

THE REPRESENTATION OF RITUAL TRADITION IN THE SHORT STORY *PESTA ADAT BAGI PUTRI KARANG MELENU*

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Abstrak

Sastra tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai sarana ekspresi estetis, tetapi juga sebagai medium representasi budaya yang merekam nilai, tradisi, dan sistem kepercayaan masyarakat. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis representasi makna budaya dan tradisi dalam cerita pendek "Pesta Adat bagi Putri Karang Melenu" menggunakan pendekatan antropologi sastra. Fokus kajian diarahkan pada representasi ritual adat, simbolisme budaya, dan interaksi sosial sebagai cerminan identitas kolektif serta sistem nilai masyarakat adat yang digambarkan dalam teks. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah analisis isi terhadap teks cerita pendek sebagai sumber data utama. Teknik pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui studi pustaka dengan membaca dan menelaah teks cerita pendek secara mendalam untuk mengidentifikasi unsur budaya dan tradisi di dalamnya. Data dianalisis melalui proses pengkodean, pengelompokan tema, dan penafsiran makna simbolik yang berkaitan dengan unsur ritual, simbol mitologis, serta pola interaksi sosial. Analisis dilakukan dengan mengaitkan temuan tekstual dengan teori antropologi sastra dan kajian budaya yang relevan guna memperoleh pemahaman kontekstual terhadap makna budaya yang terkandung dalam cerita pendek. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa ritual adat, berfungsi sebagai simbol legitimasi sosial, transisi budaya, dan pengakuan individu dalam struktur masyarakat adat. Simbolisme budaya melalui figur mitologis dan binatang ajaib merepresentasikan sistem kepercayaan masyarakat yang memandang alam dan makhluk non-manusia sebagai bagian integral kosmologi budaya. Selain itu, interaksi sosial antar tokoh mencerminkan nilai budaya komunal, seperti kepatuhan terhadap norma adat, solidaritas sosial, dan penghormatan terhadap kepentingan kolektif. Simpulan penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa cerita pendek "Pesta Adat bagi Putri Karang Melenu" berperan sebagai media representasi budaya sekaligus sarana pelestarian tradisi melalui struktur naratif sastra.

Kata Kunci: Antropologi Sastra, Cerita Pendek, Representasi Budaya, Tradisi, Masyarakat Adat

Abstract

Literature serves as a medium of cultural representation that records values, traditions, and belief systems. This research analyzes the representation of cultural meaning and tradition in the short story "Pesta Adat Bagi Putri Karang Melenu" using a literary anthropological approach. The study focuses on indigenous rituals, cultural symbolism, and social interaction as reflections of the collective identity and value systems of the indigenous peoples described. The research method employed is content analysis, using the short story text as the primary data source. Data collection was conducted through a literature study, involving in-depth reading to identify cultural elements. The data were analyzed through coding, theme grouping, and interpreting symbolic meanings related to rituals, mythological symbols, and social interaction patterns. This analysis relates textual findings with relevant literary anthropological and cultural studies theories to gain a contextual understanding of the cultural meanings. The results show that traditional rituals function as symbols of social legitimacy, cultural transition, and individual recognition within the indigenous social structure. Cultural symbolism, through mythological figures and magical beasts, represents a belief system that views nature and non-human beings as integral parts of cultural cosmology. Additionally, social interactions between characters reflect communal values, such as adherence to customary norms, social solidarity, and respect for collective interests. In conclusion, this study confirms that "Pesta Adat Bagi Putri Karang Melenu" acts as a medium of cultural representation and a means of preserving tradition through its narrative structure, bridging the gap between ancient heritage and modern literary expression for future generations.

Keywords: Literary Anthropology, Short Story, Cultural Representation, Tradition, Indigenous Community

1. INTRODUCTION

Literary studies not only function as an appreciation of the aesthetics of language and the creativity of writers, but also as a medium that contains representations of social life, cultural values, and community traditions. Literary works, including short stories, do not stand alone as a form of entertainment, but also as a reflection of a culture that captures the standards, traditions, and worldview of a community that defines its identity (Salwa et al., 2025). Narrative texts such as short stories are understood as a vehicle to read the cultural values of the community through symbols, rituals, and social interactions depicted in them.

The study of Darma et al., (2025) shows that cultural narratives in literature help readers understand the complexities of the traditions and social practices that make up the fictional structure of the literary work. In addition, short stories as a form of short fiction have a high density of meaning and often represent cultural values through narrative elements such as settings, characters, and storylines.

The analysis of cultural values in short story texts has become the focus of research in literary anthropology, because through short story texts it is possible to trace how culture is produced, maintained, and interpreted in a particular social context (Juanda et al., 2025). This opinion is supported by Wijdaniyah's research, Wijdaniyah et al.,(2022), which highlights that short stories are loaded with local cultural values that reflect the customs, traditional rituals, and social symbols that live in people's experiences, so that literary texts become an authentic source of cultural learning.

The study of cultural values in short stories is not only a theoretical problem, but also a scientific necessity to understand the relationship between literature and the socio-cultural life of the community. Research by Kasmi & Zamana (2019) shows that local short stories contain

distinctive cultural narratives and can be used to enrich readers' cultural insights as well as as literary learning materials that are relevant to local wisdom. In other words, short stories are not just fictitious texts, but also socio-cultural documents that contain meanings that can be interpreted through a hermeneutic approach. Although previous research has observed a lot of cultural value in short stories, there are still limitations in studies that specifically examine the meaning of culture and tradition in short stories that have nuances of traditional rituals and ceremonies.

Many previous studies tend to emphasize narrative descriptions or intrinsic elements such as themes, characters, and plots, without delving deeply into the cultural symbolism and social practices contained in the text. As mentioned in Siburian (2022) research, that the elements that support the integrity of a literary work are themes, plots, characters, characterization, setting, point of view, language style, and mandate. Understanding the value of this tradition is very important because it can strengthen the awareness of local culture which is increasingly eroded by modernization and globalization.

Erau is a traditional party or sacred ceremony that functions as a symbol of social legitimacy and cultural transition. Erau in the Sultanate of Kutai Kartanegara is an intermediary for the Kutai people to show respect for the collective identity and value system of indigenous peoples. The coral pond is believed to be the birth of Princess Karang Melenu, the first Queen Mother of the Kutai Kartanegara Kingdom who sent down kings (who are now sultans after Islam entered) in the Kutai Kartanegara Region. Coral ponds are expressive as a form of imaginative imitation influence (Janah, 2017). A folklore that describes the beginning of the sultans of Kutai Kartanegara Ing Martadipura and the birth of Princess Karang Melenu. During the Erau festival in Tenggarong, this story was transformed into a

type of carving called Karang Nungkul and made it more than just a folklore (Janah, 2022).

The short story of "*Pesta Adat Bagi Putri Karang Melenu*" presents a number of traditional cultural elements ranging from ground-stepping rituals, traditional parties, to magical animal symbols that reflect cultural practices in the social context of the indigenous people depicted. Therefore, this study focuses on the cultural and traditional meanings presented in the short story text.

Folklore is generally anonymous, therefore folklore that appears in a particular location is considered a shared heritage by the locals. Implicitly, individuals integrate life values into the structure of social interaction as part of a member of society. The culture that develops in a community represents the crystallization of noble values that have been inherited from generation to generation by predecessors (Azni & Putri, 2025).

Overall, this study is very important because short stories can be used as a tool of cultural education by introducing readers to the customs, connections, and social values of the community expressed in literary works. A deep understanding of the meaning of culture and tradition in this short story can be an important reference for the development of cultural literacy and a more contextual study of Indonesian literature.

Before conducting an in-depth analysis of the representation of traditional rituals in the short story "*Pesta Adat Bagi Putri Karang Melenu*", various previous literature and studies have been found that have significant relevance to the theme of this research. One of the most relevant references is *The Representation of Minangkabau Culture in the Short Story of Rawang Tangkuluak by Riko Safardi: An Anthropological Study of Koentjaraningrat Literature* written by Siti Nuraini Putri Septiani and Nur Mufid (2025). Based on the presentation that has been presented by the researcher, the researcher is interested in

studying short stories using a literary anthropology study approach.

The study of the representation of traditional rituals in literary works has been the concern of previous researchers. Although there is harmony in the use of theoretical approaches, it is found that discourse space has not been fully explored in the study. Most of the previous literature tended to be oriented towards the description of the physical elements of culture and customs in general, so it has not touched on the analysis of the sociocultural function of literature as an instrument of social control and environmental ethics.

In contrast to the previous research, this research lies in its focus of analysis which repositions the short story "*Pesta Adat Bagi Putri Karang Melenu*" beyond just a mythological fictional narrative. This study specifically dissects how the manifestation of rituals in the text is transformed into a tool of sociopolitical legitimacy and ecological wisdom in maintaining community harmony with the Mahakam aquatic ecosystem. The main focus on this functional dimension makes a different theoretical contribution from previous studies. Previous studies are generally still limited to pure structuralism analysis.

This research has urgency because the figure of Putri Karang Melenu is not just a fictitious figure. This figure is also a symbol of morality and ecological guidelines of the local community. The urgency of this research lies in the need to reposition the figure of Putri Karang Melenu as a significant cultural entity. Through this study, efforts are made to conserve oral traditions that still exist to make them an educational instrument for the younger generation in mitigating identity crises in the midst of globalization (Senen et al., 2025). The preservation of this local narrative is crucial so that future generations remain attached to the richness of civilization and identity inherited by their ancestors through the structure of literary works (Salwa et al., 2025).

Theoretically, this research makes a significant contribution to the development of literary anthropological studies. The results of this analysis emphasized the position of literary works as active agents in the transmission of sociocultural values and ecological wisdom of the Kutai people. In addition, this research offers a new perspective on narrative functionalism as an instrument of collective identity legitimization, thereby enriching the understanding of how myths and rituals are rearticulated to maintain the relevance of ancestral values in the midst of changing times.

Based on this background, this study aims to describe and analyze the representation of traditional rituals and cultural elements contained in the short story "*Pesta Adat Bagi Putri Karang Melenu*". More specifically, this study intends to reveal how the literary text integrates religious systems, local knowledge, and social organizations as a reflection of the collective identity of the society of its owner through the perspective of literary anthropology.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Folklore

Folklore describes the stories that grow and develop in a particular society. One type of children's literature is folklore. The life of the society from which literature originates is reflected in it. Thus, it can be said that literature is more than just art (Anafiah, 2017). Folklore is valued both in national and global culture. Folk tales are a useful tool for understanding cross-cultural communication (Dahal & Bhatta, 2025).

Folklore is one of the popular cultures in society, by bringing stories to children, can provide a beneficial stimulus to process tastes, emotions, and language (Listyowardany et al., 2025).

It is also due to the fact that it is impossible to separate the study of Folklore from the other theoretical, methodological or practical aspects that would be facilitated by the aforementioned

objects. In addition to these motivations, we can add pragmatic aspects related to the future workplace or extracurricular activities in museums or various ethnographic exhibitions, the organization of certain events, professional practices, and others (Orlan & Jucan, 2013).

It can be concluded that folklore is the oral cultural heritage of the community that functions as a medium of entertainment, a source of information, a reflection of life, the preservation of cultural values, and as a means of communication and understanding across cultures.

Literary Anthropological Theory

Literary anthropology is one of the many disciplines or literary analyses of various focuses that can be found in a literary work. One of the newest disciplines in literary studies is literary anthropology. Literary anthropology is a branch of study that connects literature with culture, literary works are seen as an integral part of human cultural life (Endraswara, 2018).

In describing the local community, literary anthropology found in the study of a number of novels and short stories shows local life in a certain place. In prose, literary anthropology is very important to understand how people's culture is represented in the form of narratives and characters in stories (Ratna, 2011). Literary anthropology thus provides in-depth insights into how culture and society are portrayed in literary works (Salwa et al., 2025). In addition, it is clear how literature functions as a reflection and acts as a critique of the social reality and cultural dynamics of society.

3. METHOD

This research is a qualitative research with content analysis techniques. The approach used is literary anthropology to examine the representation of cultural values and traditions in short stories "*Pesta Adat bagi Putri Karang Melenu*" (Juanda et al., 2025). Content analysis

was chosen because it allows researchers to identify, categorize, and interpret the meanings contained in literary texts systematically, especially related to symbols, rituals, and social interactions that represent the culture of traditional societies.

In the perspective of literary anthropology, literary texts are understood as a medium of representation of local wisdom and cultural practices that are reflected through narrative structures and social relations between characters (Juanda et al., 2025). The main data in this study is text excerpts in the form of words, phrases, and sentences in short stories that represent the ritual elements of the traditional rituals of the Kutai indigenous people.

The main source of data from this study is the text of the short story "*Pesta Adat Bagi Putri Karang Melenu*" which will be abbreviated to *PKM*, while the secondary data source is obtained from literature on literary anthropology theory and cultural references relevant to the traditions of the people depicted. The data collection technique is carried out through the literature technique by reading and studying the Short Story in depth to identify the cultural elements and traditions contained in it (Kasmi & Zamana, 2019). The technique for data analysis is carried out in several stages, namely: (1) reading the text thoroughly to gain an understanding of the context of the story; (2) encoding relevant data units; (3) grouping the data into thematic categories such as traditional rituals, symbolism, and social interaction; (4) interpret data based on a content analysis approach with the support of cultural theory and literary anthropology; and (5) draw conclusions based on the patterns of meaning and findings that emerge from the text.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the research were obtained through a textual analysis of the short story "*Traditional Party for Putri Karang Melenu*". The analysis uses literary anthropological

approaches and hermeneutic interpretation. Based on a critical reading of the data source, it was found that there is a form between the semiotic aspects of culture, the ritual dimension, and the pattern of relationships between the characters that build the integrity of the traditional background in this short story.

According to the research findings, this short story is a symbolic representation of the cultural practices and belief systems of indigenous groups that affect the collective social identity in addition to being a work of fiction. Based on the results of coding and data grouping, several main themes were found that represented the meaning of culture and tradition in short stories.

Traditional Ritual Representation in Short Story of "*Pesta Adat Bagi Putri Karang Melenu*"

The results of the analysis show that traditional rituals are the central element in the short story "*Pesta Adat Bagi Putri Karang Melenu*". Groundbreaking rituals and traditional feasts are described as symbolic practices that mark social transitions and individual recognition within the structure of indigenous peoples. The ritual of stepping on the ground, for example, represents human attachment to nature and ancestors, as well as marking social acceptance of the main characters in the indigenous communities depicted in the story. The existence of the traditional ritual in this short story can be seen through the depiction of the ground-stepping ceremony for Putri Karang Melenu, as illustrated in the following excerpt:

(Data 1)

Indonesian:

"Ketika usianya memasuki lima tahun, Putri Karang Melenu tidak suka berdiam di rumah. Ia ingin bermain di luar rumah. Hal itu membuat kekhawatiran kedua orang tuanya. Suatu hari, Petinggi Hulu Dusun berkata kepada istrinya, 'Istriku, anakmu

sudah semakin besar. Tidak betah berdiam di rumah. Ia selalu ingin bermain di luar rumah. Hati-hatilah. Jaga dengan baik, agar dia selamat.' Istrinya selalu mengiyakan perintah Petinggi Hulu Dusun. **Petinggi Hulu Dusun masih ingat pesan lewat suara gaib.** Ketika itu diterima oleh **Babu Jaruma.** Segeralah diadakan persiapan upacara **injak tanah bagi putrinya.**" (PKM, Halaman 33)

Translation:

"When she was five years old, Putri Karang Melenu did not like to stay at home. He wants to play outside the house. This made his parents worried. One day, the Hulu Dusun official said to his wife, 'My wife, your child is getting older. Not feeling at home. He always wanted to play outside the house. Be careful. Take good care of him, so that he is safe.' His wife always agreed to the orders of the Hulu Hamlet Officials. **The Hulu Dusun officials still remember the message through a supernatural voice.** At that time it was accepted by **Babu Jaruma.** Preparations for the ground-breaking ceremony for his daughter will be made immediately." (PKM, Page 33)

(Data 2)

Indonesian:

"Tepat pada hari keempat puluh, **Babu Jaruma melakukan upacara pacar.** Kuku Putri Karang Melenu diolesi dengan pacar, yakni cairan berwarna yang diambil dari getah tetumbuhan. Tampaklah semakin menawan penampilan sang bayi. Wajahnya seolah mendorong semua orang untuk memandangnya. **Upacara dilanjutkan dengan mandi di tepian**" (PKM, Halaman 34).

Translation:

"Right on the fortieth day, **Babu Jaruma performed the Henna ceremony.** Putri Karang Melenu's nails are smeared with henna, which is a colored liquid taken from plant sap. It seems that the baby's appearance is getting more charming. His face seemed to encourage everyone to look at him. **The ceremony was followed by a bath on the riverside.**" (PKM, Page 34).

Based on this depiction, traditional rituals do not only function as ceremonial events. Rituals are also a cultural symbol that contains the social and spiritual meaning of the community. In contemporary cultural and literary studies, rituals are not only understood as ceremonial acts, but also as cultural symbols that contain social, spiritual, and collective memory of society (Min & Zhang, 2025).

These findings are in line with research Yunidar (2023) which affirms that the representation of traditional rituals in literary and cultural texts serves as a narrative medium to reproduce the values, norms, and social structure of traditional societies. Kasmir & Zamana (2019) also shows that traditional rituals in local Indonesian short stories are often used as a symbol of the formation of collective identity. Thus, the traditional rituals in this short story are not just the background of the story, but a cultural representation that contains a deep meaning about the relationship between humans, nature, and the belief system of indigenous peoples. Cultural element theory is used to recognize and evaluate the components of culture in literature and society. On the other hand, the function of culture in society is as a controller of human behavior and also as the identity of community groups (Rosyidah & Wijaya, 2024).

Sources of Cultural Elements and Mythological Figures

This short story showcases strong cultural symbolism through the presence of magical

animals and mythological elements that blend into the storyline. The magical beasts in the story are not depicted realistically, but rather as symbols of spiritual power, guardians of customs, and intermediaries between the human world and the sacred world.

Bronislaw Malinowski argues the opposite of Herskovits, who argues that culture is constructed of four universal elements—technology, economy, family, and politics—that culture consists of four main components that include norm systems, economic institutions, educational institutions, and institutions of power or politics (Kamilah, 2022). This symbolism shows how indigenous peoples interpret nature and mythological creatures as an integral part of their belief system. The symbolic meaning of the magical beast in this short story can be seen directly through the interaction of the characters with mythological creatures, as illustrated in the following excerpt:

(Data 1)

Indonesian:

"Semakin hari Putri Karang Melenu semakin besar. Pada suatu hari, tiba-tiba muncullah lembuswana di hadapan Putri Karang Melenu. 'Lembuswana, kemarilah, bawalah daku ke atas mahligai. Duduklah agar aku dapat naik ke punggungmu!' kata Putri Karang Melenu. Binatang ajaib itu mengerti ucapan putri itu. Segeralah direndahkan tubuhnya. Putri pun segera naik ke punggungnya. Duduklah Putri Karang Melenu di atas mahligainya. Semua orang takjub menyaksikan peristiwa itu." (PKM, Halaman 34-35).

Translation:

"Every day Putri Karang Melenu is getting bigger. One day, a lembuswana suddenly appeared in front of Putri Karang Melenu. 'Lembuswana, come here, take me to the mahligai. Sit down so I

can ride on your back!" said Putri Karang Melenu. That magical beast understood the princess's words. Immediately humble his body. The princess immediately climbed onto his back. Sit Putri Karang Melenu on her crown. Everyone was amazed to see the event." (PKM, Pages 34-35).

Based on this quote, this is in line with the view of Eagleton (2008) who states that mythological symbols function as a representation of values and views on people's lives, where the existence of magical animals reflects a belief in supernatural forces that regulate social and cosmic harmony.

In East Kalimantan, especially the people of Kutai Kartanegara, there is a mythology that surrounds Lembuswana and is a legacy that has been passed down from generation to generation in the form of beliefs and values.

Lembuswana is believed to be an animal that has lived since the time of the Kutai kingdom as a royal symbol, this animal is also considered a vehicle for Dewa Batara Guru in giving advice and guidance (Dewi, 2023). This finding is also a continuation of the research by Wijdaniyah et al., (2022) which states that mythological symbols in Indonesian short stories are often used to represent spiritual values and local wisdom that are passed down from generation to generation. In addition, the research of Juanda et al., (2025) emphasizing that cultural symbols in literary texts cannot be separated from the social context of the producing society. Therefore, the symbol of the magical animal in this short story serves as a medium of representation of the belief system of indigenous peoples that places traditions and myths as the foundation of social life.

Social Interaction and Cultural Values in Traditional Societies

According to anthropology, humans have evolved and adapted to their natural environment in amazing ways since ancient times. This is

because humans have an instinctive and rational system that allows them to understand and respond appropriately to natural phenomena (Fatonah et al., 2024).

The results of the analysis show that social interaction between figures reflects the cultural values of indigenous peoples. These values include respect for customs, adherence to norms, and social solidarity. The dialogue and actions of the characters illustrate how individuals are expected to put common interests above personal interests. These values reflect the principles of communal culture that characterize traditional societies. Kashima (2016) affirms that culture is not only present in the form of practices or symbols, but is mainly manifested in meanings attached to everyday social actions. This is evident through the depiction of a traditional party involving all citizens and important figures, where the participation of everyone becomes symbolic of the internalization of social norms, as illustrated in the following Short Story excerpt:

(Data 1)

Indonesian:

"Pesta berlangsung sangatlah meriah. Tua-muda, laki-laki dan perempuan hadir dan bersuka cita. Makanan dihidangkan serba enak. Tarian dan hiburan sangat memesonakan. Banyak pembesar kampung tetangga hadir".
(PKM, Halaman 33-34).

Translation:

"The party was very lively. Young and old, men and women were present and rejoiced. The food was served very well. The dancing and entertainment are fascinating. Many neighboring village dignitaries were present."
(PKM, Pages 33-34).

This quote shows the involvement of all levels of society in a traditional practice, emphasizing social solidarity and respect for traditions. All residents show respect and

compliance with customary decisions represented through the active participation of the community in every stage of the ritual without any social resistance. This traditional festival is not just a ceremonial celebration, but a crucial vehicle to strengthen social relations and community cohesion. The concrete form of this interaction can be seen in the practice of mutual cooperation (*rewan*) during the preparation of the ceremony, the distribution of roles between families in the provision of regret, and the space for dialogue between residents created during the procession. Through this pattern of collective interaction, the values of compliance with customary hierarchies and social solidarity are continuously strengthened.

In this short story, social interaction between characters serves as a narrative medium to show how customary norms and cultural values are practiced concretely, both through obedience to customary decisions and through social relations that emphasize harmony and communal attachment. In addition, social interaction in short stories also acts as a mechanism for internalization and reproduction of cultural values.

To maintain harmony between individuals and groups, social contact in society must be well established. Cultural values are one of the most valuable potentials in society. Communities can move forward together and increase social harmony thanks to the richness and strength of their unique cultural values (Firmando, 2021).

Research by Darma et al., (2025) shows that short stories set in indigenous peoples often represent social interaction as a form of subtle cultural control, where values and norms are inherited through habits, examples, and relationships between individuals. Thus, the short story "*Pesta Adat Bagi Putri Karang Melenu*" shows that cultural values are not only manifested in traditional rituals and mythological symbols, but are also deeply internalized in the patterns of

social relations of indigenous peoples depicted in literary texts.

Short Stories as a Media of Cultural Representation

Each community has a different culture, as seen in Indonesia and is home to several community groups. These traits are not defined specifically but universal without distinguishing between race, natural environment, or educational factors (Puspasari et al., 2020).

The findings of this study show that short stories as a form of short literature have high effectiveness in representing culture and traditions in a dense, symbolic, and meaningful way. The density of narrative in short stories allows the author to present cultural reality through the selection of essential story elements, such as traditional rituals, mythological symbols, and distinctive patterns of social interaction. With a concise structure, short stories do not require long descriptions to build a cultural context, but rely on the power of symbols and key events that are able to condense the collective meaning of society. This makes short stories a strategic medium to record cultural values without losing their interpretive depth.

Short literary works, including short stories, have strong representational abilities because they rely on the economy of language and the intensity of meaning. The short narrative structure actually encourages the reader to make a more active symbolic interpretation of the cultural elements presented in the text. In this case, culture is not displayed solely descriptively, but is represented through symbolic signs inherent in the characters, setting, and storyline.

The cultural representation in the short story "*Pesta Adat Bagi Putri Karang Melenu*" is reflected concretely through the detailed depiction of the Erau ritual. Textual data show that this ritual is not just a ceremonial activity, but an instrument of legitimacy for the social position of its figures. For example, the procession of picking up Putri Karang Melenu from the

Mahakam whirlpool, accompanied by traditional music and the presence of traditional dignitaries, represents a collective recognition of the origins that are considered sacred (*divine origin*).

Sociologically, the interaction between figures in the preparation of the traditional party shows a hierarchical but solid structure of society. The tangible manifestation of this interaction can be seen in the division of collective tasks starting from the presentation of offerings to the arrangement of ceremonial procedures that reflect absolute compliance with applicable customary norms. In addition, the mythological elements inherent in the figure of Putri Karang Melenu function as a medium of ecological education, which teaches the community about respect for the river and its surrounding nature as a source of life that must be maintained for generations.

These findings are in line with research Juanda et al., (2025) which states that short stories are an effective medium to transmit local cultural values in the context of Indonesian literature. Thus, the Short Story "*Pesta Adat Bagi Putri Karang Melenu*" can be understood as a vehicle for cultural representation that reflects the identity of indigenous peoples in a symbolic and sustainable way, while strengthening the role of literature as a medium for cultural preservation.

Cultural Meaning and Cultural Preservation through Literary Texts

The last theme in this study emphasizes that the Short Story "*Traditional Party for Putri Karang Melenu*" not only represents cultural meaning, but also functions as a medium for preserving tradition through literary narratives. The presence of traditional rituals, cultural symbols, and collective values that are explicitly displayed makes this short story a cultural representation space that records the traditional practices of indigenous peoples in an aesthetic and reflective form.

Literature, especially short stories, has the ability to record cultural experiences in a

symbolic and sustained way. Literary narratives act as cultural archives that store the collective memories of the community. (Assmann, 2011) explain that cultural memory preserved through symbolic mediums such as texts, stories, and narratives, which allow cultural values and identities to be passed down across generations.

Short stories with a local cultural background are an important medium in maintaining the continuity of the meaning of traditions that live in indigenous peoples. Apart from being cultural documentation, short stories also function as a means of cultural education. Through the storyline and symbols presented, readers are invited to understand traditional values contextually without having to directly experience these cultural practices. Literary works set in indigenous peoples play an important role in increasing the cultural awareness of readers, especially the younger generation, towards the value of local traditions that are beginning to be eroded by modernization.

The cultural meaning in this short story is deeply reflected through the placement of tradition as the main pillar of the social life of indigenous peoples. One of the specific data that can be seen is the narrative about the birth procession of Princess Karang Melenu which is supernatural, Princess Karang Melenu was found in a *Gong* above the whirlpool of the Mahakam River. The symbolism of *the Gong* and *the River* here is not just a spice for the story, but a representation of a local belief system that glorifies water as a source of life and metal objects as a symbol of status and sacred customs.

This cultural significance is emphasized through the description of the traditional feast for seven days and seven nights described in the text. Textual data that shows the involvement of various levels of society in preparing ceremonial equipment, such as making offerings and preparing traditional attributes becomes a narrative instrument that emphasizes that collective identity is built on the basis of mutual

cooperation and compliance with hierarchy. Thus, the traditions in this short story serve as a value system that binds people to stay in tune with the laws of nature and their ancestral heritage.

This is in line with the view Bendix et al., (2013) which emphasizes that cultural preservation does not solely focus on the sustainability of physical practices, but also on the maintenance of the symbolic meanings contained in cultural expressions and social narratives.

The short story "*Pesta Adat Bagi Putri Karang Melenu*" shows how literature can be a space for cultural resistance to global cultural homogenization. By featuring local traditions in a dominant way, these short stories contribute to efforts to maintain cultural diversity through textual representation. Study by Senen et al., (2025) emphasizing that local literature has a strategic role in maintaining cultural identity in the midst of globalization trends that tend to get rid of traditional narratives. Thus, the results of this study show that short stories not only function as aesthetic works, but also as an effective medium for cultural preservation. Through the representation of rituals, symbols, and traditional values, the short story "*Pesta Adat Bagi Putri Karang Melenu*" contributes to recording, reflecting, and transmitting the cultural and cultural meanings of indigenous peoples to readers across generations.

Through literary works, readers can understand how culture is carried out in daily life and how people interpret their traditions in the midst of changing times. Literary works depict the life of people with all the values, norms, and cultures that develop in a particular social context (Septiani et al., 2025).

The historical approach of literary culture seeks to return classical authors to their historical context and uncover early versions of important historical texts that have since been adapted and incorporated. In the same way, the literary cultural history approach also seeks to

consolidate the literary history that has been divided into narratives from various literary genres (Xu Yan, 2024).

5. CONCLUSION

This research aims to examine the representation of cultural meaning and tradition in the short story "*Traditional Party for Putri Karang Melenu*" through a literary anthropological approach with a hermeneutic interpretation. Based on textual analysis, this short story does not just present a fictitious story. The story also represents the cultural practices and belief systems of indigenous peoples. The traditional rituals, mythological symbols, and patterns of social interaction depicted in the text serve as a narrative medium to convey the collective identity and cultural memory of the indigenous peoples represented in the story.

The findings of this study also confirm that the cultural values of indigenous peoples are strongly represented through social interaction between figures. The dialogue and actions of the figures illustrate the principles of communal culture, such as adherence to customary norms, respect for collective decisions, and emphasis on social harmony. Such social interaction functions as a mechanism for internalization and reproduction of cultural values, where customary norms and ethics are inherited through daily social practices.

Overall, this study concludes that the short story "*Pesta Adat Bagi Putri Karang Melenu*" not only represents cultural significance and tradition, but also serves as an effective medium for cultural preservation. Through traditional rituals, mythological symbols, and social interactions, this short story records, reflects, and transmits the cultural values of indigenous peoples in a symbolic and sustainable manner. Thus, this study emphasizes the strategic role of literature, especially short stories, as a vehicle for cultural representation, forming collective

memory, and preserving the sustainability of tradition in the context of modern society.

6. REFERENCES

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