

ANTHROPOCENE CHARACTER BUILDING OF “KITAB AMBYO” READING IN BEDINGIN PONOROGO

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Abstract

Every nation has various innovation steps to shape the character of its nation. The character of a nation is reflected in the way they treat others, especially in times of need. This “anthropocene character building” research is an effort to understand humans as the focus of cultural events and ecosystems, allowing individuals to internalize feelings and differences with others. This paradigm is important for creating a harmonious and inclusive society. The urgency of this research is how good and strong identity and character become manifestations of three universal human traits, namely honesty, integrity, and generosity. People in Bedingin Ponorogo has realized and practiced the need to have character traits that will ensure the success of its community members. This situation places humans and the village ecosystem in a bond of integrity and high standards of behavior. This phenomenon shows positive behavior towards every human being who lives side by side with their environment. The purpose of this study is to reveal the importance of defining “character building” innovation with an “anthropocene” approach and to provide guidelines regarding the elements of effective and comprehensive “character building” needs. Stakeholders in Bedingin village agreed to provide traditional capital for its people to build quality human character, through reading of inherited sacred book that is called as Kitab Ambyo since 1995. This research reveals reading activities in the society, maps the pattern of writing narratives of Kitab Ambyo and determines the interdisciplinary influence of reading on humans, mentality, and the landscape of Bedingin village. The qualitative methodology of ethnographic anthropology is the reference for this study, where data acquisition and analysis are obtained from the interview process and direct observation of behavior, concern and its influence on relationships between individuals and groups in Bedingin village and its influence on their living environment.

Keywords: ideology; character; nation; anthropocene; Kitab-Ambyo

Introduction

Many people are concerned about the damage to children's healthy moral development. Rates of delinquency, pregnancy, violence, and substance abuse continue to rise among adolescents (1). Character development is crucial in every aspect of society; this paradigm must involve humans in synergy with the natural world. Children need consistent messages, and they need all adults in their lives to have high standards and expectations for ethical behavior (2,3). This is what is called "anthropocene" character development—a long-term, community-wide effort that prioritizes human and natural institutions such as schools, parents, social service agencies, law enforcement, religious institutions, businesses, and other youth and family organizations (4).

The term "anthropocene character building" is used in a very simplistic way, as its purpose is to problematize the political project of creating individual identity and focus on issues of human identity that are ethnic and geographical (5). The process of character development is complex and varies across time and space. Characters can overlap, and individuals may have multiple identities (6). And to emphasize the need for early character building for individuals in every corner of the region to develop good character, which includes knowing, caring for, and acting based on core ethical values such as respect, responsibility, honesty, justice, and compassion (7).

In Bedingin Village, Sambit District, Ponorogo Regency, character formation begins on the day a baby is born (8). On the first day of birth, the community, initiated by village elders, intensively reads the Ambyo book until it is finished, interpreted as a manifestation of spiritual support for the baby (9). This support is also given to the baby's parents with the aim of strengthening their journey to nurture, educate, teach, and love their offspring (10). The recitation of the Ambyo book is also intended to provide a spiritual foundation for local residents to support the new individual in navigating a life process that adheres to applicable customs, rules, and norms (11). With the background outlined above, the initial stage of this research focuses on the following questions:

1. What reasons make the Ambyo Book acceptable in the Bedingin village community?
2. What messages in the Ambyo Book are particularly memorable and touching for its listeners?
3. How does the Ambyo Book accommodate the context of "anthropocene" knowledge and its supporting components?
4. What are the challenges of translation, both linguistic and conceptual, and ensuring an anthropocentric interpretation of the Ambyo Book?
5. How does the Ambyo Book text articulate an understanding of environmental

change and the relationship between humans and nature at various temporal scales?

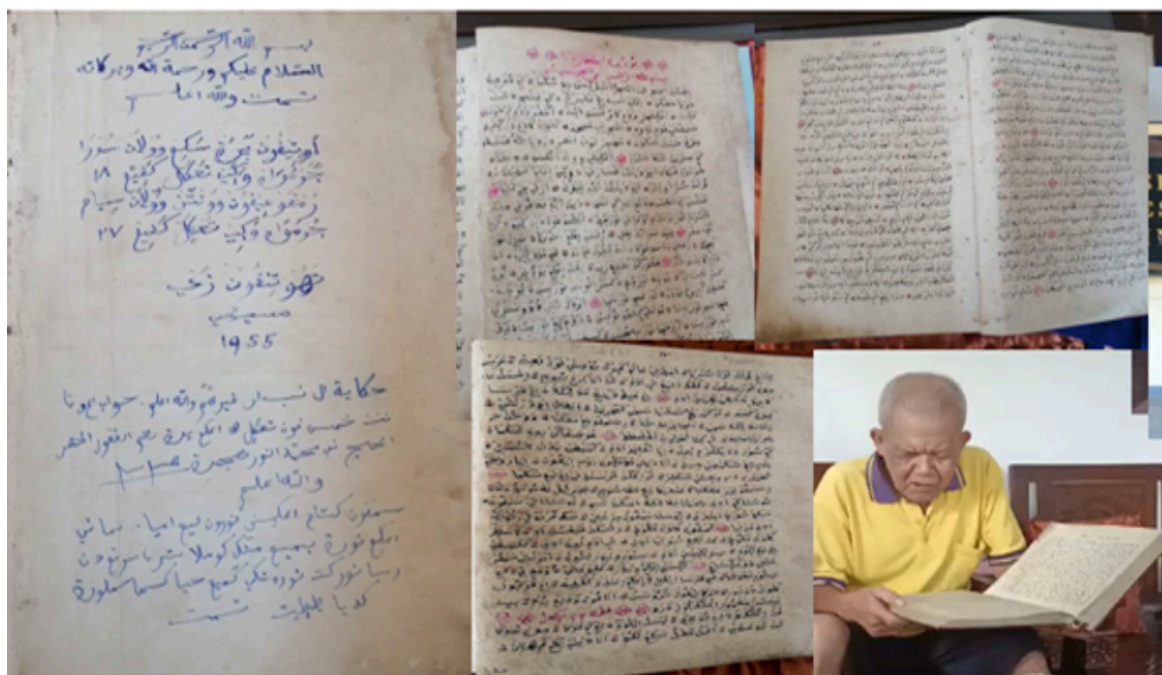


Figure 1

The Ambyo Book is a book containing the life stories of the prophets, compiled in a way that embodies noble, universal values practiced by the people of this village. Furthermore, this book is often used as a reference for guidance on various occasions, especially births and weddings (12).

A recent issue is the frequent occurrence of social, ethical, and moral violations, as well as violence in various forms, such as fights between students, promiscuity, crime, unethical behavior toward teachers, and various forms of violation of school rules. (13) (14)



Figure 2

This phenomenon raises deep concerns about the continued identity of the next generation in Bedingin village. This includes the successors to the Ambyo Book, of which only eight elders are currently able to recite the Ambyo Book because the letters are written in Arabic but the sounds produced are Javanese.

This research combines the "reader-response" approach and the "anthropocene" approach, a branch of ethnographic anthropology, as a method to address issues that all center on the role of humans and their objects. Reader response theory focuses on individual reactions and interpretations of a text, proposing that only readers can assign adequate meaning to a text (15) depending on their intelligence or knowledge of the history depicted, their mood, personal experiences, ideology, and culture (16).

Meanwhile, the Anthropocene approach emphasizes the strong relationships across spatial and temporal scales of humans within their ecosystems. Phenomena occurring over long timescales impact decision-making and policies over much shorter timescales, and vice versa (17), creating dependencies that are not always explicitly understood in relation to people's habitats and behaviors.

Methodology

This research uses a qualitative descriptive method. Qualitative research is a naturalistic inquiry process that seeks an in-depth understanding of social phenomena in their natural setting (19). This approach focuses on the "why" rather than the "what" of social phenomena and relies on the direct experiences of humans as meaning-making agents in their daily lives. Qualitative research is a type of research that explores and provides deeper insights into real-world problems. The methods applied involve interventions or introducing treatments that generate hypotheses and further investigate and understand non-numerical data. Qualitative research based on ethnographic anthropology emphasizes empirical data, perceptions, and participant

behavior. It answers the how and why, not the how much or how many (20). This research can be structured as a stand-alone study, relying solely on qualitative data, or it can be part of a mixed-methods study that combines qualitative and quantitative data. The figure below introduces readers to some basic concepts, definitions, terminology, and applications of qualitative research.

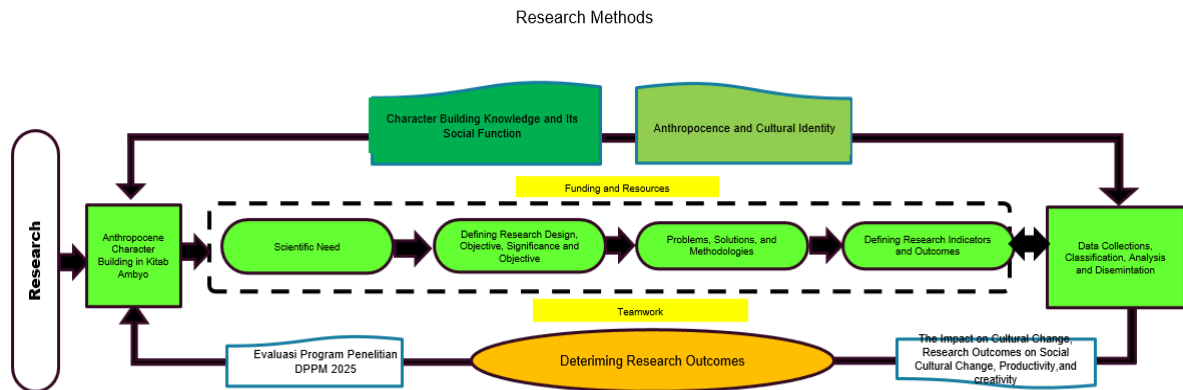


Figure 3

Qualitative research uses several techniques, including interviews, focus groups, and observation. Interviews may be unstructured, with open-ended questions on a topic and the interviewer adjusting their responses (21). Structured interviews involve a predetermined set of questions asked of each participant. They are typically one-on-one and are suitable for sensitive topics or topics requiring in-depth exploration. Focus groups are often conducted with a target number of 8-12 participants and are used when group dynamics and a collective perspective on a topic are desired. Researchers can act as participant-observers to share the subject's experiences, or as non-participants or detached observers.

The Reader Response Criticism approach is part of the data analysis method related to readers' ability to analyze texts. In this study, data obtained from interviews with listeners of the Ambyo Book reading were classified and processed to determine the listeners' perceptions. Reader Response Theory is the reaction generated by readers that changes our perception of the text, the reader, and the creation of meaning (22). Meaning is created in the interaction between the reader and the text. The reader response theory applied by the researcher is the transactional reader response theory proposed by Louise Rosenblatt. According to her, feelings, associations, and memories arise when we read, and these responses influence how we understand the text as we read it (23). The literature we encounter prior to this reading, the sum total of our accumulated knowledge, and even our current physical condition and mood will influence us as well. However, at certain points while we read, the text acts as a blueprint that we can use to correct our interpretation when we realize it has strayed too far from what is written on the page. This process of correcting our interpretation as we move through the text usually results in us returning to previous sections in light of new developments in the text. Thus, the text guides our self-correction process as we read

and will continue to do so after the reading is complete if we return and reread parts, or the entire text, to develop or complete our interpretation (24). Thus, the creation of poetry, a work of literature, is the product of a transaction between the text and the reader, both of whom are equally important in the process. This transaction between the text and the reader can occur, in the reader's perception of the text, but it must be aesthetic rather than efferent. When the reader reads in an efferent mode, the reader focuses solely on the information contained in the text, as if the text were a repository of facts and ideas to be taken forward.

This research is expected to uncover the history of the development of the reading of the Kitab Ambyo in Bedingin village; to find out the acceptance of the Bedingin village community towards the reading of the Ambyo Book; to explain the reasons why the Ambyo Book is acceptable in the Bedingin village community; and to identify the messages in the Ambyo Book which are very impressive and touching for the community that listens to it (25).

Results and Discussion

Bedingin Sambit Village, Ponorogo, is home to an ancient text of significant historical and cultural significance in Indonesia, known as the Kitab Ambyo. Believed to have been written in the 18th century, this manuscript is a compilation of teachings and wisdom passed down through generations in the Ponorogo region. As a graduate student with a background in literature and history, I had the opportunity to analyze this manuscript in depth, and I found its contents to be rich and thought-provoking.

One of the main aspects of the Kitab Ambyo found in Bedingin Sambit Village, Ponorogo, that stood out to me was its language and writing style. The manuscript is written in Javanese, a language rich in symbolism and nuance. Through my analysis, I came to understand that the language used in this manuscript is not only a means of communication but also a reflection of the cultural and spiritual beliefs of the Ponorogo people.

Beyond the language, the manuscript's content is equally fascinating. The Ambyo Book contains numerous teachings on various aspects of life, including morality, ethics, and spirituality, passed down by our ancestors through their understanding of the stories of 25 prophets they knew. Through my analysis, I found that these teachings are presented in a profound and accessible manner, making them relevant to today's readers.

Furthermore, the manuscript also contains stories and myths that provide insight into the beliefs and cultural practices of the Ponorogo people. Through my analysis, I was able to uncover layers of meaning and symbolism within these stories, revealing the values and traditions that have shaped the community for centuries.

One of the most fascinating aspects of the Ambyo Book, unique to the Ponorogo region, is its depiction of power dynamics and social relations within the community. Through my analysis, I found that the manuscript offers a nuanced perspective on issues such as leadership, authority, and social hierarchy. By examining these themes, I gained a deeper understanding of the complex dynamics underlying Ponorogo's social structure.

Furthermore, this manuscript also contains practical advice and guidance on various aspects of life, such as health, agriculture, and family relationships. Through my analysis, I found that these teachings are rooted in the practical realities of everyday life in Ponorogo, demonstrating the pragmatic and resourceful nature of the people of the region.

Beyond its practical wisdom, the Kitab Ambyo also explores spiritual and metaphysical themes, such as the nature of existence, the afterlife, and the relationship between humans and the divine. Through my analysis, I found that these teachings offer a profound and insightful perspective on the mysteries of life and death, inviting readers to ponder the deeper meaning of their existence.

Overall, my analysis of the Kitab, sacred to the Bedingin Sambit Community of Ponorogo, has revealed a manuscript that is not only a valuable historical document, but also a treasure trove of wisdom and insight. Through its language, content, and themes, this manuscript offers a window into Ponorogo's rich cultural heritage and provides a fascinating glimpse into the beliefs and traditions of its people.

As a graduate student, I continually strive to deepen my understanding of the world around me through careful analysis and critical thinking. Bedingin Sambit Ponorogo has provided me with a unique opportunity to engage with a text that is both intellectually stimulating and spiritually enriching. I am grateful for the chance to explore this manuscript and uncover the hidden truths and teachings contained within its pages.

Throughout this research study on Reader Responses to the Book of Ambyo, several key findings have emerged that shed light on how readers engage with and interpret this complex text. The Book of Ambyo, a mystical and allegorical text from Indonesian literature, presents readers with a dense and layered narrative that challenges traditional notions of storytelling and interpretation. Through a close examination of reader responses to this text, it becomes clear that readers approach the Book of Ambyo from multiple perspectives and engage with its mysterious themes in diverse ways.

One of the main conclusions drawn from this study is that readers of the Book of Ambyo deeply engaged with the text's spiritual and allegorical elements. Many readers described the text as a profound and transformative experience, with themes of self-discovery and spiritual awakening deeply resonating with their own personal beliefs

and experiences. This suggests that the Book of Ambyo serves as a powerful tool for self-reflection and spiritual growth, inviting readers to explore their own beliefs and values in deeper and more meaningful ways.

Another key finding of this study is that readers of the Book of Ambyo were drawn to its unique narrative structure and unconventional storytelling techniques. The text's fragmented and nonlinear narrative style challenged readers to think beyond the traditional boundaries of storytelling, encouraging them to engage with the text in a more active and participatory manner. This finding suggests that readers of the Book of Ambyo were not passive consumers of the text, but rather active participants in the construction of its meaning.

Furthermore, it becomes clear that readers of the Book of Ambyo were deeply influenced by the cultural and historical context in which the text was situated. Many readers described the text as a reflection of Indonesian culture and society, with themes of mysticism and spirituality deeply intertwined with the country's rich cultural heritage. These findings highlight the ways in which readers bring their own cultural backgrounds and experiences into their interpretations of the text, shaping their understanding of its themes and messages in deeply personal ways.

Furthermore, this research has revealed that readers of the Book of Ambyo are highly attuned to the text's complex symbolism and allegory. Many readers described the text as a puzzle to be solved, with enigmatic symbols and metaphors inviting them to dig deeper and uncover hidden meanings. These findings suggest that readers of the Book of Ambyo are intellectually curious and eager to engage with the text on a deeper level, exploring complex themes and ideas with a critical and analytical eye.

Furthermore, it is clear that readers of the Book of Ambyo are deeply moved by the text's emotional and philosophical resonance. Many readers described the text as a deeply emotional and thought-provoking experience, with themes of love, death, and transformation evoking deep feelings of empathy and compassion. These findings suggest that readers of the Book of Ambyo were drawn to universal themes and eternal truths, finding in its pages a source of profound and enduring inspiration and wisdom.

1. Structure of the Ambyo Book Text

The Ambyo Book text is one of the most common forms of storytelling across various cultures and time periods, offering diverse insights into the values, beliefs, and social customs of the society in which it emerged. While narratives can take many forms—from oral traditions to modern novels—the Ambyo Book text typically adheres to a recognizable structure that guides the reader through a coherent and engaging story. This narrative structure often includes distinct elements such as exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution. Understanding this structure is crucial for academics and practitioners in various fields, including literature, communications, and

even psychology, as it explains how stories function in human culture.

The exposition serves as the foundation of the narrative, introducing key characters, the setting, and the context. This initial stage establishes the story's world, which can shift between familiar and exotic locations, set in the past, present, or future. Furthermore, the exposition often hints at the central conflict or thematic issues that will develop throughout the narrative. By placing the reader in the story's environment and establishing its main characters, the exposition lays the groundwork for emotional and intellectual investment that will develop as the narrative progresses.

Following the exposition, the narrative typically enters a rising action phase, where complications arise and the stakes rise. This is where the characters face obstacles or challenges that threaten their goals. This rising action is marked by a series of events that create tension and propel the narrative forward, building to the story's climax. This phase is crucial for developing character arcs, as protagonists must navigate complex situations that often force them to make difficult choices, revealing their motivations, weaknesses, and strengths. Narrative pacing and emotional resonance are crucial during this phase, as effective writers use dramatic tension to keep readers engaged and invested in the outcome.

The climax marks a turning point in the narrative—often referred to as the moment of greatest tension or conflict. This is where the narrative's stakes reach their peak, and the characters face their greatest challenges. The choices and actions taken during this crucial moment are crucial not only for character development but also for thematic resolution. The climax often serves as a metaphorical crossroads that forces characters to confront their inner conflicts and external challenges, which can lead to a transformative experience for both the characters and the audience. Scholars point out that the emotional gravity of this section is often what makes a story memorable, as it crystallizes the narrative's central themes.

After the climax, the narrative transitions to falling action, where tension begins to subside. This phase is characterized by characters facing the impact of the climactic events and moving toward resolution. Here, the narrative typically addresses the consequences of the characters' choices, answering questions raised during the rising action and climax. This stage provides the reader with closure, as it explains the outcome of the conflict and reaffirms the narrative's main themes. While some narratives may end with a clear resolution, others may leave certain elements ambiguous or open-ended, inviting further reflection and interpretation from the audience.

Finally, the resolution or denouement provides a sense of closure, tying up loose ends and answering lingering questions. In traditional narratives, this section often reflects on the story's moral or highlights the character's development throughout their journey. The resolution can serve as a commentary on broader social or philosophical

issues, reinforcing themes established earlier in the narrative. In many cases, this final section invites readers to reflect on the implications of the characters' journeys, encouraging them to consider their own experiences in light of the narrative's lessons.

The importance of adhering to this traditional structure lies not only in facilitating the coherence of the Kitab Ambyo but also in engaging the audience. More than mere entertainment, a well-structured narrative provides a framework for readers to interpret their own lives and worldviews. The emotional rhythms established within the narrative's flow resonate with universal human experiences, making the study of the Kitab Ambyo's structure a valuable endeavor across disciplines, including anthropology and psychology, where narratives are examined for their role in shaping identity and community.

The music used in the Ambyo Book recitation is derived from the periodization of human existence, from the womb to the afterlife. Thirteen music pieces can be harmonized with the Ambyo Book recitation: Maskumambang, Mijil, Sinom, Kinanthi, Asmarandana, Gambuh, Dhandhanggula, Durma, Pangkur, Megatruh, Wirangrong, Pucung, and Gurisa.

Conclusion

The Book of Ambyo has provided valuable insights into how readers engage with and interpret this complex and enigmatic text. Readers of the Book of Ambyo approach the text from multiple perspectives and engage with its spiritual, allegorical, and cultural themes in diverse and deeply personal ways. Through a close examination of reader responses to the Book of Ambyo, it becomes clear that readers are drawn to the text's unconventional narrative structure, intricate symbolism, and emotional resonance. Overall, this study highlights how readers of the Book of Ambyo actively participate in the construction of meaning, bringing their own cultural backgrounds, experiences, and interpretations to bear on their engagement with this rich and complex text.

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