

# Environment Conservation toward Local Culture on Belief

Dr. Ashari Ismail

Faculty of Social Science, Universitas Negeri Makassar

**Abstract:** *This study is the result of research conducted on environmental conservation based on local culture as a symbolic study and reality of community behavior patterns. This study explores local knowledge in conserving and preventing environmental degradation, and efforts adopted by customary institutions and formal subdistrict government in preserving the environment. In this research, the approach used is ethnographic with the technique of tracing data. The grand theories used in exposing this problem are Max Weber's theory of social action, the theory of Behaviors, and Symbolic theory. This study found that Dewata Sewwae believers in the location targeted by the Tolotang Bacukiki symbolically are such communities that uphold familiarity with nature, and regard that the environment is part of their lifestyle. Similarly, by this research, the role of adat institutions and subdistrict governance in preserving the environment (forest) is significant. By the existence of customary tools becoming institutions that curb every act of forests exploitation. Similarly, the village level government is a formal institution that can serve as a medium for mediation between indigenous peoples' interests and formal rules relating to efforts to protect forest conservation.*

**Keywords:** Environment, conservation, local culture, belief

## 1. Introduction

This study conducted on the community of Dewata Sewwae believers, which took the research location on Bacukiki Tolotang community in the area of South Sulawesi province, Indonesia. The purpose of the study is directed to expansion studies that emphasize local culture in conserving and preventing environmental degradation and policies pursued by formal government of subdistrict as social institutions in environmental conservation. This study continues to develop a number of urgent concepts on environmental management. Some of the urgent concepts are the environmental management and preservation policies have a concept 'leap' far from the views of previous ecologists. Environment in the previous study was based on environmental management. Environmental management was carried out conscience through the dogma of local tradition (Bengston, 1994). Synergy was between customary and formal law. Sanction was for violators of forest destruction with customary sanctions, or also sanctions based on constitution.

This research explores local culture to understand the protective cultural shields that ensure the sustainability of wise environmental management as an ancestral heritage based on grounded doctrines in society. Understanding of the nature conservation is a spatial pattern that relies on local initiatives that have no systemic impact on ecological maintenance (Tallis & Polasky, 2009). In such a case, research touches the deeply rooted cultural aspects of society. A study filled with the content of meaning in seeing the phenomenon of culture. Thus, this study is more oriented specifically on environmental conservation as symbolic and reality study of community conduct pattern of Dewata Sewwae belief in South Sulawesi province, Indonesia.

The study of environmental conservation based on local culture is a symbolic study and reality in Tolotang community. The grand design of this research is directed to the paradigm of social definition and social behavior. This study aims at interpreting and understanding the

interpretative thoughtful of a social action as well as the behaviorism of social events. Such an acknowledgment allows researchers to understand the cultural phenomena of Tolotang community with symbolic interpretations combined with the understanding of behaviors of human and contingencies of reinforcement (G Ritzer, 1992). This study used the theory of Max Weber as a grand theory which is about social acts, the theory of Behaviors Sociology, and the theory of symbolic (Denzin, 1973; Hatch & Cunliffe, 2012; G Ritzer, 1992; George Ritzer & Stepnisky, 2017; Weber, 2009).

Referring to a number of grand theories, the analysis of the study is supported by a number of middle theories that emphasizes the relationship between culture and environment (ecology) (DeLoughrey, Gosson, & Handley, 2005). Middle theory in this relationship emphasizes human behavior from ecosystem complexity with basic assumptions that human behavior is related to environmental context. The mutual interaction benefits people with the environment, dynamic human interaction environment, and human interaction takes place in various levels. Humans and cultures are integral entities and forces that encompass culture and environment. The integral unity of culture and environment places humans as biosociocultural beings. Understanding such integral integrity is regarded as the study of the socio economy of the animal organism as Darwin's enduring aspiration to the struggle for existence (Hodgson & Knudsen, 2011).

In other respects, human relations with the environment are seen in two points, namely nature as a determinant element and nature only as one of the decisive elements (Foster, 2000; Hough, 2004; Taylor, 2011). Nature as a determinant element that is a natural flow that understands aspects of culture is fundamental and natural aspects that directly inherent in the supporting community. Nature only as one of the decisive elements is such a comprehensiveness understanding that environmental does not determine the color of culture, but simply offers its possibility and human

use in accordance with the technology they mastered. The difference between the two poles of the ecological paradigm becomes the deference of the concept long enough to be polemic and to this day is still the basis of the latest ecological concepts.

Moreover, environment conservation is attributed to local knowledge. Local knowledge in this research is a viewpoint and attitude through the media of customary institutions that implement norms or rules either in written or unwritten. In different analysis, local knowledge is interpreted as a hereditary heritage. Likewise, local knowledge can be recognized as a lifestyle and a world view of it supports community for cultural sustainability (Berkes, Colding, & Folke, 2000; Mauro & Hardison, 2000; Stevenson, 1996; Wals, 2007). In such case, local knowledge is a number of knowledge that is believed to be hereditary that support the community in the pattern of behavior and tend to have knowledge of the cultural universality principles. This acknowledgment shows that a local knowledge is not only a pragmatic value, but also has practical value for other communities.

Local knowledge that has practical value to both the support community and other communities is the management of the environment conservation (Berkes, 2004, 2007, 2009; Berkes et al., 2000). The natural environment is human interaction with the physical, social, and cultural environments comprise a process of human behavior that encompasses all components related to ecology. The concept of environment concerns the concept of physical and non-physical environments. From such case, local knowledge or local wisdom with the environment are two concepts that have a close link in the local community. The closeness of traditional community relationships with nature is a natural thing and almost every classical culture understands it.

Local wisdom tends to be understood as something that is believed to be maturity in taking or imposing local attitudes toward a decision. In the issue of environmental conservation require the support of local wisdom to public policy (Blackwell & Colmenar, 2000). Policy is by a party having authority which includes the regulation and decision. Policy is a set of concepts and principles that outline and basic plan in the implementation of a job involving leaders and ways of acting, the statement of ideas, goals, principles, or intentions. In the author's understanding, policy is something that refers to the rules, regulating patterns of behavior or life. Likewise in a policy, other inherent traits usually arise the term social intervention as meaning of action aimed at helping people. Policy is expressed as a specific act done by a spirituror who raises change to solve rational problems.

The policy of environmental management is the utilization of natural resources to improve the welfare and quality of life of the harmonious and balanced people. The management of environment is also supposed to support sustainable development (Seiffert & Loch, 2005). In relation to the environmental management policy, a number of strategies that must be understood include maintaining essential ecological processes and life-sustaining systems, preserving and protecting a wide variety of genetics, and

sustaining the use of various species and ecosystems. The enforcement of this policy is certainly in accordance with Indonesian government law, which contains an integrated effort to preserve the environmental function which includes the policy of structuring, utilizing, developing, maintaining, restoring, monitoring and controlling the environment.

## 2. Research Method

The method of this research is qualitative using ethnography design. The preference of the method is based on the assumption that the research context is related to the subjective reality of a local culture which includes symbolic elements. The ethnographic approach is favored based on the understanding of the research conducted is the ideographic research subject as a single case that only apply contextually to Tolotang community based on their culture. Ethnography is a study to deeply understand the context under study by constructing concepts based on empirical processes (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). The researchers studied the phenomenon based on the natural events and attempted to reveal the cultural phenomena studied by exploring the culture of Tolotang community as a culture that is patterned in the worldview of the community.

### 1) Data collection and analysis

Data collection in this study was conducted in two categories consists of the primary and secondary data collection. Primary data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews with a number of informants from Tolotang either as customary stakeholders or the common people. In order to obtain primary data, the researcher also conducted a deep observation which is limited to a number of settings and behavior patterns of Tolotang community. Secondary data collection was done by tracer study on a number of documents related to Tolotang community pattern, such as the community view of Tolotang to their existence on a number of documents. After accomplishing the data collection, the researcher distinguished between accurate and less accurate data. This permissibility allows data which is then understood as a guaranteed cultural fact of its validity. The data then analyzed for the sake of sounding data. The data analysis conducted in this research is Spradley's analysis, namely category, taxonomi, and theme analysis. Such an analysis is a comprehensive analysis in understanding the culture on the basis of its contexts.

### 2) Setting and research theoretic sample

The setting of this research was carried out in the community of Dewata Sewwae beliefs. The research setting was originally planned in some areas of Tolotang and community. By considering the research objectives, then the location of research focused on Tolotang Bacukiki Community in the province of South Sulawesi, Indonesia. The research setting was selected purposively. The location of this study is that culturally has a symbolic culture and also has an empirical understanding in an effort to preserve the environment based on local knowledge. The chosen location of this research is considered as a sample of theoretical research that represents the entire subject of research based on the context and the criteria of a research

objective. This acknowledgment allows the data tracer to be more valid.

### 3. Results and Discussion

#### 3.1 Results

##### a) Arajange forest in Tolotang Bacukiki community

The Arajange (King) Forest is a sacred forest for the Tolotang community. This forest is located in a mountain. The forest was called as Arajange because it is considered as the King emergence of Bacukiki kingdom. The king of Bacukiki is named La Bangenge, along with his aide called Arungkuru. La Bangenge is understood as a lowering of the aristocracy in Bacukiki and very sacred to the community of Tolotang. Regarding the appearance of La Bangenge in Bulu Roange, the following script of interviews with Research Subject 1:

*The Arajange Forest is a forest of the emergence of Bacukiki King, La Bangenge appeared and disappeared (missing in its grave) (Research Subject 1).*

The Arajange forest is not a customary forest but is believed by Tolotang community as a forest inherited by their ancestors. The emotional ties of the Tolotang community with the forest are quite close. According to Research Subject 2 that, Tolotang community pilgrimage to Arajange forest every January to February.

*Every year, Tolotang people come together and parkes their vehicles around the office of Bacukiki subdistrict (Research Subject 2).*

The Arajange Forest area belongs to a protected forest by the government and sacred by Tolotang Bacukiki community. Both Forest Service staff and Tolotang community preserves the Arajange Forest. This is based on the information by the Research Subject 3.

*Until now, the Tolotang community with the Forest Service has no problem in preserving the Arajange forest because they are taking care of it (Research Subject 3).*

Reviewing the local knowledge of Tolotang Bacukiki community in relation to the preservation of Arajange Forest is something that is understood in its symbolic context. Such understanding by the Tolotang community's viewpoint in seeing the Arajange Forest reflects the openness in expressing their belief.

##### b) Arajange forest as a symbol of nature conservation

###### 1) Arajange forest is a place for customary meeting

The Arajange Forest is the customary meeting place. The Arajange forest is the symbol of gathering all elements of the Tolotang community. Arajange Forest is believed to be a representative place of ancestor spirits Tolotang. In such connection, the gathering of Tolotang community from various elements is part of the unification of the Tolotang community. In this connection one of the informants stated:

*Sipulang is an annual party event beginning of each year is performed in the jungle of Arajange people come from different areas of South Sulawesi (Research Subject 1).*

In this connection, it is well understood that the Arajange Forest is a forest which in Tolotang community's view is a forest that can unify their solidarity and communicate their lives together in the future.

###### 2) Arajange forest is a symbol of ancestor heritage

In the Arajange forest, there is something so sacred the Tolotang community. The object shaped like a cannon, which is about 1 meter long. This object is very sacred for Tolotang community. Sufficiently understood in the understanding of Tolotang community of ancestral objects contributes significantly the existence of Arajange forest.

Sacral objects like cannons as weapons of ancestors that have been being in Arajange forest become a symbol as well as part of the spiritual reason for the sustainability of the Arajange forest from the act of human exploitation. In the view of one of the informants of the Tolotang community believes about the proximity of a cannon-like object to the Arajange forest as stated below:

*Sacred objects such as cannons removed and thrown away by the followers of Muhammadiyah into the abyss but then returned to their origin in the Arajange forest (Research Subject 5).*

In addition to the sacred objects understood by the Tolotang community and a symbol of the preservation of the forest, other things so sacred is "grave". Sufficiently understood by the Tolotang community that Arajange's forest is the ancestral heritage of Arung Bacukiki and became the venue of I Pabbere's wandering in defending belief in Dewata Sewwae. The Arajange forest is a sacred place of Tolotang people who do not want the forest to be exploited by humans.

###### 3) Arajange forest is a symbol of life

The Arajange Forest in Tolotang community belief is a symbol of life. It is understood that the mountains around the Arajange forest are the rocks. So the water sources as source of hope for life is the Arajange forest. Forests are a symbol of life as informed by the Research Subject 5.

*Wood felled resulting in less water (Research Subject 5).*

The belief above is sufficiently stated by the staff of the local government as Forest Service that the effort to keep the Arajange forest is part of the effort to maintain the sustainability of life in the nearest city. It is understood that the Arajange forest is the source of life as in the following statement.

*The arajange forest (guarded by the Tolotang community and highly sacred) is the source of the other river in the nearest city (Research Subject 6).*

Regarding the arajange forest understood as a symbol of life, it can be understood also by the presence of Wai Tompoe (well above the mountain, with a depth of about  $\pm 3$  meters but never dry throughout the year). Wells that are  $\pm 1$  meter



deep, regardless of water taken will not be depleted of water in the well.

*The well of Kanre Ladder Allo, is a well located within the Arajange forest. The well is never dry no matter how much water taken in the well will not run out of water. At the time of gathering, whatever the number of people who come will not run out of water in the well Kanre Tangga Allo (Research Subject 1).*

#### 4) Foerest is the real nature

In the Tolotang community belief, it shows how the community closes to nature. This community believes that everything is as it is without being engineered. Originality understood as something as it should not be added or subtracted. This belief in this community shows that it is so close to nature (including the forest).

The proximity of the tolontang community to this nature is apparent in the location of the Arajange forest. Arajange Forest with grave and sacred cannons are not fenced or not given any prohibited sign for visitors who wish to sign the place. This understanding shows how the Tolotang community views things as they are without any change without corresponding to what really is. Based on the above description, it is quite understandable that the Tolotang community is a follower of natural religion. In most religions of the earth, a harmony with nature is the characteristic of their teachings.

## 4. Discussion

A study of local culture-based environmental studies that has been studied in this research by taking research settings in the Bacukiki Tolotang indigenous communities is a reality and symbolic study. Referring to such studies, then the grand research design is directed to the paradigm of social definitions and social behavior. In this regard, referring to viewpoint on cultural understanding combined with behaviors of human and contingencies of reinforcement is such a wise understanding in view of culture as indispensable to the pattern of action filled with symbolic content (Denzin, 1973; Foster, 2000; Hatch & Cunliffe, 2012; G Ritzer, 1992; George Ritzer & Stepnisky, 2017; Taylor, 2011; Weber, 2009).

In the Tolotang-Bacukiki community, human behavior is related to the environmental context, mutual interaction that benefits people with the environment, and human interaction with a dynamic environment. Human interaction occurs at various levels is an appropriate view in view of the community community Tolotang indigenous communities. In other respects, human and culture constitute integrity which encompasses the environment is a view that can also be understood within the community to which research is subjected, in accordance with the integral power of that community.

In the Bacukiki Tolotang community, nature is not the only determinant of culture although it is understood that nature still colors human activities. Based on this understanding, the culture in the targeted research community is no longer environmental but remains cultural ceremony. Such a view indicates that the community of Tolotang is a community

that has been contaminated with outside cultures but still tied to the customary and natural order.

Regarding local knowledge as views and attitudes through the media of customary institutions that implement the norms or rules both in written and unwritten (Berkes et al., 2000; Blackwell & Colmenar, 2000; Mauro & Hardison, 2000; Stevenson, 1996). This understanding is quite in line with local observations within the Tolotang Bacukiki community. In a different understanding that local knowledge is interpreted as a hereditary a model of community-based management that is very wise to survive because indigenous knowledge is a justified understanding. In such an understanding, it is sufficiently understood that local knowledge is something that is born from a local community in which it contains knowledge that allows the birth of a harmonious social social order.

In this study, the natural environment is in accordance with human interaction with the physical, social, and cultural environment (Hough, 2004). It is clear in this study that the natural environment is not only physical (forest, river and other physical environments) but also the social environment (human, group and community relations) while the cultural environment is tradition, values, customs. In this connection, it is understood that the environment is not only the physical environment but also the social environment. In this sense, the analysis of the environment in this study is an analysis of human relations with nature (local knowledge) and human relationships with humans. Such a cultural understanding is wise in organizing life.

In relation to policy, policy is a set of concepts and principles that outline and base the plan in the implementation of a job, which involves leaders and ways of acting, goals (Blackwell & Colmenar, 2000). Principle or intent is a viewpoint not entirely related to the role of the village head in the Tolotang Bacukiki community. Environmental management policies such as those of village heads are less relevant. The environmental management policy in the targeted community is the policy undertaken by the Village Head based on local wisdom. The village head urged his community to do environmental conservation efforts based on the institutionalized culture pattern in their community. A number of strategies that must be understood in preserving the environment that includes maintaining essential ecological processes and life-sustaining systems, preserving and protecting a wide variety of genetics, and sustainable use of various species and ecosystems. In the Tolotang culture, it is well understood that the community maintains ecology, preserving the variety of genetics of forest-dependent sustainability.

## 5. Conclusion

The Arajange Forest in Tolotan Bacukiki community is a sacred forest. A number of cultural symbols indicate that human beings should not exploit te forest. In such a connection in the Tolotan Bacukiki community, the sustainability of Arajange forest is due to its supporting community having a number of local knowledge which thus contains a symbol to preserve it. It is so in the sense that the Arajange forest is a place of scavenger, a place to unite the

Tolotan community. The Arajange Forest is a symbol of an ancestral heritage that must be preserved (there is a cannon-shaped object). Forest is understood as a symbol of life (source of springs) and the environment (including the forest) is not something that needs to be engineered. Forest is a shadow of life that must be respected because it is very beneficial to human life.

Research on environmental conservation based on local culture is based on cultural wisdom that relies on deep-rooted traditions in society. In such an understanding, it is necessary for concerted efforts of stakeholders to encourage pragmatic action so that the local culture in question is embodied in legally binding policies and understood educatively in the life of the state. From such a case, concrete responses of policy makers are necessary for the birth of a wisdom based on local culture and in accordance with the demands of life. Research conducted on the Tolotan Bacukiki aimed at exploring cultures related to environmental conservation needs to be continued with research that traces the policy bias that has been done by stakeholders to the community.

## References

- [1] Bengston, D. N. (1994). Changing forest values and ecosystem management. *Society & Natural Resources*, 7(6), 515–533.
- [2] Berkes, F. (2004). Rethinking community-based conservation. *Conservation Biology*, 18(3), 621–630.
- [3] Berkes, F. (2007). Community-based conservation in a globalized world. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 104(39), 15188–15193.
- [4] Berkes, F. (2009). Evolution of co-management: role of knowledge generation, bridging organizations and social learning. *Journal of Environmental Management*, 90(5), 1692–1702.
- [5] Berkes, F., Colding, J., & Folke, C. (2000). Rediscovery of traditional ecological knowledge as adaptive management. *Ecological Applications*, 10(5), 1251–1262.
- [6] Blackwell, A. G., & Colmenar, R. (2000). Community-building: from local wisdom to public policy. *Public Health Reports*, 115(2–3), 161.
- [7] DeLoughrey, E. M., Gosson, R. K., & Handley, G. B. (2005). *Caribbean literature and the environment: Between nature and culture*. University of Virginia Press.
- [8] Denzin, N. K. (1973). *The research act: A theoretical introduction to sociological methods*. Transaction publishers.
- [9] Foster, J. B. (2000). *Marx's ecology: Materialism and nature*. NYU Press.
- [10] Hatch, M. J., & Cunliffe, A. L. (2012). *Organization theory: modern, symbolic and postmodern perspectives*. Oxford university press.
- [11] Hodgson, G. M., & Knudsen, T. (2011). Generalized Darwinism and evolutionary economics: from ontology to theory. *Biological Theory*, 1–12.
- [12] Hough, M. (2004). *Cities and natural process*. Routledge.
- [13] LeCompte, M. D., & Schensul, J. J. (1999). *Designing and conducting ethnographic research* (Vol. 1). Rowman Altamira.
- [14] Mauro, F., & Hardison, P. D. (2000). Traditional knowledge of indigenous and local communities: international debate and policy initiatives. *Ecological Applications*, 10(5), 1263–1269.
- [15] Ritzer, G. (1992). *Contemporary Sociological Theory*. McGraw-Hill.
- [16] Ritzer, G., & Stepnisky, J. (2017). *Modern sociological theory*. SAGE Publications.
- [17] Seiffert, M. E. B., & Loch, C. (2005). Systemic thinking in environmental management: support for sustainable development. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 13(12), 1197–1202.
- [18] Stevenson, M. G. (1996). Indigenous knowledge in environmental assessment. *Arctic*, 278–291.
- [19] Tallis, H., & Polasky, S. (2009). Mapping and valuing ecosystem services as an approach for conservation and natural-resource management. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 1162(1), 265–283.
- [20] Taylor, P. W. (2011). *Respect for nature: A theory of environmental ethics*. Princeton University Press.
- [21] Wals, A. E. J. (2007). *Social learning towards a sustainable world: Principles, perspectives, and praxis*. Wageningen Academic Pub.
- [22] Weber, M. (2009). *The theory of social and economic organization*. Simon and Schuster.