

LOCAL WISDOM REPRESENTATION IN MULTICULTURAL STUDENTS' POETRY: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY FROM NORTH KALIMANTAN

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi peran puisi sebagai medium refleksi kearifan lokal melalui analisis terhadap 40 puisi karya mahasiswa multi-etnik Universitas Borneo Tarakan. Dengan pendekatan analisis konten kualitatif dan wawancara mendalam, penelitian ini menjawab empat rumusan masalah: (1) identifikasi nilai-nilai kearifan lokal, (2) analisis gaya bahasa dan simbol, (3) kesesuaian dengan praktik sosial, dan (4) relevansi bagi penguatan literasi budaya. Temuan mengungkap lima nilai kearifan lokal dominan: konservasi lingkungan (35%), kesakralan tradisi (28%), solidaritas sosial (20%), estetika budaya (12%), dan kearifan maritim (5%). Analisis stilistika menunjukkan penggunaan metafora ekologis, simbolisme budaya, dan bahasa ritual yang efektif dalam merepresentasikan nilai-nilai tersebut. Data wawancara mengonfirmasi kesesuaian 73% antara representasi puisi dengan praktik sosial nyata, dengan 22% adaptasi modern dan 5% disjungsi generasi. Penelitian ini merekomendasikan integrasi puisi dalam kurikulum pendidikan tinggi sebagai strategi inovatif penguatan literasi budaya, melalui pengembangan bahan ajar muatan lokal, workshop penulisan kreatif, dan festival budaya berbasis karya sastra. Temuan membuktikan bahwa puisi tidak hanya merefleksikan nilai-nilai budaya tetapi juga berfungsi sebagai medium preservasi dan transformasi kearifan lokal yang relevan dengan konteks masyarakat modern.

Kata Kunci : puisi, kearifan lokal, multi-etnik, literasi budaya.

Abstract

This study explores the role of poetry as a medium for reflecting local wisdom through the analysis of 40 poems written by multiethnic students at Universitas Borneo Tarakan. Employing a qualitative content analysis approach and in-depth interviews, this study addresses four research problems: (1) identification of local wisdom values, (2) analysis of linguistic styles and symbols, (3) alignment with social practices, and (4) relevance for strengthening cultural literacy. The findings reveal five dominant local wisdom values: environmental conservation (35%), sacredness of tradition (28%), social solidarity (20%), cultural aesthetics (12%), and maritime wisdom (5%). Stylistic analysis indicates the effective use of ecological metaphors, cultural symbolism, and ritual language in representing these values. Interview data confirm that 73% of the poetic representations align with actual social practices, with 22% reflecting modern adaptations and 5% showing generational disjunction. This study recommends integrating poetry into higher education curricula as an innovative strategy for strengthening cultural literacy, through the development of local content teaching materials, creative writing workshops, and literature-based cultural festivals. The findings demonstrate that poetry not only reflects cultural values but also serves as a medium for preserving and transforming local wisdom in ways that remain relevant to modern societal contexts.

Keywords: poetry, local wisdom, multiethnicity, cultural literacy

1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a country endowed with invaluable natural and cultural wealth, where each region preserves unique and meaningful

forms of local wisdom. As an archipelagic nation comprising approximately 1,340 ethnic groups, Indonesia possesses a rich cultural mosaic encompassing diverse value systems, traditions,

and social practices that have been transmitted across generations. Literary works, particularly fictional creations imagined and produced by authors, serve as reflections of human life and social reality (Suraya, 2022).

Literary works are constructed through aesthetically rich language imbued with profound meanings (Alvi Khoirul Baqiyah, Cutiana Windri Astuti, 2024). In this context, literature—particularly poetry—plays a significant role not only as a medium of artistic expression but also as a vehicle for preserving cultural values embedded within society. Consequently, literary studies contribute substantially to both cultural preservation and educational development.

In contemporary Indonesian literature, poetry is often regarded as an individual aesthetic expression detached from its socio-cultural context. However, a closer examination reveals that poetry possesses the capacity to function as a cultural document that records and reflects the values, beliefs, and social practices of the communities from which it emerges. A previous study relevant to the present research, entitled *Cultural Diversity of the Indonesian Archipelago in the Ethnographic Poetry Collection Luka Sebuah Negeri by M. Junus Melalatoa: A Multiculturalism Study*, focused on exploring the forms and meanings of Indonesian cultural diversity manifested in the poetry collection (Hadirman, 2023).

Another relevant study, entitled *Language and Multiculturalism: A Portrait of Local Language Wisdom*, primarily focused on the role of local languages as reflections of multicultural values and local wisdom in North Sulawesi, as well as their potential integration into Indonesian language teaching and learning (Hadirman, 2023).

Research on local wisdom in literary works has been conducted using various approaches and research focuses. Ardika Natalia, Mukti WDayati (2025) examined the values of local wisdom contained in the

poetry collection *Tangan yang Lain* by Tia Setiadi and its relevance to strengthening character education at the junior high school level. Similarly, Akbar dkk (2024) investigated the local wisdom values of the Madurese community reflected in the poetry collection *Bantalku Ombak Selimutku Angin* by Zawawi Imron, aiming to preserve cultural heritage through literature grounded in Madurese traditional values. Meanwhile, Umi Faizah, Joko Purwanto, Tri Inten Pratiwi, Kadaryati, Bagiya, (2022) memfokuskan penelitiannya pada kearifan lokal Purworejo dalam antologi puisi Kaloka Tanah Pusaka karya penyair Purworejo serta skenario pembelajaran puisi di kelas X SMA. Selanjutnya Monica (2024) focused on the representation of Purworejo local wisdom in the poetry anthology *Kaloka Tanah Pusaka* written by poets from Purworejo, as well as its application in poetry learning scenarios for tenth-grade senior high school students. Furthermore, Monica (2024) developed instructional materials for folk poetry based on Deli Malay local wisdom for seventh-grade junior high school students. Although these studies have explored local wisdom values across different ethnic groups and educational levels, a research gap remains. Specifically, there is still a lack of studies that directly examine the relationship between local wisdom values embedded in poetry and the strengthening of character education at the junior high school level. In addition, no previous study has been found that explicitly integrates local wisdom values derived from poetry into the systematic development of instructional materials aimed at supporting students' character formation in junior high schools. Therefore, further research is needed to bridge this gap and

contribute to the advancement of character-based literary education.

Based on a review of relevant previous studies, the present research occupies a distinctive position and addresses gaps that remain insufficiently explored in local wisdom-based literary studies. Previous research has primarily focused on analyzing local wisdom values represented in poetry originating from a single ethnic group or specific region. Examples include Hadirman's (2023) study on the cultural diversity of the Indonesian archipelago in ethnographic poetry, Akbar et al.'s (2024) investigation of Madurese local wisdom, and Faizah et al.'s (2022) examination of Purworejo local wisdom. These studies generally concentrated on identifying and interpreting local wisdom values and meanings embedded in poetic texts without conducting field verification to determine the extent to which such representations correspond to the living social practices of the communities concerned.

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This study offers a novel contribution by bridging three dimensions that have largely been

examined separately in previous research: the textual analysis of poetry, the verification of cultural representations through in-depth interviews and field observations, and the formulation of strategies for strengthening cultural literacy in higher education. Unlike Hadirman's (2023) study, which focused primarily on the forms and meanings of cultural diversity represented in poetic texts, the present research goes beyond textual interpretation by examining the extent to which poetic representations correspond to the social realities experienced by the communities themselves. Similarly, in contrast to the studies conducted by Faizah et al. (2022) and Akbar et al. (2024), which focused on a single ethnic group, this research adopts a multiethnic perspective by involving five major ethnic groups in North Kalimantan—Tidung, Bulungan, Dayak, Bugis, and Javanese. This approach provides a more comprehensive understanding of intercultural dialogue as represented in students' poetry.

Accordingly, this study is situated within an integrative-interpretive framework of local wisdom-based literary studies that combines literary textual analysis with literary anthropology and multicultural education perspectives. It not only describes local wisdom values represented in poetry but also evaluates their correspondence with contemporary social practices and formulates their pedagogical implications within higher education contexts. In doing so, the study addresses the limitations of previous research, which has tended to be partial and text-centered, and advances a more holistic approach that incorporates contextual and practical dimensions of preserving local wisdom through literature.

North Kalimantan (Jolly et al., 2020) As one of the youngest provinces in Indonesia, officially established in 2012, it possesses highly diverse cultural wealth, ranging from oral traditions and customary rituals to environmental wisdom that has been inherited across

generations. The province is inhabited by various major ethnic groups, such as the Tidung, Dayak, Bulungan, and other ethnic communities, each of which has its own distinct cultural characteristics. This cultural diversity is reflected in literary works, particularly poetry, written by the younger generation of the region, which not only serves as a creative medium but also functions as a space for negotiation between tradition and modernity.

Universitas Borneo Tarakan, as one of the public universities in North Kalimantan, has a multiethnic student population. This academic environment provides a strategic setting for observing how the younger generation represents and transforms local wisdom in their literary works. The poems produced by these students not only reflect their understanding of cultural heritage but also demonstrate how they interpret and adapt these values within contemporary contexts.

This study is based on the assumption that poetry can function as a “cultural text” containing values of local wisdom. Through a literary text analysis approach combined with the perspective of literary anthropology, this study seeks to reveal how poems written by students in North Kalimantan represent their cultural reality. This approach enables a more holistic reading of poetic texts, not merely as artistic works but also as cultural documents that record social phenomena.

This study is grounded in the integration of literary sociology theory and literary anthropology in order to understand poetry as a complex socio-cultural phenomenon. The theory of literary sociology (Goldmann, 1967) on “structural homology” posits that there is a structural relationship between literary works and the collective consciousness of society. In the context of this study, this theory helps analyze how thematic structures in poems written by multiethnic students reflect the socio-cultural structure of North Kalimantan society, which is currently undergoing transformation. Goldmann

argues that a meaningful literary work does not merely reflect social reality, but also offers a vision of possible social transformations.

On the other hand, literary anthropology (Peacock, n.d.) provides a more holistic perspective by viewing poetry as a form of “cultural action” that is inseparable from its socio-cultural context of production. This approach enables the analysis of poetry as part of a living and dynamic cultural practice. The concept of “thick description” (Geertz et al., 2024) is particularly relevant for uncovering the layers of cultural meaning embedded within poetic texts. Through the integration of these two approaches, this study seeks to understand poetry not only as an aesthetic document, but also as a socio-cultural record that captures the struggles of the younger generation in interpreting and transforming local wisdom amid the currents of modernization

tuart Hall’s theory of cultural representation, as discussed in Ivana Grace Sofia Radja (Ivana Grace Sofia Radja, 2024), (Ayuanda et al., 2024) complements this framework by offering a perspective on how socio-cultural realities are represented through systems of signs and symbols in poetry. Hall emphasizes that representation is not merely a reflection of reality, but rather a process of meaning construction through language. In the context of this study, this theory helps analyze how meanings in poetry are constructed through linguistic choices, symbols, and metaphors. Multiethnic students represent their cultural identities through the selection of language, symbolic expressions, and metaphorical structures in their poetry. (Filosofis et al., 2024).

The study of local wisdom in this research is grounded in Ayatrohaedi (1986) theory of “local genius” and UNESCO (2003). Ayatrohaedi defines local wisdom as a system of values, knowledge, and cultural practices that have proven their sustainability in governing human relationships with nature, other human

beings, and transcendence. This theoretical framework assists in identifying and categorizing local wisdom values represented in students' poetry, ranging from ecological wisdom and social wisdom to cultural wisdom.

James Banks' multicultural education theory (Rahardja, 2010) and the concept of "culturally responsive teaching" are learning approaches that integrate the cultural diversity found among learners, according to Gay's view (2000) in (Fitriah et al., 2024). The framework for analyzing the relevance of research findings in strengthening cultural literacy in higher education. Banks emphasizes the importance of integrating cultural content into the curriculum to develop.

The concept of "transformative education" proposed by Mezirow (Fleming, 2018) further offers a perspective on how learning can transform students' frames of reference in understanding socio-cultural reality.

The integration of local wisdom theory and multicultural education enables this study not only to describe the representation of local wisdom in poetry, but also to formulate educational strategies for strengthening cultural literacy in higher education. This approach is relevant to the Indonesian multicultural context, where strengthening cultural literacy is a strategic necessity for building an inclusive and sustainable society.

ased on the description above, this study is focused on four research questions: (1) what local wisdom values are reflected in the poems of multiethnic students at Universitas Borneo Tarakan; (2) how do language styles and symbols in the poems represent these values; (3) to what extent do the values recorded in the poems correspond to social practices occurring within the student community; and (4) what is the relevance of these findings for strengthening cultural literacy in higher education. Through a qualitative approach with in-depth textual analysis and supported by interview data, this

study is expected to reveal the potential of poetry as a living and dynamic cultural mirror.

2. METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with an exploratory study design (Denzin, Norman. Lincoln, 2012). This design was chosen because the study aims to explore the phenomenon of local wisdom representation in the poetry of multiethnic students, which has not been extensively examined in depth, particularly in North Kalimantan. An hermeneutic and ethnographic approach is employed to comprehensively understand the relationship between poetic texts and their cultural context. The hermeneutic approach is selected to trace the meanings embedded in the poetic texts, not only at the literal level but also at the symbolic and contextual levels. Through repeated hermeneutic readings, this study seeks to uncover the layers of meaning hidden within the poems, taking into account the reader's horizon of expectation and the author's horizon of experience. The interpretive process is conducted in a spiral manner, where understanding of the parts of the text enriches the understanding of the whole, and vice versa.

The poems analyzed in this study are works by multiethnic students at Universitas Borneo Tarakan (Ilham, Muhammad, Boni, 2021). These poems are the final assignments of a literary criticism course.

Data analysis was conducted by adapting the interactive analysis model of Miles and Huberman, which consists of three concurrent flows of activity: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. The analysis process was carried out through the following stages. Stage 1) holistic reading; Stage 2) open coding, in which each poem was analyzed in depth to identify meanings relevant to local wisdom. The coding procedure was conducted as follows: (a) Text segmentation (each poem was broken down into analytical units in the form of

lines or stanzas containing cultural meaning). Each unit was assigned an identification number. (b) Initial coding (each textual unit was assigned a descriptive code capturing its basic meaning). (c) Code development (initial codes were then grouped and linked to form more abstract categories). This process was conducted by comparing recurring codes and identifying thematic patterns. Stage 3) micro-analysis (after meaning units were identified, the researcher conducted micro-analysis focusing on intrinsic elements of poetry that support the categorized values of local wisdom). Diction (identifying distinctive regional word choices, e.g., *beseruan*, *bepupur*, *nyembaloy*, *padaw*, and analyzing their meanings and functions); figurative language (identifying figures of speech and linking them to the reinforcement of local wisdom messages); imagery (analyzing visual, auditory, and tactile imagery that builds atmosphere and brings cultural values to life). Stage 4) semiotic analysis was conducted on identified cultural symbols, with the following procedures: (a) sign identification (listing all cultural symbols that appear, e.g., hornbill, ironwood, and the yellow/green/red colors of *baju ta'a*, *rumah baloy*); (b) analysis of denotative and connotative meanings; (c) symbolic interpretation (analyzing how these symbols function as markers of identity, social status, and philosophical values in society).

Stage 5) contextual analysis (relationship with social reality): (a) text-discourse triangulation (comparing textual analysis findings with interview data to confirm whether the values represented in the poems are consistent); (b) text-observation triangulation (comparing textual findings with field observation notes regarding living cultural practices in society); (c) compatibility calculation (calculating the percentage of alignment between poetic representations and social practices based on interview and observation confirmation).

Stage 6) data presentation and conclusion drawing.

The ethnographic approach was applied through participatory observation and in-depth interviews with student poets and local cultural figures. Observations were conducted in various settings, including cultural activities, literary discussions, and everyday campus life, to understand the context of poem creation. In-depth interviews were conducted with 15 students representing various ethnic groups. This technique was chosen because the study aims to obtain rich and in-depth information from participants who have relevant knowledge and experience related to the research topic, rather than for statistical generalization.

Participant inclusion criteria were defined as follows:

1. Active students of Universitas Borneo Tarakan
2. Have written poems included in the research corpus
3. Represent five major ethnic groups in North Kalimantan, namely Tidung, Bulungan, Dayak, Javanese, and Bugis
4. Participate voluntarily

Participant exclusion criteria: (1) students who were unwilling to be recorded during interviews, (2) students whose poems did not contain elements of local wisdom based on the researcher's initial assessment. The distribution of participants by ethnicity is presented in the following table.

Table 1. Participant Distribution

Initials	Ethnicity
Mt	Tidung
Mfth	Tidung
Ad.P	Bulungan
Nrm.	Bulungan
Khnz	Dayak
Els	Dayak
And.A	Bugis
MhD.	Bugis
CFp.	Jawa

Is.A	Tidung
Ar.	Bulungan
Sd.	Dayak
F.H.	Bugis
R.A.	Jawa
M.I	Tidung

The composition of the participants is briefly presented in the following table.

Table 2. Participant Composition

Aspect	Number	Percentage
Ethnicity		
Tidung	4	26,7%
Bulungan	3	20,0%
Dayak	3	20,0%
Bugis	3	20,0%
Jawa	2	13,3%
Gender		
Female	10	66,7%
Male	5	33,3%

The distribution of ethnic participants was intentionally designed to reflect the multiethnic composition of students at Universitas Borneo Tarakan and to ensure that each major ethnic group is adequately represented in this study. The higher proportion of female participation (66.7%) corresponds to the fact that most of the poetry writers included in the analytical corpus are female students, indicating a high level of female participation in creative writing activities within the university environment.

A semi-structured interview guide was used, allowing in-depth exploration of the creative process, understanding of cultural values, and the relevance of poetry to real-life experiences. These ethnographic data serve as a foundation for understanding the gap between textual representation and actual practice.

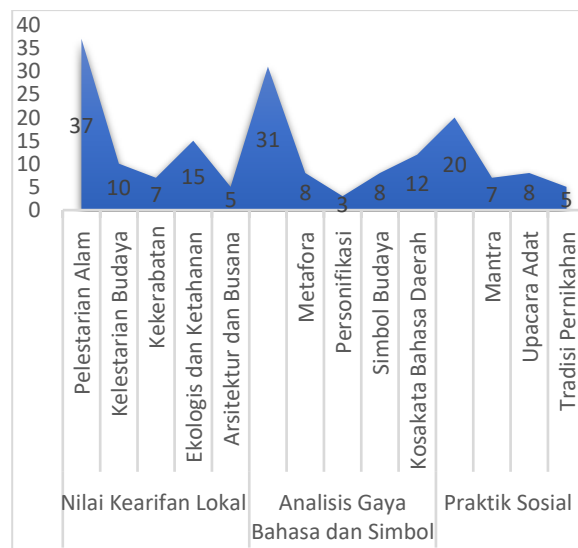
This study applies various strategies that refer to criteria of data validity, in which the researcher's position is that of a key instrument bringing specific experiences, values, and perspectives into the research process. The

researcher originates from Java and has lived in North Kalimantan for more than 10 years.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the research on Poetry as a Reflection of Culture: An Exploratory Study of LocalWisdom and Its Relevance to Real-Life Contexts, the findings are illustrated in the following figure.

Figure 1. Poetry Analysis Results



The values of local wisdom reveal several findings. Environmental conservation emerges as the most dominant category with 37 data occurrences, followed by cultural preservation with 10 data, kinship with 7 data, ecological resilience and sustainability with 15 data, and architecture and traditional clothing with 5 data.

The analysis of language style and symbols identifies 31 data occurrences, including 8 instances of metaphor, 3 instances of personification, 8 occurrences of cultural symbols, and 12 instances of regional language vocabulary.

Furthermore, in the category of social practices, 20 occurrences were identified, consisting of 7 instances of mantras, 8 occurrences of traditional ceremonies, and 5

occurrences related to wedding traditions.

Local Wisdom Values

The students' poems collectively reflect the richness of local wisdom in North Kalimantan, particularly from the Tidung and Bulungan ethnic groups. The identified values include the following:

Love for and Environmental Conservation Values

The poems predominantly depict admiration for the natural environment of Kalimantan and awareness of environmental preservation. In the poem "*Borneoku, Kalimantanku*" (Mita), this is illustrated in the following excerpt:

*"Oh inikah hutanku paru-paru duniaku
berjutakekayaan alam didalamnya/
membuat detak kagum setiap orang
mengenangnya".* (BK, B.1. MT).

"Oh, is this my forest, my world's lungs, containing millions of natural resources within it, which creates a sense of admiration in everyone who remembers it." (BK, B.1. MT).

This excerpt portrays the forest as the "lungs of the world" and expresses profound admiration for its abundant natural resources. Such admiration reflects sincere affection for nature.

*"Engkau seperti paras mempesona
bidadari alam semesta/ semua
berhasrat memilikinya".* (BK, B.1-2.MT)

"You are like the face of a celestial nymph of the universe, whose beauty fascinates everyone, and all desire to possess it." (BK, B.1-2.MT)

This line personifies nature as a celestial nymph of extraordinary beauty, indicating a

strong sense of admiration and emotional attachment.

Further expressions of environmental appreciation are found in the following excerpt:

*"Keindahan pantai di setiap jengkal
samudera khatulistiwa permadani permata
hijau menambah kecintaanku akan alam
ini".* (BK, B.2.MT)

"The beauty of the beach in every stretch of the equatorial ocean, a green jeweled tapestry, increases my love for this nature." (BK, B.2.MT)

This line explicitly expresses the poet's love for the beauty of the coastline and the green landscapes of Borneo.

Environmental conservation is further emphasized in the following excerpt:

*"wahai para pecinta borneo raya
kalimantan tercinta / parasmu
mempesona, mari kita jaga bersama
pelihara bersama dengan bijak teruntuk
cintaku alam kalimantan utara".* BK, B.3.MT

"O lovers of great Borneo, beloved Kalimantan, your beauty is enchanting, let us protect and preserve it together wisely, for my love of the nature of North Kalimantan". BK, B.3.MT.

This excerpt contains explicit expressions of affection ("lovers," "beloved," "my love") as well as conservation appeals ("let us protect together," "preserve together wisely"). The call for environmental preservation is explicitly stated in the phrases "let us protect together" and "preserve together wisely." This message serves as a strong moral conclusion of the poem, suggesting that genuine love for nature necessarily entails responsibility for its protection.

The experience of exploring mangrove forests with admiration and joy is also reflected in the following excerpt:

*“Sungguh menyenangkan
berkunjung / Ke hutan pelindung
abrasi air laut ini/ Seru melepas
penat/ Gembira nan sejuk dirasa”.*
(PAAL.B.7.MA).

“It is truly enjoyable to visit / this sea erosion protection forest / So exciting to relieve fatigue / Happiness and coolness are felt”. (PAAL.B.7.MA).

This excerpt illustrates both emotional attachment and ecological awareness. Feelings of joy, happiness, and coolness reflect affective engagement with nature, while the explicit mention of mangrove forests as “sea erosion protection forests” highlights their ecological function.

Thus, the relationship with nature is constructed as an intimate bond, positioning nature as a living entity worthy of love and care. The invitation to protect nature “wisely” and “together” emphasizes that this local wisdom is collective and based on intergenerational sustainability principles.

The poem “*Sea Erosion Protection Forest*” (Miftah Auliyah) goes beyond aesthetic appreciation by highlighting the specific ecological function of mangrove forests as coastal protectors. The expression “it is truly enjoyable” indicates that happiness arises from understanding nature’s vital role, suggesting that environmental preservation is not a burden, but a source of comfort and well-being.

Cultural Preservation and Customary Values

Several poems meticulously document stages of customary practices, reflecting kinship values as the backbone of social structure, as illustrated in the poem “*Mantra Sakral*” (Miftah Auliyah) in the following excerpts:

*“Tradisiku membawa kita/ pada
beseruan dan buka sungut”*
(MS.B.2.M.A)

“My tradition brings us / to the marriage proposal and family initial deliberation”;
(MS.B.2.M.A)

*“Kesepakatan beseruan/ membawa
kita kepada ngatot de pulut/
Perasaan bahagia terlukis indah
dibibirku/ Senyum manis dari
keluarga kita/ menandakan bahwa
tradisi selanjutnya akan terlaksana”*
(MS.B.4.M.A)

“The agreement of the proposal / brings us to the delivery of bride wealth (dowry) / A sense of happiness is beautifully reflected on my lips / The sweet smiles of our families / indicate that the next stage of tradition will be carried out”;
(MS/B/4/M/A)

*“Kesenian hadra mengiringi tradisi/
bepupur dan selanggo/ Berlanjutkan
besanding/ Hingga terucap mantra
sakral itu”.* (MS.B.5.M.A)

“Hadra performing arts accompany the tradition / purification rituals and ceremonial adornment /continuing to the wedding seating ceremony / until the sacred mantra is pronounced.”
(MS.B/5/M/A)

This excerpt presents an informative depiction that details the stages of the Tidung traditional marriage ceremony, beginning with “marriage proposal and family deliberation,” followed by “delivery of bride wealth (dowry),” then “wedding seating ceremony,” and culminating in the recitation of a sacred mantra. The use of these culturally specific terms not only

provides poetic value but also functions as an archive of cultural knowledge. This poem affirms that marriage within the customary framework is a sacred and complex social event that strengthens social cohesion and inter-family relationships, while simultaneously serving as a medium for the transmission of cultural heritage to future generations.

Cultural Preservation and Customary Values

The poems reveal that cultural objects function as symbols imbued with profound philosophical and social meanings. The poem “*Rumah Baloy*” (Khanzah Nur Wijayanti) can be seen in the following excerpt:

*"ukiran-ukiran motif yang indah/
membuatnya menjadi unik/ mengandung
banyak makna
didalamnya,"*(R.B.B2.KNW).

“beautiful carved motifs / make it unique / contain many meanings within them.” This excerpt suggests that architectural carvings are not merely aesthetic elements but carry deep symbolic significance. (R.B.B2.KNW)

From a philosophical perspective, architectural carvings share similarities with motifs in traditional clothing. Both serve as media of cultural expression containing symbolic meanings. Certain motifs—such as the hornbill, plants, or geometric patterns—embody philosophies related to social status, protection, and life values. This excerpt emphasizes that beauty, in essence, invites readers to explore the cosmological and cultural values embedded behind aesthetic forms.

More concretely, the poem “*Baju Ta'a*” (Adhelia Putri) reveals the social codes embedded in its motifs, as shown in the following excerpt:

"Motif burung enggang diperuntukkan para bangsawan / Motif tumbuhan diperuntukkan para rakyat biasa" (B.A.B.2.AP)

Hornbill bird motifs are designated for the nobles / Plant motifs are designated for common people.” (B.A.B.2.AP)

This demonstrates that traditional clothing functions as a marker of hierarchy and social status that regulates and communicates societal order. Collectively, these poems affirm that local wisdom is manifested in material culture as a complex symbolic system that preserves identity and social structure.

Language Style and Symbols

The use of stylistic devices and symbols in these poems is strongly embedded in the locality of North Kalimantan, functioning not only as an aesthetic instrument but also as a reinforcement of local wisdom values and a marker of cultural identity.

Metaphor and Personification

The poems vividly animate nature and cultural objects through metaphor and personification, thereby creating emotional closeness. Nature in Kalimantan, for instance, is not merely depicted as a landscape but is metaphorically constructed as a sacred and enchanting figure, as seen in the poem “*Borneoku, Kalimantanku*” in the following excerpt:

"engkau seperti paras mempesona bidadari alam semesta" (B.K.B.1.Mt)

“you are like the face of a celestial nymph of the universe.” (B.K.B.1.Mt)

This comparison to a “celestial nymph” not only emphasizes absolute beauty but also attributes sacredness and spiritual value to nature.

Meanwhile, cultural objects such as boats in maritime tradition are animated through personification in Elsa's poem "*Padaw Tuju Dulung*," as shown in the following excerpt:

*"Berlayarlah padaw tuju dulung/
bersama harapan
kami"* (P.T.D.B3.Els)

"Sail, O Padaw Tuju Dulung, together with our hopes." (P.T.D.B3.Els)

This excerpt illustrates the capacity of the boat to "carry hopes," transforming it from a lifeless object into an active subject that symbolizes the mediation of collective aspirations and prayers within the community.

Specific Cultural Symbols

The richness of specific cultural symbols constitutes a distinctive characteristic that firmly situates these poems within the context of North Kalimantan. These symbols function as cultural codes that carry profound philosophical meanings. This is evident in the depiction of the hornbill in the following excerpt:

*"Burung Enggang, / Suaramu
menggelegar menggempur alam / pertanda
simbol kewibawaan."* (ESPB.B.3.J)

"Hornbill / Your voice roars through nature / a sign of authority." (ESPB.B.3.1)

This excerpt illustrates that the hornbill's "roaring voice through nature" symbolizes authority. In Dayak culture, a loud and resonant voice represents courage, strength, and influence. This signifies that a leader or customary figure is expected to possess authority that is respected and highly regarded by the community. Furthermore, color symbolism is represented in the following excerpts:

*"Kuning, hijau, merah
warnamu"* (PTD.B.1.RN)

*"Berlayarlah padaw tuju dulung/
bersama harapan kami yang ada/
menguatkan setiap kehidupan yang
kami jalani"* (PTD.B.3.RN)

"Yellow, green, red are your colors"(PTD.B.1.RN) and "Sail, O Padaw Tuju Dulung, together with our hopes that exist / strengthening every life we live."(PTD.B.3.RN)

These excerpts symbolize the meanings embedded in *Padaw Tuju Dulung*, where colors such as yellow represent purity or royalty, green symbolizes fertility or Islamic values, and red signifies courage. Collectively, these colors represent the grandeur of the Tidung ethnic identity.

Another form of symbolic strength is reflected in the following excerpt: "The ironwood you use is native to the island of Kalimantan." This excerpt functions as both a physical symbol and a metaphor for strength, resilience, and a solid identity, reflecting the characteristics of the Tidung community.

Use of Regional Vocabulary

The use of regional vocabulary, particularly from the Tidung language, is not merely ornamental but constitutes a crucial linguistic strategy for ensuring authenticity and deepening meaning. The incorporation of such terms can be seen in the following excerpts:

*"beseruan, buka sungut, ngatot de
pulut, bepupur, nyembaloy"* (MS.MA)
"Semandak pagun" (SP.MD)

*"melamar mengantar jujuran (mahar),
tradisi memakai bedak, datang kerumah
mertua"* (MS.MA)
"Gadis Desa" (SP.MD)

“proposing and delivering the dowry, the tradition of applying traditional powder, and visiting the in-laws’ hose” (MS.MA)
“Village Girl” (SP.MD)

These terms serve a dual function. First, they operate as technical customary terminology that preserves semantic precision and prevents reduction or distortion in the process of translation into Indonesian. Second, their use represents a strong affirmation of cultural identity. By deliberately maintaining the original vocabulary, the poets not only enrich the cultural content of the poems but also assert the existence, continuity, and pride of their mother tongue. In this sense, the poems function as a space of resistance against linguistic homogenization and as active documentation for the preservation of the local lexicon.

Conformity With Social Practices

The students’ poems are not merely expressions of poetic imagination, but also show a very high level of conformity with the social and cultural practices living in the society of North Kalimantan, particularly within the Tidung and Bulungan communities. The accuracy of these descriptions makes the poetry collection a source of literary documentation with ethnographic value.

First, the poems accurately record traditional rituals and ceremonies in specific sequences and detailed stages. The poem coded “MS.MA” does not merely mention traditional marriage ceremonies but systematically describes the stages of the process—starting from *beseruan* (marriage proposal), *bukasungut* (family deliberation), *ngatot de pulut* (delivery of bride wealth/dowry), up to *besanding* and the recitation of mantras—according to actual customary practices. Likewise, the poem “Bepupur” (IA) explains in detail the *bepupur* ritual, namely the process of applying a mixture of *lenggai* (henna) and other materials to the bride. The description

“alternately applying the cool white liquid / covering the entire body / for purification” corresponds to the meaning of purification rituals and the hope for safety within the tradition.

Second, the poems also serve as narratives of real cultural festivals. The poems “Iraw Tengkeyu” (C.F.P) and “Padaw Tuju Dulung” (Els) vividly depict the annual *Iraw Tengkeyu* festival (Andryan et al., 2024)

a traditional ceremony of the Tidung ethnic group, which is held as an expression of gratitude by coastal communities for abundant harvests. *Iraw Tengkeyu* is the most anticipated cultural celebration for the people of Tarakan City. As stated by (Adriansyah et al., 2022) and (Parlindungan et al., 2016), this festival reflects the rich cultural heritage and strong historical legacy of coastal communities in border regions. This is illustrated in the following excerpt:

“*Arak-arakan menelusuri bibir pantai / Dengan mengenakan pakaian adat*”.
PTD.Els.

“a procession moving along the shoreline / wearing traditional attire.” (PTD.Els)

This excerpt describes the ritual of floating *padaw* (small boats) into the sea as a symbol of warding off misfortune and expressing hope for prosperity, in accordance with the implementation of the festival in Tarakan. The poems capture the essence of the festival not merely as a performance, but as a cultural practice imbued with spiritual and social meaning.

Third, this conformity is also evident in the depiction of cultural objects and performing arts. Representations of Rumah Baloy (including its architecture, the use of ironwood, and the meaning of its carvings), the Jepen Dance, Iluk Dance, and Baju Ta’a in various poems do not merely address visual aspects, but also explain or imply their functions, performance contexts, and symbolic meanings within society. For instance,

references to motifs and colors in Baju Ta'a or movements in traditional dances correspond to the rules and philosophies upheld by the cultural community that owns them.

Thus, the poetry collection successfully bridges the world of literature and socio-cultural reality. This high degree of conformity strengthens the function of poetry as an authentic medium of cultural preservation, while also demonstrating the depth of understanding and emotional engagement of young poets toward the traditions they represent. These poems are not merely about culture, but are born from and for the culture itself.

Relevance For Strengthening Cultural Literacy

This poetry collection holds a very high level of relevance as a medium for strengthening cultural literacy, particularly among the younger generation of North Kalimantan. Through a literary approach, these poems perform four strategic functions in the preservation and transmission of local wisdom values.

First, the poems function as literary documents or archives that record cultural details which may gradually be eroded by time. By incorporating and explaining specific terms such as "Kiwon talu landom" (the night three days before the wedding) in the poem "*Mantra Sakral*," the poems serve as linguistic repositories that preserve cultural vocabulary and concepts from extinction. This documentation is not rigid but integrated into a poetic narrative that is easy to remember.

Second, the poems function as an effective and engaging educational medium. Compared to factual informational texts, poetry conveys cultural knowledge through imagination, emotion, and aesthetic language. Readers do not merely learn that there are rituals such as *bepupur* or festivals like *Iraw Tengayu*, but also experience the sacred atmosphere, joy, and sense of pride surrounding them. This approach makes

cultural learning more vivid, personal, and deeply memorable.

Third, these poems actively build local identity and pride among the younger generation. The process of writing and reading poems about one's own culture becomes an act of reflection and recognition. This can be seen in the following excerpt: "O Youths / Preserve the Busak Baku dance." This line contains an appeal that emerges not as an external instruction, but as an internal declaration from the younger generation itself, indicating the internalization of values and responsibility to act as cultural practitioners.

Fourth, poetry becomes a dynamic bridge between generations. These poems connect the older generation as holders of traditional authority with the younger generation as successors through creative and contemporary language. By combining customary terms with modern writing styles, the poems make cultural heritage more accessible, relevant, and understandable to youth, while also demonstrating to the older generation that traditions can be revitalized through new forms of expression. Thus, this poetry collection is not only a product of cultural literacy but also an active instrument for ensuring the continuity and regeneration of local wisdom in North Kalimantan.

DISCUSSION

This discussion will examine three main aspects, namely local wisdom values, stylistic and symbolic analysis, and social practices. Each of these aspects is presented as follows

Local Wisdom Values of North Kalimantan

Local wisdom values refer to the worldview, knowledge systems, and strategies developed by local communities in their interactions with the environment, fellow community members, and cultural traditions. Local wisdom is not merely manifested in rules or norms but is also reflected in various cultural expressions, including literature. Poetry, as a

literary genre, possesses the capacity to document, preserve, and transmit local wisdom values from one generation to the next.

Based on the analysis of poems written by students from North Kalimantan, three dominant local wisdom values were identified: (1) love for and preservation of nature, (2) the preservation of cultural traditions and customs, and (3) kinship and customary ceremonial practices. These values reflect the close relationship between the people of North Kalimantan and their natural environment, their commitment to safeguarding ancestral heritage, and the importance of familial bonds in the implementation of traditional ceremonies.

These findings are consistent with Cheryll Glotfelty's (1996) Ecocritical perspective, which argues that literature fosters ecological awareness through the reciprocal relationship between humans and the environment. They also support Fikret Berkes' (2012) concept of Local Ecological Wisdom, which views environmental preservation as an integral part of collective identity and cultural practices transmitted across generations.

Furthermore, the findings resonate with Endraswara's (2016) discussion of nature personification in contemporary Indonesian youth poetry. However, unlike many poems that focus on narratives of environmental degradation, the poems from North Kalimantan predominantly emphasize appreciation of nature and calls for its preservation. The results also reinforce Sugihastuti and Saptiawan's (2017) argument that nature is perceived as a sacred entity within Dayak oral literary traditions.

Language Style and Symbol

Figurative language serves as a distinctive form of expression through which authors create aesthetic effects in literary works (Aryanti & Hartati, 2025). In poetry, figurative language and symbolism constitute essential intrinsic elements because they function as tools

to reinforce messages, stimulate imagination, and construct deeper layers of meaning. In the poems written by students from North Kalimantan, the use of figurative language and symbols is strongly rooted in local cultural contexts. These elements function not only as aesthetic devices but also as instruments for strengthening local wisdom values and affirming cultural identity.

The analysis identified three major aspects of figurative language and symbolism: (1) metaphor and personification that animate nature and cultural objects, (2) culture-specific symbols containing profound philosophical values, and (3) the use of regional vocabulary as a linguistic strategy to preserve authenticity and cultural meaning. Together, these aspects operate synergistically to produce poetry that is not only aesthetically appealing but also rich in cultural significance.

The hornbill functions as a dominant cultural symbol encompassing three interconnected layers of meaning: sacredness (as a revered creature), leadership (through its association with elevated places), and authority (represented by its powerful voice). The expression "*thunderous voice shakes the universe*" symbolizes courage, strength, and influence, suggesting that traditional leaders are expected to possess an authority that commands respect within the community. As a cultural code, this symbol embodies profound philosophical values that can only be fully understood within the cultural framework of the society that created and preserves it.

These findings are consistent with Turner's theory of Symbols and Rituals (Ummah, 2019) particularly the concepts of dominant and instrumental symbols. They also align with Clifford Geertz's perspective on symbols in cultural communication (Abdurahman, Syukur Saud, n.d.) which views symbols as vehicles for conveying abstract cultural values. Furthermore, the findings support (Levi-strauss, 1958) structuralist approach to myth, particularly the

binary opposition of high versus low, which signifies superiority and social prestige.

The results are also in accordance with the findings of (Hendriana Werdhaningsih, Alberta Haryudanti & Wirmas, 2017) who argue that the hornbill occupies a central position in Dayak cosmology as a “messenger of the gods.” Unlike bird symbolism in Javanese culture, which is often associated with political meanings, the hornbill in Dayak culture possesses a stronger sacred dimension due to its status as a revered and spiritually significant creature.

Social Practices

Social practice in poetry refers to the ways in which poetic texts reflect, document, and interact with the social and cultural realities of a community. Poetry functions not only as an aesthetic expression but also as a mirror of social life that can serve as a valuable source of ethnographic documentation. The correspondence between poetic representations and the living social practices of a community indicates that such poems emerge from authentic experiences and are deeply rooted in local culture.

The analysis revealed that the poems written by students from North Kalimantan demonstrate a high degree of correspondence with the social and cultural practices of local communities, particularly among the Tidung and Bulungan ethnic groups. The accuracy of these cultural representations positions the collection as a form of literary documentation with significant ethnographic value. The poems not only portray the beauty of traditional festivals and ceremonial events but also capture their essence as cultural practices imbued with spiritual and social significance. Consequently, these findings reinforce the role of poetry as an authentic medium for cultural preservation.

Iraw Tengkeyu Festival (Andryan et al., 2024) a thanksgiving ceremony of the Tidung community in Tarakan that continues

to be practiced today. (Parlindungan et al., 2016) The portrayal of a ceremonial procession accompanied by traditional clothing demonstrates a strong correspondence between the poetic representation and the actual social and cultural practices of the community. The poem not only illustrates the visual beauty of the festival but also captures its essence as a cultural practice rich in spiritual and social meaning.

These findings are consistent with Ian Watt's Sociology of Literature perspective Ian Watt (1957) (Suraya, 2022) which views literature as a reflection of social reality. They also align with the principles of Literary Ethnography, which suggest that literary texts can serve as valuable ethnographic sources for understanding the cultural practices of a community. This poem demonstrates that literary works can function as cultural archives that accurately document and preserve social realities.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussion of this study, it can be concluded that the poems written by multiethnic students of Borneo Tarakan University represent the local wisdom values of North Kalimantan, including love for and preservation of nature, the preservation of culture and customs, as well as kinship and customary ceremonial practices. These values are expressed through the cultural symbol of the hornbill, which embodies the meanings of sacredness, leadership, and authority, as well as through the use of local languages as a strategy for preserving cultural identity. The poems were also found to correspond closely with the socio-cultural practices of local communities, such as the Iraw Tengkeyu Festival and traditional Tidung wedding rituals, thereby demonstrating that poetry functions as a medium of education and an intergenerational bridge. Thus, this study confirms that poetry is not only an aesthetic work

but also a cultural document that records and transmits noble values amid the currents of modernization. These findings reinforce the theories of ecocriticism, local wisdom, symbols and rituals, and the sociology of literature. Future research is recommended to expand the scope of data and conduct field verification to strengthen the findings empirically.

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