



From Tradition to Transformation: A Cultural Representation of 'Mata dan Rahasia Pulau Gapi'

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ABSTRACT

Keywords:
Culture
Novel
Ternate Ethnic
Tradition

Researching culture in literary works is crucial because it provides a nuanced understanding of how societal values, traditions, and beliefs are reflected and shaped through literature. By analyzing literary texts, researchers can uncover the cultural contexts that influence narrative structures, character development, and thematic explorations. This study explores the novel *Mata dan Kunci Pulau Gapi* by Okky Madasari through an anthropological literary approach, aiming to uncover cultural depictions in the narrative. The research background emphasizes the significance of literature as a reflection of culture, particularly in Indonesian contexts where traditional beliefs and modernity often intersect. The methodology is descriptive qualitative, employing textual analysis to interpret symbols, rituals, and character development in relation to their cultural significance. Data collection involves close reading of the text, focusing on narrative elements that reveal underlying cultural themes. Preliminary findings indicate that the novel effectively illustrates the tension between tradition and change, highlighting how characters navigate their identities within a culturally rich yet challenging environment. The conclusions drawn from this analysis suggest that *Mata dan Kunci Pulau Gapi* serves not only as a narrative of personal growth but also as a commentary on the preservation of cultural heritage amidst modernization. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of how literature can serve as a vehicle for exploring and critiquing societal values in contemporary Indonesia.

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1. Introduction

Researching culture in literary works is crucial because it provides a nuanced understanding of how societal values, traditions, and beliefs are reflected and shaped through literature (Ratna, 2019). By analyzing the cultural context in which a text is created, readers can gain insights into the historical moments, power dynamics, and social hierarchies that influence both the author and the narrative. This approach not only enhances our understanding of literary themes and character development, but also enables us to perceive literature as both a product of and a reflection of its cultural environment. From this perspective, literature serves as a conduit between the past and the present, offering insights that may challenge or reinforce contemporary ideas and ideologies (Ratna, 2017).

A considerable number of authors have drawn inspiration from cultural phenomena in the creation of their literary works. Cultural phenomena, which encompass traditions, customs, values, and social events, frequently offer rich and pertinent material for narrative construction. By employing cultural phenomena as a backdrop or theme, literary works can serve as a reflection of societal conditions while simultaneously offering critiques or perspectives on social change. Such works frequently serve



to reinforce emotional bonds with the audience, as readers are able to discern a reflection of their own reality within the narrative.

The author who employs cultural phenomena as a source of inspiration for her work is Okky Madasari. Madasari frequently employs social issues, cultural values, and the intricacies of modern Indonesian society as points of reference in her novels. In her writing, Okky examines a range of themes, including gender inequality, human rights and the challenges faced by marginalised communities. Her work reflects the realities and challenges of contemporary Indonesia. Her works not only provide a critical reflection on these cultural phenomena but also aim to raise awareness and prompt readers to engage in critical thinking. Okky's narrative style positions her as a significant figure in the field of Southeast Asian literature.

One of Okky Madasari's works entitled "Mata dan Rahasia Pulau Gapi" (Madasari, 2018) raises the theme of identity, culture, and inner turmoil in facing the changing times. Through her characters, Okky Madasari explores the social dynamics that occur in society, especially in the Maluku region, where the story is set. This novel depicts the conflict between local traditions and modernity that often causes tension within individuals and communities. "Mata dan Rahasia Pulau Gapi" also explores issues of history, local wisdom, and the struggle to maintain identity amidst globalization, making it a relevant and meaningful work for Indonesian and international readers.

In her novel, *Mata dan Rahasia Pulau Gapi*, Okky Madasari presents the adventures of Mata, a teenage girl who is both intelligent and inquisitive. During her journey to Gapi Island, Mata encounters a series of challenges that test her courage and humanity. Following an encounter with an oppressed community group, Mata begins to grasp the social complexities that exist on the island. The idyllic natural scenery belies a conflict between the local population and external parties who exploit the island's natural resources. Mata is confronted with a moral dilemma: should she remain silent or become involved in the struggle for justice. As a result of the poignant experiences she encounters on Gapi Island, Mata gradually discovers the inner fortitude to take action. She encounters individuals who serve as exemplars of resistance, through whom she gains insight into the significance of solidarity and fortitude in confronting injustice. Her decision to become involved in the struggle had a profound impact on her life, leading her to a deeper understanding of the concept of social responsibility and the courage to confront uncertainty. The novel is not merely a physical journey; it is also an emotional and intellectual journey of a young girl who matures into an agent of change.

This study will examine the apparent cultural colour of "Mata dan Rahasia Pulau Gapi" using a literary anthropology approach. This approach allows the researcher to focus on how the author describes the cultural elements of the Ternate community in the work. The researcher will examine the cultural elements in question using the theory put forward by Koentjaraningrat (Koentjaraningrat, 2019). In his theory, Koentjaraningrat identifies seven cultural elements that are present in all societies: the social system and organisation, the religious system, the livelihood system, the knowledge system, the equipment and technology system, the language, and the art. This theory will be employed to analyse the interrelationship between cultural elements and narratives embedded within literary texts, encompassing symbolism, customs, myths, and social practices manifested through characters, storylines, and settings (Ratna, 2011, 2017, 2019). The objective is to comprehend the manner in which this text serves as a reflection of the culture of the Gapi community and to identify the means by which the author.

A substantial corpus of research on Indonesian culture has been conducted by Indonesian literary researchers, with a particular focus on the richness and diversity of Indonesia's cultural heritage. These studies frequently investigate the manner in which traditional values, customs, and local wisdom are reflected in a range of literary forms, including novels (Astutik, 2012; Hikmasari & Sahayu, 2019; Lestari & Siagian, 2024; Putri & Nursaid, 2023; Saptiana Sulantri, 2020; Setiawati et al., 2023; Wiyatmi & Nurhadi, 2021), short stories (Astuti & Umianti, 2018), and poetry (Isnaini & Farras, 2021; Suwignyo, 2013; Wati et al., 2024). By analysing these works, researchers can gain insight into how Indonesian authors depict societal issues, cultural identity, and the dynamic interplay between tradition and modernity. A significant proportion of the research of Indonesian literature engages with historical events, religious traditions and philosophical concepts that are rooted in the archipelago's multi-ethnic society. This engagement offers a critical perspective on post-colonial identity, globalisation and the influence of modern values on traditional life.

Moreover, this research frequently examines the ways in which literature contributes to the formation and modification of cultural and national identity (Apriyani, 2020; Darmawati, 2017; Fitriana, 2017; Muhammad, 2017). The focus may include an examination of the ways in which authors employ literary forms to address social changes, gender roles, and intergenerational conflicts, while simultaneously providing insight into local customs and contemporary societal issues. By undertaking such analyses, Indonesian literary studies contribute to a more profound comprehension of the ways in which culture is perpetually renegotiated, represented, and transformed through literature.

A review of the literature reveals a dearth of research examining the cultural elements in the novel "Mata dan Rahasia Pulau Gapi." Accordingly, the objective of this study is to identify, analyse and comprehend the cultural representations present in the novel. This study will address the shortcomings of previous research, particularly with regard to the cultural context that forms the backdrop to the narrative.

2. Method

This research is a type of qualitative descriptive research utilising the material object in the form of the novel "Mata dan Rahasia Pulau Gapi" by Okky Madasari. The data were collected through a close reading of the novel, "Mata dan Rahasia Pulau Gapi," in order to identify cultural symbols, themes related to local customs and beliefs, and representations of social and moral values of the community. A further method of data collection is a literature study, whereby a range of relevant references are examined with a view to identifying cultural elements present in the novel. The data analysis was conducted using descriptive-analytical techniques. This entailed a description of the cultural elements present in the work and an analysis of these elements in the context of literary anthropology theory. The subsequent phase of the analysis entails mapping and examining the cultural elements that contribute to the development of the major themes in the novel. The final stage of the process is to conclude by identifying a unifying theme that connects the various cultural elements present in the novel.

3. Result and Discussion

This research results section will describe the various cultural elements contained in the novel 'Mata dan Rahasia Pulau Gapi,' by referring to the formulation of cultural elements put forward by Koentjaraningrat (2019). The analysis will focus on several key aspects, such as the social system and organisation, the religious system, the livelihood system, the knowledge system, the equipment and technology system, the language, and the art. Through detailed examination, this section will highlight how the characters and events in the novel embody these cultural elements, illustrating the way in which the author reflects the traditions, practices, and social dynamics of the society depicted. By drawing connections between Koentjaraningrat's theoretical framework and the textual evidence from the novel, this section aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the cultural context that informs the storyline and character development in 'Mata dan Rahasia Pulau Gapi.'

3.1. The social system and organisation

Okky Madasari, the author, characterizes the Ternate community as a society that is rich in unique social and cultural systems, which have been transmitted from one generation to the next. Okky examines the social dynamics at play in the lives of indigenous people, customs, and the power relations between local rulers (the sultanate) and ordinary people. The Ternate culture is characterised by a clearly delineated social structure, with the sultanate occupying a central position of authority. In this novel, the role of the sultan as a political and spiritual leader is a prominent feature, and the community holds this position in high regard.

"You must remember, Mata, we live under the protection of the Sultan. All customary rules come from there. Never go against the Sultan's orders." (Madasari, 2018, p. 98)".

This quotation illustrates the high degree of respect accorded to the Sultan within the social system of Ternate society. All customary regulations and significant decisions emanate from the sultanate, and the community is obliged to comply with these decisions. The sultanate represents the nexus of

decision-making and the repository of deeply entrenched customs. Furthermore, the social system is characterised by the involvement of customary figures, village elders and other community leaders. The customs of Ternate society exert a profound influence on the daily lives of its inhabitants. To illustrate, one may cite the case of land distribution and the strength of customary rights.

3.2. The religious system

The culture of Ternate is characterised by a rich heritage of traditions that are transmitted orally and through traditional ceremonies. One of the cultural elements discussed in the novel is *moloku kieke*, a customary system that regulates the way of life of the community, including rituals, customary laws, and social norms that must be obeyed. Furthermore, Okky Madasari elucidates the interconnection between humans and nature in Ternate culture, wherein the sea and the surrounding islands are not merely regarded as economic assets but are also integral to the community's identity and spiritual sustenance.

"Our life is not just about land and possessions, Mata. There are ancestral spirits guarding it. Don't just step over them." (Madasari, 2018, p. 170)".

The quote presents a more comprehensive perspective on life, encompassing not only the material aspects, such as land and property, but also the intangible and immaterial elements that contribute to an individual's overall well-being. It is imperative that spiritual values and traditions are upheld and respected. In the sentence, the ancestral spirits are described as guardians who are present and who appear to retain an important role in life even though they are no longer physically present. The aforementioned quote suggests that the local community bears a responsibility to respect the spiritual, cultural, and traditional heritage of their ancestors. The phrase "Don't carelessly step over them" can be interpreted as a cautionary note against the neglect or trivialisation of cultural and spiritual heritage, which is regarded as an integral aspect of an individual's identity and existence.

In the "Mata dan Rahasia Pulau Gapi" novels, the narrative depicts the belief system of the people of Pulau Gapi, which is closely intertwined with local myths and legends. The characters in the story are frequently shaped by beliefs in ancestral spirits and the potency of natural forces.

"This sea is our mother. Since long ago, our ancestors lived from here. We cannot just destroy it, Mata." (Madasari, 2018, p. 152)".

The above quote illustrates the Ternate people's perception of the sea as a vital source of sustenance and a revered entity, deserving of veneration and respect. The Ternate people adhere to a belief system that encompasses both ancestors and supernatural beings. The Ternate people adhere to the conviction that their lives are shaped by spiritual forces that warrant respect.

3.3. The livelihood system

Livelihood systems are typically associated with the means by which individuals within a narrative obtain the resources necessary to sustain their lives. In the novel "Mata dan Rahasia Pulau Gapi", the portrayal of the livelihood system is characterised by the lives of coastal communities that are heavily reliant on the sea. As the setting of the narrative, Pulau Gapi portrays a community whose members predominantly subsist by fishing. The residents of Pulau Gapi are profoundly attached to the sea, which serves as their primary source of income. The sea is not merely a source of economic sustenance; it also shapes the perspectives and cultural practices of the local community.

"We live off this sea. Every morning I hear the sound of the waves calling the men away, taking the boats out to sea. They never know what they will get today." (Madasari, 2018, p. 45)".

The above quote substantiates the assertion that the inhabitants of Gapi Island rely on the sea as their primary source of sustenance and livelihood. The sea represents the nexus of the Gapi Island community's economic activities. The primary economic activity of this community is fishing, as evidenced by the daily fishing expeditions undertaken by men to provide for their livelihood. The sound of the waves serves as a natural symbol that guides their lives, indicating a profound emotional and material attachment between the community and the sea. The sea is not merely a workplace; it is also a source of identity and pride. The nature of the fishermen's livelihood system is susceptible to fluctuations and unpredictability in natural conditions. The reliance on uncertain marine products is indicative of the inherent risks associated with the fishermen's livelihood. On a daily basis, they are

confronted with the prospect of disparate outcomes, ranging from bountiful harvests to occasions when they may return with nothing to show for their efforts. This illustrates the intimate bond between humans and the natural world, and how the unpredictability of nature is an integral aspect of the livelihoods of coastal communities.

Additionally, the novel presents a narrative of the advent of modernization and external intervention on Gapi Island, which gradually transformed traditional livelihoods. This is evidenced by the advent of novel economic systems, including international trade and the emergence of large corporations that began to exploit the island's resources. This resulted in a conflict between local communities, who continued to rely on traditional methods, and the emergence of new economic forces that posed a threat to the sustainability of their environment and culture.

"They came with big ships, bringing machines and equipment we've never seen before. They said this was all for progress. But what's the point of progress if we can no longer catch fish in our own seas?" (Madasari, 2018, p. 102)".

This quotation illustrates the manner in which the effects of modernization and globalization have commenced to transform the economic structure of Gapi Island. The introduction of new technology does not invariably result in economic advancement for the local community. Conversely, the local population is facing the prospect of losing access to the natural resources that have constituted the basis of their livelihoods.

"*Mata dan Rahasia Pulau Gapi*" novels also elucidates the issue of the exploitation of natural resources by external parties, which gives rise to economic inequality among the people of Pulau Gapi. Those who possess economic privilege tend to monopolize resources, while local populations whose livelihoods are based on traditional practices are increasingly marginalized.

"They are exploiting what is on our land, but we can only watch. The wealth that is in front of our eyes is simply taken away without us knowing when we can feel it." (Madasari, 2018, p. 150)".

The quote elucidates the presence of injustices within the local communities' livelihood systems. This dialogue implies that natural resources in the area are controlled by external parties, while indigenous people are unable to exercise control over them. This also demonstrates economic exploitation, whereby natural resources that rightfully belong to the community are appropriated by entities that are more powerful or possess greater access to technology and capital, while local communities lack control over these resources. They remain on the periphery, merely observing the exploitation that occurs, without benefiting from the proceeds that should rightfully accrue to them for the betterment of their welfare.

3.4. The knowledge system

In her novel, "*Mata dan Rahasia Pulau Gapi*", Okky Madasari illustrates the synthesis of traditional and modern knowledge within the community of Pulau Gapi. One illustrative example is the manner in which the characters in the novel comprehend the significance of the eye as a spiritual emblem, reflecting indigenous understanding of spirits and the supernatural. Furthermore, there is a discourse surrounding the utilisation of indigenous knowledge in addressing contemporary challenges, such as the exploitation of the island's natural resources by external actors.

"Here, the secret of the eye is kept by the ancestors, not just as an inanimate object, but as a guardian of our spirits" (Madasari, 2018, p. 123)".

This quote serves to illustrate the significance of the eye symbol as a spiritual heritage that has been transmitted by ancestors. In this context, the eye is not merely a physical object; rather, it represents the guardian of the soul and spirit, which plays a sacred role in maintaining the identity and balance of the community. In these words, the author underscores the interconnection between traditional objects and the spiritual fabric of the community. Ancestral heritage is not merely inanimate objects; it is also a vital force that safeguards and unites the past with the present. The eye, in its symbolism, represents spiritual fortitude and the safeguarding of cultural values.

The knowledge system depicted in this novel appears to be closely intertwined with the cultural and spiritual identity of the people of Gapi Island. Madasari effectively portrays the conflict between traditional beliefs and the values of modernization that are beginning to permeate the island. The protagonist, confronted with the choice between preserving his ancestral heritage and embracing technological advancement or modern knowledge, reflects on how society grapples with changes in the modern era. For instance, when the protagonist Mata discusses how modern education broadens his understanding of the external world while simultaneously distancing him from his cultural roots.

"I learned a lot about the world outside this island, but on the other hand, I feel like I'm getting further and further away from who I really am." (Madasari, 2018, p. 87)

This quote exemplifies the internal conflict experienced by a character who feels estranged from his identity, coupled with the insights he gains about the external world. The acquisition of knowledge serves to expand his intellectual horizons, enabling him to transcend the limitations of the island, which symbolizes his place of origin. However, as he gains further insight, he experiences a growing sense of disconnection from his roots and the fundamental aspects of his identity. This reflects the theme of identity, alienation, and the impact of globalization or modernity, which can result in individuals experiencing a sense of disconnection from their values and cultural roots, leading to a sense of confusion between their past and present selves.

3.5. The equipment and technology system

In her novels "Rahasia Mata and Pulau Gapi", Okky Madasari provides a detailed account of the technological tools utilized by the inhabitants of the island, encompassing both traditional and modern contexts. The technological elements highlighted in these works not only reflect the progress of civilization, but also illustrate how technology can alter or influence social dynamics and the relationship between humans and nature.

"The helicopters, the planes, the bombs, all to chase away the short people. (Madasari, 2018, p. 153)".

The presence of helicopters and planes in the sky can be interpreted as a symbol of technological advancement and its impact on human life. The helicopters and planes not only symbolize technological advancement but may also reflect Molu's evolving perspective on the world around him. This can be seen as the genesis of new discoveries and explorations, whereby Molu begins to recognize the extent of his previously unacquainted knowledge. This moment can also be seen as illustrative of the transition from a traditional way of life to a more modern one, in which technology becomes an integral part of everyday life. An analysis of these elements suggests that the novel may be intended to illustrate how contemporary technology and equipment can expand one's horizons and experiences, while also underscoring the cultural transformations occurring within society. Molu, as a character who experiences these changes, can be seen as a representation of a generation that must adapt to the times and find their place in a changing world.

"They will build a large mall on the ruins of this fort." (Madasari, 2018, p. 175)".

The proposed construction of a mega mall on the ruins of a fort represents a stark contrast between the advancement of technology and the preservation of historical heritage. The ruins of a fort that may have once served as a symbol of strength, protection, or even struggle will now be replaced by a modern shopping mall that represents contemporary consumption and lifestyle. This can be seen as an indictment of the manner in which contemporary society frequently makes the choice to prioritize the advancement of economic interests and the pursuit of economic gain over the preservation of cultural heritage. The term "mega mall" also indicates that technological developments influence not only the built environment but also the way of life and social interactions of those residing in the vicinity. Moreover, the construction of this mall can be seen as a symbol of the decline of traditional values and local identity. When modern technology and equipment are introduced to a space that should be respected for its historical value, there is a risk that future generations will lose their connection to the past. The ruins of a fort that may have once served as a site for collective reflection on historical events have now been transformed into a commercial space that prioritizes consumerism. This prompts significant inquiries into the equilibrium between advancement and cultural conservation, and its ramifications for the identity of the inhabitants in the vicinity.

3.6. The language

In "Mata dan Rahasia Pulau Gapi" novels, Okky Madasari employs a multifaceted narrative approach, integrating a rich tapestry of regional language elements into the narrative fabric. The employment of regional language in this novel serves as a device to enhance the characters, establish atmosphere, and underscore the cultural identity of the community depicted in the narrative.

"Tolire, that's what people call it (Madasari, 2018, p. 27)".

The term "tolire" is seldom encountered by individuals from external sources. In the Ternate area, the word "Tolire" is used to refer to a lake. Furthermore, Tolire was originally a secure and tranquil village within the Ternate sultanate at that time. However, one inaccuracy was introduced, resulting in the legend of Tolire Gam Jaha.

"Hundreds of years ago, Sultan Baabulah expelled the Portuguese from the land of Gapi Island.(Madasari, 2018, p. 38)".

The term "Baabullah" refers to the name of one of the sultans in Ternate, namely Sultan Baabullah. Sultan Baabullah led the kingdom in Ternate and is regarded as the most illustrious sultan in the history of Ternate and Maluku, having succeeded in expelling the Portuguese colonizers from Ternate.

3.7. The art

The "Mata dan Rahasia Pulau Gapi" novels are devoid of any additional artistic elements apart from quotations that serve to indicate the existence of regional dances. This is exemplified by the following quotation:

"They call the dance the Soya-soya Dance(Madasari, 2018, p. 35)".

"That morning, as hundreds of people prepared to dance the Soya-soya in the square in the center of town, as the entire island's population prepared to leave their homes to witness the celebration, ...(Madasari, 2018, p. 165)".

The Soya-Soya Dance is a traditional dance originating from the Maluku region of Indonesia. This dance is typically performed by a group of dancers who engage in rhythmic movement while vocalizing songs that elucidate the cultural and existential experiences of the Maluku people. The Soya-soya Dance is distinguished by its dynamic and energetic movements, which are typically accompanied by traditional musical instruments such as the tifa and guitar. This dance is frequently presented at various occasions, including weddings, festive celebrations, and other traditional events. It serves as a symbol of communal unity and the joy experienced by the local community. Furthermore, the Soya-soya Dance is imbued with profound spiritual significance, symbolizing gratitude and reverence for the ancestors and the natural world (Setiawan & Kurniati, 2024).

4. Conclusion

The findings of this analysis indicate that "Mata dan Rahasia Pulau Gapi" functions not only as a narrative of personal growth but also as a critique of the preservation of cultural heritage in the context of modernization. This work encourages the examination of the significance of cultural memory and the methods through which storytelling can facilitate the reclamation of heritage in the context of modern challenges. This novel, therefore, while also affirming that understanding cultural roots is not only a form of nostalgia, but also a tool for creating a strong and competitive identity in a changing world. By reviving stories that may have been forgotten, we can find strength in their history and build bridges between different generations, encouraging cross-cultural dialogue and understanding. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of how literature can serve as a vehicle for exploring and critiquing societal values in contemporary Indonesia. By intertwining personal and communal narratives, the work prompts a reconsideration of the concept of belonging in a rapidly evolving global context. drawn from this analysis suggest that "Mata dan Rahasia Pulau Gapi" serves not only as a narrative of personal growth but also as a commentary on the preservation of cultural heritage amidst modernization. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of how literature can serve as a vehicle for exploring and critiquing societal values in contemporary Indonesia.

5. Acknowledgement

We would like to express our sincerest gratitude to the Faculty of Literature, Culture and Communication (FSBK) at Ahmad Dahlan University (UAD) for providing us with the invaluable opportunity to attend the Sylection 2024 international conference.

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