

Modernity as Disruption to Nature, People, and Culture in *Things Fall Apart*, *Burung Kayu*, and *Isinga*

Modernisasi sebagai disrupsi terhadap alam, manusia, dan budaya dalam Things Fall Apart, Burung Kayu, dan Isinga

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Abstract

Environmental degradation has become an important issue in the 21st century. Environmental destruction has never been free from exploitation, oppression, and marginalization. Through Indonesian and African novels *Burung Kayu*, *Isinga*, and *Things Fall Apart*, this paper attempts to reveal two research questions; first, how people, nature, and culture are interconnected with each other in the three novels, and second, how modernity becomes a disruption to the Mentawai, Aitubu, and Igbo. By comparing and contrasting the three novels, this paper uses library research. The research questions will be revealed through descriptive qualitative data. The approach used to analyze is postcolonial ecocriticism. The findings of the research are two. First, there is a connectedness of nature and people of the three communities manifested in ritual tradition, livelihood, social systems and values, and land ownership system. Second, the power dominance of the First World toward the Third World through modernity results in environmental destruction and cultural disruptions of the Mentawai, Aitubu, and Igbo indigenous. Humans are inseparable from living with other communities and over time, they will experience modernity. However, not all forms of modernity fit for a community. Therefore, they have two choices regarding modernity: to reject or accept it.

Kata kunci

sastra bandingan; budaya; modernisasi; orientalisme; ekokritik pascakolonial.

Abstrak

Kerusakan lingkungan telah menjadi isu penting di abad ke-21 ini. Kerusakan lingkungan tidak pernah lepas dari eksploitasi, penindasan, dan marginalisasi. Melalui novel Indonesia dan Afrika, *Burung Kayu*, *Isinga*, dan *Things Fall Apart*, tulisan ini mencoba untuk mengungkap dua rumusan masalah; pertama, bagaimana manusia, alam, dan budaya saling berhubungan satu sama lain dalam ketiga novel tersebut, dan kedua, bagaimana modernisasi menjadi sebuah disrupsi terhadap komunitas Mentawai, Aitubu, dan Igbo. Dengan membandingkan dan mengontraskan ketiga novel tersebut, penelitian ini menggunakan penelitian kepustakaan dan akan diungkap melalui data kualitatif deskriptif. Pendekatan yang digunakan untuk menganalisis adalah ekokritik pascakolonial. Temuan dari penelitian ini ada dua. Pertama, terdapat keterkaitan antara alam dan manusia dari ketiga komunitas tersebut yang termanifestasi dalam aspek-aspek budaya yang menonjol, yaitu tradisi ritual, mata pencaharian, sistem dan nilai sosial, serta sistem kepemilikan lahan. Kedua, dominasi kekuasaan Dunia Pertama terhadap Dunia Ketiga melalui modernisasi mengakibatkan kerusakan lingkungan dan gangguan budaya pada masyarakat adat Mentawai, Aitubu, dan Igbo. Manusia tidak dapat dipisahkan dari hidup bersama komunitas lain dan seiring waktu, mereka akan mengalami modernisasi. Namun, tidak semua bentuk modernitas cocok untuk komunitas. Maka, ada dua pilihan dalam menyikapi modernitas: menolak atau menerimanya.

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A. Introduction

In recent decades, nature and the environment have become problematic global issues. These issues are no longer unusual, and the warning signs continue to ascend. Since the Industrial Revolution, human activities have increasingly destroyed and degraded forests, grasslands, wetlands, and other important ecosystems, threatening human well-being. The Earth's ice-free land surface has already been significantly altered around 75%. Most of the oceans are polluted, and more than 85% of the area of wetlands has been lost (Almond et al., 2020). Pollution, poor sanitation, ozone layer depletion, desertification, flood, erosion, bushfires, deforestation, and soil contamination in Nigeria (Onuoha, 2022), logging and mining issues cause environmental destruction in West Papua (Kuum, 2020), and forty years of exploitation of Mentawai's forest area regardless of the rights of the local societies (Eindhoven, 2007) are only a few examples of environmental degradation.

The issues of environmental degradation affect people's civilization. It has been understood that nature and humans are inseparable since people depend their lives on it. Nature allows people to inhabit a particular location and meet their community. Their environment has shaped the social system and cultural aspects of humans. Culture is the foundation where a society has been built in a certain environment, and it impacts people's lives. According to Pandey, there is an interconnection among the environment, the people, and the culture. Physical environment, people, and cultures form a social system and they work together in an integrated way (Pandey, 2014). In Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, the Igbo lives in the forest and they build houses made of materials from its natural resources. It is described that *obi* is usually made of a wooden frame, bamboo, thatch of bamboo or palm frond, or straw depending on the locality, and finished with red mud. Having *obi* to keep his altars and entertain his guests, the head of the family lives apart from the wives and children's rooms. The Mentawai in Erlang's *Burung Kayu* live in the forest and own *uma*, a windowless rectangular design with a verandah at each end and structured from forest logs to accommodate every member of the egalitarian Mentawai society. The adult males live in different *uma*, separately from females and children. Living on a densely forested cold plateau, Herliany's *Isinga* depicts the Aitubu's traditional family house structured from forest logs with a small door and a windowless dome designed to protect the family from the cold air. The roofs are made of layers of sago leaves because the trees are found in the surrounding area. The males live in *yowi* while the females live in *humia*. The distinction between the male and female world is strict in the three communities since they are patriarchal societies. From the housing, it is obvious that the environment influences the people's cultural system. According to Kumar, there is a mutual relationship between nature and humans because they nurture each other (Kumar, 2021). Since people are inseparable from nature, it is imaginable that when nature is destroyed, it will impact human civilization.

The recent advances in environmental criticism need to examine the interfaces between nature and culture, animal and human. An understanding of environmental issues is confirmed in Huggan and Tiffin's *postcolonial ecocriticism*, the intertwined connection between environmental degradation and the marginalization of the subordinate or indigenous ethnic groups who inhabit a certain location (Indriyanto, 2019) which is not only projecting the European conquest and global domination as central, but also as inherent in the ideologies of imperialism and racism. Western ideologies of 'development' are a mere tool of the technocratic West designed to serve the economic and political interests of the West. It is necessary to question such as what is development, how the word 'development' be defined and measured, whose interest this development serves, and what development's historical relationship to colonialism and imperialism. Instead of emphasizing the mining industry as one of the causes of environmental degradation in Nigeria at that time, Achebe emphasizes the European domination of the Igbo through Christianity which marginalized the native's sovereignty and disrupted their culture. The underlying capitalist ideologies of Western perceive that humans as superiors have free will to manage nature and take its natural resources for the sake of development. Since nature is perceived only for its usefulness, this concept has led them to natural resource massive exploitation that results in ecological problems in most parts of the global world. The superior British-Christian missionaries conquered the Igbo's land by settling in the Evil Forest, cutting down trees to construct a church building, and interrupting the native social culture through modernity. Meanwhile, Erlang and Herliany emphasize the central government's domination of environment degradation through development projects of *Siberut* National Park in Mentawai and mining industries in Papua.

Gogoi explains that human and physical environment are closely linked and is shaped in the study of ecocriticism. Achebe depicts the spiritual and cultural relations between the Igbo and their natural environment. They believe nature and its elements have divine power and spirit. Their philosophy is denigrated by the arrival of Christian missionaries who act colonial rule. They have built a church by cutting down the trees of the Evil Forest, a sacred land that belongs to the dead spirits of the ancestors; and this construction has marked the destruction of nature. Colonial enterprise is shown clearly in *Things Fall Apart*. Violating and destroying the natural environment in Umuofia is based on the principle of colonial rule that does not embrace the concept of spiritual bonding between nature and human beings. The colonial power leaves the local people with no

alternative so they embrace Christianity completely under colonial rule, for example, in the case of harvesting *yam* it is disrupted by the name of the Christian God instead of *Ani*, the goddess of the Earth (Gogoi, 2014). Wani and Ganaie utter the impact of colonialism on human and non-human entities of the Igbo society. The Igbo have their own contradictive culture in the eyes of the British missionaries such as tribal war, murdering the twins, polygamy, the involvement of the oracle in their belief, and the pathetic women (Wani & Ganaie, 2022). Having a barbaric and savage culture, the missionaries urged the Igbo to embrace Christianity, a peaceful religion. The establishment of church buildings by cutting down trees in the Evil Forest, British governmental institutions such as courts, prisons, and trade regulations lead to the disintegration of the Igbo. Nature and human interconnection have shaped a culture of religious rituals to help humans keep nature from being exploited and destroyed by human interests. Since the Igbo culture is presumably contrary to the views of Western missionaries; they are implicated in Christianity, the modern religion that says God will save them. Western colonialism destroyed the Igbo relationship with nature when the sacred python was killed. Christianity perceives a snake as committed to an evil spirit. It is the native Igbo who can maintain the ecosystem with their philosophy and belief. Through colonialism, the Western material culture does not acknowledge the existence of bonding between nature, people, and their culture.

Similar case to the Igbo, Westerners consider the Mentawai as primitive because of its geographical isolation from the outside world. They believe in and respect the spirits of ancestors, animals, and plants because they play a major role in the religious and medicinal tradition called *Arat Sabulungan* (Susilastri & Sudarmanto, 2022). The natives maintain the balance of macrocosm and microcosm because the entity of the universe is implanted in human form. In the New Order, the government policy made *Arat Sabulungan* to be replaced by Islamic and Christian religions in 1954 because they perceived it as contrary to universal religions. The role of the *Sikerei* and ancestral spirits in traditional medicine is intervened by modern medical treatment of doctors. The government intimidates the entity of Mentawai life because the rulers intend to change the social system of the indigenous Mentawai (Ginting et al., 2022). It causes prolonged social and cultural conflicts, such as the imposition of beliefs, the elimination of customary systems, intimidating bans, and *hak ulayat* grabbing (agrarian conflict). The conflicts have caused some issues for example violence, environmental destruction, and the disappearance of the tribe's identity. It begins with the issue of *Siberut* National Conservation. In the name of 'development' for a better life, the rulers commanded the natives to move away from the forest to *barasi* in the small town. As a result, they cannot carry out their ritual tradition which needs materials from the forest such as leaves and flowers in the offerings. The government intervenes in the social system of the Mentawai and the natives must take action to adapt and reconcile with modern culture. Therefore, they can continue to relate to nature and their ancestral spirits; they can maintain and preserve their ancestral traditions differently. Their culture changes over time because the government offers 'development' for their left-behind civilization.

The native Papua, Aitubu depends their lives on nature and they have close relations with the natural world in daily activities. This closeness with nature shapes their cultural traditions. They perform *muruwal*, a ceremony that gives safety to boys approaching adulthood, and *wit*, a post-natural disaster ceremony (Putri, 2018), ritual ceremonies and serve offerings to the spirits such as particular animals, food, leaves, and vegetables from the forest. The ceremonies held in the tribes involve the shaman because their role is to cast a spell on indigenous young men so they grow healthy and mature (Rizkan & Arman, 2015). After the mining and timber industries were opened by the stakeholders and central government in the New Order era, this phenomenon disrupted the peaceful life of the native Papua. The landmine opening and massive logging created an opportunity for outsiders to come to Papua to open some businesses, such as brothels, liquor houses, and markets in the new districts which are very new to the natives' way of life. The male natives are attracted by the modern life in the new district, so they sell their land, pieces to pieces, to the government and forget their ancestors' advice that selling their land to outsiders is forbidden and taboo. Leaving their traditional society, they move to a modern civilization which interrupts the traditional social culture of the natives of Papua. Being attracted by the entertainment of the new civilization, they leave their villages for modern life in the new districts. They have started to leave their traditional custom, livelihood, social system, and values to adapt themselves to modern life.

Responding to the Western capitalist ideologies and environmental change in connection with people and cultural change, in this study, there will be a discussion of comparing and contrasting the three selected novels from two different countries, Nigeria and Indonesia. Most studies on *Things Fall Apart*, *Burung Kayu*, and *Isinga* discuss colonialism, gender roles, and cultural clash but only a few talks about nature and human relationships. The selection of the classic African and the two modern Indonesian novels in this study has reasons, Asian and African similarities in experience and status mention two things; first, both share a colonial past, and second, both share Third World status. The three novels share cultural similarities such as the importance of ancestors and the family network, ritualization and traditional ceremonies, communal living rather than individualism, the dominance of the male, and last but not least, the silence and suffering of the women. Proposing two research questions, *first*, how do the three novels interconnect people, nature, and culture and *second*, how does

modernity disrupt the culture of the Igbo, Mentawai, and Aitubu in the three novels, this study will be framed from the *postcolonial ecocriticism* perspective because the three novels have revealed the power dominance of the First World/superior toward the Third World/indigenous which results in the environmental and cultural changes of the groups.

B. Method

The paper uses library research, and the research questions will be revealed through descriptive qualitative data. According to Sugiyono, a method of qualitative research is research based on post-positivism and interpretive philosophy (Sugiyono, 2008). This is used in natural objects to understand meaning, and uniqueness, construct phenomena, and find hypothesis (Sanjaya et al., 2023). To further understand, in positivism, it is not always transferable to the social world. Meanwhile, Alharahsheh and Pius state that interpretivism considers differences such as cultures, circumstances, as well as times leading to the development of different social realities (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). Since this paper uses library research, the data collection is from reading primary and secondary sources. The primary data is taken from an African novel *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe and two Indonesian (Asian) novels *Burung Kayu* by Niduparas Erlang and *Isinga* by Dorothea Rosa Herliany. While reading the primary and secondary data, taking notes is included as the technique to get the data. The approach used to discuss the research questions is *postcolonial ecocriticism* and the supporting references are related to culture. The writer takes some important concepts explained by the theorists, Huggan and Tiffin about *postcolonial ecocriticism* which are related to the situation in the three novels as follows. *First*, the intertwined connection between environmental degradation and the marginalization of the subordinate (indigenous ethnic groups) who inhabit a certain location. *Second*, both postcolonial and ecological issues are important for continuing imperialist modes of environmental and social dominance, therefore, it considers the complex interplay of environmental elements such as land, water, habitat, and migration with social-political-cultural categories such as society, conflict, and tradition. *Third*, it is a mere tool of the technocratic West designed to serve the economic and political interests of the West so it is a disguised form of neo-colonialism. *Fourth*, it is to contest Western ideologies of ‘development’, an implementation of the Third World’s developmentalism that the 1st World sets a regime of thought to eradicate poverty in the Third World to be the center which they call modernity. *Fifth*, on behalf of the environmentalism of the poor, modernity has taken part in the ecological destruction of the Third World.

C. Results and Discussion

There will be two discussions to reveal the research questions in this paper. First, how nature and human interconnection have formed culture, prominently in terms of ritual traditions, livelihoods, social systems and values, and customary law in *Things Fall Apart*, *Burung Kayu*, and *Isinga*. Second, how modernity disrupts the environment and culture of the Igbo, Mentawai, and Aitubu in the three novels.

1. Interfaces of Nature, Humans, and Culture in the Three Novels

The word “nature” has many definitions (Ducarme & Couvet, 2020), and to be defined in this context, the word is equivalent to the natural world, physical environment, or material world and it has coexistence between living organisms and ecosystems on the earth. Humans are inseparable from nature since they inhabit a particular place which includes animals, plants, and ecosystems. People who settle in a particular area depend on their living in nature, and within their communities, they form civilization. It means there is an interaction between the biological community and the physical environment, both ecosystem and social-cultural environment. Pandey states that physical environment, people, and cultures form a social system and they work together in an integrated way (Pandey, 2014). When the physical environment changes, it will influence the alternation of the people and their culture.

Achebe depicts clearly that the natural environment interferes with the people of Umuofia in how they treat nature in their philosophical lives. Kumar explains that the native Igbo, believe the sky, the rock, the trees, insects, birds, and animals have personalities (Kumar, 2021). They often compare things with the spirits or characters of animals, plants, or natural phenomena. In their daily conversation, commonly they describe things by using metaphors, words, proverbs, or even songs related to nature. They compare Amalinze to a cat’s behavior and Okonkwo to a fish in water for their skills in the wrestling contest (Achebe, p.3). When they are busy preparing for the wedding of Obierika’s daughter, their activities are compared to the busy life of ants in the ant-hill (Gogoi, 2014). When it rains, children stay outdoors and sing a song under slanting showers through sunshine and quiet breeze. They enjoy playing in open fields under the moonlight as if nature can heal the cripple to walk.

Meanwhile, Erlang also reveals the connectedness between nature and people through a comparison between the moves of a soaring eagle in the sky and the moves of the *Sikerei* in *manyang* dance (Erlang, p.1). Like Achebe and Erlang, Herliany also describes how the local Papua compares things with nature since they adore and live close to it. They compare celestial objects to humans; the sun characterizes a boy and the moon reflects a girl (Herliany, p.1). The masculinity of a boy symbolizes the brave and strong light of the sun in the noon while the mildness of a girl is similar to the warm and soft light of the moon at night. The Aitubu natives love to sing and the lyrics represent the beauty of the animal in comparison with people, for example, a song from Irewa when she falls in love with Meage, “*I want to be as beautiful as a cuscus decorates me as beautiful as possible*” (Herliany, p.21).

Behind its beauty and energy, nature also gives cautions to people to respect and behave well toward the environment. In Igbo tradition, it is forbidden to say a harsh word to their neighbor in the Week of Peace, or they will get consequences from the goddess *Ani* (Gogoi, 2014). Those who break the rule are compulsory to serve *kola* nut, vegetables, alligator pepper, new *yam*, and palm wine as an offering to gods and ancestral spirits for compensation. The *Oracle of the Cave and the Hill* as a mediator will help them in such rituals so the god *Ani* can accept their offerings. When it is dark at night, the children are forbidden to whistle because they believe the evil spirit may appear. After the night it may be dangerous and taboo to call a snake with its name, so it is called a string (Achebe, p.9). It is forbidden to kill a python snake because, in their belief, it is a god. In modern science, we recognize a snake as one of the predators in chain food which balances the ecosystem, and the Igbo natives have already been wise to balance the natural environment in their political view.

The Mentawai natives and *Arat Sabulungan* are inseparable (Nurjanah et al., 2022) as this ritual tradition has passed from generation to generation. In the ritual, the *manyang* dance is present to summon the spirits of ancestors who are believed to come at the inauguration of the *Sikerei*. Same as the oracle in the Igbo, the *Sikerei* takes an important role as a mediator between humans and the ancestral spirits. In the ritual ceremonies, the Mentawai natives take materials from the forest such as wild pigs, leaves, and hibiscus flowers as offerings.

A similar thing to maintaining ritual traditions in Igbo and Mentawai, for Aitubu natives, the *wit* and the *murawal* ceremonies are very important traditions (Arman, 2015). Preparing themselves for welcome ceremonies, they decorate their skins and bodies with natural elements like flowers, leaves, and lard. In *murawal* ceremony they are bound with the universe, connecting themselves nowadays with their ancestors in the old times, serving natural resources such as *betatas*, waxy vegetables, pigs, cuscuses, grasshoppers, insects, woody plants that are handed over to the shaman as the executor of the ceremony.

Livelihood enables people to earn a living. Livelihoods originated from natural capital use of environmental resources such as land, water, and air (Gai et al., 2020). The Igbo, Mentawai, and Aitubu share the same situation regarding their living close to nature; they are all agricultural communities with strict job division between males and females. In the Igbo community, the nature of farming is inseparable from land (earth), *Ani*, and *yam*. Those who own wide lands with an abundance of *yam* are considered respectful and wealthy persons (Kumar, 2021). For the patriarchal Igbo community, a man who can feed his family on *yams* from one harvest to another is considered a very great man. *Yam* is a symbol of a man respected as the breadwinner of the family, the protector of the family in food supply. Meanwhile, the females plant less prestigious food such as melons, maize, and beans when the rain is heavy (Priyanka, 2019). As *yam* is a masculine staple food for the Igbo, the Mentawai, and Aitubu also share the same case; it is *sago*.

Settling in tropical forests, the Mentawai and Aitubu can easily find *sago* trees and they become important sources of food. The strong men in both Mentawai and Papua have the main task of clearing *sago* fields in the forests. Their masculine job is to cut down the *sago* trees in the forest and bring the *sago* stems home. The Mentawai and Aitubu women then process the *sago* stems in particular steps to change them into flour; it is called Aitubu *menokok* (Herliany, p.58). In both communities, the job division between men and women is very clear. Men clear the land for *sago* trees and hunt animals in the forest because these jobs require a lot of energy and are dangerous for women. Meanwhile, the Mentawai and Aitubu women do all women's work, such as caring for pigs, providing food for the family, gardening, caring for children, and processing *sago* into flour.

With the strict difference in position and rank between males and females in the division of jobs explained earlier, the three groups run social and value systems based on patriarchal systems in which the males hold the power and the females are excluded from it. Family is one concrete example of elements of the social systems aside from belief, norms, supervision, position and role, and sanctions (Sukadi et al., 2021) in which each family has rules and norms to manage the members of the family. In the Igbo social system, males, especially the successful ones are in the higher rank of social status. The community believes a man is meaningless without having the capability to manage his wives and kids. Female is forbidden to act like males or to handle male jobs, for example, Okonkwo has shouted at his daughter, Ezinma to sit like a woman when she sits improperly so she brings her two legs together and stretches them in front of her. He also has said to her that bringing a chair to the wrestling contest is a boy's job (Achebe, p.39).

Like in the Igbo community, in Mentawai and Aitubu, they run patriarchal systems, and the roles of males and females are adapted to nature. As by nature males are physically strong and competitive, they are the head of the family; they are the decision-makers. In Mentawai, the males usually gather in their *uma* to have important meetings where females are not involved in the decision-making, for instance, marriage arrangement, *pako* (tribal war), and compensation given after *pako*. However, in the families, a husband still needs his wife role to help him in their household decision-making. When a husband has died, the wife will be returned to her original family and use her maiden name (Herliany, p.67).

Having patriarchal social and values systems, there is a clear division of the male and female world in Aitubu. The males spend most of their time in the *yowi* while the females are in their *humia*. A couple has their own family house but their sons will stay in the *yowi* to be given masculinity teachings by the community, only sometimes they return to their mother in the *humia*. The daughters live with their mothers in the *humia* and after marriage, they will be with their husbands in their own family house (Herliany, p.13). Daughters of the natives are educated to be serving and loyal to their future husbands, capable of managing housework, and being happy and cheerful no matter what (Herliany, p.63). Their mothers educate them through songs. Same case in Mentawai, in Aitubu marriage is arranged by the clan and there will be a discussion involving all men in the *yowi*. Unlike the Igbo and the Mentawai social order system, the community in Aitubu does not have any leaders chosen by the clan, but the voices of the respected and influenced ones will be heard (Herliany, p.29).

The indigenous communities have their system of managing property and natural resources on the land. They have the right to take advantage of natural resources and cultivate the land of their area for survival from generation to generation (Hutama, 2021). The land ownership system in the Igbo is determined by the social status of a male as the head of the family. Those who are hard-working and own an abundance of *yams* in the barns are perceived as rich and noble; the rich ones can buy titles with a lot of *cowries* while the poor can only have the *ozo* title at the cost of two *cowries* (Achebe, p.60). The rich may cultivate their land to grow more *yams*. Inviting neighborhoods and clans, they organize a ceremony to crown the title. The achievement and titles of the head of an Igbo family and the acknowledgment from the clan and community will determine how an Igbo native owns his land ownership.

Similar to the Igbo community which acknowledges customary land with a masculine achievement and acknowledgment from the family and clan, the landownership system in the Mentawai community is also determined by the inheritance of the ancestors. A prominent and qualified person who is skillful in masculine tasks like hunting, roles in *pako* (war), and expanding his land by exploring and clearing new bare land in the forest is the respected one. He usually will have tattoos on his skin as the title after experiencing certain achievements; the more tattoos he has the more skillful and respected he is in the clan. Those with the qualities will own more land and he will provide a hereditary legacy to his descendants. Living in a patriarchal system, a male descendant is important for Mentawai because they will inherit the land ownership. The more sons a family has, the more land they will inherit.

Like the Mentawai group, the landownership system in Aitubu is determined by inheritance. For the Aitubu, the respected nobleman is not necessarily rich in owning land but commonly they are. Running a patriarchal social system, male children are very important to gain more land. The more sons a family has, the more land they will cultivate. In Aitubu, the male descendant is a means of acquiring land, while the female descendant is a means of acquiring dowry. A young male of a family who is about to marry will be given a certain amount of land by the head of the family. Therefore, the head of a family who has many sons certainly owns a large amount of land (Herliany, p. 60).

There is one strict difference among the Igbo, Mentawai, and Aitubu concerning the customary land. In the Igbo community, if they are rich, they can buy particular land from other families among the group or they can give a piece of land as compensation for punishment. However, for the Mentawai and Aitubu, a piece of land is obtained from inheritance. In their customary law system, native Mentawai and Papua must not trade land because it is an ancestral heritage; it cannot be replaced with anything of value.

An important point to underline from the three novels is nature and human interconnection have shaped similar cultures and civilizations of the Igbo, Mentawai, and Aitubu. Living in agriculture-patriarchal societies, they believe gods, spirits, and ancestral spirits guide and help them to live prosperously and in harmony with nature. The Igbo prays to *Ani*, the goddess of the Earth that guarantees the Earth to produce *yams*, the god of war, and here the role of the Oracle is matter as a counselor in Mbata village. The Mentawai adore *roh* and spirits of their ancestors to help them in cultivating land and casting away disease. Here the role of *Sikerei* is very important in holding ritual traditions. The Aitubu believe in ancestral spirits, animals, and elements of nature, and they keep the ecosystem working well with the help of ancestral spirits. The three groups have already maintained a natural balance in the past time. Their belief in the existence of gods and spirits helps them to live in harmony with nature, for example, the Igbo do not kill a python as they believe it is god. In modern science especially chain food, a snake is one example of a second consumer in the pyramid. The snake functions as a predator which consumes smaller animals called pests. Unlike in the modern era, farmers in the

past did not use pesticides to kill pests but they can maintain ecosystem balance. The Mentawai and the Aitubu give teaching to generations to maintain the balance of the ecosystem by taking natural resources as needed so there will be no natural destruction.

2. Modernity as Materialistic Civilization and Ecological Destruction

From the perspective of the Western world, the term modernity is related to the time of period, dividing it into three epochs: antiquity, medieval, and modern (Mitchell, 2015). It has a wide range arising from the mid-15th century and ended in 1930, an era before WW 2. Viewed in the 19th century, the modern era is closely related to the development of individualism, capitalism, and urbanization, and is believed there are possibilities for technological and political progress. In this paper, the term modernity is rooted in the perspective of Said's *Orientalism*, which is related to the concepts of how the West (the civilized) views the East (the uncivilized) as the subaltern. Leading to the ideas of individualism, capitalism, and urbanization, the civilized introduces many possibilities of technological and political progress to the subaltern Igbo, Mentawai, and Aitubu.

In the three novels, the civilized appear as the invaders, they use their perspective to instill the ideas in the subalterns that they are backward and need "development" such as in education, technology, and morals-spiritual. Modernity from the perspective of the West is closely related to materialistic civilization: industrialism, advanced science and technology, economic and financial stability, law and governance, and human resource qualities, and this argument is on the idea of 'development' which is the core of globalization (Jonah, 2021). Postcolonial ecocriticism is to contest Western ideologies of development as a mere tool of the technocratic West. Underlying Huggan and Tiffin's postcolonial ecocriticism (Indriyanto, 2019) restates the word 'development' has become a means for Western technocrats (the First World) to advance their economic and political interests in underdeveloped countries (the Third World).

It is shown in the three novels that the developmentalism carried out for the natives Igbo, Mentawai, and Aitubu is to manifest the economic and political interests of the superior (the First World) to the inferior (the Third World), and 'development' itself is merely the First World's strategy for domination, imperialism, and racism in the area of colonialism. This is proper as Said's *Orientalism* that there are Westerners, and there are *Orientalists*. The former dominates; the latter must be dominated, which usually means having their land occupied, their internal affairs rigidly controlled, and their blood and treasure put at the disposal of one or another Western power. As a result of the domination of the First World, the three groups have experienced not only environmental destruction but also cultural disruption. In modern materialistic civilization, people think they have no boundaries to rule nature, so they exploit natural resources for profit, material possession, and economic success. Achebe does not straightforwardly portray the destruction of nature but highlights the taking over of the Evil Forest for the White missionaries' settlement as the beginning of the cultural disruption to the Igbo. Unlike Achebe, Erlang and Herliany straightforwardly describe the destruction of nature to fulfill the political and economic interests of the central government which is manifested in the development of infrastructures and mining companies.

There are two major points of exploitation of nature in Mbanta Village; the first is the occupation of the Evil Forest by the Western missionaries, and the second is the killing of Royal Pythons. The Igbo believe not to disturb the existence of Evil Forest in any action to respect the spirits, however, Western missionaries have disturbed their philosophy of microcosm and macrocosm balance. By cutting down the trees of the Evil Forest, the Europeans have ignored the rights of the indigenous with their concept of natural sustainability. From this point of view, the White race starts to dominate the Igbo natives. They have run their imperialism and racism through policy, as (Wani & Ganaie, 2022) mentions that the British rulers established governmental institutions such as courts, prisons, and trade and commerce policy, and the White rulers enforced their law and put those who broke the regulations behind the bars. Departing from the death of the White man, the White missionaries confirm the indigenous that paganism is complicit in the barbarism of the community. To manifest their political and economic interest, the West missionaries declared the natives Igbo must embrace Christianity. It is merely a movement that eventually gives alternatives to the natives' culture and beliefs. To be a surprise, many natives welcome the alternatives, leaving their animism and praying in the way of the Christian Church. The opening of the European school is an effective way to transfer the White's ideology and knowledge. They persuade the clans to send the native children to the school, claiming education is the best key to maintaining their land from the foreigners. It comforts the native children to listen to the priests' words at school because Christianity teaches them to love, forgive, and treat humans. In contrast to their cultural practices, the Igbo culture has brutal traditions, such as murdering the twins, polygamy, pathetic condition of women, sending the sick to Evil Forest, and punishments. More days, more natives convert to Christianity and leave their traditions and beliefs. Through Christianity, the White missionaries manifested their political and economic interest to dominate the land, impose their ideology, and run the law for the subordinate.

Two main reasons why the government has taken over the Mentawai's Forest. Firstly, the nomadic life of the indigenous expands the destruction of the forest, therefore, the establishment of *Siberut* National Park must be carried out immediately. Secondly, the Mentawai natives are considered economically backward and uncivilized compared to other regions in Indonesia. Therefore, developments such as the establishment of schools, government offices, health centers, modern housing, and the enactment of new regulations related to the administration of citizenship, official religions, restrictions on taking forest products, and the removal of tattoos are necessary. The government has taken over their land and even worse, they are tricked to sign a recognition letter which states they are willing to give their ancestral land to the government. In reality, they run logging companies managed by the private sector and government. They have dropped bulldozers and other modern machines to cut down the trees for the timber and so the land becomes deforested. Behind the developmentalism, the New Order has actually carried out and supported environmental destruction. The ritual traditions of the Mentawai natives have been disrupted since the New Order regulated the new policy. It is mentioned tattoos are an important tradition for the Mentawai people, especially for the *Sikerei* (Windiyarti, 2021). This tattoo connects the Mentawai tribe with their deities and the spirits of their ancestors. The new policy also forces the natives to convert their paganism, *Arat Sabulungan* to one of the recommended modern religions such as Islam, Christianity, or Catholicism.

Like *Burung Kayu*, *Isinga* depicts environmental destruction in the era of the New Order. The government has declared an important reason for the development of Papua, to make a better future for the indigenous. The indigenous have been considered to have no modern education, and their economic life is underdeveloped compared to other provinces in Indonesia. The New Order government understands that the land of Papua has vital natural resources, for example, gold, copper, tin, and raw oil while Papua's forests produce timber and natural materials that are important for human welfare. Underlying the *Article 33 of Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia*, the government has legalized the opening of mining and timber companies. Advanced technology and modern machines have been brought in to excavate the land and are used to cut down the trees in the forest effectively and efficiently. As a result, the land becomes deforested and the area where mining excavations have been made is no longer fertile. The land of Papua has become vulnerable to floods and landslides, especially in hilly areas. The food crisis hit Papua since natural disasters have caused failure in the agriculture sector. The indigenous do not get the sweet fruits of the 'development' as programmed by the New Order, they instead receive many material losses related to the natural wealth of Papua. This 'development' is not intended one hundred percent for indigenous Papuans, but rather to serve the political and economic interests of foreign investors, the central government, and state-owned private companies.

D. Conclusion

This article has shown that the three novels show an intersection among nature, humans and culture in which nature and human interconnection have shaped similar cultures and civilizations of the Igbo, Mentawai, and Aitubu. The most prominent human cultures formed due to the natural environment in the three novels are four things. Firstly, the existence of a pagan religion of the three groups that they worship nature and believes in gods and ancestral spirits. Secondly, the three groups make efforts to fulfil the needs of life which lead to livelihoods related to nature, such as farming and hunting. Thirdly, due to the livelihoods division based on natural environment, patriarchal system becomes the social system adapted by the communities of the three tribes and this leads to values and roles of being male and female in the communities of the three groups. Fourthly, this social system influences on the customary rights of land ownership (*hak tanah ulayat*) of the three communities in which men will inherit and expand the land while women will acquire dowry.

Achebe, Erlang, and Herliany have clearly portrayed in their novels that before the arrival of the superior in the territory of the Igbo, Mentawai, and Aitubu, the natives live well in harmony with nature. However, after the arrival of the superior who occupied their land, the three communities as the Third World experience oppression and marginalization. Their land and natural resources are exploited, and the balance of nature is damaged by the interference of the First World. They have marginalized and lost their rights to rule their territories. The three groups experience a change of civilization as the First World technocratic ideology interrupt their harmony with their natural environment. Since the intervention of the First World emerge territorial occupation and oppression, the three communities interface the destruction of natural environment and cultural disruption.

Modernity is something people think provides goodness for civilization and a better life for the Third World. The indigenous Igbo, Mentawai, and Aitubu in *Things Fall Apart*, *Burung Kayu*, and *Isinga* have shown that not all elements of modernity such as formal education, technological advancement, industrialization, and urbanization can guarantee the welfare of the Third World although there are positive sides of modernity. This is because the modern world is capitalist-based where material things are important and capitalist people will seek as much profit as possible from the Earth they live on. Within the Western ideology of 'developmentalism'

that Huggan and Tiffin refer to, the Third World is merely a victim of this technocratic West's tool and modernity brings not only ecological destruction but also cultural disruption.

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