

# Environmental Elements in Bugis Agricultural Mantras: An Ecocritical Study

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**Abstract:** Agricultural mantras in Bugis society that are passed down orally between generations provide strong evidence of the interrelationship between humans, nature and spirituality in agrarian life. Bugis mantras contain various representations of ecosystem elements that reflect human relationships with nature and belief in supernatural powers. The purpose of this study is to identify and analyse environmental elements in Bugis agricultural mantras. The method used in the study includes a qualitative descriptive approach with an ecocritical approach that includes tracing the environmental elements contained in the mantras. The findings of this study show that there are five environmental elements in the Bugis community's agricultural mantras, namely rice, paddy fields, sun, wind, and rain. The environmental elements reflected in the Bugis people's agricultural mantras have symbolic meanings that illustrate the connection between humans, nature, and God.

**Keywords:** Agricultural mantra; Bugis; environmental elements; ecocriticism

## 1 Introduction

The environment is the various elements of life that exist on earth that are interconnected, interacting, and influencing each other consisting of biotic and abiotic components [1]. Biotic and abiotic environmental elements have very important properties for the sustainability of life. The existence and interaction between environmental elements can create mutual prosperity. Damage or loss of one element can disrupt the environmental balance and have a negative impact on the environment in a sustainable manner [2].

Environmental balance has long been embedded in the local wisdom of various cultures in the world, including through oral literature such as mantras [3]. Mantras, as part of the oral tradition, contain messages through natural symbols about respect for nature and the importance of maintaining harmonious relationships between humans and their environment. Mantras in the agricultural tradition contain requests to the forces of nature to provide good harvests, as well as thanksgiving for the blessings of nature that have been given [4]. Mantras implicitly provide an understanding that humans depend on nature and human welfare is closely related to environmental sustainability. This shows that humans are not seen as the rulers of nature, but as part of the ecosystem that must live in harmony with nature [5]. Thus, mantras not only function as spiritual expressions, but also as a medium to instil the values of environmental conservation and ecological ethics.

The Bugis people, who inhabit a large part of South Sulawesi, are known for their diverse oral literature. Bugis oral literature covers a wide range of genres, from the heroic epic *I La Galigo* to legends, myths, rhymes, proverbs, pappaseng, folk songs, and mantras that demonstrate the complexity of the culture [6]. Mantras as a form of oral literature play a crucial role in the Bugis agricultural tradition and are believed to have the power to ensure agricultural success. Apart from having a practical function in agriculture, mantras as a type of oral literature in the form of poetry also have aesthetic value and beauty of language [7]. This is shown through the use of rhyme, rhythm, and diction that is diverse and beautiful.

Mantras as a form of oral literature often contain diction or word choices that reflect environmental elements. The diction does not only function as language beauty, but also contains cultural meanings related to people's understanding of nature and their interaction with nature [4]. The choice of words used in mantras is not just to create language beauty or fulfil aesthetic demands, but also functions as a symbol of human relationships with nature. Each word contained in the mantra has a double dimension, namely, a cultural dimension that reflects the values and worldview of the local community, as well as an ecological dimension that describes the way people understand and respond to their natural environment.

In the cultural dimension, the diction used in the mantra contains moral messages or teachings that emphasise the importance of maintaining the balance of nature. Mantras teach that humans must act as an integral part of the ecosystem that must support each other and not overexploit nature. Therefore, mantras not only function as a medium of spiritual communication, but also as a means of ecological education that transmits the values of sustainability, respect for nature, and preservation of natural resources for future generations [8]. This is in line with research conducted by Ariyani dan Bahardur which shows that oral literature can be a source of ecological knowledge [9], [10]. Based on the above explanation, this study aims to analyse and identify how environmental elements are represented in the agricultural mantras of the Bugis community.

## **2 Research Method**

Creswell explains that research methods are research plans and procedures that include steps ranging from broad assumptions to detailed methods of collecting, analysing and interpreting data [11]. The method used in this research is descriptive qualitative. Qualitative descriptive research serves to identify what exists in the social world and how it manifests itself [12]. The data of this research are qualitative data in the form of sentences of Bugis community agricultural mantras. The data collection techniques used in this research are interviews, and observations. Furthermore, the collected data were analysed using interactive data analysis techniques. The interactive data analysis technique uses three components of data analysis, namely data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing [13].

## **3 Result And Discussion**

### **3.1 Ecocritical approach in mantra studies**

Ecocriticism is an interdisciplinary approach in literary studies that explores the reciprocal relationship between literature and the physical environment [14], [15]. Ecocriticism can be a medium to understand the relationship between humans and the environment and culture

[16]. Garrard outlines three methods of in-depth literary ecological analysis to understand the representation of the environment in literary works, namely (1) Involving the tracing and description of ecological elements that appear in literary texts, including fauna, flora, rivers, geological formations, and other aspects of the environment; (2) uncovering the pastoral dimension contained in literary works, which includes images of charming rural nature and harmonious relationships between species; and (3) Identifying environmental degradation depicted in literary works, which refers to the impact of natural imbalances such as pollution, floods, and forest fires [15]. In this study, the ecocritical approach provides an analytical framework to reveal the elements of the environment represented and depicted in Bugis agricultural mantras.

The environment consists of several components, including biotic, abiotic, and cultural elements [10], [17]. The biotic component includes all living organisms, such as producers (plants), consumers (herbivores, carnivores, omnivores), decomposers, and detritivores. Abiotic components include physical and chemical factors, such as temperature, sunlight, water, soil, air, topography and climate. Both components interact and influence each other. This interaction creates the balance and sustainability of the ecosystem.

### 3.2 Bugis rice field farming mantras

The Bugis community's wetland farming mantras are not just a series of magical words, but a system of knowledge that combines ecological, spiritual and social aspects. They serve a variety of functions, from invoking fertility, protection for crops, to organising farming procedures in harmony with nature. Bugis agricultural mantras contain valuable local ecological knowledge, such as the power of nature in maintaining the balance of the rice field ecosystem.

In the midst of the current challenges of environmental degradation and climate change, the local wisdom contained in the Bugis community's rice field farming mantras is very relevant to provide ecological understanding of the community ecological understanding. The following are the Bugis community's rice field farming mantras that are chanted in every agricultural ritual:

#### Mantra to start growing rice

*Assalamualaikum*

*Pungallataala pancajiko ase, iyanci aseng tonging-tongengmu pole ri Puangallataala,  
Nabi Muhammad taroko, Ali monroakko, Abu Bakkarang maddojaiko, Jibril malitutuiko  
muangka tuo salama na muriaseng Sanging Serri*

*Pasicocokangnga pallae na cakkewe pancajiangnga pabuura palla assoe nannie bosie  
uwala pabbura ri aseku.*

*Allahuma shalli wa sallim alaa sayidinaa Muhammadin wa ala ali sayidina Muhammad.  
Pasiduppa laloka assek karesokku na ta pabbarakkangnga angka ku panreangi ri wijakku  
na angka ku akkigunangi ri agamata*

(O paddy, Allah has created you. Your real name is Iyanci, a gift from Allah. Prophet Muhammad kept you, Ali guarded you, Abu Bakr stayed up all night, and Jibril watched over you. Because of this, you lived safely and were given the name Sanging Serri.

May heat and cold always be in balance. Make sunlight a source of strength and rain a coolant for my paddy."  
'O paddy, may my hard work in planting and tending you be blessed by Allah Swt, so that I can feed my children and fulfil my needs)

### **Rice harvesting mantra**

*Astagfirullah 3X*

*Iko ase ku libuko kua bulu kua tanete na musipulung manang mai pole mattulili anno  
iyawa galunna (pemilik sawah)na saba meloko ipammulang iya assoe.  
Nabi Muhammad taroko Puangallataala makkattaniko takkurang.*

(O heaping and towering rice, I surround you. May all the grains in this rice field (mention the name of the owner of the field) be gathered at harvest time. The Prophet Muhammad guards you, and Allah Swt nurtures you, so that the harvest is abundant.)

## **3.3 Environmental elements in Bugis people's agricultural mantras**

The agricultural mantra above reflects the local wisdom knowledge of the Bugis people. The mantra is not just a series of words, but a form of interaction with the surrounding environment. The Bugis believe that every element of the environment plays an important role and needs to be kept in balance for a bountiful harvest. The Bugis ask for permission and blessings from the forces of nature and for protection from pests and diseases through agricultural mantras. The mantra implies acknowledgement of the power of nature and respect for the various elements that play a role in successful farming. These elements include rice, rainwater, sun, heat and cold.

### **3.3.1 Rice**

Rice is seen as a source of life and prosperity that brings blessings so it deserves to be protected through physical and non-physical actions. Physical actions are carried out by applying fertiliser or protecting from pests. Non-physical actions are taken by chanting prayers and wishes as in the mantra above. Paddy or *Sanging Serri* in Bugis culture is represented not just as a food crop, but as an entity with a sacred position and spiritual value. Humans value rice as a part of nature that is essential for survival, not only from a material aspect but also a spiritual one.

Rice is an element of the biotic environment from an ecological perspective. Rice as a food crop is highly dependent on environmental factors such as water, soil, temperature, and sunlight that require special conditions to thrive [17]. Rice plants have a reciprocal relationship with microorganisms in the soil that help the decomposition process and return nutrients to the soil [17]. Therefore, the mantra that mentions rice as a living being blessed and guarded by spiritual forces signifies the symbiotic relationship between humans and nature that must be maintained for survival.

### **3.3.2 Rain**

Rain, which is represented in the mantra above as a cooler, is believed to fertilise the land, provide nutrients needed by plants, and play an important role in ensuring a bountiful harvest. Rain in Bugis culture is represented as an important element that brings blessings and ensures soil fertility and community welfare. Rain is a manifestation of God's life-giving grace. Rain as an abiotic natural element provides water for plants such as rice [17].

In the spiritual dimension, rain is regarded as a sign of God's favour that is requested through prayer, to fall at the right time and in sufficient quantity to maintain the balance of nature. In addition, rain is also seen as a link between humans and nature, creating the harmony necessary in agricultural ecosystems. Rain is often seen as a symbol of blessings that bring life, but can also be a threat if it falls in excess or out of time, as in the case of floods or droughts. Therefore, in Bugis culture, rain has always taken centre stage in the prayers of the community, who hope that it will bring goodness and protection to their farms, ensuring balance and survival in agriculture.

### **3.3.3 Sun**

The element of the sun in the above mantra is an abiotic element represented as a symbol of life force, fertility, and an important source of energy in the agricultural cycle [17]. The sun is often associated with natural forces that influence plant growth and bountiful harvests. In the mantra above, the sun is described as the giver of light and heat necessary for the photosynthesis process of plants [17].

The sun in Bugis culture is likened to a masculine force in Bugis cosmology, where the balance between the masculine element (sun) and the feminine element (earth) is important to maintain the fertility of the land [18]. The representation of the sun in mantras is linked to prayers or requests to nature for the weather to support the farming process in order to get enough sunlight to avoid crop failure. The symbolisation of the sun in the mantra appears as an expression of asking for the harmony of nature, so that the sunlight that comes provides positive energy, not causing drought. Thus, the sun element in the mantra is a manifestation of the community's hope for sustainability and success in farming, associating the sun with blessings and prosperity.

### **3.3.4 Heat temperature**

The mantra above that mentions may the heat and cold always be balanced represents the recognition of the importance of heat as one of the elements that are important in life, especially rice which depends on certain temperatures to grow optimally. Heat in an ecological perspective is an abiotic element that functions as one of the factors that support photosynthesis to produce energy from sunlight [17]. Enough heat provides a stimulus for plants to multiply and grow.

The mantra above shows the role of heat in supporting plant growth cycles, and emphasises the symbiotic relationship between humans and nature. The element of heat can be interpreted as a symbol of resilience and adaptation to environmental conditions. The hope chanted in the mantra that the hot temperature remains balanced with the cold implies that the environment can continue to support the stability of weather patterns. Thus, the element of heat in agricultural mantras teaches the importance of natural balance, ecological awareness, and the need to maintain a harmonious symbiotic relationship between humans and the environment to ensure sustainable survival.

### **3.3.5 Cold temperature**

The cold temperature in the mantra above represents the ecological balance required in the agricultural life cycle. The expression in the mantra that mentions that heat and cold are always in balance shows recognition of the role of cold temperatures in supporting soil fertility and plant growth processes. Cold temperature in an ecological perspective is an abiotic element

that can affect various important aspects of plant life [17]. Plants such as rice require lower temperatures at certain times in the life cycle, especially at night. Cool temperatures at night help maintain the balance of plant body temperature to prevent excessive water evaporation, as well as provide suitable conditions during the photosynthesis process during the day.

The cold temperature in the agricultural mantra above functions as a counterweight to the hot temperature, illustrating the importance of harmony in nature. The cold temperature acts as a counterweight to the hot temperature during the day, creating a temperature cycle that supports the survival of plants. The representation of cold temperatures in agricultural mantras is not just a plea for better weather but also an acknowledgement of the contribution of temperature in maintaining the balance of agricultural ecosystems. The mantra above illustrates the ecological awareness that humans not only pray for the success of their agriculture, but also to expect a balance between the various natural elements that make up a sustainable agricultural ecosystem.

#### **4 Conclusion**

The ecocritical approach used in this research reveals the representation of environmental elements and ecological meanings in the Bugis community's rice field agricultural mantras. The agricultural mantras of the Bugis community are not merely magical utterances, but a knowledge system that combines ecological, spiritual and social aspects that reflect local wisdom in maintaining balance and harmony with nature. The analysis shows that Bugis agricultural mantras contain environmental elements such as biotic and abiotic elements. Rice, as a biotic element, is represented as a source of life, a symbol of blessing, and a sacred entity that needs to be preserved. Meanwhile, abiotic elements such as rain, sun, heat and cold each have a role to play in the agricultural cycle and the balance of the ecosystem. Rain is symbolised as a carrier of fertility, the sun as a source of energy, hot temperatures support photosynthesis, and cold temperatures maintain ecological balance.

This research reveals that Bugis agricultural mantras reflect valuable local ecological knowledge, such as the importance of maintaining ecosystem balance, valuing each element of nature, and understanding the interrelationship between humans and the environment. Local wisdom is relevant amidst the current challenges of environmental degradation and climate change and can be a source of inspiration for developing sustainable agricultural strategies. In addition, this research also contributes to the preservation of cultures such as oral literature, especially mantras. Thus, this study makes an important contribution to understanding the local wisdom of the Bugis people and through ecocritical analysis, the mantra of sawah farming is not only seen as a literary text, but also as a reflection of the harmonious relationship between humans and nature that needs to be preserved.

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