

The Reflection of Cultural Values in Panggilan Tradisi Short Stories by Denny Agung: A Literary Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Studi kualitatif ini menyelidiki bagaimana nilai-nilai budaya tercermin dalam cerpen Panggilan Tradisi, serta bagaimana pembaca menafsirkan nilai-nilai tersebut melalui lensa budaya mereka sendiri. Dengan menggunakan wawancara mendalam dengan sebelas mahasiswa universitas, penelitian ini mengeksplorasi persepsi peserta terhadap indikator budaya yang tertanam dalam cerita, seperti ritual tradisional, kesopanan bahasa, harmoni sosial, dan elemen simbolis seperti wayang, gamelan, dan blangkon. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa cerpen tersebut secara efektif menyampaikan nilai-nilai budaya yang kompleks melalui struktur naratif yang ringkas, pengembangan karakter, dan latar belakang cerita. Interpretasi pembaca sangat dipengaruhi oleh latar belakang budaya mereka, pengalaman sebelumnya, dan kedekatan emosional dengan nilai-nilai yang diwakili. Hasil penelitian menyarankan bahwa cerpen dapat berfungsi sebagai alat yang kuat untuk mempromosikan pemahaman antarbudaya dan refleksi identitas. Selain itu, studi ini menyoroti pentingnya analisis budaya dalam sastra sebagai sarana untuk mempromosikan empati, toleransi, dan kesadaran kritis terhadap nilai-nilai sosial dalam konteks multikultural.

This qualitative study investigates how cultural values are reflected in the short story Panggilan Tradisi, and how readers interpret these values through their own cultural lenses. Using in-depth interviews with eleven university students, the research explores participants' perceptions of cultural indicators embedded in the story, such as traditional rituals, linguistic politeness, social harmony, and symbolic elements like wayang, gamelan, and blangkon. Findings show that the short story effectively conveys complex cultural values through concise narrative structure, character development, and setting. Readers' interpretations were deeply influenced by their cultural backgrounds, prior experiences, and emotional proximity to the values represented. The results suggest that short stories can serve as powerful tools for fostering intercultural understanding and identity reflection. Additionally, the study underscores the significance of cultural analysis in literature as a means to promote empathy, tolerance, and a more critical awareness of societal values in a multicultural context.



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INTRODUCTION

Literature serves not only as a reflection of society but also as a dynamic repository of cultural identity, beliefs, and collective memory. In particular, short stories have the capacity to encapsulate complex social realities and cultural nuances within a concise narrative structure. Through characters, setting, and language, they present a vivid portrait of how values are constructed, preserved, and challenged across generations.

The short story *Panggilan Tradisi* exemplifies how literature can embody and transmit traditional Indonesian values, particularly Javanese culture. Elements such as wayang, gamelan, and linguistic politeness are not merely decorative but function as symbolic representations of deeper social and moral principles. These textual cues reflect what Hofstede (2017) describes as “the programming of the mind” that distinguishes the members of one cultural group from another.

In a multicultural and globalized world, cultural literacy through literature becomes essential. As Byram and Wagner (2018) assert, literary texts act as “gateways to intercultural understanding,” allowing readers to experience, evaluate, and reflect upon values that may differ from their own. Stories such as *Panggilan Tradisi* help bridge cultural distances and promote empathy through narrative immersion.

However, the way readers perceive and interpret cultural values is not uniform. According to Shin and Crookes (2021), “reader identity plays a central role in constructing meaning,” especially when the text contains implicit cultural codes. Cultural background, gender, and prior experiences influence how readers decode the symbols, behaviors, and messages within a story. This makes reader response an essential component in the study of cultural representation.

In Indonesia’s context, where oral and written traditions often intertwine, the short story remains a powerful literary form. Its accessibility and brevity allow readers to engage deeply with cultural messages in a short span of time. As highlighted by Lazar (2019), short fiction “enables learners and readers to reflect critically on cultural representations while developing aesthetic appreciation.” Thus, *Panggilan Tradisi* can serve as a vehicle for both cultural preservation and introspection.

This study is grounded in the belief that literature offers more than just storytelling it serves as a site of cultural negotiation and identity exploration. The protagonist’s journey in *Panggilan Tradisi* reflects the tension between modernity and tradition, individual desire and communal expectation, which are central themes in many postcolonial societies. Such narratives offer opportunities to examine how cultural values are internalized, resisted, or reinterpreted by different readers.

To investigate this phenomenon, the present study employs a qualitative approach through in-depth interviews with eleven university students who read *Panggilan Tradisi*. Their interpretations reveal a wide range of responses shaped by personal, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds. This aligns with Imada and Yussen’s (2011) assertion that “narratives function as tools for cultural reproduction and identity construction.”

The purpose of this study is twofold: (1) to explore how cultural values are embedded in the literary and linguistic structure of *Panggilan Tradisi*, and (2) to understand how these values are interpreted and internalized by readers. By focusing on both textual and reader-centered perspectives, this research aims to contribute to the growing discourse on literature as a medium for intercultural dialogue and critical cultural awareness (Canagarajah, 2020).

METHOD

Type of research

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design to explore how cultural values are reflected in the short story *Panggilan Tradisi* and interpreted by readers from diverse personal and cultural backgrounds. A qualitative approach was selected to allow in-depth exploration of participants’ perceptions, emotions, and reflections toward cultural elements embedded in the narrative. As suggested by Creswell and Poth (2018), qualitative methods are ideal for understanding how individuals construct meaning from texts and social phenomena in naturalistic settings.

Data sources and research subjects

The research participants consisted of eleven students from the English Education Undergraduate Program at the Prima Bangsa Institute in Cirebon, who were selected through purposive sampling based on their willingness to engage in literary reflection and cultural interpretation. The sample included male and female students from traditional cultural backgrounds, providing a rich diversity of perspectives. All participants read the short story *Panggilan Tradisi* (Call of Tradition), which was given to them prior to the interview session.

Data Collection

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, guided by five core open-ended questions focused on the identification, interpretation, and personal response to cultural values in the story. Questions addressed topics such as cultural symbols, the influence of reader identity, cross-cultural impact, genre effectiveness, and the significance of cultural analysis in literature. The interviews were conducted individually by face-to-face, and lasted approximately 10-25 minutes per session. All interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent and transcribed verbatim for analysis.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke's (2016) framework, which involves familiarization with data, coding, theme development, and interpretation. Key themes such as symbolic representation, reader identity, intercultural awareness, and genre impact were identified. In addition, elements of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) were incorporated to examine how specific linguistic features in the participants' reflections such as evaluative language, modality, and narrative structure revealed their stance toward the cultural values presented in the story. This combination of thematic and discourse analysis allowed for both depth and flexibility in interpreting the data.

Trustworthiness and Ethical Considerations

To ensure accuracy and reliability, several strategies were applied. Member checking allowed participants to review their interview transcripts to confirm that their ideas and interpretations were correctly represented. Triangulation was used to compare responses from the eleven participants, identifying consistent themes such as respect for elders, tradition, and the contrast between modern and traditional life. Peer review with two cultural studies researchers helped refine the analysis and minimize researcher bias. Finally, reflexivity was maintained throughout the process by reflecting on the researcher's own cultural background to avoid personal bias and ensure objective interpretation.

These combined measures enhanced the trustworthiness and validity of the findings, ensuring they accurately represent how Indonesian youth perceive and reflect on traditional cultural values through literature.

These steps ensured that the findings presented are trustworthy and meaningful, particularly in representing how Indonesian youth today understand, relate to, and reflect upon traditional cultural values through literature.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study combine textual analysis of *Panggilan Tradisi* and participants' interpretive responses to explore how cultural values are represented and understood through literature. The findings reveal that the short story serves as both a reflection of Javanese identity and a medium for intercultural learning. By analyzing participants' perspectives, six major themes emerged, illustrating how linguistic expression, reader identity, and literary form contribute to the preservation and reinterpretation of cultural values in a modern context.

Linguistic and Symbolic Representations of Javanese Cultural Values in Panggilan Tradisi

The short story *Panggilan Tradisi* reflects Javanese cultural values through symbolic language and traditional expressions. Several participants recognized that the use of words such as *wayang*, *gamelan*, *blangkon*, and *Pagelaran* serve not only as cultural ornaments but also as meaningful representations of identity, respect, and wisdom. For instance, *wayang* and *Semar* were described as symbols of moral guidance and social harmony, while *blangkon* was understood as an emblem of cultural pride and discipline.

Participants highlighted that the author's deliberate use of traditional vocabulary allows readers to emotionally connect with the story and understand its cultural depth. Many stated that these elements evoke nostalgia and appreciation for Indonesian heritage. Furthermore, the combination of language and symbolism acts as a cultural transmitter, teaching moral values such as humility, respect for elders, and community spirit through everyday dialogues and settings.

This finding aligns with Weninger's (2018) argument that language and cultural symbols in literature function as tools for cultural enactment. The short story does not merely depict traditional life but invites readers to reflect on their role in preserving it. Through linguistic choices and imagery,

Panggilan Tradisi succeeds in bridging modern readers with ancestral wisdom embedded in Javanese culture.

Reflection of Local Cultural Values

The analysis revealed that participants identified several core indicators of local cultural values within the story, including polite language, communal cooperation, and respect for tradition. Participants 1–11 generally agreed that cultural values were expressed through three key aspects: (1) characters' behavior and speech, (2) rural settings depicting village life, and (3) symbolic cultural elements such as *wayang Punakawan*, *blangkon*, and *gamelan*.

Politeness, modesty, and respect for elders emerged as dominant values portrayed through daily interactions between characters. For example, gestures such as hand-kissing or the use of honorific language reflect Javanese courtesy and moral refinement. Participants also pointed out that the depiction of traditional markets, art performances, and village rituals serves as a visual metaphor for mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*) and cultural continuity.

These findings demonstrate that the story's portrayal of rural simplicity represents not backwardness but wisdom, harmony, and spiritual grounding. The short story thus reinforces the importance of maintaining cultural roots in the face of modernization. It echoes the argument by Lazar (2019) that short fiction helps readers develop cultural awareness while cultivating empathy and respect for social norms.

Reader Identity and Cultural Interpretation

The findings revealed that the participants' cultural and experiential backgrounds significantly influenced their interpretation of *Panggilan Tradisi*. Participants 1, 3, and 5 emphasized that readers from similar cultural contexts especially Javanese or Indonesian tended to relate more deeply to the story's symbols such as *wayang Punakawan*, *gamelan*, and *blangkon*. They viewed these symbols as part of their own identity, which made the reading experience feel nostalgic and personal.

Meanwhile, Participants 2, 6, and 8 highlighted that readers from more urban or modern backgrounds often saw the story as a rediscovery of cultural heritage rather than a familiar reflection of their lives. They admitted that the story prompted them to reconnect with traditional values that are often forgotten in the digital era.

Participants 7, 9, and 10 interpreted the story through the lens of intercultural learning. They believed that even if a reader is not culturally close to Javanese traditions, literature like *Panggilan Tradisi* can serve as an entry point for understanding diversity. Participant 11 also noted that each reader's interpretation is shaped by personal experience and emotional proximity, meaning that the same story can be interpreted differently depending on cultural "glasses."

These variations confirm Shin and Crookes' (2021) argument that literary meaning is co-constructed through the reader's identity. Thus, *Panggilan Tradisi* does not present fixed meanings but opens space for cultural reflection, encouraging readers to negotiate between modernity and tradition.

Short Story as a Cultural Bridge

The participants agreed that *Panggilan Tradisi* acts as a cultural bridge that connects readers from different backgrounds through shared values and empathy. Participants 1, 2, and 4 noted that the short story introduced them to new perspectives about Javanese traditions, helping them appreciate the moral values behind rituals and daily interactions. They viewed the story as a medium that encourages tolerance and reduces prejudice among diverse readers.

Participants 5, 6, and 7 stated that stories like *Panggilan Tradisi* can inspire curiosity about other cultures, especially when presented through relatable themes such as family, respect, and self-discovery. They explained that literature provides a non-threatening way to learn about others because it delivers cultural messages through emotion and narrative, not through direct instruction.

Participants 8–11 emphasized that this short story promotes empathy and cultural awareness by portraying harmony in diversity. They felt that the narrative humanizes cultural education and strengthens intercultural understanding. This aligns with Byram and Wagner's (2018) view that literature can be a pedagogical tool for intercultural dialogue, where stories serve as both learning materials and emotional experiences that connect people across cultural boundaries.

Effectiveness of the Short Story Genre

Participants generally agreed that the short story format is effective in conveying cultural messages concisely and emotionally. Participants 1, 3, and 5 stated that the brevity of *Panggilan Tradisi*

allows cultural values to be delivered directly without unnecessary details, making the story more focused and impactful. They emphasized that short stories, although simple, can highlight one major theme in depth—such as Raka’s rediscovery of his cultural roots—through compact yet meaningful narration.

Participants 2, 6, and 8 explained that short stories are more accessible for readers who prefer a quick but reflective experience. They felt that the format suits younger readers or those unfamiliar with literature because it conveys complex values in an engaging and efficient way. However, they also noted that while novels offer broader exploration, short stories maintain a stronger emotional focus due to their brevity.

Meanwhile, Participants 9–11 described *Panggilan Tradisi* as a successful example of how a short story can balance simplicity with cultural richness. They argued that the limited length of a short story forces the writer to choose symbols, settings, and characters carefully, resulting in a concentrated moral and aesthetic experience. This supports Lazar’s (2019) claim that short fiction can effectively communicate deep cultural insights within a limited structure.

Cultural Analysis and Identity Formation

The final theme highlights how cultural analysis through literature contributes to readers’ self-reflection and identity formation. Participants 1, 4, and 7 explained that analyzing cultural values in *Panggilan Tradisi* made them more aware of who they are and where they come from. They realized that understanding cultural symbols in literature helps build pride and belonging toward their heritage while developing empathy for others.

Participants 2, 5, and 8 viewed cultural analysis as a form of moral introspection. They stated that literature not only entertains but also mirrors society, prompting readers to evaluate their own values and perspectives. For them, Raka’s transformation from indifference to appreciation symbolizes the process of rediscovering one’s identity in a globalized world.

Participants 9–11 emphasized that cultural analysis encourages critical thinking and tolerance. By reading *Panggilan Tradisi*, they became more conscious of social diversity and the need for intercultural understanding. They agreed that literature functions as a medium of reflection, connecting individual identity with collective cultural consciousness. This finding supports Imada and Yussen’s (2011) argument that narratives help individuals reconstruct their sense of self through engagement with cultural meaning.

CONCLUSION

This research aimed to explore how cultural values are reflected and interpreted in the short story *Panggilan Tradisi*, through the lens of university readers with diverse cultural and educational backgrounds. By employing a qualitative approach grounded in in-depth interviews with eleven participants, this study revealed that literature particularly short stories can serve as a powerful medium for conveying embedded cultural ideologies and stimulating readers’ critical awareness of their own cultural assumptions. The findings highlighted that *Panggilan Tradisi* is not only a narrative about tradition and modernity, but also a space where values such as respect for elders, communal harmony (*gotong royong*), and cultural preservation are meaningfully encoded through setting, symbolism, and character transformation.

One of the most salient insights from the study is the significance of reader identity in shaping how cultural messages are received and interpreted. Readers with close ties to traditional or rural life reported a deep emotional resonance with the story, often connecting personally with the experiences of the protagonist, Raka. On the other hand, readers with more urban or modern orientations approached the story as a reflective exploration of a cultural world that is both familiar and distant. This supports theories in reader-response criticism that emphasize the active role of the reader in co-constructing textual meaning based on prior experience, cultural literacy, and emotional proximity. It also affirms the view that literature functions as a dialogic space where individual identity and collective memory intersect.

Furthermore, the short story genre itself proved effective in delivering compact yet profound cultural insight. Participants consistently reported that the brevity of *Panggilan Tradisi* did not diminish its emotional or cultural impact; rather, it allowed for focused storytelling, rich in symbols and values, without overwhelming detail. The transformation of Raka from a modern, disconnected youth into

someone who rediscovers pride in his cultural roots was perceived as both relatable and inspirational. This validates previous claims (Lazar, 2019) that short stories offer unique pedagogical value by concentrating cultural themes in a way that is accessible, especially for young or time-constrained readers.

A particularly noteworthy dimension of the study is how *Panggilan Tradisi* acts as a cultural bridge, fostering empathy and intercultural awareness. For several participants, the story initiated new appreciation toward aspects of Javanese culture that they had either overlooked or taken for granted. For others, it sparked curiosity about cultural practices outside their own. This aligns with Byram and Wagner's (2018) argument that literary texts can facilitate intercultural dialogue, offering windows into other ways of thinking and living. In increasingly multicultural societies like Indonesia and indeed in global education such stories play a crucial role in shaping tolerant, reflective, and culturally literate citizens.

Beyond the interpretation of the story itself, the process of analyzing cultural values in literature was reported by participants as intellectually and emotionally transformative. Many described how engaging with cultural themes in *Panggilan Tradisi* prompted deeper introspection about their own identity, beliefs, and cultural affiliations. The act of literary reflection, especially through guided discussion or qualitative inquiry, enabled participants to articulate their positions on issues such as tradition, modernity, and national identity. This reinforces the notion that literature does not only represent culture, but actively participates in the formation of self-understanding and social consciousness (Imada & Yussen, 2011).

In summary, this study contributes to the growing body of research on literature, culture, and identity by demonstrating how short stories can powerfully reflect, transmit, and reframe cultural values for contemporary readers. It emphasizes the dynamic role of the reader in cultural interpretation and highlights the pedagogical and sociocultural potential of literary texts in fostering critical awareness, empathy, and identity development. Future research could build upon these findings by involving readers from diverse ethnic or international backgrounds, examining other literary genres, or incorporating multimodal cultural texts. As this study shows, when literature is approached not only as a story to be consumed but as a space for cultural dialogue, it becomes a vital tool for education, intercultural growth, and social reflection.

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