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Tolerance Attitude Analysis of the Social Piety Value in the Novel *Lingkar Tanah Lingkar Air* Based on Prophetic Ethics

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***Abstract*—This study analyzes tolerance attitude as a manifestation of social piety values within the framework of prophetic ethics in the novel Lingkar Tanah Lingkar Air by Ahmad Tohari. This study aims to understand how the novel depicts tolerance in the context of diversity in Indonesia. Using Goldmann's genetic structuralism approach and Jurij Lotman's semiotics, qualitative research methods were used, involving hermeneutic analysis and interviews with the author. The results showed a binary opposition between the character Kang Suyud, who represents a rigid interpretation of Islam, and Kyai Ngumar, who prioritizes tolerance. The novel illustrates how differences in religious understanding do not have to lead to conflict, emphasizing the importance of social piety manifested through tolerance and empathy. Kyai Ngumar's tolerant attitude contrasts with Kang Suyud's intolerance, showing the importance of moderation and understanding diversity to maintain social harmony in Indonesia, aligning with prophetic ethical values. This study concludes that tolerance is the key to building an inclusive society in Indonesia, which is rich in cultural and religious diversity.**

***Index Terms*—Kuntowijoyo's prophetic ethics, social piety values, tolerance**

I. Introduction

Indonesia has the world's largest Muslim population and has the challenge of becoming a guide for Islamic civilization. Indonesia's geographical condition consists of various ethnic groups, cultures, and languages, so tolerance for Indonesia's diversity is always an exciting topic to discuss. Indonesia's credibility as a heterogeneous nation has been at stake in recent years since Islamic movements harassed the credibility of Islam in Indonesia (Azra, 2020). The phase currently happening and developing in Indonesia is the creation of a big dichotomy named "radicalism". This phenomenon can threaten the integrity of the very heterogeneous Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia in various situations and dynamics. This radicalism movement, labeled as intolerant, has also colored the political agenda in every democratic party. The peak occurred when the people of Jakarta had to choose their governor in 2017 (Jamil, 2021; Khamdan & Wiharyani, 2018). If this continues, Islam in Indonesia may only become a well-documented historical record in a museum.

The story presented in *Lingkar Tanah Lingkar Air* differs from the stories in Ahmad Tohari's other works, which are about conflicts among Muslims. The novel's title, first published in 1995, stylistically tells a story that circles to form a specific pattern. However, in the end, it looks like the arrangement of harmonized lines is analogous to land and water that complement each other. The novel's conflict starts from a different perspective in understanding Islam, for example, in terms of activities. Kang Suyud believes that working together is best if the people involved are all Muslims. This point of view differs from the thinking held by Kyai Ngumar, who is very tolerant. Kang Suyud's belief in the necessity of collaboration exclusively among Muslims highlights a more rigid interpretation of Islam, while Kyai Ngumar embodies a more tolerant approach.

The difference in views of tolerance reminds the author of Navis in the short story titled *Robohnya Surau Kami*. What happened to Haji Saleh in the short story was a suitable form of satire. In daily activities, ritual piety measures the quality of human worship in Haji Saleh's view. This transactional view will birth the idea that Muslim activities, such as prayer, zakat, and hajj, are the only way to achieve happiness. As a result, a person is a good Muslim if he/she only carries out activities based on the pillars of Islam alone. The attitude that a Muslim should have is a sense of empathy. Empathy is aligned with the social education values found in the Qur'an, which emphasize helping others, promoting

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good, and preventing wrong, thus fostering social solidarity and brotherhood (Islamy & Saihu, 2020). This sense of empathy is a moral obligation and a social responsibility that encourages Muslims to actively participate in addressing social phenomena in society. Empathy is linked to moral development and concern for others, providing the basis for moral behavior and social attachment processes (Decety, 2014). For example, if there is a social phenomenon in the environment around the place of residence, a Muslim should participate in helping to resolve the phenomenon (Zaini, 2018). In social phenomena like this highlight social piety, even though there should be only one piety, that is, *muttaqi* piety (Bisri, 1996).

Studies that discuss social piety have varied views; however, the study's results focused more on piety in a family context. Piety in a family context is the relationship between children and their elderly parents, which is in line with the research of Park (2021) and Li et al. (2018). Meanwhile, the focus on social piety in this study is the same as the focus of the research conducted by Prayitno et al. (2020). The object of the research is the study of the novel *Sang Pencerah*, which tells the life of K.H. Ahmad Dahlan. The study concludes that there was progressivism in the monotheism of the founder of Muhammadiyah. Many valuable lessons are taken to follow the development of the communication era and the current era of industrialization. The values include compassion, patience, help, generosity, humanity, sensitivity, and social responsibility. This sense of responsibility was developed based on tolerance in this study.

Based on this point of view, the analysis of this research object in Ahmad's *Lingkar Tanah Lingkar Air* aims to find an attitude of tolerance as a manifestation of social piety values within the framework of prophetic ethics initiated by Kuntowijoyo. The views above inspired the title of this article, which is like uniting land and water in the sense of combining two crucial components (tolerance) in life as a circle that continues to rotate. The goal is to provide an understanding that tolerance is needed to reestablish public awareness that Indonesia is a country of various kinds of existing diversity. Tolerance analysis as a manifestation of social piety in prophetic ethics highlights the importance of fostering an inclusive society in Indonesia, characterized by rich cultural, religious, and ethnic diversity. In education, for example, this is in line with the role of multicultural education in fostering tolerance among students, as multicultural education instills values that encourage mutual respect and understanding (Rahmawati et al., 2023; Saputri et al., 2024).

The analysis of tolerance attitudes in the novel *Lingkar Tanah Lingkar Air* through the lens of prophetic ethics reveals the significance of mutual respect and understanding in a multicultural society. As emphasized in various educational initiatives, tolerance is crucial for fostering harmonious relationships among diverse groups (Muhtarom et al., 2024). The integration of tolerance within religious moderation values further illustrates how these principles can be instilled in students, promoting a culture of respect and dialogue (Firmansyah & Putra, 2023; Muhajir & Latief, 2023). Furthermore, the role of cultural tolerance in communities showcases how communication and understanding can mitigate conflicts and enhance social cohesion (Nurhayati, 2023). Thus, the novel can reflect these prophetic ethical values, advocating for a society rooted in tolerance and mutual respect.

II. Method

This qualitative study uses the theoretical basis of Goldmann's genetic structuralism with a literary sociology approach. The method used is the dialectical method. The approach and method were used to interpret the story's events as cultural events. Jurij Lotman's semiotics and Kuntowijoyo's prophetic ethics concept are also used in this research. (Prakoso et al., 2024; Wibowo & Abdullah, 2023) The method can trace Ahmad Tohari's views in the novel *Lingkar Tanah Lingkar Air* (2019). The views described are critical, considering that Ahmad Tohari is one of the authors who used his works to preach until now (Supriyanto, 2014). The primary data source used in this research is the novel *Lingkar Tanah Lingkar Air* by Ahmad Tohari (2019), while the secondary data source used is elements outside the novel, which includes studies or analyses of the novel by researchers/critics related to tolerance or harmony between religious communities. For further analysis, two interviews were conducted (8 June 2021 and 14 August 2021) with Ahmad Tohari, who also serves as one of the objects of this research. The first interview explored the main color of storytelling in spiritual life. Meanwhile, the second interview explored Tohari's views on tolerance and diversity. The data that has been collected is then analyzed using hermeneutic reading techniques to obtain in-depth results linked to the results of the interviews that have been conducted (Khasanah & Prakoso, 2023; Prakoso et al., 2023).

III. Result and Discussions

A. Worldview as a Metamorphosis of Ahmad Tohari's Attitude

As a study of genetic structuralism, the story in Lingkar Tanah Lingkar Air is a collective subject and a human fact. The characters studied were Amid, Kiram, Jun, Kang Suyud, Kyai Ngumar, Mbok Nikem, and other figures. The characters represent different thoughts, even though they are Muslims. Kyai Ngumar is on one side, but Amid, Kang Suyud, Jun, and Kiram are on the other.

Based on the result, Kang Suyud and Kyai Ngumar were in binary opposition. Kang Suyud is the most influential character in the Darul Islam movement. Kang Suyud's view reflects the understanding currently synonymous with radical Islam. Meanwhile, Kyai Ngumar is a character who believes Islam is a giver of grace to all human beings,

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regardless of their religion. These two characters become the researchers' foothold in determining the built environments and the form of oppositional relations raised with the following explanation. First, the natural environment formed in Lingkar Tanah Lingkar Air is dominated by wilderness. Besides, the environment is in the village, where Amid and his friends, Kyai Ngumar and Karangtalun (the location of the retribution collector), are located. As a novel that tells the story of a guerrilla struggle, it was interesting to depict the wilderness environment with all its inhabitants and particular names. Second, the cultural environment in Lingkar Tanah Lingkar Air is a village. The description of interactions and patterns of community life is reflected in the dialog between individuals in the story. Kyai Ngumar's positive characteristics include humility and becoming a role model for the villagers. In addition, the attitude of accepting Amid's presence during the struggle in the wilderness is another example. There is tolerance among them. Third, the social environment in Lingkar Tanah Lingkar Air tells the story of the interactions of people's daily lives in conditions of the post-independence revolution. This interaction is colored by heterogeneity in various aspects, such as religion, political fatsun, and diversity. Socially, their solid interactions are seen in a small group. They fought together in the Cigobang forest and witnessed the train "trap" in Kebumen (Tohari, 2019). Especially in the relationship between humans and all their ethnicities, the social environment built in Lingkar Tanah Lingkar Air reflects Bhinneka Tunggal Ika. The tolerance for diversity is reflected in the appearance of the character Asui, a Chinese girl who owns a shop whom Kiram often teases. Fourth, the ideological environment found in Lingkar Tanah Lingkar Air is Islamic ideology. Islam in this novel is then grouped into two. The first part is Islam, which started from the struggle of Hezbollah soldiers, namely Amid, Kiram, Jun, and Kang Suyud, even though Amid "is not a true Hezbollah" (Tohari, 2019). The second part is the Islam of Kyai Ngumar, which is adhered to by Kyai Ngumar and firmly upholds tolerance.

Meanwhile, the oppositional relations formed from the imaginary world of Lingkar Tanah Lingkar Air include the following. First, a religious pattern of life characterizes cultural opposition. The struggles of Kang Suyud and Kyai have become dominant characters in the post-independence Indonesian journey throughout the novel's storytelling. However, they both have different perspectives on the issue of Islamic teachings, as stated by the researcher. For example, Amid became part of Kang Suyud because he believed it was the best choice.

Second, the "natural" opposition can be identified on several grounds, such as the appearance of the characters of Mantri Karsun and Hianli. These two people have selfish personality traits because they only care about themselves. They are Dutch spies. In the real world, figures like them always exist, even though they are in the form of a different person.

Third, social opposition identified several attitudes and behaviors of characters who live in the area where Amid also lives. These characters reflect a person full of a sense of family, tolerance, and wisdom, as reflected in Kyai Ngumar. Kyai Ngumar believes that the harmony of life brings blessings. Even though Amid, Kiran, Jun, and Kang Suyud originally came from the village as well, the dynamics of the struggle they went through made them change roles. The separate barriers between Amid and his friends are shown when they return from their struggle. These characteristics are rural communities. Fortunately, the figure of Kyai Ngumar could lighten the situation. Kyai Ngumar is sincere and open to welcoming Amid and his friends (Tohari, 2019). This attitude is stated in Ahmad Tohari's message: always empathize with those persecuted for unfair treatment. "I remember when I was in high school in grade 2, and I saw many people who were victims of humanity under the pretext of being involved in the G30S/PKI. Even, many of them don't really know what communism is" (from an interview with Ahmad Tohari, June 8, 2021).

Fourth, this ideological opposition dominates throughout the story in Lingkar Tanah Lingkar Air. Based on the results, the author has several thoughts. Lingkar Tanah Lingkar Airhas is a time background during the early days of Indonesia's independence, telling the story of the struggle of Islam, especially related to Darul Islam. The conflicts that arise are then identified with two thoughts. On the one hand, the presence of Kyai Ngumar manifests an attitude that shows moderate thoughts about religion. On the other hand, if there are differences in understanding within a Muslim group, they cannot fight together.

Fifth, human opposition is identified as the two sides that always face each other in Lingkar Tanah Lingkar Air. The most easily identifiable figures are Kyai Ngumar and Kang Suyud. Both represent different typologies. The attitude of Kyai Ngumar has an understanding that every Muslim needs to spread kindness always. This act is reflected when Amid and his friends choose to return to the village, and then Kyai Ngumar shows an attitude of love for fellow humans by accepting Amid. In fact, at that time, Amid had a negative stigma as a rebel (Tohari, 2019). This kind of character was later shown to Mbok Nikem, a traditional birth attendant who helped Amid's wife give birth in the wilderness.

Based on the story's structure, Ahmad Tohari has a very strong worldview, namely, the attitude of always upholding the harmony of life. Disputes due to different points of view and understanding of the aqeedah should not create a commotion between them. The ideological difference between Kyai Ngumar and Kang Suyud is indeed very basic. The polarization of this ideology is currently threatening Indonesia as a pluralistic nation. The emergence of community organizations that define themselves as the most Islamic parties, as shown in the 2017 social phenomenon, colors politics in the election of the governor of DKI Jakarta (Jamil, 2021). However, in the context of Lingkar Tanah Lingkar Air, polarization can be avoided when Kyai Ngumar is impartial and in a position in the middle of the situation. Based on the tolerance attitude, the difference between Kyai Ngumar and Kang Suyud can be understood as a difference that does not have to lead to disputes if one understands the importance of awareness.

B. Tolerance as an Entity of Social Piety Values in the Prophetic Ethics Framework

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This research discusses the importance of tolerance and its role in this section. The result of the analysis shows that Kang Suyud is a figure who judges that diversity is impossible. Meanwhile, Kyai Ngumar has a different thought. Kyai Ngumar values heterogeneity and intercommunity harmony, while Kang Suyud does not. What Kang Suyud believed was the idea outlined by their command, which came from Sekarmaji Marijan Kartosuwiryo, the caliph of Darul Islam, the supreme commander of the Indonesian Islamic Army (DI/TII).

In this context, Kyai Ngumar tries to be a mediator in diversity. What Kyai Ngumar did reminds researchers of Dorothe Rosa Herliani's statement (Herliany, 2018). Kyai also thinks that harmony and harmonization will be built with this heterogeneity. This harmony can be realized by being tolerant. From the value of social piety perspective, tolerance is a tangible manifestation of the social piety variables, namely, fairness and balance, as well as other aspects (Istiqomah, 2019). More comprehensively, Kyai Ngumar tries to become a liaison of thought that seeks to moderate Islam *kaffah*, including the behavior that must be shown (Kuntowijoyo, 2019).

Tohari's character in *Lingkar Tanah Lingkar Air* is very attached to Kyai Ngumar. In the novel, Ahmad Tohari strives to relate his background, which is that he was born from the *Nahdlatul Ulama* (NU) culture. This view is also in line with what Junaidi (2018) conveyed. Tohari said in his interview that he greatly admired his father figure, who was also an NU administrator in Jatilawang. Tohari said that his father took him for a walk to see his garden one day. Unexpectedly, there was a thief who stole the bananas he had planted. Ahmad Tohari was surprised because his father let the thief take the banana (Interview II; August 14, 2021). What Ahmad Tohari conveyed provided information about humanism and the idea that the thief might indeed have nothing to eat. The true story experienced by Ahmad Tohari is an example of the implementation of Islam in a *kaffah* manner.

The implementation above is in line with Kyai Ngumar's thoughts in *Lingkar Tanah Lingkar Air*, which always emphasizes the harmony of life by mediating Kang Suyud's correct thoughts. From Kuntowijoyo's prophetic ethics, what Ahmad Tohari said in interviews and the character of Kyai Ngumar were a form of affirmation of the guidance the Prophet Muhammad SAW conveys to build virtuous human civilization. Ahmad Tohari said, "The Great Prophet Muhammad was sent to earth to perfect human character. So, in such a context, the pillars of Islam are the means used, and not the goals to be achieved" (Interview I; June 8, 2021). The argument presented by Faishal Zaini is in line with Tohari's view that there must be a transformation of goodness that was initially individual to social goodness (Zaini, 2018). The actual form is to change ritual piety into social piety. For this social piety to manifest in daily activities, the diversity of attitudes and perspectives on worship should be seen as the estuary of Islam embraced by its adherents, not merely as questioning the rituals.

C. Diversity of Attitudes and Perspectives on Worship as a Real Form of Tolerance

Self-righteousness is the will that destroys harmony in life, characterized by the belief that one's beliefs or behavior are superior to those of others. This disorder stems from the inherent nature of self-righteousness, closely related to dogmatism and intolerance of ambiguity. It fosters an environment where different perspectives are not valued or respected (Falbo & Belk, 1985). Such attitudes can lead to conflict and disruptions in social harmony, often resulting in a lack of empathy and understanding towards others.

Most of these characters feel guided by the Koran and Hadith and view other teachings as wrong. Ahmad Tohari clearly described a character with this attitude in *Lingkar Tanah Lingkar Air*. These characteristics are confirmed by Tohari's statement when he saw the phenomenon of groups who felt that their rituals were the most correct. This group even refers to other groups as infidels/*kafir*. Tohari, an author born in Tinggarjaya, tried to reveal individual beliefs regarding their societal perspective. For example, in *Lingkar Tanah Lingkar Air*, the most basic form is the character of Kang Suyud. Characters like this are real in society. Tohari continued to present his story as an enlightenment and a way of incorporating the importance of thinking about the value of social piety.

Ritually, no one doubts Kang Suyud's Islam. According to Ahmad Tohari, beliefs, and perspectives on an issue might differ but cannot be separated from God's destiny. The many races and ethnicities are a blessing for Indonesia. Ahmad Tohari explained that being born into a devout Muslim family and having great empathy for those around him was a blessing (Interview II; August 14, 2021).

Kyai Ngumar realized that Kang Suyud's ideology differed from Kyai Ngumar's belief. However, Kyai Ngumar did not force Kang Suyud's thoughts to conform. When there was a debate about whether to join the republican army or to form an army of its own, Kyai Ngumar's opinion was different from Kang Suyud's. Based on the debate, Kyai Ngumar continued to show affection for all (Tohari, 2019). Although it was finally canceled due to a betrayal, the wise attitude shown by Kyai Ngumar by giving guarantees to Amid, Kiram, and Jun when they wanted to join the republican army was the value of piety shown by Kyai Ngumar.

Among Ahmad Tohari's many works, *Lingkar Tanah Lingkar Air* is a novel with different characters based on the social structure surrounding it. In this novel, Ahmad Tohari is "serious in preaching". The ultimate goal of *Lingkar Tanah Lingkar Air* is to achieve harmony in life and harmonization. The characters in opposition are united in the purpose of the prophetic philosophy thought. The purpose of thinking is still based on the philosophical thought of *sangkan paraning dumadi* (everything starts from one point and then returns to its original point), equivalent to *innalillahi wa'inna ilaihi roji'un* (Indeed, we belong to Allah, and Indeed, to Him, we shall return).

IV. Conclusion

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Based on the explanations presented, tolerance is important as a manifestation of social piety, which refers to the essential teachings of the prophet. Religious rites are important but only as a way. Through the terminology of tolerance, every human being, regardless of religion, should always carry an attitude of mutual respect and never think of himself as a person with the highest rank in the eyes of God. *Lingkar Tanah Lingkar Air* has shown that heterogeneity should be considered the foundation of thought. No religion condones humiliation, harassment, and self-righteousness while fighting others who do not share the same faith. As the author of *Lingkar Tanah Lingkar Air*, Ahmad Tohari is nervous about the egoism of religious adherents in Indonesia. He believes religion should be the voice of peace and the exaltation of human values. Kang Tohari chose to be religious in togetherness with others, namely in diversity. Ahmad Tohari also said that the Koran has clearly instructed that humans should consist of men and women and live in tribes and nations so that they will know each other. All must accept other people, nations, religious differences, and even heterogeneous local cultures. Without this understanding, the entire local culture will be eroded in the name of religion. Tolerance toward differences and different perspectives on a belief should be the main binder in the thinking of Muslims in Indonesia. Individual worship rituals are essential, but socially related rituals are equally important. Without such an attitude, the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia will be threatened that it will no longer adhere to the motto of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*. The unification of "land and water" in *Lingkar Tanah Lingkar Air* has a message of harmony in human life. These two things are the fundamental foundations of creating tolerance. These notes also serve as a foothold for researchers to further deepen their studies with more exciting topics. Some things are still very open for studies that can take advantage of new theories so that the results enrich literary studies in Indonesia and the world.

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