

Human-Nature Relationships in the *Maccera Tappareng* Tradition: An Ecocritical Analysis

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Abstract

This study explores the relationship between humans and nature in the Maccera Tappareng tradition of the Bugis community in Wajo Regency, South Sulawesi. Maccera Tappareng is part of the ancestral cultural heritage of the Bugis tribe, especially the Wajo community, which aims to purify the lake and ask for blessings. This research uses the theoretical framework of Literary Ecocriticism with data collection techniques in the form of observation and interviews. The results of interviews conducted using purposive sampling showed that Maccera Tappareng is not only a ritual but also a means of managing the Lake Tempe ecosystem in a sustainable manner. The Maccera Tappareng tradition contains ecological values, which include rules that must be obeyed by fishermen, such as the prohibition on destroying the ecosystem lakes and throwing rubbish in the waters. This shows that the Maccera Tappareng tradition plays a role in managing freshwater fisheries resources in a sustainable manner and strengthening social relations among fishing communities to preserve the environment in Lake Tempe. This study enriches our understanding of the Maccera Tappareng tradition, which is an example of the ecological wisdom of the Bugis community. The implications extend to understanding how to maintain a harmonious relationship between humans and nature, understanding the ecological values contained in the local cultural context as an effort to maintain environmental sustainability, and respecting the power of nature in everyday life.

Keywords: ecocriticism, Maccera Tappareng, ecological wisdom, Bugis community

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Introduction

In recent decades, humans' relationship with nature has increasingly become the focus of academics, practitioners and policy makers around the world (Abas et al., 2022; Mpofu, 2021). The ecological crisis caused by unlimited exploitation of natural resources has triggered climate change, loss of biodiversity and significant environmental degradation. In the midst of these global challenges, it is important to explore and preserve traditional practices that contain ecological values (Gandotra & Agrawal, 2020; Winslow, 2022). One tradition that attracts attention is Maccera Tappareng, a ritual of the Bugis community in South Sulawesi which emphasizes the close relationship between humans and aquatic ecosystems. This tradition is not only a symbol of cultural identity, but also reflects the principles of sustainability which can be valuable lessons in dealing with modern ecological issues (Rahman et al., 2019). South Sulawesi, especially the Bugis tribe, the place where the Maccera Tappareng tradition developed, is one of the areas with high biodiversity in Indonesia (Tabbu & Amrullah, 2022). However, data shows that this region faces serious threats to its aquatic ecosystem. Ministry of Environment and Forestry report, around 30% of the total water area in South Sulawesi experiences moderate to heavy pollution due to human activities such as agriculture, excessive fishing and coastal infrastructure development. At the same time, another report from the Global Mangrove Alliance noted a decline in the area of mangrove forests in this region by 18% in the last decade. This situation emphasizes the importance of studying and applying local wisdom as contained in the Maccera Tappareng tradition to preserve the environment while strengthening cultural identity. The Maccera Tappareng ritual, which literally means “purifying the lake,” is a form of respect for the water resources that have supported people's lives for centuries. However, modernization and globalization have threatened the sustainability of this tradition (Abas et al., 2022). Shifting cultural values among the younger generation as well as economic pressures that encourage the exploitation of natural resources are major challenges (Triadi & Ismoyo, 2022). Previous research by Nasir et al. (2022) shows that the younger generation of the Bugis tend to lack understanding of the symbolic meaning of Maccera Tappareng, which contributes to the weakening of this practice (Nasir et al., 2022). In addition, a study by Mustamin et al. (2016) revealed that the influence of foreign culture through digital media has caused a decline in interest in local traditions (Mustamin et al., 2016). On the other hand, research on Maccera Tappareng is still limited to cultural and anthropological perspectives, without in-depth analysis of its ecological contribution. For example, Nasir et al. (2022) explores these ritual values in the context of strengthening cultural identity, but does not link them to the principles of environmental sustainability (Nasir et al., 2022). This deficiency reflects the gap in the literature in integrating ecocritical approaches, namely studies that highlight the relationship between literature, culture, and the environment (Garrard, 2012; Glotfelty & Fromm, 1996). This approach is relevant for understanding how ecological values can be translated into practices that support environmental conservation. Most research on local traditions in Indonesia focuses on cultural and social aspects, but does not relate their findings to contemporary ecological challenges. The study by Maulana et al. (2023) on traditional rituals in East Java, for example, identified that such traditions have the potential to support environmental conservation, but the research does not provide sufficient empirical data to support this claim (Maulana et al., 2023). The same thing was found in Syamsuddin et al. (2023) research on the local wisdom of the coastal communities of Sulawesi. The qualitative approach used in this study yields rich insights into cultural values, but does not provide a framework for measuring the ecological impacts of these traditions (Syamsuddin et al., 2023). Moreover, most existing research tends to be descriptive in nature without developing practical solutions for integrating local traditions into environmental policy. For

example, the analysis of Yusuf and Sari (2021) regarding agricultural traditions in Kalimantan only touches on social aspects without discussing how these traditions can be applied to deal with modern problems such as climate change or decreasing water quality. Thus, there is an urgent need for research that combines in-depth analytical methods with practical approaches in supporting the preservation of local traditions (Yusuf & Sari, 2021). This research aims to answer the gap in the literature by analyzing the Maccera Tappareng tradition using Garrard's ecocritical approach. This approach will not only explore the ecological values contained in these traditions, but also explore how these values can be applied in the context of today's environmental challenges (Garrard, 2004). By integrating cultural and environmental analysis, this research is expected to provide a new perspective that goes beyond the limitations of previous research. This research will also use empirical data to evaluate the ecological impact of the Maccera Tappareng practice. This data will be collected through in-depth interviews with ritual practitioners, direct observation, and analysis of related documents. This approach is expected to make a significant contribution in linking local traditions with environmental sustainability strategies, as well as providing practical recommendations for involving local communities in preserving aquatic ecosystems.

Theoretically, this research is expected to enrich literature on the relationship between humans and nature in the context of local traditions. This research also makes an important contribution to the development of an ecocritical approach in cultural studies. Practically, the results of this research can be used by local governments, community organizations, and policy makers to design tradition preservation programs that are in line with environmental sustainability goals. Through in-depth exploration and an innovative analytical approach, this research will not only complement the limitations of previous studies, but also offer new insights that are relevant to facing today's ecological challenges. Thus, the Maccera Tappareng tradition can be recognized as a model of local wisdom that contributes to environmental preservation and sustainable development.

Literature Review

Maccera Tappareng Tradition

The Maccera Tappareng tradition in the Bugis tribe, especially around Lake Tempe in Wajo Regency, South Sulawesi, is a ritual that is closely related to preserving nature and the lives of fishermen. In Bugis language, "Maccera" means offering blood, and "Tappareng" refers to the lake. This ritual involves offering blood to the lake as a form of prayer for the safety of the fishermen and the hope of abundant fish catches. This tradition is not only a ceremony, but also a form of spiritual connection between humans and nature, where the Bugis people believe that lakes are places inhabited by spirits who must be respected and looked after in order to get good results in fishing activities (Syamsuddin et al., 2023). This ritual is carried out as a form of respect and protection for Lake Tempe, which has very important ecological and cultural values for the Bugis people. Blood offerings are carried out by slaughtering animals such as buffalo or cows which are then brought to the lake to be given as a form of gratitude and a request for salvation. The Maccera Tappareng procession is also a symbol of the sustainability of local traditions which reflect ecological values in people's lives. Apart from that, with this ritual, the Bugis people hope that nature will continue to provide prosperity, avoid disasters, and support the survival of fishermen (Khaidir, 2020). The Bugis people also believe that the Maccera Tappareng tradition helps maintain the balance of nature and is a form of local wisdom passed down from generation to generation. The adaptation process in this society shows the importance of ecological knowledge conveyed through

traditional rituals. This also reflects how local culture plays a role in preserving nature and protecting natural resources through norms that have existed for a long time. In Lake Tempe, this tradition is not only a religious ritual, but also a tool for maintaining environmental sustainability and social relations within the Bugis community (Syamsuddin et al., 2023). In modern developments, Maccera Tappareng is also seen as a way to strengthen Bugis cultural identity and become a cultural tourist attraction. The existence of this lake and tradition helps the community to preserve nature while developing a culture-based economic sector. However, the big challenge faced is environmental damage due to deforestation which threatens the sustainability of the lake. Therefore, the sustainability of this tradition is very dependent on nature conservation efforts that continue to be carried out by the community together with the government and related institutions (Rismanto et al., 2024).

Ecocriticism

The term “ecocriticism” was first used by William Rueckert in 1978 to describe the application of ecological principles in the analysis of literary works (Rueckert, 1978). This concept focuses on the relationship between literature and physical reality, and how the two influence each other (Garrard, 2004; Glotfelty & Fromm, 1996). An ecocritical approach to literature, especially folklore, legends and myths, can be a way to convey local wisdom contained in the culture of a society. This wisdom not only reflects the values adhered to, but also functions as a basis for preserving and protecting the environment, through norms that are not written but are recognized by certain groups (Dumenil, 2022; Faizah, 2024). In this context, oral literature is considered more than just narrative, but rather as a container that stores ecological knowledge that is used by local communities to maintain balance with the natural surroundings (Arianto et al., 2021; Rishma & Gill, 2024). Folklore that depicts humans' relationship with nature can create collective norms that support environmental conservation efforts (Akhter, 2024; Anwar, 2020). Local wisdom contained in oral literature is not only an intellectual heritage, but also a form of ecological knowledge that continues to be passed on from one generation to the next, through a continuous process of cultural adaptation (Bhattacharyya, 2022). Thus, ecocriticism in oral literature opens up insight into how ecological values can be integrated into everyday life.

The Relationship Between Humans and Nature From the Perspective of Local Traditions

The study of the relationship between humans and nature has become one of the main focuses in ecological and cultural studies (Glotfelty & Fromm, 1996). According to Bhattacharyya (2022), local traditions often reflect ecological principles that support sustainability. This tradition integrates environmental ethical values that are manifested through ritual practices, resource use, and ecosystem management (Bhattacharyya, 2022). Research by Thanakong and Kaowiwattanakul (2024) shows that indigenous traditions can play a role in preserving local ecosystems by reducing overexploitation and strengthening environmental awareness in local communities (Thanakong & Kaowiwattanakul, 2024). In the Indonesian context, Faizah (2024) analyze the representation of nature in the story Jagapati Bumi as a literary environmental study. The results of the analysis show that the myths in this book not only function as entertainment, but also as educational media that instill the values of environmental conservation (Faizah, 2024). This research is relevant as a comparison to examine how the Maccera Tappareng tradition plays a role in preserving aquatic ecosystems in South Sulawesi.

Previous Research on Maccera Tappareng

Research on the Maccera Tappareng tradition is relatively limited and mostly focuses on cultural and historical aspects. The study by Nasir et al. (2022) studied the symbolism in the Maccera Tappareng ritual, with an emphasis on the spiritual meaning and identity of the Bugis community. However, this research does not link this tradition to ecological issues or its potential for sustainability in facing modern challenges (Nasir et al., 2022). Meanwhile, analysis by Khaidir (2020) states that this tradition has ecological components, such as the use of local plants and the prohibition of fish exploitation during rituals (Khaidir, 2020). However, the research did not explore how these values can be applied in the context of environmental sustainability. This research identifies that the Maccera Tappareng tradition has the potential to become a model for culturally based environmental conservation, but no research has yet explored this potential in depth.

Methodology

This research uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive-analytical design. This approach was chosen because it aims to explore in depth the meaning, ecological values and cultural practices of the Maccera Tappareng tradition (Kogen, 2024; Leavy, 2017). This research also adopts an ecocritical framework to connect the cultural and ecological aspects contained in this tradition. This research was conducted in the coastal area of Wajo Regency, South Sulawesi, which is one of the centers for implementing the Maccera Tappareng tradition. This region was chosen because it still practices this tradition actively, even though it is facing modernization pressures. Research participants consisted of local traditional leaders (5 people): Individuals who lead the Maccera Tappareng ritual and have in-depth knowledge of traditional values. Local community members (10 people): Representation of different age groups (older generation, adults and youth) to identify different perspectives on traditions. Environmental observers (3 people): Experts or practitioners who have knowledge of ecological conditions and the relevance of this tradition to environmental conservation. The participant selection technique used purposive sampling with the criteria of direct involvement in traditions and the ability to provide relevant information (Maxwell, 1996). The research instruments used in this study include a semi-structured interview guide, a checklist for observation, and documentation based on Garrard's eco-critical framework (Garrard, 2012). Data for this study were collected using a combination of methods to ensure validity and triangulation of results (Creswell, 2009). Participatory observation involved the researcher engaging directly in the Maccera Tappareng ritual to understand the interaction between the community and the environment, focusing on ecological symbols, local resource utilization, and human interactions with the aquatic ecosystem. Additionally, documentary analysis was used to examine written records, photos, and traditional archives related to the ritual, alongside literature on local traditions and ecological data from government sources.

For data analysis, the study followed Leavy (2017) three-step process. First, data reduction involved summarizing, simplifying, and focusing on aspects relevant to the research objectives. Transcripts were reviewed, and key themes were identified. Second, the reduced data were presented through narratives, tables, and conceptual maps to illustrate the relationships between elements of the Maccera Tappareng tradition and its ecological values. Lastly, conclusions were drawn and verified by comparing data across sources to ensure consistency and validity, with an in-depth analysis of emerging themes based on eco-critical theory (Leavy, 2017).

Results and Discussions

Results

This research explores the relationship between humans and nature in the Maccera Tappareng tradition through analysis based on Greg Garrard's six ecocritical indicators: wilderness, pastoral, apocalypse, dwelling, animism, and ecocentrism. Below are the main findings expressed in detail according to these indicators (Garrard, 2012).

Wilderness: Nature as a Sacred Entity

The wilderness indicator reflects society's view of wild nature as a space that must be respected. In the Maccera Tappareng tradition, the lake Tempe as the main location of the ritual is treated very sacredly. The Bugis people believe that lakes have spiritual entities that must be respected, so any action that disturbs the balance of the ecosystem can invite disaster. For example, before starting the ritual, people usually perform a special prayer led by Sanro (traditional leader) to ask for permission and protection from the lake's guardian spirit. Offerings in the form of local produce such as rice, fish and coconut are provided as a symbol of respect for nature.

Pastoral: Living in Harmony With Nature

Pastoral indicators describe the relationship between humans and nature in simple harmony. In the context of Maccera Tappareng, the Bugis community shows a pattern of interaction that combines human needs and environmental sustainability. For example, the use of natural materials such as bamboo to make *Lawasuji*, a type of bamboo fence in the shape of a rhombus made of woven bamboo that functions to store food / offerings during rituals. *Addudupa-dupang* (incense), Incense is believed by the Bugis community as the main tool in carrying out a tradition, both oral and written traditions. *Lopi-lopi* (boat) which comes from the Bugis language which means boat, is used to transport offerings, ritual leaders or *maccua pakkaja*, and the community who carry it out, all of which are transported to a special location where the maccera tappareng is held which is believed by the surrounding community to be a sacred and sacred place. The flag, which is used as a sign that the surrounding community has carried out the Maccera Tappareng tradition. This tradition encourages a mindset that supports nature conservation while meeting daily needs in a way that does not damage the environment.

Apocalypse: The Ecological Threat That Lurks

Apocalypse indicators reflect the threat of ecological damage caused by human activities. In the Maccera Tappareng tradition, there is concern that modernization can damage the ecosystem and eliminate traditional values. For example, economic pressures have fueled overfishing with destructive gear, such as large trawl nets, that do not adhere to the principles of fish selection based on size and type. This not only threatens the sustainability of fish in the lake Tempe but also violates traditional norms that have been passed down. In addition, water pollution is a real threat to the lake where the ritual takes place. Domestic waste from *Bola Mawang* settlements around the lake, such as plastic and detergent, has changed the water quality. Many respondents stated that the presence of pollution reduces the sacredness of ritual sites, and this makes the Maccera Tappareng tradition face major challenges to remain relevant and effective in preserving the ecosystem.

Dwelling: Human Connectivity and Housing

In the Maccera Tappareng tradition, the lake is not only a place for rituals but also a source of life for the Bugis people, who depend on fishing and irrigation. This ritual reminds people of the importance of maintaining the lake as an integral part of their living space. For example, during the dry season, people use lake water to irrigate rice fields, but they still comply with traditional rules not to drain the water excessively.

Animism: Belief in Life in Nature

Animism indicators reflect the belief that every natural element has a spirit or life. In the context of Maccera Tappareng, the Bugis people believe that the lake *Tempe* has a spiritual “guardian” who is called by a certain name. This belief makes them very careful in interacting with the lake. For example, there are restrictions on using chemicals or cutting certain plants around the lake without ritual permission. Animist practices are also seen in the special prayers recited during Maccera Tappareng. This prayer is addressed to the guardian spirit of the lake to ask for blessings, protection and continuity of life for the community. This shows that humans' relationship with nature is not only material but also spiritual, where every action towards nature is carried out with awareness of the existence of non-human entities within it.

Ecocentrism: Sustainability as Main Focus

In the Maccera Tappareng tradition, the Bugis community has local wisdom that upholds environmental sustainability. For example, during the ritual, they only catch fish that are suitable for harvest, while small fish or those deemed “not yet ready” are released back into the lake. This practice shows a deep understanding of natural resource regeneration. Ecocentric values are also visible in education for the younger generation. Children are invited to participate in the ritual with the aim of introducing them to the values of sustainability. For example, children are taught how to make offerings from local ingredients such as coconut or banana, while also being given an understanding of the importance of protecting the lake ecosystem. This shows that the Maccera Tappareng tradition not only functions as a traditional ceremony but also as a tool for cross-generational ecological education.

Discussions

The Relevance of Ecocriticism in the Local Tradition of Maccera Tappareng

The results of this research confirm that the Maccera Tappareng tradition is not just a traditional ritual, but a real manifestation of the relationship between humans and nature in Bugis culture. Findings regarding the concept of lake sacredness (wilderness) show a deep respect for nature as an entity that goes beyond its ecological function. These results are in line with the views of Garrard (2004) who emphasizes that wilderness is the core of environmental sustainability because people understand nature as part of their spirituality. Thus, this tradition enriches discussions in ecocriticism about how local culture can contribute to environmental conservation through an approach based on traditional values (Garrard, 2004).

Ecological Harmony and Local Adaptation

Pastoral indicators in this tradition reflect harmony between humans and nature, where the material needs of society do not damage the ecosystem. Local wisdom such as restrictions on modern fishing gear is proof that the Bugis community has a sustainability-based adaptation mechanism to the environment. These findings are in line with research by Alvi et al. (2019) who stated that traditional communities have a local ecological knowledge system which functions to maintain natural balance (Alvi et al., 2019). Thus, the Maccera Tappareng tradition can be a model in developing a community-based approach to environmental conservation.

Ecological Challenges Due to Modernization

Discussions regarding apocalypse indicators reveal that modernization and unsustainable economic practices are a real threat to the lake ecosystem which is the center of this tradition. The findings regarding pollution and overfishing in the lake are in line with research by Rishma and Gill (2021), which shows that economic pressures often push local communities to abandon sustainable practices. Therefore, it is important to integrate modern policies that support conservation while still considering traditional values as the basis for regulations (Rishma & Gill, 2024).

Spirituality and Human Relationship With Nature

Findings about dwelling and animism highlight the connection between humans, dwelling, and spirituality. Belief in a spiritual entity that protects the lake provides an ethical basis for the Bugis people to protect their environment. This supports the argument of Mwale and Yahya who emphasize that spiritual values are often the main motivation for environmental conservation in indigenous communities (Mwale, 2023; Yahya et al., 2012). In this context, Maccera Tappareng provides an example of how spirituality can be the main catalyst for changing human behavior towards the environment.

Educational Value in Local Traditions

This tradition also shows that cross-generational education plays an important role in maintaining sustainable values. The findings regarding children's participation in rituals reflect the process of inheriting ecological values, which is in line with Murti (2019) views on the importance of experience-based education to create critical consciousness (Murti, 2019). Thus, the Maccera Tappareng tradition can be adopted as an inspiration for integrating environmental education into the formal curriculum in the region.

Theoretical and Practical Contributions

This research fills the gap in ecocritical studies which previously tended to ignore the role of local traditions in supporting ecological sustainability. Previous studies focused on literature and art, while this research shifts attention to direct cultural practices. By connecting Garrard's ecocritical indicators with local traditions, this research expands the scope of ecocriticism into the realm of anthropology and culture (Garrard, 2012). Theoretically, this research provides evidence that the concept of ecocriticism can be applied to analyze local culture, expanding its relevance beyond literary studies (Arseniev, 2021; Mu & Ma, 2024). Practically, the Maccera Tappareng tradition can be an inspiration in designing culture-based

environmental policies, especially in regions with a high level of cultural plurality such as Indonesia. This research also highlights the need for collaboration between government, indigenous communities and academics in creating a holistic approach to environmental conservation based on local wisdom. This discussion shows how Maccera Tappareng is able to answer research questions by providing evidence that this tradition not only maintains cultural values, but also makes a real contribution to environmental preservation amidst the challenges of modernization.

Conclusions

This research shows that the Maccera Tappareng tradition is a real representation of the meaningful relationship between humans and nature, as analyzed through Garrard's ecocritical indicators. This tradition combines elements of spirituality, ecological harmony and intergenerational education to create a model of environmental sustainability based on local culture. The findings show that the Bugis people view the lake *Tempe* as a symbol of sacredness (wilderness), a place that not only provides material benefits but also high spiritual value. This tradition also promotes ecological (pastoral) harmony through practices that limit overexploitation of natural resources. However, modernization and environmental challenges such as pollution and overfishing threaten the continuity of the values contained in this tradition. This reflects the relevance of the apocalypse indicator, where threats to the ecosystem also test the resilience of local culture in facing changing times. Overall, this research emphasizes the importance of involving cultural perspectives in the study of ecocriticism and environmental conservation.

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