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Ethological Representation of Birds and Other Animals in Kidung Tantri Kediri

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ABSTRACT

Kidung Tantri Kediri is one of the titles of a collection of tantri stories written in Middle Javanese language. Kidung Tantri Kediri text which used in this research is the text of Kidung Tantri Kediri edited by Revo Arka Giri Soekatno. The manuscript identification in the text editing also states that Kidung Tantri Kediri is a prose text composition of Kidung Tantri Kamandaka. This study aims to explore the ethological representation within Kidung Tantri Kediri's text. The analysis in this study uses intertextual studies with the discipline of ethology that studies animal behavior. The data collected by determining the dominance of animals that often appear in the text and other distinctive features. Furthermore, the results of the intertextuality study are then analyzed using semiotics to determine the philosophical meaning contained in the representation. Finally, the research concludes that the ethology represented within Kidung Tantri Kediri's text. The animal characters are analogized philosophically in the story.

Keywords: chant, representation, ethology

INTRODUCTION

Kidung Tantri Kediri, hereafter referred to as Tk, is an old Javanese Manuscript which written in Middle Javanese language. It is adapted from old Indian Manuscript that titled *Panchatantra.* It is known for its moral tales featuring animal characters. While the text has received attention from literary scholars, linguistic analysts, and cultural historians, one critical aspect remains underexplored: the ethological representation, or how animal behavior is depicted and whether it corresponds with real-life behavior observed in animals (ethology).

Tk is the dissertation work of Revo Arka Giri Soekatno. The dissertation details that Tk is a composition of Kidung Tantri Kamandaka-prosa, hereafter referred to as TK. Kidung Tantri Kediri is a collection of tantri stories. Tantri stories are generally fable stories with the main characters being animals. In this article, the discussion of fable stories will be studied intertextually with the science of animal behavior called ethology. Ethology can further explain how and why animals have certain characteristics and perform certain actions.

Research on Kidung Tantri Kediri has largely focused on its narrative structure, moral and educational function, linguistic features, and its roots in Indian literature. Studies have analyzed its didactic nature and how it reflects Javanese cultural and courtly values. Scholars have recognized that

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animals are central to the stories, often used as metaphors for human behavior, particularly in political and ethical contexts.

However, there has been limited analysis regarding the scientific accuracy or realism of animal behavior depicted in the text. The symbolic function of animals has been well-documented, but little attention has been paid to whether these representations show any actual understanding of animal behavior consistent with ethological science.

Animal symbolism in Javanese literature is not something new. Since the beginning of the Javanese literary tradition, animal symbolism has been present. In Kalangwan, Zoetmulder (1974) provides a categorization of flora and fauna in Old Javanese texts such as Negarakrtagama, Ramayana, Arjunawijaya, and Sumanasantaka. The fauna category is summarized by the list of Javanese birds that appear in the Ramayana. The texts suggest that the *kawi* or author of the Ramayana relied on an inexhaustible supply of onomatopoeia and alliteration to translate birdsong into conversations and domestic disputes that are often difficult to understand and impossible to translate into one other language In a different tradition from the Hindu texts in Kalangwan, namely the Buddhist tradition, animal stories appear in reliefs in temples on the island of Java. Bambang and Listia (2001) provide a categorization of reliefs of animal types in Borobudur Temple, namely fish, creeping animals, mammals, and birds. The bird group is categorized into 3 categories, namely the Passeriformes order, Falconiformes order, and peacocks. Animal symbolism also appears in every periodization of Javanese literature. Of course, in the Middle Javanese period, tantri stories represent this symbolism. Every tantri story comes in the form of an animal story. Van Bloeman Waanders (1859) mentioned that *Pancatantra* is similar to the story of 1001 nights, although Waanders claimed not to have mastered the content of *Pancatantra.* In the periodization of new Javanese literature, animal symbolism appears in the whole text or in parts. In Serat Centhini, the appearance of animals is marked by a symbol of healing venereal disease (rajasinga) by having intercourse with a horse, as in the following excerpt:

> *"Kulawirya nimbali Nuripin, nyariyosaken supenanipun, dipundhatengi Jamal Jamil lan dipunaturi pitedah jampining sakit rajasinga, inggih punika kedah senggama kalihan prawan kencur utawi wanita ingkang luwas rah. Botenipun kalihan kapal. Nadyan kamanah aneh, ewadene Nuripin mrayogekaken kalihan kemawon ship, menawi kalihan prawan utawi wanita old-rah nenambahi sin, jalaran mesthi badhe katularan." (Serat Centhini, volume X pupuh XI)*

Then freely translated by Salfia Rahmawati with:

> "Kulawirya *memanggih* Nuripin, (then) recounted his dream, (he) was visited by Jamal Jamil and given instructions on the cure for rajasinga disease, which is to have intercourse with a young virgin or a woman who has finished menstruating. Or with a horse. Although it seemed strange, Nuripin suggested horses, (because) if it is with a virgin or a woman who has finished menstruating (it will) increase the sin because it will definitely be infected."

In her own manuscript editing, Salfia (2014) describes the manuscript of Serat Narasawan, a manuscript from the Moens collection, which also has animal symbolism in it. Serat Narasawan

discusses sexual deviant behavior in Javanese society. The deviation is in the form of sexual relations carried out by the characters in the Serat Narasawan manuscript with animals including cows, buffaloes, horses, deer, goats, monkeys, orangutans and dogs. In the periodization of modern Javanese literature, both prose stories and *geguritan* use animal symbolism in the storyline. In addition to the plot, animal symbols appear in the texts of novels written by Suparto Brata, including Garuda Putih and Emprit Abuntut Bedhug. Although the animal characters appear only in the title, they can still be studied semiotically to provide answers to the question of why garuda and emprit birds appear in the title of a novel with a complex story and plot.

In the summary of the story, Dyah Tantri is said to have a *stock of* 360 stories to be told to the King. The beginning of the tantri story begins when King Eswaryapala went to a high place and looked across his vast country. In the distance he saw a sudra marriage where the bride and groom and their families looked really very happy, then the next day the King Eswaryapala decided to marry every day to be happy continuously. Then one day all the beautiful girls in his country were gone, so his patih told his daughter, the Tantri, a girl of special intelligence. Upon hearing this, Tantri agreed to marry King Eswaryapala, so Tantri was married to the king and in the evening, she told the king to get rid of her sleepiness and tiredness. Then she told a story called the tantric story. After hearing the tantri's story that night, the next day the king said that he did not want to get married again because he wanted to hear the rest of the tantri's story. The opening of the animal story in Tk begins with a fragment entitled Nandakaprakarana. Nandaka is a perfect bull, beautifully black in color. Nandaka is considered a cow that received a gift from Sang Hyang Widhi, because usually people are given female cows that are only used for milk. But Nandaka's presence brought blessings to the farmer's family, because with Nandaka, the farmer could look for wood in the forest and then sell the wood and buy rice. Then if he has excess rice, he will exchange it for gold. And so on, Nandaka was used by the farmer until the farmer was wealthy and had thousands of cows. Then Nandaka felt bored and finally he was burned by a Brahmin messenger who was told to find where Nandaka had gone. This is the end of the story of a cow that is used by humans endlessly until it feels bored and isolates itself because it feels annoyed with the farmer.

The story of the cow can remind the reader how much energy cows use every day to work for humans. Cows work with a lot of energy because the work done by cows is usually work with a lot of loads. The story of animal characters in Tk is interesting to be discussed intertextually by comparing the habits and traits of animals after receiving a stimulus, this science is then referred to as Ethology. The representation of ethology in the instinctive nature of a cow can be compared with how much power a cow actually has to do a job. Then, how does a cow respond when it gets an ordinary stimulus compared to an excessive stimulus. Whether the stimulation will affect the psychological condition of the cow as an animal. The ethological representation will then be linked to the philosophical meaning that Tk wants to convey. To explore the philosophical meaning, it will be assisted by semiotic discussion in the text.

Tk is one of the texts that has not been studied much in terms of content. The fragments of the story also have a peculiarity with an irregular plot that makes it rather difficult to understand. However, this is the challenge in studying the text considering that, in general, there are still very few references to Middle Javanese literature, so this research is expected to complement the treasure of previous research results on the Tk text.

This research is translational research involving the discipline of ethology, so to better understand it, the definition of ethology is explained starting from a brief definition of ethology. Ethology is the study of animal behavior. Lorenz (1981) defines ethology as the study of animal behavior in their natural context. He emphasized the importance of direct observation and the influence of environmental factors on animal behavior. Hall (2004) describes ethology as the systematic study of animal behavior that includes observation, analysis, and testing of hypotheses about animal behavior in social and environmental contexts. It can thus be concluded that ethology is an important field for understanding animal behavior from various perspectives, and the definitions provided by experts show the complexity and depth of this study. To deepen it, Tinbergen (1963) introduced the concept of "four questions" in ethology: function, development, mechanism and evolution of behavior. He argued that to understand animal behavior, we must consider all these aspects.

This research combines literary intertextuality with ethology. Intertextuality in literature refers to the study of the relationship between different literary texts. The concept suggests that each text does not stand alone, but is interwoven within a wider network of references and meanings. Texts may interact, refer to, or respond to each other, allowing readers to interpret new meanings based on these relationships. Ethology, on the other hand, is the study of animal behavior in their natural context. In the context of literary studies, the ethological approach can be used to understand the behavior of characters in literary texts, as well as how that behavior can be understood in a broader context, including the relationships between texts. The combination of literary intertextuality and ethology, formulates a stage of understanding in the form of:

a. Character Behavior: in intertextual studies, the behavior of characters in a text can be analyzed through the lens of ethology. For example, a character who has certain animal-like behaviors can be understood more deeply if we consider how those behaviors relate to other characters in different texts. In the study of animal behavior, the ability of domesticated species to fulfil their naturally-selected behavioural needs depends on: (a) the constraints imposed by their captive environment plus; (b) the influence of artificial selection (selective breeding) on their genome (Barnard and Hurst, 1996).
b. Animal Symbolism: many literary works use animals as symbols to depict human nature. Intertextuality studies can help reveal how this symbolism recurs in various texts, while ethological approaches give us insights into the behavior of the animals on which the symbolism is based. Preethi (2020) said many symbolic words are represented in literature to denote different issues in the society. Animals too are used for such.

c. Human and Nature Relationships: in literature, the relationship between humans and animals can reflect cultural and social values. Through intertextuality, we can see how this relationship is explored across different texts, while ethology provides a deeper understanding of the dynamic. Amiot (2015) made conclusion for their research about human and animal relationship, said nonhuman animals are ubiquitous to human life, and permeate a diversity of social contexts by providing humans with food and clothing, serving as participants in research, improving healing, and offering entertainment, leisure, and companionship. Despite the impact that animals have on human lives and vice versa, the field of psychology has barely touched upon the topic of human–animal relations as an important domain of human activity.

This incorporation emphasizes the importance of ethology in understanding the representation of birds and other animals in Kidung Tantri Kědiri. The work not only reflects animal behavior but also provides insights into moral values and human character, making it relevant for both literary and ethological studies. Tk, is no longer a new thing that has never been researched at all. The presence of Tk itself has been the object of research in "*Kidung Tantri Kědiri*, A Philological Study of a Middle Javanese Manuscript" by Revo Arka Giri Soekatno (2009) resulting philological studies in the form of text edits and translations, and "Looking at Tantri's Story in *Kidung Tantri Kědiri*" by Salfia Rahmawati (2024) resulting notes on the Results of the Philological Study of Tk.

Earlier researches show that combining intertextuality studies with an ethological approach offers a deeper understanding of the relationship between text and character behavior. It creates rich and complex layers of meaning in literary analysis, opening up space for innovative and multidimensional interpretations.

METHODS

The basic principle of intertextuality is the relationship of texts with other texts. So the research method used in this writing is the read and write method, namely by reading the entire Tk text and then recording things that are in accordance with the theory used in this study. The data generated in the form of words, sentences in Tk fragments based on the results of text editing from Revo Arka Giri Soekatno Data collection is done as carefully as possible, so that data collection will be maximized. Identification and classification of texts are done by comparing intertextuality.

According to Kristeva (1980) in intertextual studies, there are two methods of data analysis offered, namely suprasegmental and intertextual. First, suprasegmental analysis examines expressions or utterances in the form of words, sentences, and paragraphs contained in the Tk text, while intertextual analysis reveals the relationship between the Tk text and the text outside the Tk text. The two cannot be separated. That is, the Tk text that contains animal symbolism is connected to other texts, namely animal traits that can be obtained from ethological studies. To understand this, the text

must understand the function that combines the pieces of the text. Kristeva's (1980) function consists of bound and unbound variables. The bound variables are words, sentences, and paragraphs found in the text of Tk. This method provides a strong framework for analyzing the ethological representations of birds and other animals in Tk. By emphasizing signs and meanings, this approach helps in understanding how animals function as symbols in the text and how they contribute to the overall meaning of the literary work.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The first step to conducting an intertextual study in the Tk text is to identify the text. Revo Arka Giri Soekatno has provided an overview of the Tk text with a summary to make it easier for readers to understand the content of the text. The summary is then made an overview of the text to make it easier to know what animals are contained in the Tk text.

From this overview, we can see that birds are the dominant animals mentioned in Tk. This makes birds self-classified in this study. Table 1 presents the classification of birds and a summary of the text that describes their story in Tk.

Table 1. List of Birds and Their Characters in the Tk Text

No.	Animal Type	Text Summary
1	Betet Bird *(Psittacula alexandri)*	The Betta bird is told to have two different characters, when it lives in the hunter's house and when it lives in the hermitage.
2	Bangau Bird *(Leptoptilos javanicus)*	It is said that he pretended to be good just to get close to prey, but because of his greed, he ended up eating a crab.
3	Birds of Prey	It is said that these two birds live together, even though instinctively, animals should be grouped according to their species.
4	Fruit-eating Bird	
5	Kedidi Bird *(Calidris ruficollis)*	It is said that likes to swear
6	Manyar Bird *(Ploceus manyar)*	It is said that he was arrogant
7	Woodpecker (*Dinopium javanense)*	It is said that it can defeat a tiger by pecking its eyes until it goes blind.
8	Crows *(Corvus splendens)*	Told to steal the prince's jewelry

The table above shows the representation of birds in the text demonstrates a blend of natural ethological traits and moral-allegorical functions. Each bird is anthropomorphized to reflect specific human behaviors and values—both positive and negative.

Animals other than birds are also classified in the Table 2 along with their characters in the Tk text.

Table 2. List of Other Animals and Their Characters in Tk Texts

No.	Animal Type	Text Summary
1	Crab *(Dromiacea)*	It is said to be able to defeat baka birds and crows with its claws
2	Elephant *(Elephas maximus)*	It is said that he was attacked by five weak animals
3	Turtles *(Coura amobinensis)*	Being told that you're stupid and can't stick to your principles
4	Tiger (*Panthera Trigis)*	It is said that his esophagus is clogged with human bones
5	Snake (*Alethinophidia*)	It is said that he initially schemed with mice in an attempt to save himself from hunters, but later became prey for the mice.
6	Goats (*Capra hirpus)*	Told of the goat who dared to bully the tiger
7	Apes (*Hominoidea)*	Said to be able to fool a tiger that would attack it

The list will then be compared with texts from ethological research that discuss animal characteristics and traits. Table 3 is summarized from a variety of ethological research sources, as one ethological research source may be limited to discussing only one or a few animal characteristics. Other supporting text sources are also included to add to the evidence base for ethology, such as coverage from National Geographic.

Table 3. List of Bird Characteristics

No.	Animal Type	Characteristics
1	Betet Bird *(Psittacula alexandri)*	Can explain the unrivaled ability of birds to mimic human sounds and speech
2	Bangau Bird *(Leptoptilos javanicus)*	In terms of preying ability, in addition to using an active approach, herons also have passive hunting tactics, where they can stand still for long periods of time and wait for prey to approach. They are very patient and are able to stay in a motionless position for a long time, waiting for fish or amphibians to come closer.
3	Birds of Prey	Both have different characters, meat-eating birds are more aggressive in terms of stalking their prey, while fruit-eating birds are calmer birds because the food object does not move.
4	Fruit-eating Bird	

5	Kedidi Bird *(Calidris ruficollis)*	They forage by looking around and sometimes probing the ground with their beaks. It often perches in holes on soft mud or on low vegetation adjacent to its feeding area.
6	Manyar Bird *(Ploceus manyar)*	Manyar birds are often called weaver birds. Some types of manyar nests are equipped with "trick doors" to trick predators. The door appears clearly gaping, while the real door is hidden. Predators that try to enter the trick door will encounter a dead end, not connecting to the cavity where the eggs or chicks are.
7	Woodpecker (*Dinopium javanense)*	This bird's beak has a sharp, chisel-like edge that is naturally kept sharp by its penchant for pecking. It can peck up to 20 times per second or 8,000 to 12,000 taps per day.
8	Crow *(Corvus splendens)*	able to recognize human faces

The analysis reveals how the ethological characteristics of each bird can carry both literal and symbolic meanings in literature, particularly in Javanese narrative traditions. These representations bridge naturalistic observation with cultural storytelling, highlighting a deep, often intuitive understanding of animal behavior. Table 4 below shows the characteristics of various other animals in Tk that appears and did not have any significance to the story.

Table 4. The Characteristics of the Other Animals in Tk

No.	Animal Type	Characteristics
1	Crab *(Dromiacea)*	It has a claw strength of about 335 kilograms. According to researchers, the strength of the claw beats the strength of other crustaceans and the bite force of terrestrial predators.
2	*Elephant (Elephas maximus)*	The elephant's trunk and its keen sense of smell are used to observe the environment. The trunk is raised and waved in the air to collect odor particles. Through the proboscis, the odor particles are then carried to a specialized gland called Jacobson's organ, which is located on the palate.
3	Turtles *(Coura amobinensis)*	The shell is resistant to fractures, heavy loads, attacks, and bites. According to Composite, the average tortoise shell fracture resistance is 36.4 MPa m1/2
4	Tiger (*Panthera Trigis)*	They often roam around their territories, searching for prey and guarding their boundaries.
5	Snake (*Alethinophidia*)	Rattlesnakes are more relaxed in their movements, but will protect themselves or attack if approached.

6	Goat (*Capra hirpus)*	Goats have a high degree of social organization, which allows them to protect themselves from predators, forage for food, and find sexual partners. Goats' fighting behavior is related to their horn structure, where horn size indicates the social status of the goat.
7	Apes (*Hominoidea)*	good at solving complex problems and able to learn things quickly, but they don't quite reach the cognitive level of great apes

Thus, the philosophical value of each fragment of the Tk story summarized based on the results of the translation of Revo Arka Giri Soekatno, that each animal in each tantri story has a character that can be taken as a philosophical value for the life of mankind.

CONCLUSIONS

Kidung Tantri Kědiri is a literary work rich in symbolism and ethological representations, especially through the characters of birds and other animals. This article concludes that the ethological representations in this work not only reflect the nature and behavior of animals, but also serve as allegories to describe human nature and morality. Through the depiction of animal life, Kidung Tantri Kědiri conveys moral and ethical messages, inviting readers to reflect on their own behavior in a social and spiritual context. As such, the work serves not only as entertainment, but also as a means of education and moral reflection for society.

This research reveals that Tk and related traditional texts do not merely use animals as narrative devices, but rather reflect a profound, albeit intuitive, understanding of animal behavior. Many of the animal characters demonstrate traits that align with real ethological knowledge—such as the mimicry ability of the Betet bird, the territorial instincts of the tiger, or the social structures observed in goats. However, these realistic behaviors are often woven with symbolic and moral dimensions, reflecting the text's function as both a didactic and literary work. Future studies should integrate literary analysis with ethology, zoology, and ecological anthropology to deepen understanding of animal representations in traditional texts.

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