seen in Pak Dirga's attitude, which is the opposite of Pambudi's character. These two attitudes are also in line with the natural environment of Tanggir Village, which has begun to change. The figure of Mr Danu, who promotes perfume for Tanggir residents, is proof of this. It depicts the decline in the ecosystem in the village—the differences in the nature of the two form an opposition. When Pambudi suddenly questioned the cost of celebrating Pak Dirga's election using cooperative money, at that time, Pak Dirga was shocked but immediately acted to "make peace" with the Tanggir youth. However, the 'peace' proposed by Pak Dirga apparently did not change Pambudi's attitude to remain critical and anti-corruption (Tohari, 2014, pp. 24–26).

Third is social opposition. Social opposition in the DKBC novel is found in the changes in social activities that occur. These changes result in mutually opposing behavior. In this context, the author actually provides an enlightening message about ecosystem awareness, including plastic waste management (Tohari, 2014, p. 7). The decreasing function of buffalo in plowing rice fields and the reduction of teak forests due to the impact of the G30S/PKI rebellion became the opening door to change their behavior. The same thing was then strengthened when Pambudi began to give a different perspective on the importance of caring and, at the same time, answered the importance of honesty, an attitude that Mr. Dirga had manipulated.

Fourth is ideological opposition. The ideological opposition in DKBC is religious and non-religious. The religious character structure is shown by the story episode that tells the story of Pambudi's actions. The spiritual message was very visible when Pambudi rejected Mulyani because of real differences in beliefs. They still respect each other (Tohari, 2014, p. 169). Apart from that, the figure of Pak Modin also falls into this classification. It is logical because Pak Modin's job is to hold religious services in Tanggir with wages from rice fields.

Fifth is human opposition. At a macro level, human opposition in the DKBC novel can be found in the differences in Pambudi's attitudes in opposition to Mr. Dirga (and Poyo) as the researcher reviews social opposition. The two are very contradictory. The attitude shown by Pambudi was positive, while the attitudes of Pak Dirga and Poyo were negative. Apart from these two, at a micro level, several individuals as collective subjects in DKBC have unique characteristics which Ahmad Tohari created in pairs, for example, in romantic matters which involve relationships between women and subjects of the opposite sex (Sanis and Jirah or between Sanis and Mrs. Runtah).

2. The Author's World View on the DKBC

Based on the analysis of the existing story structure, it can be explained that empirical Tohari thoughts form his view. First, in social life, harmonization and harmony of life are the foundations that every individual should have in it, including harmony with nature. Tohari's concern for maintaining this ecosystem is a big concern for him. Second, moderating thoughts about openness and progress as provisions for life in society must still be a priority. However, these changes must still consider the harmony of nature. This message was conveyed when Tohari compared Tanggir Village 'in the past' with the habits of its people, which were starting to become 'modern.' Therefore, messages about plastic waste are also included in the message. Third, the balance of nature remains Tohari's concern. For example, the public's prohibition on

collecting and burning dried Angsana leaves is of interest to him. It can be seen in his efforts to involve students from Bogor who are doing activities in Tanggir Village and explain the importance of ecology and ecosystems (Tohari, 2014, p. 70). Likewise, Tohari criticized the habit of the Tanggir people who had started to get rid of the tobacco containers they usually woven from grass and replaced them with plastic (Tohari, 2014, p. 7).

3. Underlying Social Structure

Based on the analysis, the social structure that occurred when the work was produced is a picture of changes in the mindset of some people, especially those living in rural areas. Their unique attitude of simplicity began to shift. If we look at the harmony of nature, on the one hand, the attitude of those who swallow these changes whole is also a concern for Ahmad Tohari. Meanwhile, on the other hand, their habits that can unknowingly damage the environment also persist, such as a sudden preference for plastic items (Tohari, 2014, p. 7), not yet using the family toilet (Tohari, 2014, p. 116), and collecting dry angkana leaves (Tohari, 2014, p. 71), or the paradox of selling their rice fields for unproductive needs (Tohari, 2014, p. 69).

These behavioral changes become an integrated message in all the stories the DKBC novel tells. Harmonization and harmony are reflected not only in the story about Pambudi but also in its environmental message. Describing flora and fauna in detail is a semiotics that, according to Ahmad Tohari, has begun to be 'forgotten.' The mention of johar trees, rasamala trees, cashew nuts (monkey cashew), mangosteen trees, sentolok trees, gardenia groves, reed grass shoots, and bamboo clumps is not coincidental. Likewise, the animal names, such as srigunting bird, pangolin, porcupine, wild boar, brown eagle, leopard, Javan tiger, langur, and monkey, represent the importance of natural harmony. It is proven by Ahmad Tohari's anxiety about the destruction of the ecosystem, as stated in the following quote: *"Now, almost all the animals that live on Cibalak Hill only live in the fairy tales of their grandfathers and grandmothers. In fact, young teachers will get dizzy if a student asks about teringgiling or porcupines"* (Tohari, 2014, pp. 68–69). Thus, it can be explained that the social structure behind the birth of the DKBC novel is a real depiction of Tohari's concerns about harmonization and harmony. It occurs in the spiritual message of the story about the twists and turns of Pambudi's feud with Pak Dirga and, in the harmony of nature, the harmonization of the causal relationship between humans and the natural environment.

4. Building Natural Harmony Through Environmental Education

If related to environmental education, building harmony with nature means being interpreted as a serious effort to change a person's views and behavior towards the environment. It is hoped that someone who previously did not care about the environment will change to care about it so that mutually beneficial relationships can be created and harmonization is created (Sudjoko, 2014). The message about environmental awareness shown by Ahmad Tohari in the novel DKBC opens up space to confirm that changing times cannot be denied. However, the neglect of natural damage and the lack of awareness regarding society's apathetic attitude towards the sustainability of the ecosystem is something that must be enlightened.

These messages about natural harmony are conveyed beautifully and flow following the stories in the DKBC novel. It also provides an overview of the function of literature, which is dulce et utile, very enjoyable and educational. It means that the DKBC novel has also provided two functions at once, namely providing a pleasant effect because of Pambudi's good behavior and providing moral lessons because the positive side of environmental harmony is also useful for readers.

If it is related to material at school, it can be explained that environmental education has an important function. Environmental education is an educational program to develop children or students to have rational and responsible understanding, awareness, attitudes, and behavior regarding the reciprocal influence between the population and the environment in various aspects of human life (Widiawati et al., 2022). Therefore, taking material about natural harmony in the DKBC novel and applying it as enrichment material in schools is certainly useful. These topics can be found to be equivalent to the learning themes of related subjects. Awareness about the dangers of plastic waste, the decreasing richness of flora and fauna, and lack of understanding about the dangers of certain wastes are important education materials in environmental education. To achieve this goal, the commitment of stakeholders is certainly a provision for making environmental education more meaningful for Indonesia's golden generation.

D. Conclusion

Based on the analysis that has been carried out at the end of this article, several conclusions can be drawn as follows. First, based on the results of the story structure analysis carried out, the harmony of nature conveyed in the DKBC novel is Ahmad Tohari's worldview as the author of the novel. From Tohari's point of view, harmony and harmonization are the thoughts of his work not only in the context of relationships between humans but also between humans and the natural environment. Second, progress over time due to the influence of technology is unavoidable, but that does not mean ignoring the ecosystem. The continuity of the chain of life consisting of flora and fauna must remain in harmony. On the other hand, habits for a more civilized life context must also be followed, such as the importance of the function of the family toilet, which is an important message. Third, in the context of the existing social system, the basic idea of natural harmony concerns Ahmad Tohari. When the DKBC novel was born, people's lives at that time were in transition between traditional and modern. Through this article, we reiterate the benefits of literary works, especially novels, in providing their role as an entertaining, enjoyable, and educational means. Fourth, if it is related to environmental education, natural harmony at least provides a good understanding that this problem is not simple. The essence of environmental education is the creation of students' full awareness of the function and role of nature management to create a mutually beneficial reciprocal relationship. Restricting plastic shopping bags at least provides concrete evidence of efforts to maintain natural harmony, and this policy is a good place to start.

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