

Living Side by Side with Nature: The Story of Mount Umbuk and The Mystery of the Kelud Firework Eruption

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Abstract

The connection between natural life and human life is very close and inseparable. As known in the life of the people of Sugihwaras, the last village before the gate of Mount Kelud where all levels of society believe that Mount Kelud is a "home" of which the state must always be preserved and requests are always fulfilled. This view is a manifestation of the local wisdom of the Kelud community. This article aims to describe the relationship of Mount Kelud with its people. The relationship can be a physical relationship or a metaphysical relationship. Physical relationships are realized by protecting and preserving the nature properly as God's creatures. Meanwhile, metaphysical relationships are manifested by respecting ancestors with a history of tracing back the nature. This study uses a qualitative descriptive method with theory of ecocriticism in the study of literature. Research data obtained through interview and observation techniques.

Keywords: Nature; Mount Kelud; Public.

A. Introduction

Mount Kelud is one of the active volcanoes in Indonesia located between three districts in East Java; Kediri Regency, Malang Regency, and Blitar Regency. Being one of the active mountains in Indonesia, the community around Mount Kelud strives to always be responsive to disaster mitigation and give mutual respect to nature. According to Jazziyatul (in Indiyanto, 2012) starting from the high level of disaster vulnerability faced by the community, they must be able to adapt to nature

and the surrounding environment.

Sugihwaras is the last village before heading to Mount Kelud which is very similar to nature with the mount. All levels of society believe that Mount Kelud is a "home" for them, so its state must always be maintained and its requests must be fulfilled. The people of Sugihwaras always carry out rituals that are believed to be an effort to implement social cohesion as part of the community where they live (Mardiyani, 2018). The ritual seeks to get closer to the sacred and

symbolizes a belief in establishing the continuity of life and peace (Mardiyani, 2018). This view is a manifestation of the local wisdom of the Kelud community. Sudirman (in Wagiran, 2009) revealed that local wisdom is related to human behavior and is related to God, signs of nature, the environment/agriculture, building houses, education, marriage and birth ceremonies, food, the cycle of human life and character, health, and natural disasters. People living alongside the nature will always respect each other and the idea that things can happen every time and in every place prevent them from taking an arbitrary action. Therefore, it should be instilled in their belief that every action is based on good intentions. Awareness of local wisdom is a human effort in using their reason to act and behave towards something, object, or event occurring in a certain space (Mukti in Indiyanto, 2012).

Basically, every human being living on earth always coexists with nature. Having the awareness to preserve local wisdom is an important point for humans to face and reduce the risk of natural disasters.

Moreover, increasing awareness of people living in disaster-prone areas is one of the things that must be taken into consideration, so that they can quickly and responsively adapt to environmental conditions when a disaster occurs. Nature revives humans not only in a physical sense, but also mental and spiritual. Therefore, it is necessary for humans to show love and concern for nature in order to guarantee their well-being, both physical and spiritual (Sukmawan, 2016). In addition, humans must always understand that they are a part of nature and that creates the necessity to stay grateful and to remember the Creator.

This study aims to describe the relationship of Mount Kelud with its people, which can be physical relationship or metaphysical. Physical relationships are implemented in properly protecting and preserving the nature as God's creature. Meanwhile, metaphysical relationships are manifested in respecting ancestors with a history of tracing back in nature.

Not many people realize that nature and humans have a very close

relationship, need each other, and cannot be separated. Therefore, realizing mutual tolerance can be the key to respect and care for each other so that there will not be any harm to both sides.

B. Research Method

This study utilized a qualitative descriptive method with ecocriticism literary theory. Ecocriticism literary theory is considered to be capable of explaining that literature and nature are an inseparable part of it. Therefore, it is hoped that the messages of wisdom in literature will reach the whole of life in the universe (Sukmawan, 2016). Eco-criticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the environment; everything related to human and non-human elements, such as earth, water, housing, agriculture, caves, hills, plants, trees, oceans, seasons, animals, wind, ancient architecture, rocks, soil, etc., which are regarded as gallery portraits in eco-criticism (Yeshpal, 2015). Also, using the theory of sacred-profane dichotomy from Emile Durkheim which states

that sacredness and profanity are opposites, for instance, sacredness refers to things that are holy, divine, and beyond human comprehension, while profanity are things that are not related to the sacred, real in everyday life, and under human control (Mustofa, 2020). In addition, research data were obtained through observation and in-depth interviews with the Elders of Mount Kelud, Kediri, East Java.

C. Results and Discussion

Mount Umbuk as a Protective Gate of Sugihwaras

Mount Kelud is one of the active volcanoes in Indonesia which has experienced many eruptions. The eruption of Mount Kelud also impacted areas outside the province of East Java. However, various impacts, such as lava or *wedhus gembel*, did not affect the people of Sugihwaras, the last village before Mount Kelud. In fact, in 1951 when Mount Kelud erupted, the lava almost got to the residents' settlements, but, it was blocked by bamboo trees, which was the barrier between the residents' house and the plantation.

People believe that Mount Umbuk had something to do with this. Mount Umbuk is a twin mountain that becomes a protective gate and barrier for Sugihwaras Village when eruption occurred, keeping the village safe and away from the impact of a heavy eruption. Mount Umbuk, located next to Mount Kelud, was believed to be originated from the shawl of Kediri Princess which was thrown at Blitar, forming a mound (*umbuk*), which prevented the area to be hit by the lava. In the other hand, the community in the area does not only believe in Mount Umbuk, but also routinely performs *Larung Sesaji* to ask for safety, so that Sugihwaras is given protection and kept away from disasters. In line with Emile Durkheim's Theory of Sacredness, *Larung Sesaji* is a form of sacred ritual for the Sugihwaras community which is carried out in every *Suro* night and is not solely conducted to preserve culture. However, someone who follows or is involved in a ritual becomes a part of it, where he resides (Mardiyarni, 2018). Evidently as the eruption occurred, the last village to Mount Kelud was spared from heavy

impacts because the people of Sugihwaras Village became part of Mount Kelud and had fulfilled their request through rituals. The existence of mutual respect between humans and nature creates a benefit and harmony of nature.

The Symbol of Firecrackers as a Warning

Living alongside the nature requires the belief in various things and cautiousness. Nature does not respect humans with evil intentions and arrogance. It is proven after the New Year's Eve when many people from the city flocked for celebration at the top of Mount Kelud where rules regarding the sacredness and profanity obeyed by local community were violated by tourists no matter how beautiful the New Year's Eve celebration was.

The eruption, which occurred a few months after New Year's Eve, launched an eruption of fireworks which reminded to what people did on New Year's Eve. This shows that the natural life in Mount Kelud which is sacred cannot be combined with fun things or worldly. This is in line with Emile Durkheim's theory

(Mardiyarni, 2018) which states that sacred things cannot be touched by something mundane (profane). Fireworks as a profane form are absolutely contradictory to sacred things. According to Emile Durkheim's theory (Mustofa, 2020) profanity has the characteristics of not displaying sacred things or being part of everyday life that can be reasoned by human. This incident implied that God has His power to launch a bigger "firework" version of God's creation. Therefore, there is no reason that humans can be arrogant and proud. Learning from this experience, the regulations were reaffirmed prohibiting the celebration of New Year's Eve at the peak of Mount Kelud because it might lead to something that would affect many people.

Blessings in the Middle of Calamity

The material released every time in a volcanic eruption varies, from small to large rocks. The eruption also released fine material, for example, volcanic ash. Volcanic ash, which is often considered a nuisance to the community, especially causing respiratory problems,

actually contains useful materials. Volcanic ash content from the eruption of Mount Kelud contains high silica which can improve poor soil properties (Triputro, 2016). This affected the people of Sugihwaras Village, especially the farmers who experienced that the land affected by volcanic ash from the volcano will be more fertile, so that the pineapple plantations, which characterize the plantations on Mount Kelud also continue to thrive. The chemical element sulfur in volcanic ash can kill plant pests, kill caterpillars, and insects (Faridah, 2014).

According to Budiyanto (in Triputro, 2016) volcanic ash from Mount Kelud grained like clay with under 0,002 mm diameter and has a pointed end shape so as to increase the resilience of the soil in holding the load.

Besides being useful for farmers, Mount Kelud volcanic ash is also useful for building construction materials. The results of water absorption and compressive strength test showed that the volcanic ash of Mount Kelud can be used as a partial replacement for sand in bricks

manufacture due to its grain size showing high silica content (Khalis, 2016). In addition to containing high silica, it also consists of alumina, iron, and calcium, which can be used as a mixture or cement substitution material if lime (CaCO_3) is added.

The various examples above show that nature always provides benefits to the community in the midst of disaster. When taken and

D. Conclusion

Living side by side with nature is the duty of every human being who inhabits the earth. As the people of Sugihwaras who always treat nature as their "home", various requests are fulfilled to create harmony in life, and to be protected from various natural disasters. Thus, a lesson can be learned that there is nothing in human to be bragged about. When humans try to show their strengths, God can turn it upside down with something greater. Like a message in living the life, especially those in disaster-prone areas, "*Ojo wedi-wedi. Nanging ojo wani-wani.*" (Don't be scared, don't be too brave)

used wisely, nature's gift will lead to virtue. The harvest, that remains abundant in the midst of disaster, manifests the gratitude of the local community by holding the tradition of *Larung Sesaji* every first night of *Suro*. This reflects that human beings are a part of nature that must always be grateful for nature which brings blessings from God.

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