

# Deforestation in Indonesian and Malaysian Novels: When Wild Forests are Destroyed by Anthropocentrism

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## ABSTRACT

Anthropocentrism is one of the perspectives applied in figuring out human relations with the environment. The environmental crisis happening in most areas of the world lately is allegedly the impact of anthropocentrism. One of the environmental crises which hit the world today is deforestation. This study aims at examining the issue of deforestation described in Indonesian and Malaysian novels. The method applied is a comparative qualitative descriptive with an ecocritical perspective. As data sources, two Indonesian novels and two Malaysian novels were selected: *Api Awan Asap [Smoke Cloud Fire]* and *Tanah Tabu [Taboo Land]* (Thayf) (Indonesian novels), *Penunggu Rimba: Tombiruo [Guardians of the Jungle: Tombiruo]* and *Anak Belantara [The Children of the Wilderness]* (Malaysian novels). From an ecocritical perspective, the results of the study show that in the novels studied, it appears that there is an issue of deforestation in Indonesia and Malaysia which has resulted in various other environmental problems.

**Keywords:** Anthropocentrism; deforestation; ecocriticism; green novel; wild forest.

## INTRODUCTION

As tropical countries which are geographically situated in the same landform, Indonesia and Malaysia can be viewed to face the same environmental problems, namely deforestation, forest fire, smog, and pollution including water, soil, and air pollution (Fashikhah, et al., 2018, p.31; Chris, 2013, p.18; Jaafar, et.al., 2020, p. 3). Deforestation in Indonesia and Malaysia continues to expand every year (Perbet, et al., 2019, p.1; Litvinoff & Griffiths, ed., 2014, p. 30; Aisyah, et.al., 2015, p. 3; Jaafar, et.al., 2020, p.3). A report from Forest Watch Indonesia (FWI) (2018) states that the high rate of deforestation in Indonesia in the 1990s could not be separated from the development of the timber industry. In 1994 timber and wood products generated about US\$ 5.5 billion of Indonesia's export revenues, approximately 15% of total export revenues (Sunderlin & Resosudarmo, 1997). During the timber industry development, there has been a large increase in the amount and rate of forest loss in Indonesia. A 1990 FAO study showed that the country's forest areas had declined from 74% to 56% over a period of 30-40 years (Sunderlin & Resosudarmo, 1997, p.1). FWI also stated that in the 2009-2013 period, 1.13 million hectares of Indonesian forests were lost annually (Barri et al., 2018, p.18).

The indistinguishable condition also occurs in Malaysia. Based on data reported by Malaysian representatives at the International Workshop on Deforestation and Forest Community Rights held in Palangkaraya (Indonesia), March 2013, more than 10% of Malaysia's forest and state forests disappeared from 2000 to 2012. Malaysia (with Cambodia and Paraguay) is one of the three countries in the world with the highest rate of deforestation. Malaysia is estimated to have lost 14.4% (4.5 million hectares) of forest and trees between 2002 and 2012. The conditions are most severe in the tropical forests of Sabah and Sarawak due to logging and forest conversion to agribusiness (Litvinoff & Griffiths, ed. 2014, p. 30). Based on his research on deforestation in Selangor, Malaysia, Aisyah et. al (2005, p. 3) stated that deforestation in Malaysia has been a much discussed issue since the 1970s. In those years, many forest lands had been cleared to make way mainly for rubber and oil palm plantations. Total annual deforestation in Malaysia between the years 1990–2000 and 2000–2005 increased to 77% (FAO 2010). However, deforestation decreased to 37% between 2000–2005 and 2005–2010. About 0.65% of forest areas were lost yearly from 2000 till 2005 but between 2005 and 2010, the annual rate of loss was 0.41%.

The deforestation is not only a concern of the government and environmental activists. Writers, as part of the community take part in environmental issues by including these issues in their literary works. Environmental issues carried in the literary works have shown that the writers have an involvement with their environmental roots. In this case, green literature or literature which discusses environmental issues is a literary work that is in favor of the earth sustainability. Some examples of green novels that respond to deforestation in Indonesia and Malaysia include *Api Awan Asap [Smoke Cloud Fire]* (Rampan, 2015), *Tanah Tabu [Taboo Land]* (Thayf, 2009), *Bilangan Fu [Fu Number]* (Utami, 2008), *Di Kaki Bukit Cibalak [At the Foot of Cibalak Hill]* (Tohari, 1986), *Kayu Naga [Dragon Wood]* (Rampan, 2006) (Indonesian novels); *Srengenge [Sun]* (Ahmad, 1979), *Penunggu Rimba: Tombiruo [Guardians of the Jungle: Tombiruo]* (Murshid, 2015), *Sangeetha* (Abdullah, 2006), *Anak Belantara [The Children of the Wilderness]* (Abdullah, 2011), and *Suara dari Rimba [The Voice of the Jungle]* (Lai, 2008) (Malaysian novels).

The ecocritical studies or research examining the relationship between literature and the environment belong to political commitment to care for the environment (Gaard, 2010, p. 644; Glotfelty & Fromm., ed., 1996; Zapf, 2010, p. 136; Khan, 2019, p. 24). Therefore, this kind of studies must be developed (Gaard, 2010, p. 644; Glotfelty & Fromm., ed., 1996; Love, 2003, p. 18; Dewi, 2016, p. 33). In Wiyatmi's research (Wiyatmi, 2018, pp. 281–291; Wiyatmi, 2016, pp. 213–323), green literature began to emerge in Indonesia by raising several environmental issues. The research conducted by Wiyatmi (2018) studied the novels of *Bilangan Fu*, *Manjali* and *Cakrabirawa*, and *Maya* by Ayu Utami, in which these novels raise environmental issues in Sewugunung, Gunung Kidul, Yogyakarta. Meanwhile, Wiyatmi (2016) examined the novel of *Amba* written by Laksmi Pamuntjak which raises environmental issues in Buru Island.

The results of the study conclude that the three novels by Ayu Utami describe the struggles of the characters against the patriarchal power over nature, environment, and women which occurred in the Sewugunung earth park area and the Calwanarang temple site in the New Order era. This resistance is in line with ecofeminism thinking and is a deconstruction strategy against patriarchal power over nature, the environment, and women (Wiyatmi, 2018, p. 290). Meanwhile, the research on *Amba* concludes that the nature and environment of Buru is described as an arena to be conquered by the main character (Bhishma) who was a political prisoner during the New Order era. In

addition, the nature preservation of Buru Island must also be protected from exploitation, especially by outsiders visiting this Island. From an ecocritical perspective, these findings show how a remote island such as Buru Island has invited migrants to explore and exploit natural resources (Wiyatmi, 2016). In Malaysia, for instance, an ecocritical study was conducted by Che Man & Suzana (2011) on the novel *Sangeetha* by Azizi Haji Abdullah. The research concludes that the novel depicts the existence of a double domination towards women and the nature which is symbolically changed to represent the author's attitude towards the environment as an awareness, which does not have materialism connotations. Another study is the "Environmental Ethics in Jong Chiang Lai's Novel from an Indigenous Perspective" (Mamat, 2015). This study examines three of Jong Chian Lai's novels, namely *Kejatuhan Langit Hijau [The Fall of the Green Sky]*, *Nanga Tiga (Nanga Three)*, (1990), *Pindah [Move]* (1988), and *Suara dari Rimba [The Voice of the Jungle]* (2008). The results of the study show that there is a harmonious relationship between indigenous people in Sarawak which is described through three main forms of interaction; the interaction between indigenous people and natural environment, between indigenous people and spirits and God, including respecting the burial places of their ancestors, and between the indigenous people and other communities.

In line with the explained background above, this study aims at examining the phenomenon of deforestation represented in Indonesian and Malaysian novels with an ecocritical perspective which so far has not discussed in the previous studies. The Indonesian novels that will be studied are *Api Awan Asap [Smoke Cloud Fire]* (Rampan, 2015) and *Tanah Tabu [Taboo Land]* (Thayf, 2009) as samples of the Indonesian novels, *Penunggu Rimba: Tombiruo [Guardians of the Jungle: Tombiruo]* (Murshid, 2015) and *Anak Belantara [The Children of the Wilderness]* (Abdullah, 2011) as samples of the Malaysian novels. In addition, by comparing the issue of deforestation described in the novels of Indonesia and those of Malaysia, it is expected that the study will reveal the possible causes and ways to prevent and fight the same or different deforestation. Thus, the study will be concerned more on the representation of and resistance to deforestation rates in Indonesian and Malaysian novels. Furthermore, the focus is on whether the issue of deforestation in the novels represent the environmental problems faced by Indonesia and Malaysia.

In the development of literary criticism, ecocriticism is one of the perspectives used to examine literary

phenomena in relation to the environment. In simple terms, ecocriticism is an interdisciplinary study which brings together literature and ecology. Ecocriticism pays attention to the reciprocal relationship between literary works and the environment, including their relationship to social and physical reality, which is usually a concern in ecology (Love, 2003, p.1; Phillips, 2003, p. 3). The study of literary works with an ecocritical perspective will explain how nature, the environment and its various problems become an inseparable part of the works. In other words, the nature and environment are not only recognized as the setting of a place and atmosphere, but also as aspects which contribute to the aesthetics of literary works.

Ecocriticism as a concept first emerged in the late 1970s, at the WLA conference (*the Western Literature Association*) (Barry, 1995, p.161). This concept was first used in ecologically related literary criticism by an American eco-critique, Karl Kroeber, in his article 'Home at Grasmere: ecological holiness', published in the PMLA journal, 89, 1974, pp. 132-141. Furthermore, at the 1989 WLA conference (in Coeur d'Alene, USA), when Cheryll Glotfelty (a post-graduate student at Cornell University, who then became an Associate Professor of Literature and Environment at the University of Nevada, Reno) not only revived the term ecocriticism, but also urged its adoption to refer to the scattered critical field formerly known as "the study of nature writing" (Barry, 1995, p. 161). Subsequently, the book publication such as *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* (1996) edited by Glotfelty & Fromm's *Ecocriticism: Creating Self and Place in Environmental and American Indian Literatures* (2002) and Love's *Practical Ecocriticism: Literature, Biology, and the Environment* (2003) show the development of ecocritical studies in literary criticism.

In its application, ecocriticism relates literary works to the physical environment, population growth, loss of wilderness, rapid extinction of species, and increased contamination of air, water, and soil, which will directly or indirectly affect human life (Love, 2003, p. 2). Ecocriticism will explain how nature, the environment, with its various problems become an integral part in literature, not only as a background for stories and atmosphere, but also as an aesthetic builder of the literary works (Glotfelty & Fromm, 1996, p. 70).

Therefore, ecocriticism will be more suitable to be used to examine literary works raising environmental issues, which are then better known as green literature (Glotfelty & Fromm, 1996, p.70). The green literature is one of the literary genres which uplifts environmental issues. Pranoto (2014, p. 5), one of the

writers who initiated the green literature movement through the *Raya Kultura* Foundation stated that green literature has several criteria, for instance: the language used in the works contains a lot of ecological dictions; and the content of the works is based on love for Earth. Moreover, this literature describes the concern and care for the destruction of Earth, the arbitrariness to Earth and its resources (trees, mines, water, and air, and its inhabitants: humans and animals) and people struggle for sovereignty. Ideally, the green literature should be able to influence people's mindsets and attitudes towards the issue of the Earth destruction. This is in accordance with the vision and mission of the green literature, i.e., literature plays a role in awareness and enlightenment, and is expected to change the lifestyle of annihilators into custodians who care for Earth (Pranoto, 2014, p. 5).

## METHOD

This study applies a comparative qualitative descriptive method. The data sources are the novels *Api Awan Asap [Smoke Cloud Fire]* (Rampan, 2015) and *Tanah Tabu [Taboo Land]* (Thayf, 2009) selected as samples of the Indonesian novels; *Penunggu Rimba: Tombiruo [Guardians of the Jungle: Tombiruo]* (Murshid, 2015) and *Anak Belantara [The Children of the Wilderness]* (Abdullah, 2011) selected as samples of Malaysian novels. The four novels were selected as samples because they address the very clear issue of deforestation. In addition, the three novels (*Api Awan Asap [Smoke Cloud Fire]*, *Penunggu Rimba: Tombiruo [Guardians of the Jungle: Tombiruo]*, and *Anak Belantara [The Children of the Wilderness]* both take place in the forests of the Kalimantan Island. Meanwhile, *Tanah Tabu [Taboo Land]* was chosen because it represents deforestation in Papua. Kalimantan and Papua are the two largest islands that have experienced deforestation. deforestation is quite severe, a condition that has inspired writers to criticize him through the literary works he wrote. From the four data sources, the problem of deforestation is represented in the novels of Indonesia and Malaysia, which is then considered as an illustration of environmental problems. Those problems occur in the two countries and are identified and figured out using an ecocritical perspective.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Deforestation in Indonesian and Malaysian Novels

Deforestation is a situation of forest loss and its resources which have implications for the loss of the forest structure and function (Barri, et al. 2018, p.7; Aisyah, et.al., 2015, p. 3). Deforestation is a permanent

change from a forested area to a non-forested area caused by human activities (Barri, et al. 2018, p.7). Several studies reveal the causes of deforestation, including the political-economic system that considers natural resources, especially forests, as a source of income that can be exploited for political and personal interests (Barri, et al. 2018, p.11; Fuller, Miettinen, & Meijaard, 2013, p. 3). Forest Watch Indonesia (Barri, et al., 2018, p.21) classifies the causes of deforestation into two, namely direct and indirect causes. The direct causes include forest clearing and natural forest timber harvesting activities, while the indirect causes are national/regional forces that can encourage forest loss, especially at the level of government policies and authority abuse. The examples of these policies include the development of industrial forest plantations at the expense of natural forests such as oil palm plantations. The high global market demands for natural resource-based commodities originating from forests such as timber, palm oil, pulp, mining, and paper. It encourages the government's reactive and opportunist attitude to issue many sectoral policies oriented towards increasing income, which are exploitative and unsustainable.

The four novels as the research samples revealed the problem of deforestation which occurred in Indonesia and Malaysia, especially in the forests on the islands of Kalimantan and Papua. Kalimantan and Papua are the two largest islands in Southeast Asia. Kalimantan is one of the islands within the territory of Indonesia, Malaysia, and Brunei. This island covering an area of 743,330 km<sup>2</sup> is divided into several regions from the three ASEAN countries. The territory of Indonesia includes West Kalimantan, Central Kalimantan, South Kalimantan, East Kalimantan, and North Kalimantan. Then, Malaysia's territory includes Sabah, Sarawak, and the Federal Territory of Labuan. Meanwhile, Brunei's territory includes Belait, Brunei and Muara, Temburong, and Tutong. Papua Island, in addition, is the second largest island in the world after Greenland, with an area of 786,000 km<sup>2</sup> belonging to Indonesia and 418,707.7 km<sup>2</sup> belonging to Papua New Guinea (<https://www.papua.go.id/view-detail-kabupaten-121/gambaran-umum.html>).

The description of deforestation in Kalimantan and Papua which is an important narrative in the four analyzed novels is motivated by the following conditions. Data from Forest Watch Indonesia (Purba, et al., 2014) in the period 2009 – 2013 explained that there are three areas which experienced the greatest deforestation rate in Indonesia: Kalimantan (1,541,693.36 hectares), Sumatra (1,520,150.03 hectares), and Papua (592,976.57 hectares). The rate of

deforestation in Kalimantan and Papua is represented in the four novels studied. This shows that deforestation has not only caused concern among environmentalists and researchers, but also writers in Indonesia and Malaysia.

### **Deforestation in Indonesian: *Api Awan Asap [Smoke Cloud Fire]* and *Tanah Tabu [Taboo Land]***

*Api Awan Asap [Smoke Cloud Fire]* is a novel by Korrie Layun Rampan, a writer from Samarinda, East Kalimantan. This novel takes the background story of the Dayak Benuaq settlement who lives around the forests of East Kalimantan (Indonesia). Taking the time frame around the 1990s, because the novel was first published in 1999, *Api Awan Asap [Smoke Cloud Fire]* tells the story of deforestation that occurred in the forests of East Kalimantan due to illegal logging and the actions of companies holding Forest Concession Rights (written as HPH) and Industrial Plantation Forests (written as HTI) that violate environmental ethics. The title *Api Awan Asap [Smoke Cloud Fire]* refers to the meaning of forest fires in the East Kalimantan region due to land clearing for Industrial Plantation Forests, mining, and oil palm plantations (Barri, et.al, 2018, p. 7).

Forest fires often occur also because of the growing population that surges in owing to “the sweetness of the development cake” coming from the great illegal logging practices named *banjir kap* and log bombs in the pre-recession era, giant gardens and supermarkets, gold, coal, oil and gas mines; calling various people with all different traditions and abilities to anticipate.... (Rampan, 2015, p. 38)

Sometimes, the conglomerates deliberately burn their land to speed up the work. There are also natural conflicts, such as natural friction between trees and trees, coal fires and unquenchable fire outcrops. All of them can ignite great forest fires (Rampan, 2015, p. 39).

The data from the *Api Awan Asap [Smoke Cloud Fire]* novel describes the deforestation caused by forest fires due to natural conditions, the deliberate actions of the holders of Forest Concession Rights (HPH), Industrial Plantation Forests (HTI), gold, coal, oil, and gas mining carried out by migrants. It is on the edge of the forest that the Benuaq Dayak tribe lives. Kalimantan's forests have indeed become a heaven for various forestry sector businesses, ranging from Forest Concession Rights as a source of national timber production, industrial forest plantations, oil palm plantations, and gas mining (Purba, et.al., 2014, p. 28).

For Dayak Benuaq, who is the native tribe of Kalimantan, the arrival of migrants who explore natural resources is very irritating because they do not only exploit natural resources on a large scale, but also ignore the environmental ethics applied in the local community.

Hood flood and HPH are kind of trauma. It is the same way as HTI as well as gold and coal mining. These activities are greatly interfering with the allotment of land that is part of the Lou. Furthermore, these also directly disrupt the ecosystem. If in the past the seasons could be determined by the circulation of stars, the effects of large-scale logging have serious consequences, i.e., the diminishing river water to a critical stage in the dry season, and uncontrollable flash floods in the rainy season... (Rampan, 2015, p.128)

It is very clear how the narratives in the novel *Api Awan Asap [Smoke Cloud Fire]* describe the terrible impact of deforestation. Droughts and forest fires in the dry season, as well as floods in the rainy season threaten the welfare of the Benuaq Tribe. Through the novel he wrote, Rampan, as one of the writers who was born from the Dayak Benuaq, criticized humans' greed in exploiting nature.

In addition to the Borneo forests which have undergone severe deforestation as seen in those three novels, deforestation in Papua was also portrayed in *Tanah Tabu [Taboo Land]* novel (Thayf, 2009). Papua is an island between Indonesia and New Guinea. Based on the data raised by Koalisi Indonesia Memantau (2021), along these two decades, Papua's natural forest coverage has decreased into 663,443 hectares; 29% in 2001-2010, and 71% in 2011-2019. If we calculate the mean, deforestation rate was 34,918 hectare per year. The most severe deforestation happened in 2015 which eliminated 89,881 hectares of natural forest in Papua ([https://auriga.or.id/cms/uploads/pdf\\_id/-report/7/1/deforestasi\\_dan\\_pelepasan\\_kawasan-\\_hutan\\_di\\_tanah\\_papua\\_id.pdf](https://auriga.or.id/cms/uploads/pdf_id/-report/7/1/deforestasi_dan_pelepasan_kawasan-_hutan_di_tanah_papua_id.pdf)).

The rate of deforestation in Papua has been a drive to write *Tanah Tabu [Taboo Land]*. The novel which was written by Anindita S. Thayf talks about deforestation and eviction around Baliem Valley due to the opening of multinational gold mining company, PT Freeport. This mining company needed a very large exploration area, so it had to clear forests and evict some villagers including their farms. Although the villagers received compensation and relocation, their new homes are far from forests and rivers and they also have difficulty to get the staple food. It is because as traditional agrarians, they still depend on forest products for their living. They completely lost their food source when gold

mine's waste polluted the river and cause the fish poisoned.

The villagers of Pace Mauwe were evicted by a gold company owned by immigrants on the hillside where they had lived for a long time. There were indeed locations and new houses which had been provided in the lower land, but it was quite far from forests and rivers. However, forests no longer produced sago and the river was polluted by gold mine's waste. One morning when many fish were suddenly floating dead on the river, and many villagers picked the fish up, Mabel was not tempted at all. He said that the fish must have died due to illness, and anyone who ate it would also suffer the same fate. Suffer, then die. It was the first time Pace Mauwe got mad for the first time at Mabel. He did not only lose the farm from which he can get the food, he has not been eating meat yet for quite some time (Thayf, 2009, p. 109).

The excerpt above shows that the deforestation and exploitation of Papua's forests by Freeport (a gold mining company) have caused the population to lose the basic food source provided by the nature. Even after moving to another village, they cannot live in peace.

We live in a small village at the forest's edge. A peaceful village away from city bustle. At first, we thought this situation would be long-lasting. Then, a group of armed men came out of nowhere. The group that we initially looked at in amazement because of their bravery turned into hatred and fear when we found out about their cruelty (Thayf, 2009, p. 179).

The expansion of the gold mine area managed by PT Freeport in Grasberg forced eviction to the people living nearby. Contract of work established with PT Freeport which was signed by Indonesia based on Law Number 11 of 1967 for a period of 30 years in 1989 was expanded to 61,000 hectares (Nefi, et al., 2018, p. 3). *Tanah Tabu* tries to describe the impact of deforestation caused by the mining industry in Papua. The title of the novel symbolically shows that the indigenous Papuans no longer have a place to live on their own land since their land has been controlled by the owners of capital.

### **Deforestation in Malaysian Novels: *Penunggu Rimba: Tombiruo [Guardians of the Jungle: Tombiruo]* and *Anak Belantara [The Children of the Wilderness]***

It is similar to what has been described by Rampan, through *Penunggu Rimba: Tombiruo [Guardians of the Jungle: Tombiruo]* and *Anak Belantara [The*

*Children of the Wilderness*], Ramlee Awang Murshid and Azizi Haji Abdullah also describe humans' greed in exploiting the forests of Kalimantan. The novel *Penunggu Rimba: Tombiruo [Guardians of the Jungle: Tombiruo]* takes the background of the Keningau forest, Sabah, Malaysia on the Kalimantan Island, while *Anak Belantara* takes the background of the life of the indigenous people who lived around the forest on Baram Island (Sarawak). These two novels describe the deforestation threat due to massive forest exploitation carried out by companies holding HPH and illegal loggers.

*Penunggu Rimba: Tombiruo [Guardians of the Jungle: Tombiruo]* tells the story of the life of a human who lives and guards the Keningau Forest named Ejim. By his adoptive father, he was given the task of guarding the forest from the disruption and from the people who are willing to destroy the forest. Ejim (or better known as Tombiruo, the forest ghost) was a person who had lived in the forest since he was a child because he was abandoned by his parents. Then, he was finally rescued and cared for by Pondolou.

"Ejim, my son! One day when you are old enough, you will be the king of this forest. If there are guests who come here solely to enjoy the beauty, then you let them. Don't ever start a rage," said Pondolou again reminding... // "Listen to my will." Pondolou immediately softened the conversation. Ejim nodded slightly.

"If there are guests who come here purely to do bad deeds, then risk your life to fight against them." Pondolou continued his speech (Murshid, 2015, pp. 2 - 3).

In addition, Pondolou also teaches Ejim the ins and outs of a thick forest, guard and protect animals and make some medicine using natural ingredients. (Murshid, 2015, p. 8).

The novel *Penunggu Rimba: Tombiruo [Guardians of the Jungle: Tombiruo]* tells the story of the beliefs of the people of Kadazan-Dusun, Sabah, about the spirit or ghost of the forest watchman (Yaakup, 2018, p. 331). This belief has become a myth that plays a role in protecting the forest from outsiders' interference.

When Ejim was adult, he also carried out his duties as a forest guard as he had been mandated before. Nowadays, the task is more complicated because this inhabited forest has often been neglected. Illegal loggers are getting more and more greedy to commit violence and at the same time spark anger in their hearts. The worries that his father faced in the past have now become a reality (Murshid, 2015, p. 3).

The description of deforestation caused by illegal logging in *Penunggu Rimba: Tombiruo [Guardians of the Jungle: Tombiruo]* can be seen from the following data excerpt.

Mr. Berham's log forest area was boisterous, surrounded by the roar of three lorries. The atmosphere of the night in the forest was like a day lit by big lights from the four corners of the area. Tonight, the trees were being cut down greedily by illegal loggers (Murshid, 2015, p. 6).

The excerpt shows how a group of people who committed illegal logging from HPH company. Ejim, as a forest watchman contributes to save Keningau forest from illegal loggers or hunters. When they carried out bad things at forest, they will see Ejim (Murshid, 2015, pp. 70-71). It is different from the condition of Uma Bawang, Serawak, Malaysia, which have been told in *Anak Belantara [The Children of the Wilderness]* (Abdullah, 2011). As an explorer, Uloi witnessed how the forest surrounding him was exploited by HPH people. Every day he heard boisterous sound of the boat engine passing through Baram River to transport logs and the machines used to cut trees.

When walked to the north of Uma Bawang village and Obong followed him, they heard the sound of a logging truck engine roaring through the quiet green wilderness. It also sounds like a centipede car pushing its engine into the mud and its tires sinking...(Abdullah, 2011, p. 24).

Suddenly there was a sound of a tree-cutting engine screaming. It was quiet, but now that sounds really close. The sound of the saw rustling as if the logs were of a hard *tempinis* type (Abdullah, 2011, p. 28).

*Anak Belantara [The Children of the Wilderness]* novel depicts how severe deforestation happening surrounding Uma Bawang villages. It did not only cause the loss of huge trees, but also the loss of villagers' livelihood who depend on the forest for their living. The people of Uma Bawang have lost their main source of food, including sago and animals (Abdullah, 2011, pp. 30, 35).

Uloi was shocked. Obong was surprised. The land, which was considered fertile and green, which has not been visited for a long time, apparently have turned to be a football field with a blanket of mud. The crumbling logs fell, like the butt of a worthless match (Murshid, 2015, p. 86).

From the analysis of the four novels, it appears that deforestation occurs due to the anthropocentrism perspective that places humans as the center of the

universe, and only humans have the right to utilize and use the nature for their interests and needs (Keraf, 2005, p. 49). This perspective causes humans to exploit the nature on a large scale without considering its sustainability. Deforestation caused by wood-based industries, conversion of forest covers into oil palm and rubber plantations, as well as mining businesses (petroleum, gold, tin, and coal) in the forests of Kalimantan and Papua shows an anthropocentrism perspective.

To reduce and stop environmental damage due to deforestation, the anthropocentrism perspective needs to be stopped and criticized. Various efforts have been made by environmentalist organizations, such as the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), Greenpeace, the Indonesian Forum for the Environment (WALHI), and international cooperation forums, such as the Heart of Borneo (HoB) Forum. Indonesia, Malaysia, and Brunei, the three countries that own Kalimantan Forest areas have realized the impact of deforestation that threatens the preservation of nature and the welfare of their citizens. To solve this problem, on 12 February 2007, the three countries formed the Heart of Borneo (HoB) Forum which aims to maintain and sustain the benefits of one of the best remaining rainforest areas in Borneo for the welfare of present and future generations. The three countries agreed that the heart of Kalimantan is part of the HoB area. At that moment, Borneo's remaining forest was no more than 60%, and if these irresponsible routines continued, the forest's existence would continue to decrease. As a result, it will reduce the forest function, loss of biodiversity and the emergence of various natural disasters (Sabran, et. al., 2014, p. 137; www.heartofborneo.or.d.). The writers criticized it through the literary works they wrote.

### **Anthropocentrism vs Ecocentrism**

From the ecocritical perspective, the deforestation represented in the four novels examined shows an anthropocentrism perspective. This perspective causes a one-sided relationship dominated by humans, which then leads to consequences in the form of a natural resource management model that tends to be exploitative and profit-oriented (Douglas, 2015, p. 698; Keraf, 2002, p. 76; Muthmainnah, et. al., 2020, p. 32). Through their novels, Indonesian and Malaysian writers criticize and fight against anthropocentrism of forest management policies by the government and certain communities.

### **Anthropocentrism vs Ecocentrism in Green Indonesian Novels**

In the novel *Api Awan Asap [Smoke Cloud Fire]*, criticism of anthropocentrism can be seen in the idea of

forest management which originates from the local wisdom of the Benoaq Dayak Tribe which divides the forest into six parts based on their function. There are parts of the forest that can be managed and made into fields, and there are parts that can only be used as supply forests (Rampan, 2015, p. 31). Those parts are (1) forest area around lou (traditional house), is designated for growing fruits, (2) land for plantations, such as coffee and pepper plantations, (3) land for planting rice fields, (4) special forests providing materials for houses, boats, and everything related to the lives of the Lou residents, (5) land providing forest products such as resin, rattan, bird's nests or honey bees, (6) free forest areas where people from outside Lou can take the forest products and hunt in this area (Rampan, 2015, pp. 31-36). *Api Awan Asap [Smoke Cloud Fire]* tells how the tribal chief of Dempar (Petinggi Jepi) managed to invite his residents to preserve the environment by managing the environment that adheres to the local wisdom. As a result, Dempar Village is known as a pilot village because it has succeeded in being self-sufficient in food and producing coffee, rubber, and rattan which improved the welfare of its citizens. For this success, Petinggi Jepi received an award as a pioneer in preserving the environment from the Indonesian government (Rampan, 2015, p. 25).

In addition to managing forests according to the local wisdom, as the tribal chief, Petinggi Jepi also criticized large-scale deforestation which caused the forest to become bare and turn into grassland, which in turn triggers the threat of fires at the peak of the dry season (Rampan, 2015, p. 129). According to Petinggi Jepi, the indigenous people have never invaded the forest arbitrarily. The natives view the soil, roots, trees, and leaves as having soul. Trees in the forest may be cut down and utilized only by the residents. The land is utilized as needed. Animals are only hunted to provide protein (Rampan, 2015, p. 26).

In *Tanah Tabu [Taboo Land]*, the resistance to anthropocentrism represented in the confrontation against PT Freeport can be seen from Mabel's point of view.

Jii... do those people lose their mind? They killed each other while actually the problems came from the outsiders. "

"Who's wrong Mabel?" Leksi, who had been fascinated when listening to The Lady Who Brings The News, suddenly spoke again.

"Who else but the gold company? They are who they are, son. They always make a mess and riot. They deceive, again and again. Because of them, people fight each other like this. Some are dead, sick, poor, or suffering. They just want our gold, Leksi. They don't care with our life, or that we are dying!" (Thayf, 2009, p. 113).

The perspective of ecocentrism is also evident from Mabel's statement that represents the Papuan people who have become victims of gold mining exploration by the Freeport Company. Despite having to threaten her own life, Mabel fought against anthropocentric capitalism, until she was finally arrested and detained by miner's security guards. Before being carried by uniformed men, the symbol of the security representing the company, Mabel instructed her daughter, Lisbeth to keep herself strong in facing the problems encountered by her family. Mabel also told her granddaughter, Leksi who was still seven years old to study hard in her school so that bad people cannot deceive and hurt her (Thayf, 2009, pp. 177-178).

The study conducted by Saruyun, Suparlan, and Adi which is referred by Syafitri (2011, p. 30) argued that mining exploration by Freeport has posed a number of problems, namely (1) environmental damage that eventually affects patterns of livelihood, employment, and social relations (2) increased social tensions as a result of rapid changes, (3) conflicts among groups, generations, people and the government which cause disharmony in society, (4) social disparities, especially between indigenous people and immigrants, (5) inadequate economic compensation, (6) life uncertainties, especially for those who are affected by the eviction, and (7) psychological disorders and stress caused by social problems. The impact of Freeport's mining exploration in the rural and forest areas of Papua is what has been described in the *Tanah Tabu [Taboo Land]* novel.

### **Anthropocentrism vs Ecocentrism in Green Malaysian Novels**

The ecocentrism view that underlies forest management for the Benuaq Dayak tribe in Penunggu Rimba: Tombiruo. appeared in the eyes of Pondolou, Ejim's adoptive father in *Penunggu Rimba: Tombiruo [Guardians of the Jungle: Tombiruo]*. In the novel it is represented the belief of the people of Kadazan-Dusun Tribe, Sabah, about a forest guardian spirit called Tombiruo also serves to preserve Keninggau forest, Sabah. By presenting the myth of a forest guardian spirit through the novel he wrote, Ramlee Awang Murshid who is a writer born in Kinibalu, Sabah (Malaysia) tries to fight against human greed in exploiting forest products. Those who are greedy will be haunted by Tombiruo.

In *Anak Belantara [The Children of the Wilderness]*, the people of Uma Bawang tried to defend the forest around their village by building tree forts. Furthermore, fifty residents slept on the ground to block the

bulldozer and the logging machine from entering the forest. They got strength from the guardian spirit of Uma Bawang, so the logging machines and bulldozer were unable to move.

"Are they your men?"

"No."

"Then, who are they?"

"Uma Bawang's spirit."

"Please tell them to go away. The truck is going to pass the road. The road is ours. We need to finish this soon!" said Lim in a deliberate and polite way.

"We won't back down." Uloi answered while looking up to a high tree.

"How if we just go ahead?"

"We'll be dead" //....

The truck was restarted. It came rushing with one gear. Bulldozer also came crawling around. No one woke up. They were like fainting. Only the sound of a small child whimpering was heard. However, the truck could not roll its tires. There is a kind of blocked by something. Even the bulldozer, which often plowed the large logs that unloaded the rooted stumps, ceased to stiffen. (Abdullah, 2011, pp. 226-227).

The struggle of Uma Bawang people in protecting their forest had finally succeeded. After Uloi and his friends were arrested by the police and tried by the court, they won and eventually defended their forests (Abdullah, 2011, pp. 250 - 251).

"You bought (the forest) to destroy it. We have a responsibility to conserve it. Every trunk of this forest belongs to our lives. This is our ancestors' forest!" said Uloi.. (Abdullah, 2011, p. 150).

By bringing the struggle of Uma Bawang people in defending their ancestral lands from the power of capitalism that exploits forests on a large scale, the writer raises local wisdom in the effort of rescuing forests. Uloi's words when confronted with Lim, an HPH entrepreneur, were clearly based on the spirit of ecocentrism to fight anthropocentrism.

From the discussion of the four novels, both Indonesia and Malaysia see anthropocentrism as the cause of deforestation that occurs in the forests in both regions of the country. To criticize the anthropocentrism view, Indonesian and Malaysian novels offer ecocentrism view, which is derived from local wisdom in the Dayak community (Indonesia and Malaysia) in the novel *Api Awan Asap [Smoke Cloud Fire]*, *Anak Belantara [The Children of the Wilderness]*, *Penunggu Rimba: Tombiruo [Guardians of the Jungle: Tombiruo]*, and Papua (Indonesia) in the novel *Tanah Tabu [Taboo Land]*.



One of the four novels examined, *Penunggu Rimba: Tombiruo [Guardians of the Jungle: Tombiruo]*, does not only relate the fighting against anthropocentrism to defending the environment that depicts harmony between humans and nature, but also raises myths in Kadazan-Dusun, Sabah society about a forest guardian spirit namely Tombiruo (Yaakup, 2018, p. 331). In her previous study, Yaakup (2018) adapted the novel *Penunggu Rimba: Tombiruo [Guardians of the Jungle: Tombiruo]* and the beliefs of the local community to the film *Tombiruo: Penunggu Rimba [Tombiruo: Guardians of the Jungle]* (2017). This study focuses more on the process of novel-to-film adaptation and how the Kadazan-Dusun myth is represented in the film and novel. Yaakup (2018, p. 330) states that Kadazan-Dusun people strongly believe that a stable world is perceived as "cool" or referred to as *osogit*. However, this stability can be threatened by any human acts, resulting in the world being perceived as "hot". One of the deviant acts showed in Tombiruo's novel and film is the immoral act committed by Tarawid who raped Tobugi. This act of Tarawid has caused life instability of the people in the village. The birth of Tobugi's twins, one of whom is ugly-faced Ejim, is thought to be the result of a hot state troubled by evil spirits. Therefore, to restore the stability of the world, ritual fines had to be carried out. Tobugi's children should be handed over to others and killed. After being immersed in a river, Ejim was found and treated by Pondolou. He further lived in the forest as a protector of the forest from the interference of outsiders who would exploit and destroy the forest.

In *Tanah Tabu (Taboo Land)* and *Anak Belantara [The Children of the Wilderness]*, the resistance against the capitalism of anthropocentrism which led to deforestation was carried out through demonstrations carried out by indigenous people living in a village at the forest's edge. There are differences in the results of resistance to the capitalism of anthropocentrism between Indonesian and Malaysian novels. In the Indonesian novel, the resistance of Papuan people ended in failure. This means that the rate of deforestation will be even worse because there is no way stopping it. The ending of the novel *Tanah Tabu [Taboo Land]* depicts Mabel and her friends being arrested by Freeport corporate security, which shows failure of the natives in saving their environment and forests. In *Anak Belantara [The Children of the Wilderness]*, the resistance gained the victory because the court gave the people of Uma Bawang the rights to manage their forests. Likewise, in the *Penunggu Rimba: Tombiruo [Guardians of the Jungle: Tombiruo]* the sustainability of the forest could still be maintained due to the trust in the forest guardian spirit, Tombiruo. The defeat is also depicted in the novel *Api*

*Awan Asap [Smoke Cloud Fire]* set in Dayak, Kalimantan. The end of the novel *Api Awan Asap [Smoke Cloud Fire]* depicts a burned forest in the Dayak Benuaq settlement due to forest fires carried out by HPH entrepreneurs who would open land. This was driven by a long drought due to global climate change.

The resistance to anthropocentrism in Indonesian and Malaysian novels is in accordance with the ecocentrism perspective which places all subjects in the universe (biotic and abiotic) as having value because they will be bound to each other in the ecosystem (Bretherton, 2001, p. 21; Burberry, 2021, p. 190; Muthmainnah, et.al. 2020, p. 33; Keraf, 2005, p. 76). Ecocentrism believes that nature is not merely instrumental –only providing human needs – but more than that, nature has an intrinsic value. All ecological communities have intrinsic value regardless of whether it can provide benefits or not for mankind (Bretherton, 2001, p. 21; Burberry, 2021, p.190; Muthmainnah, et.al., 2020, p. 33; Keraf, 2005, p. 76; Kopnina, 2019:6; Lucia, 2017, p. 186). The publication of Indonesian and Malaysian novels that carry the spirit of ecocentrism to resist anthropocentrism shows the efforts of the writers of the two countries to take part in the environmental justice movement and take care of nature conservation.

## CONCLUSION

The results show that the four novels which have been studied represented the deforestation occurred in the forests of Kalimantan and Papua. Deforestation in Kalimantan has been a concern of Indonesian and Malaysian writers. The establishment of the Heart of Borneo (HoB) Forum by Indonesia, Malaysia, and Brunei proves the concern of the three countries in an effort to maintain and preserve the benefits of one of the remaining rainforest areas in Borneo for the welfare of current and future generation.

In an ecocritical perspective, the research results show that in the four novels studied, there seems to be deforestation in Indonesia and Malaysia that results in other environmental problems. These four novels show how local wisdom can prevent and combat deforestation that occurs in the forests of Kalimantan and Papua. Through their novels, Indonesian and Malaysian writers presented an ecocentrism view to combat anthropocentrism that led to deforestation. There are different perceptions expressed by Indonesian and Malaysian writers in dealing with deforestation. In the perspective of the Indonesian writers, deforestation is difficult to stop because the government's policy is in favour of anthropocentric capitalism. This is different from the Malaysian writers

who consider that deforestation can be stopped with the support of the government and the public, who still believe in the myth of forest rangers.

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