

From Sastra Hijau to Sastra Bahari: Place, Resistance, and Indigeneity in *Danum* and *Dari Rahim Ombak*

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Abstract

This paper examines contemporary Indonesian literature's engagement with the nation's ecological crises through a comparative analysis of Abroorza A. Yusra's *Danum* and Tison Sahabuddin Bungin's *Dari Rahim Ombak*. While existing studies of *Sastra Hijau* (Green Literature) have focused on terrestrial narratives, and emerging scholarship on *Sastra Bahari* (Maritime Literature) explores maritime spaces, few analyses have integrated terrestrial and maritime domains within a single framework. This study argues that examining forest and sea environments together shows how Indonesian fiction reconceptualizes place as a site of Indigenous knowledge systems that resist extractive capitalism and state complicity in environmental destruction. Using postcolonial ecocriticism and Blue Humanities methods, this analysis examines how *Danum* represents bioregional attachments threatened by palm oil expansion, while *Dari Rahim Ombak* depicts maritime cosmologies disrupted by blast fishing and structural poverty. The analysis reveals that both novels portray resistance as both vulnerable and adaptive, expressed through everyday cultural practices. Through its integration of terrestrial and maritime perspectives, this study demonstrates literature's critical role in showing the inseparable relationship between ecological survival and cultural sovereignty in contemporary Indonesia.

Keywords: Blue Humanities, Indonesian Literature, Postcolonial Ecocriticism, Sastra Bahari, Sastra Hijau

Introduction

Indonesia's accelerating ecological crisis demands not only scientific and policy-based solutions but also critical engagement through cultural and literary analysis. As Li and Semedi (2021) argue, extractive industries such as palm oil continue to reshape rural and Indigenous territories, driving large-scale deforestation and social displacement. At the same time, severe marine degradation — including widespread coral reef loss — illustrates how coastal ecologies face intensifying threats from destructive fishing and climate change (Razak et al., 2022). As the world's largest archipelagic nation—stretching across more than 17,000 islands and home to vast tropical forests—Indonesia stands at a fragile intersection of economic expansion and environmental decline. Massive palm oil plantations, deforestation, and coral reef bleaching have become intertwined threats to ecological and cultural survival. Against this backdrop, Indonesian writers have turned literature into a space of critique and resistance, giving rise to two vital trends: *Sastra Hijau* (Green Literature) and *Sastra Bahari* (Maritime Literature).

Green Literature has roots in early nationalist works like Muhammad Yamin's *Bukit Barisan* and *Tanah Air*, which “celebrate nature and the homeland” (Dewi, 2017, p. 26). Over time, this ecological thread deepened through prose by authors such as Ahmad Tohari, whose *Di Kaki Bukit Cibalak* “illustrates deforestation... caused by human actions” (Wiyatmi, 2021, p. 9). This movement centers on forests, farmland, and rivers, exploring how local communities

resist land grabs and environmental degradation. Meanwhile, *Sastra Bahari* reflects a newer shift that responds to the relative neglect of Indonesia's oceanic identity. As Bungin's *Dari Rahim Ombak* shows, contemporary writers "re-center the ocean as a sacred space and site of resistance" (2015, pp. xi–xii).

This study places two key texts in conversation: Abroorza A. Yusra's *Danum* and Tison Sahabuddin Bungin's *Dari Rahim Ombak*. *Danum* portrays the Uud Danum people of Borneo, whose forests and rivers are bound to Kaharingan beliefs—a worldview that upholds "a balanced relationship between humans, nature, and God" (2021, p. 161). The novel exposes how palm oil expansion fractures these bonds and fuels what Nixon (2011) describes as "slow violence." In contrast, *Dari Rahim Ombak* shifts to coastal Sumbawa, where the Bajo people treat the sea as a living relative. Bungin's narrative blends maritime cosmology, Islamic ritual, and Indigenous law to show how reef destruction and blast fishing erode ancestral ties. Here, the ocean becomes, in Cilano and DeLoughrey's terms, "a site of cultural memory and ecological resistance" (2007, p. 84).

Both novels confront the hidden costs of modern development. *Danum* critiques what Escobar (1995) calls a "top-down, ethnocentric" model of growth that disguises "development aggression" (Doyle & Gilbert, 2011). It shows how "capitalist-driven development" disrupts Indigenous relationships to land and belief. Meanwhile, *Dari Rahim Ombak* reveals how poverty, corruption, and state neglect sustain marine destruction. Bungin's depiction of blast fishing networks illustrates "systemic complicity among state actors" (Pellow, 2018, p. 6) rather than isolated crimes.

This study asks: how do land and sea shape different ethical ties between communities and nature? In what ways do Kaharingan and Bajo maritime cosmology sustain resistance? And how do both works portray fractured communities—Santo's divided family in *Danum* and the three siblings in *Dari Rahim Ombak*—to dramatize moral and economic dilemmas? These questions connect to the idea of "environmentalism of the poor," where survival, not luxury, motivates care for place (Guha & Martinez-Alier, 1997). By bridging *Sastra Hijau* and *Sastra Bahari*, this paper argues that Indonesian literature must be read as both land- and sea-centered. Both texts insist that ecological justice and cultural survival are inseparable. Together, *Danum* and *Dari Rahim Ombak* reveal how forests and oceans are more than resources: they are living archives of memory, struggle, and hope.

Recent scholarship on Indonesian environmental literature has concentrated mainly on terrestrial ecologies and rural degradation under the framework of *Sastra Hijau*. For instance, Dewi and Indriyanto (2023) and Wiyatmi et al (2022) examine how novels and poetry foreground deforestation, land dispossession, and local resistance, situating these themes within postcolonial ecocriticism. A more recent contribution by Saragih and Prasetyo (2023)(2023) explores the representation of coastal identities in short stories but notes that marine ecocriticism remains marginal compared to land-focused studies. Oppermann (2023) and Dobrin (2021) extend the *Blue Humanities* discourse to highlight how oceans are increasingly framed as active cultural agents in global ecocriticism, yet Southeast Asian scholarship still seldom combines terrestrial and maritime perspectives in a single comparative framework. While a few studies acknowledge the symbolic role of the sea in Indonesian prose (Ryan, 2018; Wybranowska, 2021) detailed comparative work that bridges forest-based bioregionalism with Indigenous maritime epistemologies remains rare. This study addresses this gap by reading *Danum* and *Dari Rahim Ombak* together, demonstrating how contemporary Indonesian literature articulates linked ecological struggles and forms of resistance across both inland and coastal spaces.

Method

This study adopts a qualitative interpretive design to examine how Indonesian Green Literature (*Sastra Hijau*) and Blue Literature (*Sastra Bahari*) articulate ecological critique and Indigenous resistance. Creswell emphasizes that qualitative research is best suited to exploring the meanings individuals or groups ascribe to social or human problems, using rich description rather than numerical analysis (2014, p. 7). Following Creswell's framework, this study treats literary texts as cultural documents that encode ecological worldviews, Indigenous knowledge, and postcolonial tensions. As Kothari adds, qualitative research "makes use of available facts or information to analyze and to make a critical evaluation," (2004, p. 110) aligning with the interpretive method employed here, where close reading and thematic coding uncover the deeper relations between place, power, and identity.

Operational Concepts

The key operational concepts guiding this study are place, resistance, and indigeneity. Place is understood both as a physical environment (Buell, 2005)—forests in *Danum* and the ocean in *Dari Rahim Ombak*—and as a cultural landscape imbued with Indigenous cosmology and ritual meaning. Resistance refers to how characters and communities confront or subvert extractive capitalist systems, whether through direct opposition to oil palm expansion in *Danum* or grassroots coral reef protection in *Dari Rahim Ombak*. Indigeneity is explored through oral traditions, customary law, and ritual practices, including the Uud Danum's Kaharingan worldview and agrarian customs in *Danum*, as well as the Bajo's sea-bound taboos and ceremonies such as Tiba Raki and Nampoh Tawar in *Dari Rahim Ombak*.

Research Design and Data

The study uses a textual analysis approach. *Danum* (Abroorza A., 2021) and *Dari Rahim Ombak* (Bungin, 2015) serve as primary data. Supporting references include scholarly articles on Indonesian ecocriticism (Dewi, Wiyatmi) and key theoretical sources (Nixon, Escobar, Cilano & DeLoughrey). Relevant passages are identified, coded by theme (e.g., place, resistance, development), and critically compared. Purposive sampling is applied to select excerpts that best represent the core themes: (1) forest and land conflicts; (2) oceanic cosmology and marine degradation; and (3) community narratives of cultural continuity and fracture. This allows for a focused yet comparative reading that reflects each text's distinctive ecological and cultural terrain.

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in postcolonial ecocriticism and the emergent Blue Humanities. Drawing on Nixon's (2011) idea of slow violence, the research examines how *Danum* narrates the gradual destruction of forests and the erosion of the Uud Danum's cultural landscape under expanding palm oil plantations. In this view, place is never neutral: it is both physical territory and symbolic ground where local cosmologies and ecological ethics resist commodification. For *Dari Rahim Ombak*, place shifts from forest to ocean, with the sea reframed through Blue Humanities perspectives (Mentz, 2009; Oppermann, 2023) as an animate domain, not merely a resource. Bungin's narrative aligns with this by presenting the ocean as "a sacred space and site of resistance" (Bungin, 2015) embedded in Bajo oral tradition and everyday ritual practice.

The study treats indigeneity as a core concept, drawing on Indigenous studies and postcolonial theory to read how both novels foreground customary knowledge, belief systems, and local law. In *Danum*, Kaharingan cosmology and agrarian customs shape the community's spiritual bond with the land—echoing what Bladow and Ladino (2018) describe as land-based ontologies rooted in everyday practice. Kaharingan, the indigenous religion of the Dayak

people in Kalimantan, predates the arrival of other religions to the region. This term derives from the Old Dayak word “haring,” meaning “life” or “alive,” reflecting its emphasis on the vitality of existence. A core aspect is Batang Haring or Garing, the tree of life. This includes rituals, taboos, and oral narratives such as Kolimoi and Tahtum that locate identity firmly in place. Similarly, *Dari Rahim Ombak* emphasizes Bajo maritime indigeneity through sea taboos, ancestral rituals like Tiba Raki and Nampoh Tawar, and the syncretic weaving of Islamic ethics with ancestral cosmology (Haerulloh et al., 2021). The sea is positioned as a sentient presence embedded in a relational ontology, challenging extractive and anthropocentric views of nature. Tiba Raki enacts an Indigenous epistemology that sustains ecological balance and spiritual continuity in this context. By foregrounding Indigenous frameworks, both works challenge colonial and modern logics that reduce land or sea to extractive assets.

Finally, the framework positions *resistance* as an ongoing dialectic that shapes the texts’ ecological critique. Following Escobar’s (1995) argument that modern development remains a “top-down, ethnocentric process,” the study reads *Danum* through Doyle and Gilbert’s (2011) notion of “development aggression” to trace how palm oil expansion is legitimized through state power but contested through community agency. Bungin’s novel extends this by showing how resistance operates at the threshold of structural violence and local survival: its depiction of blast fishing networks highlights what Pellow (2018) terms “systemic complicity among state actors,” while the persistence of Bajo maritime ethics embodies Guha and Martínez-Alier’s (1997) environmentalism of the poor. Together, these perspectives illuminate how contemporary Indonesian literature imagines forests and oceans as interlinked sites of struggle, where ecological survival and cultural sovereignty are inseparable.

Findings and Discussion

While Indonesian environmental literature has developed distinct traditions of *Sastra Hijau* (Green Literature) and *Sastra Bahari* (Maritime Literature), few studies have examined how these domains intersect in contemporary fiction. This study addresses this gap by comparing Abroorza A. Yusra’s *Danum* and Tison Sahabuddin Bungin’s *Dari Rahim Ombak* to analyze how Indonesian novels articulate place, indigeneity, and resistance across terrestrial and maritime environments. Using postcolonial ecocriticism and Blue Humanities frameworks, this research examines how these texts represent land and sea not as passive ecological settings but as active sites of cultural knowledge and resistance to extractive development. In *Danum*, the forest functions as a bioregional space integral to Uud Danum Kaharingan cosmology and traditional agricultural practices, while *Dari Rahim Ombak* portrays the ocean as a sacred domain grounded in Bajo maritime knowledge and Islamic ritual traditions. The study demonstrates that reading forest and sea narratives together exposes the interconnected nature of ecological and cultural resistance in Indonesia’s extractive economy.

To develop this comparative reading, the study employed thematic coding of narrative scenes, characters, and ritual episodes that illustrate how each novel stages environmental conflict and community agency. Close textual analysis focused on key passages—such as the depiction of berladang in *Danum* or the Tiba Raki ritual in *Dari Rahim Ombak*—to trace how land-based and maritime cosmologies inform characters’ relationships with place and shape their strategies of resistance. The findings highlight points of convergence and divergence: both works reveal how capitalist expansion fractures Indigenous lifeways, yet they do so through distinct ecological terrains and cultural systems—agrarian bioregionalism in the forest and oceanic kinship along the coast. This synthesis provides the basis for the more detailed thematic discussions that follow.

In *Danum*, place is not merely a geographical setting but a sacred landscape intertwined with the Uud Danum community’s cultural survival. Yusra’s narrative frames the forest as a

“small paradise” (2021, p. 30) governed by the Kaharingan cosmology, which positions humans, nature, and ancestral spirits in a balanced, reciprocal relationship. This relationship is sustained through agrarian practices such as *berladang padi Gunung* (upland rice farming), which involves taboos and rituals like *Monilik* to ensure harmony with nature’s guardians (Kardi & Reza, 2023). The forest is thus imagined as both an ecological system and a repository of cultural memory, symbolized by relics like the *Patung Katak-Kadal* and *Patung Singa Berbadan Lembu*, which connect the Uud Danum to their precolonial heritage (2021, p. 30). When Santo warns his community that the “sacred forest, their cultural heritage, and way of life” are threatened by palm oil expansion (2021, p. 23), Yusra makes clear that place is not a passive commodity but an active site of resistance.

By contrast, *Dari Rahim Ombak* shifts the representation of place from inland forest to coastal sea, reframing the ocean as a living agent embedded in Bajo maritime cosmology. Bungin’s narrative insists that the ocean is “not merely a resource but a living relative”, animated by ancestral guardians known as *umbo ma’dilao* (Raudloh et al., 2023). Rituals such as *Tiba Raki*—where villagers release offerings to the sea—and *Nampoh Tawar*—performed before voyages—reflect what Whyte (2018) calls “systems of responsibilities” rooted in kinship and care. Bungin shows how this relational sense of place governs ethical interactions with marine life, as when an elder reminds Katir’s generation that “nature too is a living being, as the ancestors taught us” (2015, p. 17). The sea’s sacredness is further reinforced by Islamic practice woven into daily seafaring: voyages begin with blessings and the *Basmalah*, marking the ocean as a moral space where spiritual continuity and ecological balance converge.

Taken together, these narratives reveal how place is reimagined as more than an extractable resource: it is a storied space that anchors identity, ritual, and resistance. While *Danum* locates this bond in the forest’s bioregional integrity and the Kaharingan’s rootedness in the land, *Dari Rahim Ombak* locates it in oceanic kinship and the Bajo’s seaborne cosmology. Both highlight how Indigenous perspectives recode territory as an ethical landscape—one that modern capitalist development threatens to uproot or reduce to profit. By staging these conflicts in the forest and at sea, the novels invite readers to see place not as backdrop but as an active protagonist in the struggle for ecological and cultural survival.

In Danum, indigeneity is entwined with place through the Uud Danum’s Kaharingan belief system, which informs every aspect of the community’s relationship with their forested homeland. The novel foregrounds how oral traditions such as Kolimoi and Tahtum preserve cosmological knowledge that situates humans within a living, interdependent environment (2021, p. 147). These oral narratives recount the origins of life and the sacred connection between the earthly realm and the danum Kaharingan, the source of life itself. Santo’s efforts to protect sacred forests and rivers reflect an understanding that cultural survival depends on the transmission of this knowledge. As he laments the neglect of these traditions—“Who will perform the Pohpas? Who can chant Kolimoi and Tahtum?” (Abroorza A, 2021, p. 144), the text underscores the fragility of Indigenous epistemology when faced with capitalist encroachment and generational disconnect.

Beyond oral storytelling, Yusra shows how Kaharingan knowledge is enacted through agrarian customs like *berladang*, where farming is not simply labor but a ritualized practice of inhabitation. As Nadi’s experience reveals, tending rice fields connects the human soul to the land: “A field is more than just soil, a spread of rice, sparrows, hill panoramas, or surrounding forests. It is part of the human soul” (Abroorza A, 2021, p. 81). Such passages echo Bladow and Ladino’s (2018) notion of land-based ontologies, where daily practices embody ecological ethics rooted in ancestral wisdom. However, Danum also shows how modernity disrupts this continuity: when the oil palm plantations expand, the younger generation begins to see farming as mere subsistence rather than spiritual stewardship, eroding Kaharingan values from within.

Dari Rahim Ombak approaches indigeneity through the lens of maritime knowledge systems unique to the Bajo people. Bungin's narrative demonstrates how ancestral sea taboos, oral legends like the Legenda Si Kareo, and rituals such as Tiba Raki and Nampoh Tawar sustain what Ingersoll (2023) calls "seascape epistemology." These practices bind the community to the ocean not just materially but spiritually, affirming the sea as a living ancestor rather than an exploitable frontier. The novel also highlights a remarkable adaptive layer: the integration of Islam as a reinforcing rather than erasing force. Ritual specialists (sandro) now blend Quranic verses and concepts like barakka (blessing) with older beliefs, ensuring continuity of marine ethics even under shifting religious and social conditions (Haerulloh et al., 2021). By dramatizing how Indigenous knowledge persists, adapts, and is reasserted through ritual, Bungin offers a portrait of resilience that is both cultural and ecological.

Having explored how *Danum* and *Dari Rahim Ombak* construct place and sustain Indigenous knowledge, this section now turns to how both novels dramatize resistance as a complex and often contradictory process. Each text reveals that defending forests or seas is not simply a matter of opposing external threats; it is entangled with economic pressures, government complicity, and tensions within the community itself. By showing how resistance can be weakened, co-opted, or reborn through new forms of grassroots action, these works challenge simplistic ideas of environmental struggle. Instead, they argue that true ecological resistance is fragile, uneven, and rooted in everyday negotiations over survival, belonging, and cultural continuity. This layered depiction of resistance forms a crucial link between Indonesian Green and Blue Literature's critique of modern development and their visions for an alternative ecological future.

While *Danum* represents the continued existence of local cultural and natural elements, it also notes how these are threatened by external forces—corporate interests, capitalism, and the nation. The novel critiques central and local governments as collaborators in corporate expansion under the guise of development. Their actions, including the granting of over eleven thousand hectares for oil palm plantations, perpetuate patterns of land dispossession and resource exploitation reminiscent of colonialism (Abroorza A, 2021, pp. 4–5). Government officials are depicted not as protectors of their communities but as collaborators in corporate exploitation, engaging in what the novel describes as a symbiotic relationship with capitalism. Permits are issued in abundance, and financial incentives flow back to those in power. To legitimize land transfers, companies fabricate the identities of community representatives who "agree" to the deals. Santo, who resists these efforts to protect Indigenous land, is labeled as obstructing development, especially in Indonesia's outer islands. As a company official points out,

'Trust us, sir. You support regional progress if you don't obstruct the company's activities. Areas like Kalimantan need significant investments to develop more quickly. Without it, they'll fall further behind other islands.'

Santo had grown weary of the sweet promises tied to the word "development". To him, its synonyms were now "oppression" and "theft of rights (Abroorza A, 2021, p. 215).

Yusra's critique in *Danum* resonates with Escobar's analysis of development as a technocratic project that elevates capitalist interests while sidelining local agency (1995). In the novel, the rhetoric of "progress" becomes a tool to legitimize land appropriation and suppress Indigenous dissent, recasting resistance as backwardness or obstruction to national growth.

Yusra's novel highlights the tragic dialectic of such resistance: while the community initially mobilizes to protect their ancestral lands, the lure of short-term economic gain, backed by government collusion with corporations, steadily undermines collective resolve. Official maps deliberately erase homes and sacred forests, transforming the land into blank "space" for exploitation (Abroorza A, 2021, p. 152). Santo's hand-drawn counter-maps, village meetings,

and spiritual appeals cannot fully halt the tide of dispossession when the narrative of “progress” has already taken root among his people. This tension reflects Nixon’s (2011) concept of slow violence—harm that seeps through everyday life so insidiously that resistance becomes both necessary and tragically precarious.

Dari Rahim Ombak presents a more complex view of environmental resistance by examining how structural forces can corrupt even well-intentioned conservation efforts. The novel follows Katir, a young advocate who initially opposes destructive blast fishing practices but eventually becomes absorbed into the very networks he once fought against. Bungin uses Katir's trajectory to illustrate how ecological ethics can collapse under the weight of survival pressures, poverty, and local corruption. Katir's transformation is not presented as a simple moral failure but as the inevitable result of intersecting structural constraints. Economic desperation, patriarchal social norms, and organized illegal fishing operations converge to narrow his choices. His marriage to Ulan—daughter of Wa Makaruhun, a prominent bombing syndicate leader—comes with an explicit condition: he must “control and pass on the bombing skills” (Bungin, 2015, p. 168). This reveals what MacGregor (2006, p. 68) calls hegemonic where male social status becomes tied to environmental domination and exploitation. Through this narrative, Bungin reveals how destructive fishing practices persist not through individual greed but through community networks that legitimize ecological harm. These networks transform environmental destruction into a form of cultural inheritance, creating a system where masculinity, economic survival, and violence become inseparably linked. The novel thus demonstrates why environmental reform efforts often fail when they ignore these deeper structural entanglements.

Katir relentlessly expanded his bombing territory, cutting short the rest periods for his vessels. He breached the security services provided by corrupt law enforcement officials, reaching even the highest ranks. Previously, these rogue officers merely protected the explosive distributors, but under Katir, they received additional payments. Their new task was straightforward: to brandish their weapons without hesitation at any fishers who dared to interfere. If you wanted a bullet in your head, you could challenge his bombing operations (Bungin, 2015, p. 198).

Yet Bungin’s narrative does not conclude with resignation. Instead, it pivots toward figures such as Anjul and Jurmini, whose actions represent what Guha and Martínez-Alier (1997) describe as the environmentalism of the poor—a form of resistance grounded in subsistence needs and everyday survival rather than abstract environmental ideals. Following Katir’s betrayal of conservation ethics, Anjul remains committed to defending the reef, confronting fish bombers at great personal risk: “willing to defend the coral at any cost” (Bungin, 2015, p. 124). Jurmini’s return to Bungin Island, having reclaimed her identity as Dampa, signals a revitalization of communal agency. She mobilizes local fishers, establishes the Selayar Marine Park, and integrates traditional Bajo legends like the *Legenda Si Kareo* to rebuild a shared ethic of care for the coral reefs (Bungin, 2015, p. 331). This grassroots effort situates marine restoration as inseparable from cultural sovereignty and local livelihoods, affirming the novel’s claim that “many rice plates await the coral’s return” (Bungin, 2015, p. 333). (Bungin, 2015, p. 331). In contrast to *Danum*—where internal divisions fracture collective resistance—*Dari Rahim Ombak* shows how Indigenous stewardship can persist and adapt, even under the weight of systemic neglect and state-sanctioned ecological violence.

Read side by side, *Danum* and *Dari Rahim Ombak* illustrate that resistance within Indonesian environmental literature is deeply conflicted and shaped by internal tensions. Both works show how Indigenous communities are pressured not only by external corporate and state interests but also by economic necessity and narratives that rebrand exploitation as modern progress. In *Danum*, the conflict between Santo and Benediktus reveals how capitalist

expansion operates through material dispossession and the erosion of communal values from within. Similarly, *Dari Rahim Ombak* depicts how structural poverty and weak enforcement allow destructive fishing to persist. Katir's shift from conservation advocate to leader of blast fishing operations demonstrates how survival imperatives and social expectations can override inherited ecological ethics.

What sets *Dari Rahim Ombak* apart is its emphasis on gendered agency as a source of renewed resistance. Bungin foregrounds Jurmini's leadership in reviving communal reef stewardship, contrasting with *Danum*'s focus on male-centered internal conflict. Her work to establish a marine park shows how women's roles and ancestral maritime knowledge can reshape degraded coastal spaces into sites of collective recovery. Together, both texts argue that resistance is fragile and uneven yet remains possible when rooted in everyday cultural practice and community-driven adaptation.

The findings of this comparative study highlight how contemporary Indonesian environmental literature pushes beyond descriptive nature writing to intervene in debates about ecological justice and cultural survival. By situating forests and oceans as contested spaces bound to Indigenous cosmologies, *Danum* and *Dari Rahim Ombak* expose the persistent tension between economic growth and the erosion of local knowledge systems. These texts show that environmental crises in Indonesia are inseparable from broader questions of power, state complicity, and the legacy of colonial resource extraction reframed through modern development. In doing so, they align with postcolonial ecocriticism's call to connect material exploitation with cultural dispossession, revealing how literature can act as both witness and critique.

Importantly, both novels suggest that any meaningful response to ecological degradation must foreground local agency and Indigenous stewardship. *Danum* warns of how internalized capitalist values can fracture resistance when communities lose connection to place-based traditions, while *Dari Rahim Ombak* demonstrates how grassroots leadership, especially by women, can sustain fragile conservation efforts even under systemic neglect. Together, they argue for a rethinking of development models that treat forests and seas as commodities, advocating instead for approaches rooted in bioregional knowledge and community resilience. This shared message extends Indonesian ecocriticism into land-sea dialogue, reinforcing the idea that cultural survival and ecological survival are not parallel concerns but deeply intertwined.

Conclusion

This comparative study of *Danum* and *Dari Rahim Ombak* demonstrates how recent Indonesian literature frames environmental crisis through place, indigeneity, and resistance. By reading the forest as bioregion and the ocean as sacred space, this paper shows how contemporary narratives position land and sea as active sites of cultural memory and ecological struggle. The study contributes to Indonesian literary scholarship by combining postcolonial ecocriticism and Blue Humanities, moving beyond a purely land-focused lens. These texts reveal how literature exposes the ties between extractive capitalism, state support, and the loss of Indigenous ecological knowledge, underscoring literature's role as both critique and witness.

This study's scope is limited by its focus on only two localised narratives and does not address wider regional or urban contexts in Indonesian literature. Future research could build on this comparative approach by including additional works, other ecological settings, and cross-genre perspectives. Further study might also examine how these literary insights connect with conservation policy or support community-led sustainability. Despite these limits, the findings affirm that literature remains a crucial space for reimagining fairer ecological futures. By centring Indigenous knowledge and everyday resistance, these works remind us that cultural

survival and environmental care are inseparable — an insight relevant for broader sustainability debates across Indonesia and other regions facing similar pressures.

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