Representation of Madurese Culture in the Novel Tanjung Kemarau: A Literary Anthropology Study

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ABSTRACT

Background: Literature functions not only as a medium of storytelling but also as a reflective space to explore cultural identity. The Madurese culture, though rich in traditions, values, and philosophical depth, is often represented through reductive stereotypes in mainstream narratives. Such portrayals risk eroding the authentic identity of the community.

Aims: This study aims to analyse the structural elements of the novel Tanjung Kemarau by Royyan Julian and uncover representations of Madurese cultural identity through the lens of literary anthropology.

Methods: Using a qualitative descriptive method and a literary anthropology framework, the novel was examined through its themes, characters, conflicts, settings, symbols, myths, and embedded philosophical values. Data collection included textual analysis and triangulation with ethnographic sources and expert consultations.

Results: The findings reveal that Tanjung Kemarau integrates Madurese cultural elements, such as the value hierarchy of bhuppa', bhâbhu', ghuru, rato, the honour-bound principle potèa tolang è tembhâng potè mata, and community rituals like petik laut and matchmaking. Characters and settings illustrate tensions between traditional values and modern social dynamics. Myths and legends embedded in the narrative reflect a syncretic worldview rooted in ancestral wisdom.

Conclusion: Tanjung Kemarau serves as more than a fictional narrative; it becomes a cultural archive that documents, critiques, and symbolically reconstructs Madurese identity. The novel validates literature's potential as an ethnographic medium to reveal complex social realities and challenge dominant cultural discourses. Through this interdisciplinary approach, the study contributes to cultural preservation and supports culturally responsive literary education in a multicultural context.

Keywords: Literary Anthropology, Madurese Culture, Local Identity, Tanjung Kemarau Novel, Royyan Julian

INTRODUCTION

Literature is a cultural reflection that not only records events, but also articulates the identity of a society (Khoirunnisa et al., 2024; Purba & Sidebang, 2024; Wardani & Fatoni, 2025) . Madurese culture holds a wealth of values, traditions, and philosophies of life that shape Madurese ethnic identity (Amalia et al., 2024; Dartiningsih, 2022; Febriani & Erlangga, 2022) . However, this culture is often reduced to negative stereotypes such as stubbornness, anger, and religious fanaticism. Such representations are problematic because they only show the surface without exploring deeper cultural values. Therefore, literary studies that highlight Madurese cultural identity are important as a form of preservation as well as affirmation of local culture in the midst of globalisation.

The reality shows a gap between the idealised view of culture as a source of noble values and the often biased, simplistic and even discrediting practices of cultural representation. Madurese identity is more often associated with violence and carok rather than their work ethic, loyalty and religious social system. This imbalance needs to be rectified with a scientific approach that is able to examine culture thoroughly and objectively. Literature, especially novels, has great potential as a tool to read social and cultural realities, because it records and interprets human life in symbolic and narrative forms (Aziz, 2023; Ma'rifah, 2020; Rifma, Syahril, 2022) .

In this context, the novel Tanjung Kemarau by Royyan Julian offers a complete construction of Madurese culture. The novel's narrative displays social conflicts, philosophy of life, and local community structure (Abdul Azis & Wiyatmi, 2023; Jannah, 2023) . As a Madurese-born writer, Royyan Julian, as a Madurese-born writer, records social dynamics with characters, plot, and setting that are thick with local nuances. Traditions such as petik laut, merantau culture, and power relations between kiai and coastal communities are represented in the novel. This makes the novel an ethnographic text rich in cultural data and relevant to be analysed through a literary anthropology approach (Didipu, 2018; Hasriyati et al., 2022; Khairiyah et al., 2024) .

As far as previous research is concerned, the novel Tanjung Kemarau has been analysed through various perspectives, such as literary sociology, character psychology, and ecocriticism. However, there has been no in-depth study using a literary anthropology approach to reveal the representation of Madurese cultural identity in the novel. This research comes to fill the void, by offering a synthesis between structural analysis and anthropological interpretation of cultural elements represented in literary texts. The novelty lies in the focus of the reading that links the narrative structure with the dynamics of local culture as a construction of social identity.

The selection of Tanjung Kemarau as the object of research is based on two main reasons. First, in terms of content, this novel is rich in Madurese cultural content that is integrated in the story naturally and not forced. Second, in terms of the author, Royyan Julian has cultural authority as a Madurese who is able to voice the complexity of his culture through literary works. As a contemporary literary work written by a local author, this novel provides a cultural representation from an *insider perspective* (Al Hafizh et al., 2016; Andayani & Purbowati, 2016; Insyiroh et al., 2025) rather than from an outside perspective that tends to be biased. Therefore, this novel is a relevant medium to understand Madurese identity contextually and symbolically.

This research aims to describe the intertwining of structural elements in the novel Tanjung Kemarau and reveal the Madurese cultural identity represented through a literary anthropology approach. Academically, this research contributes to the development of interdisciplinary studies of literature and cultural anthropology and enriches references on the representation of local culture in

contemporary Indonesian literature. The results of this research are also expected to be a reference in local wisdom-based literary education.

METHODS

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a type of library research. (Ihsan et al., 2024; Jasmadi et al., 2024; Muzakki et al., 2021) . This approach was chosen because it is suitable for exploring cultural meanings in literary texts through symbolic interpretation. This method allows researchers to examine cultural representations in literary works in depth and contextually through a literary anthropology approach. The unit of analysis in this study is the novel Tanjung Kemarau by Royyan Julian. The novel is analysed as a cultural text that represents the social values, traditions, and cultural system of Madurese society. The analysis focuses on the structural elements in the novel that contain cultural representations, such as theme, character, setting, and plot, and is associated with the socio-cultural context of Madurese society.

Data collection techniques were carried out by intensive reading and recording important data related to cultural elements in the novel. Researchers also used documentation techniques on various supporting literature such as books, scientific articles, and journals relevant to the theory and context of Madurese culture. Data validity was tested through theory and source triangulation techniques. Triangulation is done by comparing data obtained from literary texts with literary anthropological theory, as well as references that discuss Madurese culture ethnographically. In addition, cultural interpretations in the novel were tested by repeated readings and discussions with literary and anthropological experts to obtain meaning validity.

Reliability was maintained through consistency of analytical procedures, using the same instruments and structured stages of analysis. Each stage of recording and interpretation is done systematically and documented to ensure repeatability of results by other researchers using similar approaches. Data analysis was conducted through the stages of identification, classification, and interpretation of cultural meanings contained in the text. The data found was then analysed using structural theory to understand the interweaving of intrinsic elements, and the literary anthropology approach to interpret the cultural meaning contained in these elements holistically and contextually.

Table 1. Novel Analysis Instrument Based on Structural Theory and Literary Anthropology

No.	Aspect Analysis	Indicators	Sample Analysis Guide
1.	Theme	Major and minor themes	What is the main issue in the novel? Are there any supporting subthemes?
2.	Characters and characterisation	Main and supporting characters, round/flat characters	How are the characters moulded? What inner conflicts do they experience?
3.	Conflict	Internal and external conflicts (physical, social, inner, ideological)	What type of conflict does the character experience? How does the conflict affect the course of the story?
4.	Background	Place, time, and social setting	Where and when did the event occur? What were the social conditions that led up to the event?
5.	Philosophy of Life	Traditional expressions, moral values, cultural principles	What are the typical Madurese philosophies that emerge? What is its meaning in the social context of the character?
6.	Rituals and Traditions	Religious traditions, customs, collective habits	What traditions are depicted? What is the role of tradition in shaping the narrative?

No.	Aspect Analysis	Indicators	Sample Analysis Guide
7.	Legends and Myths	Folklore, local myths, legendary figures	Is there a Madurese legend in the story? What is the function of myth in shaping conflict or meaning?
8.	Cultural Power Relations	Social structure, position of kiai, bajing, people	How is power displayed? What is the relationship between the characters and the local cultural value system?
9.	Madurese identity	Value system, stereotypes, work ethic, identity conflicts	How is Madurese culture represented? Is there a confrontation between modernity and the local?

The research procedure began with a thorough reading of the novel, followed by the identification of structural and cultural elements in the text, and the recording of relevant quotation data. The next stage was the classification of data into analytical categories based on two theoretical approaches. The research was conducted over a period of three months, covering the stages of text exploration, in-depth analysis, and writing up the results.

Data analysis planning was conducted using *content analysis* and interpretative analysis. The data that had been classified were analysed thematically to find patterns of meaning, narrative structure, and representations of Madurese culture in the novel. The researcher integrated the results of structural and anthropological analyses to answer the problem formulation as a whole. This process resulted in a contextualised interpretation of Madurese identity represented in the literary text.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The results of the analysis of the theme element in the novel Tanjung Kemarau show the existence of a major theme that highlights the struggle of Madurese people in facing social, political, and ecological conflicts to achieve prosperity. This theme is framed through the events experienced by the main character, Walid, in his efforts to improve the condition of Branta Pesisir village, which is plagued by political intrigue and environmental damage. Meanwhile, there are several minor themes including religious fanaticism, ancestral cultural heritage, conflict between community groups, and social dynamics due to deeply rooted traditions. These themes work together to build the narrative and characterisation of the characters.

The analysis of characters and characterisation shows that Walid is a complex protagonist, with a round character that develops in line with the conflicts he faces. He is portrayed as an educated figure who is idealistic but trapped in a corrupt social reality. Supporting characters such as Ra Amir, Nyai Rasera, and Gopar also have significant roles in shaping the dynamics of the story. Their hard, religious, and intriguing characters illustrate the complexity of Madurese characters in the context of the story. The characterisation of these characters reflects the identity conflict between traditional values and modernity.

The conflict in the novel is divided into two main forms: internal conflict and external conflict. Internal conflict is experienced by Walid in the form of a struggle between idealism and manipulative social reality, as well as moral conflict due to his illicit relationship with Ria. Meanwhile, external conflicts involve power struggles between Ra Amir and his group and the community, as well as ecological conflicts arising from the exploitation of nature. The tension between characters also indicates the clash of values between the old and new generations in Madurese society. The

placement of these conflicts strengthens the structure of the story while emphasising the cultural context underlying the conflicts.

The dominant place setting in the novel is Branta Pesisir Village in Pamekasan, which is described as an arid and poor coastal area, yet rich in traditions and cultural symbols. The time setting includes the dry and rainy seasons, as well as daily time that illustrates the rhythm of village life. The social setting shows the social structure of Madurese society which is still influenced by the power of kiai, belief in myths, and rigid social stratification. These three types of settings support each other in building a story atmosphere that is both realistic and symbolic.

In terms of literary anthropology, there are a number of Madurese philosophies of life embedded in the narrative. Among them are *bhuppa', bhâbhu', ghuru, rato* (father, mother, teacher, leader) as a value structure that must be respected in the community order. This philosophy is reflected in the characters' submission to kiai or village leaders, although in practice this value is often manipulated for political interests. In addition, the philosophy of *potèa tolang è tembhâng potè mata* (it is better to die than to bear shame) is also the basis of some characters' actions, which shows the strong influence of honour values in Madurese culture.

Traditions and rituals are also an important part of shaping characters and storylines. The traditions of sea picking, village cleaning, and congregational banqueting are symbolically depicted as a form of community connection with nature and spirituality. The tradition of carok as a symbol of resolving conflicts of honour also appears in the story although it is not explicitly demonstrated. The practice of arranged marriages and the belief in shamans show how oral and traditional cultures still play a strong role in decision-making in Madurese society. All of these traditions strengthen the ethnographic context of the novel.

The findings of this study enrich the study of literary anthropology by showing that structural elements in novels are not only narrative instruments, but also a medium for complex and layered cultural articulation. This approach confirms that literary texts can be a valid source of ethnographic data if analysed contextually and interdisciplinarily. Thus, this research contributes to expanding the scope of literary anthropology theory from mere representation to the formation of cultural meaning through literary narratives.

Table 2. Findings of Madurese Cultural Elements in the Novel Tanjung Kemarau

No.	Cultural Aspects	Example in a Novel	Cultural Meanings
1.	Philosophy	*Bhuppa', bhâbhu', ghuru, rato; Potèa tolang è tembhâng potè mata*	Structure of honour and dignity as core values
2.	Traditions	Petik laut, bersih desa, tarekat banquet, matchmaking	Social and spiritual bonds of the community
3.	Myths and Legends	Bangsacara-Ragapadmi, Rajumina fish, season of death	Symbolic value link between humans, nature, and ancestors
4.	Social System	Domination of kiai, bajing, common people	Social hierarchy and power based on religion and status
5.	Stereotypes and Reality	Stubborn vs religious, hot-tempered vs hardworking	Deconstruction of stereotypes through character representation and conflicts
6.	Collective Identity	Religious fanaticism, value of honour, relation to homeland	Symbolisation of Madura as an ethnicity with strong local wisdom

Discussion

The results show that literary works such as Tanjung Kemarau are able to be a space for criticism of cultural stereotypes and open up new discourses about cultural and power relations in

local communities. The character Walid, for example, is portrayed as an idealist who has to deal with social reality and manipulative power. The conflicts experienced by the characters strengthen the theme and show the complex social dynamics in Madurese coastal society. The distinctive place and social settings, such as the village of Branta Pesisir and the dominance of kiai figures, confirm that the novel's structure is shaped by a strong cultural context, making this novel not just a work of fiction, but a reflection of the social reality of Madurese society.

From the perspective of literary anthropology, Madurese cultural identity in the novel is displayed through symbols such as the philosophy of life *bhuppa', bhâbhu', ghuru, rato* and *potèa tolang è tembhâng potè mata*. These symbols indicate a value system that places honour and hierarchy at the centre of the social structure. Literary anthropology focuses on the complex of cultural ideas, including philosophies and customs that shape the way people think (Maulana et al., 2023; Mawikere & Hura, 2022; Sudikan, 2015) . In this novel, the characters' philosophy of life becomes the basis for making decisions and reacting to social conflicts. However, Royyan Julian not only affirms traditional culture, but also reveals the problems when these values are reduced by the ambition of power, as played by the character Ra Amir.

Rituals and traditions in the novel, such as sea picking and the congregation's banquet, are described not just as complementary to the atmosphere, but have functional and symbolic meanings in building the narrative. In literary anthropology, traditions are not only cultural events, but also narrative devices to strengthen conflicts or shape characters. In *Tanjung Kemarau*, tradition becomes the meeting point between the spirituality of the community and the power structure, where religion, shamans, and tarekat intertwine in the struggle for social legitimacy. Tradition also functions as a marker of local identity that shows how Madurese people interpret relationships with nature, ancestors, and community.

The use of legends and myths such as Bangsacara-Ragapadmi and Rajumina fish in the narrative shows how local belief systems are still alive in people's imagination. Myths and legends are part of the religious system and local knowledge that is passed down from generation to generation. In this novel, myths not only appear as folklore (Sari et al., 2023; Suwarno et al., 2018; Yelly, 2019) , but become part of the narrative logic that influences the characters' actions and conflict dynamics. The function of myth as a shaper of the structure of relations between humans and supernatural forces is also a reflection of the syncretic and symbolic way of thinking of Madurese society.

Finally, through the synthesis between structural approach and literary anthropology, the novel Tanjung Kemarau successfully presents Madurese identity in a complex manner. The identity is not presented monolithically, but through the tension between noble values and power practices, between tradition and change, between self-image and the Other. In accordance with Cavallaro's (2004) concept, identity is formed through the relationship between the self and the Other, which in this novel is illustrated through the conflict between characters representing morality, religion, modernity, and betrayal. Thus, this novel not only portrays culture, but also becomes a battleground of meaning that reflects the social complexity of Madurese society symbolically and contextually.

CONCLUSIONS

The novel Tanjung Kemarau presents a narrative that blends structural elements and representations of Madurese culture within the framework of literary anthropology. The characters,

conflicts, settings, and symbols in the story such as traditions, philosophy of life, and social systems play an important role in showing the complex dynamics of cultural identity. Madurese identity in the novel is not portrayed in black and white, but through the tension between noble values and power distortion, between honour and self-interest, and between tradition and changing times.

Through a literary anthropology approach, the novel also successfully reveals cultural values such as *bhuppa', bhâbhu', ghuru*, *rato*, the philosophy of honour, the tradition of sea picking, and local myths that are part of the Madurese way of thinking. All of these representations make *Tanjung Kemarau* a literary text that not only presents a story, but also functions as a cultural document that records, reflects, and at the same time criticises social conditions. This research shows that literature can be a strategic medium to build awareness of local cultural diversity and strengthen cultural literacy in the context of multicultural Indonesia.

AUTHOR'S CONTRIBUTION

MSD is responsible for problem formulation and literary structural analysis. TM conducted the theoretical study of literary anthropology and interpretation of Madurese cultural data. ABRM developed the analytical framework, analysed the textual data, and refined the discussion and conclusion sections.

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