

# TELAGA BURET AS AN ECOLOGICAL LANDSCAPE IN THE ORAL LITERATURE OF TULUNGAGUNG

*(Telaga Buret sebagai Lanskap Ekologis dalam Sastra Lisan Tulungagung)*

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**Abstract:** *This study argues that the oral narrative of Telaga Buret functions as an ecological landscape with symbolic meanings central to the Tulungagung community's relationship to nature. By exploring how water in the narrative embodies both cultural values and ecological wisdom, the research reveals a cosmological worldview that ties the community to environmental stewardship. Employing a qualitative approach and narrative analysis, the study collected oral accounts from local informants, transcribed the stories, and analyzed symbolic elements related to ecological ethics. The findings show that Telaga Buret is seen not merely as a geographical site but as a spiritual space respected, preserved, and deeply connected with customary values. In the narrative, water symbolizes purity, life, and balance, reinforcing the community's ecological awareness and sense of moral responsibility toward nature. The results underscore the urgency of revitalizing such oral traditions to promote culture-based environmental preservation and to develop ecological education rooted in local wisdom.*

**Keywords:** *Ecological Awareness; Ecological Landscape; Oral Tradition; Symbolic Meaning; Telaga Buret*

## A. INTRODUCTION

Oral literature constitutes a significant cultural legacy, functioning not only as a medium for storytelling and moral instruction but also as a reflection of the complex relationship between communities and their environment. Folktales, myths, and legends enable societies to articulate cosmological perspectives and transmit ecological knowledge across generations. In the context of contemporary global ecological crises, these narratives are particularly valuable because they preserve environmental ethics and indigenous values.

The ecocritical perspective provides an important framework for examining these texts. (Garrard, 2012) emphasizes that ecocriticism connects literature with ecological consciousness, while (Zapf, 2016) highlights its role in cultural ecology, and (Oppermann, S., Iovino, S., & Estok, 2017) stress its importance in the Anthropocene era. Recent Indonesian studies further confirm the ecological dimension of oral traditions. For instance, (Helida et al., 2021) identifies ecological symbolism in the Lae Angkat folktale of North Sumatra (Oppermann, S., Iovino, S., & Estok, 2017), (Dhiya R & Indrastuti, 2022) reveal reciprocal human–nature relations in Rejang narratives, and (Ibrahim & Saputra, 2024) notes ecological awareness in Moi oral literature of Papua. More recent works, on Exploitation of Nature from a Literary Perspective: A Literary Ecological Study

of Royyan Julian's Novel "Tiang Garam" and Its Implications for Environmental Literacy Education (Rahman & Cindi, 2024) and Umsyani & Saguni (2021) on Human Relations with Ecological Wisdom Values in the Oral Literature of Bugis Mantra Society: Glotfelty's Ecocritical Study

Within this scholarly context, the present study focuses on the oral narrative of Telaga Buret in Tulungagung. The lake is not merely a geographical site but an ecological landscape imbued with symbolic and spiritual meaning. Water, in particular, is represented as a symbol of purity, life, and cosmological balance. The main problem addressed in this study is how the symbolism of water in the Telaga Buret narrative reflects ecological values relevant to environmental education based on local wisdom. Using an ecocritical approach, the study aims to (1) identify the symbolism of water in the narrative, (2) describe the ecological and ethical values it conveys, and (3) explain its relevance for the revitalization of local culture in environmental education.

## ***B. METHOD***

### **1. Research Design**

This study used a qualitative descriptive method with an ecocritical approach. The qualitative design was chosen to interpret symbolic meanings and ecological values in the oral tradition of Telaga Buret. The ecocritical framework, as stated by (Garrard, 2012) and (Zapf, 2016) was employed to analyze the representation of nature—particularly water—and its ethical implications within the narrative.

### **2. Data Sources**

The primary data were obtained from oral versions of the Telaga Buret story collected from local storytellers and cultural custodians in Tulungagung. Secondary data included folklore anthologies, written documents, and previous studies related to oral literature and ecocriticism.

### **3. Data Collection Techniques**

Data collection was carried out through:

- a) In-depth interviews with community elders and cultural informants to gather oral renditions of the story;
- b) Participant observation in community activities surrounding Telaga Buret to understand the living tradition and ecological practices;
- c) Document review of written sources supporting the oral accounts.

#### 4. Data Analysis

The analysis followed the interactive model of Miles et al. (2018) consisting of:

- a) Data condensation, by transcribing oral narratives and coding them into thematic categories;
- b) Data display, by organizing ecological symbols and ethical values found in the narrative;
- c) Conclusion drawing, by interpreting the significance of water symbolism and ecological ethics in relation to cultural-based environmental education.

#### 5. Validity of Data

Data validity was ensured through source triangulation by cross-checking oral accounts with written references, and member checking with key informants to confirm interpretations.

### C. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### 1. Telaga Buret in the Oral Tradition of Tulungagung

The existence of Telaga Buret has been strongly preserved in the oral narratives of Tulungagung, particularly in the Mataraman cultural sphere. The lake frequently appears in myths, legends, and folktales, functioning as both a geographical site and a symbolic representation of the sacred. In the myth of its origin, for instance, Telaga Buret is narrated as the result of divine intervention, symbolizing the interconnection between humans and supernatural forces Umsyani & Saguni (2021). Such narratives not only explain the origin of the lake but also establish a cultural framework that positions the lake as a sacred ecological landscape.

#### 2. Ecological Dimensions Reflected in Oral Literature

The ecological significance of Telaga Buret is consistently embedded in its oral narratives. Myths describe the lake as a source of life that sustains biodiversity, while legends recount guardian spirits associated with flora and fauna, reinforcing the cultural necessity of preservation (Trijono, 2022). These stories reflect indigenous ecological knowledge, in which narrative prohibitions or taboos function to regulate the community's interaction with the environment. By presenting the lake as a protected space, oral traditions encode environmental wisdom that emphasizes sustainable use of natural resources (Asiyah, 2017)

**Tabel 1.** Forms of Oral Literature Related to Telaga Buret

Form of Oral Literature	Main Narrative Theme	Ecological Value
Myth	Origin of Telaga Buret	Sacred water as a life source
Legend	Guardian spirit of the lake	Protection of biodiversity
Folktale	Human interaction with the lake	Ethical use of natural resources

As shown in Table 1, the oral tradition of Telaga Buret encompasses myths, legends, and folktales, each emphasizing ecological messages. Myths highlight sacred water, legends introduce protective spirits, and folktales focus on ethical human–nature relationships.

### **3. Socio-Cultural Functions of Telaga Buret**

Beyond ecology, oral traditions of Telaga Buret serve vital socio-cultural functions. The lake is central to ritual practices such as slametan or communal offerings, which are believed to maintain harmony between human beings, spirits, and nature. Oral narratives embed prohibitions, such as refraining from exploiting the lake irresponsibly, thereby aligning ecological preservation with cultural taboos (Andriani, 2025). Such practices demonstrate how oral literature operates not only as storytelling but also as a cultural code that governs human behavior and collective identity.

### **4. Oral Literature as a Framework for Environmental Ethics**

Telaga Buret’s oral literature illustrates how environmental ethics can be transmitted intergenerationally through narratives. Stories of divine punishment for environmental violations serve as deterrents against unsustainable exploitation (Trijono, 2022). In this sense, oral literature becomes a form of ecological pedagogy, instilling ethical responsibility in preserving natural resources. Unlike written regulations, oral traditions have strong persuasive power because they are rooted in cultural belief systems and shared memory.

### **5. Revitalization and Contemporary Relevance**

In the context of modernization, oral literature related to Telaga Buret faces the risk of marginalization. Digital documentation and revitalization programs are therefore necessary to preserve both the ecological and cultural values embedded in these narratives (Tim, 2023). Recent research demonstrates that digitized folklore can function as an accessible medium for ecological education and heritage preservation simultaneously (Rizam & Ayuanita, 2024).

## **D. CONCLUSION**

This study examines Telaga Buret as an ecological landscape integral to the oral literature of Tulungagung. Myths, legends, and folktales associated with the lake reveal a local worldview that fuses environmental ethics with cultural identity. These oral traditions transmit ecological knowledge by underscoring respect for natural resources, the sanctity of the lake’s ecosystem, and the necessity of sustaining harmony between humans and nature. The findings demonstrate that oral literature serves as a medium of cultural transmission and provides an indigenous framework for ecological stewardship. Recognizing the ecological values embedded in these narratives can inform contemporary environmental education and related initiatives. Consequently, documenting and revitalizing these oral traditions in digital formats is essential for maintaining cultural

heritage and promoting sustainable environmental practices. In conclusion, Telaga Buret embodies a cultural landscape where ecological and cultural dimensions are intertwined. Strengthening the role of oral literature as a repository of environmental knowledge can contribute meaningfully to fostering local environmental awareness and supporting broader sustainability efforts.

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