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**The Representation of Ethnic Identity in Banjar Fiction
by Jamal T. Suryanata**

Heppy Lismayanti¹, Johan Arifin², Kamariah³

^{1,2,3} Universitas PGRI Kalimantan, Indonesia

ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the representation of ethnic identity in Banjar fiction by Jamal T. Suryanata. Banjar fiction, as part of regional literature, plays an important role in depicting the life, culture, and thoughts of the Banjar community. The main objective of this research is to identify how Banjar ethnic identity is portrayed in Suryanata's works, as well as to understand how the characters, themes, and symbols used in these works reflect the social and cultural construction of Banjar ethnicity. The method used in this study is descriptive qualitative text analysis. This research examines several works of Banjar fiction by Jamal T. Suryanata, such as novels and short stories, through an ethnic identity theory approach and literary sociology studies. The analysis focuses on the characters in the stories, cultural depictions, and the role of the Banjar language in shaping the image and characteristics of ethnicity in these works. The findings of this study indicate that Banjar ethnic identity in Jamal T. Suryanata's works is portrayed through depictions of daily life, customary values, and the social conflicts faced by the Banjar community. The characters in these fictions often experience shifts or quests for identity, both in relation to other communities and in maintaining their original culture. The Banjar language also plays an important role in reinforcing the authenticity and depth of the representation of Banjar cultural identity. Themes such as unity, social change, and modernization challenges become central issues that highlight the dynamics of ethnic identity. The implications of this research show that Banjar literature functions not only as entertainment but also as a medium for communicating and preserving cultural identity. The representation of ethnic identity in Banjar fiction contributes to a deeper understanding of Banjar cultural values and how its community faces the challenges of modern times. This study also opens up space for further research on the role of regional literature in preserving Indonesia's cultural diversity.

Ethnic Identity, Banjar Culture, Banjar Fiction.

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Author 

johankaltara@upk.ac.id

INTRODUCTION

Ethnic identity is one of the key aspects in shaping the self-concept of a community, especially in multicultural societies like Indonesia. Ethnic identity

encompasses not only physical or geographical characteristics but also cultural aspects, values, norms, traditions, and symbols passed down through generations. In the Banjar community, ethnic identity plays a significant role in daily life, encompassing customs, language, and value systems that shape the community's character (Harpriyanti and Kamariah, 2019). However, in the face of globalization, this identity faces significant challenges, such as the penetration of foreign cultures, modernization, and socio-economic changes that may erode traditional values.

Literature holds a strategic role in preserving and strengthening ethnic identity. Through literary works, local culture can be documented, represented, and passed on to future generations. One of the literary contributions to this effort is the Banjar fiction written by Jamal T. Suryanata. As an author born and raised in South Kalimantan, Jamal T. Suryanata often addresses themes related to the lives of the Banjar people. His works vividly portray elements of local culture, such as traditions, religion, and social relationships, as well as how the Banjar community copes with the changes of the times.

However, despite Banjar literature's great potential as a medium for cultural preservation, studies on how ethnic identity is represented in Jamal T. Suryanata's works remain limited. This gap offers an opportunity to explore further how Banjar ethnic identity is not only represented but also how these values remain relevant to contemporary social dynamics. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the representation of ethnic identity in Jamal T. Suryanata's Banjar fiction. This research is expected to contribute significantly to the development of local literary studies and provide a deeper understanding of the dynamics of ethnic identity in the context of Banjar culture.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research employs a qualitative-descriptive method with a content analysis approach to uncover the representation of ethnic identity in the Banjar fiction of Jamal T. Suryanata. This method is chosen as it aligns with the aim of understanding the meanings, symbols, and cultural messages embedded in literary works. The steps undertaken in this research are as follows:

Type of Research

This study is qualitative with a focus on literary text analysis. Its objective is to interpret the narrative elements in Jamal T. Suryanata's works that represent Banjar ethnic identity, including themes, characters, settings, and cultural conflicts.

Primary Data: Banjar fiction texts by Jamal T. Suryanata selected based on their thematic relevance to Banjar ethnic identity. Examples include short

stories or novels that depict Banjar traditions, values, and social interactions. Secondary Data: Literature, articles, and previous studies related to ethnic identity, Banjar culture, and local literature.

Data Collection Techniques

Literature Review: Collecting and reading Jamal T. Suryanata's literary works to understand their narrative elements and cultural representations. **Documentation:** Documenting cultural elements found in the literary works, such as customs, language, religion, and social interactions characteristic of the Banjar community. **Field Notes (Optional):** Recording relevant socio-cultural contexts through interviews or observations related to Banjar culture, if necessary.

Research Procedures

- a. **Identifying Works:** Selecting Jamal T. Suryanata's works to be analyzed based on themes and their connection to Banjar ethnic identity.
- b. **Reading and Coding:** Conducting an in-depth reading of the texts to identify elements relevant to ethnic identity, such as character portrayals, settings, conflicts, and cultural values. The data are coded to facilitate analysis.
- c. **Narrative Analysis:** Examining narrative elements such as themes, characters, settings, and plot to reveal how ethnic identity is represented. This process adopts a theoretical approach based on concepts of ethnic identity, cultural representation, and local literature.
- d. **Data Interpretation:** Interpreting findings using theories outlined in the theoretical framework, such as ethnic identity theory and cultural representation. Emphasis is placed on how the literary works depict the dynamics of Banjar ethnic identity amidst modernity.
- e. **Conclusions and Results Writing:** Summarizing findings on the representation of Banjar ethnic identity in Jamal T. Suryanata's works and the contribution of literature to preserving local culture.

Data Analysis Techniques

- a. **Content Analysis:** Examining textual elements to uncover meanings and cultural messages in the literary works.
- b. **Contextual Analysis:** Connecting the representation of ethnic identity with the social, cultural, and historical context of the Banjar community.
- c. **Data Triangulation:** Utilizing secondary sources, such as previous studies or interviews, to validate the analysis results.

6. Research Credibility

To maintain the validity and reliability of the study, repeated readings of the texts are conducted by the researcher, along with consultations with Banjar cultural experts and local literature specialists.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study analyzes the representation of Banjar ethnic identity in the fiction of Jamal T. Suryanata, focusing on narrative elements such as themes, characters, settings, and conflicts. The findings reveal that these works not only represent Banjar culture in depth but also illustrate the dynamics of ethnic identity amidst social change. Below are the results and discussion based on the analysis conducted:

Representation of Banjar Ethnic Identity

a. Themes

The main themes found in Jamal T. Suryanata's works revolve around the preservation of traditions, religiosity, and cultural conflicts. His stories often highlight the struggles of Banjar communities in maintaining their traditional values, such as marriage customs, local beliefs, and the tradition of mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*). For instance, one story portrays a protagonist torn between continuing a family tradition and pursuing a modern life in the city. This theme reflects the dilemma of Banjar society caught between tradition and modernity.

b. Characters

The characters in these fictions generally represent the social layers of Banjar society, including religious leaders (*ulama*), traditional leaders, and ordinary community members. Their depiction often reflects values such as adherence to Islamic teachings, loyalty to customs, and close social bonds within the community. Female characters are frequently portrayed as guardians of tradition, highlighting the crucial role of women in preserving cultural identity.

c. Settings

The settings in these works predominantly feature distinct Banjar environments, such as rivers, traditional markets, and villages with stilt houses. These elements not only enhance the local atmosphere but also reflect how the physical environment shapes the way of life of the Banjar people. Additionally, the temporal setting often represents a transitional period, where social changes begin to influence traditional life.

d. Conflicts

The conflicts in Jamal T. Suryanata's works are largely social and cultural, such as generational clashes and tensions between traditional and modern values. For example, one recurring conflict involves a young character wanting to abandon traditional customs to pursue education or a career elsewhere, often met with resistance from their family. These conflicts illustrate the tension between preserving ethnic identity and adapting to contemporary changes.

Dynamics of Banjar Ethnic Identity

The findings reveal that Banjar ethnic identity is dynamic, not static. Jamal T. Suryanata's works reflect how Banjar ethnic identity undergoes negotiation and adaptation in response to modernity. Despite external cultural pressures, values such as religiosity, community solidarity, and respect for customs remain central to this identity. This demonstrates the resilience of local culture, albeit in an evolving form.

The Role of Literature in Cultural Preservation

Through the depiction of characters, settings, and conflicts, Jamal T. Suryanata's works demonstrate the potential of literature as a medium for cultural preservation. The cultural elements of Banjar reflected in his works serve not only as representations but also as a means to teach local values to readers. Thus, literature can become a space for dialogue between younger generations and tradition, as well as a form of resistance against cultural homogenization driven by globalization.

Discussion

The findings of this study align with Stuart Hall's (1997) theory of cultural representation, which posits that representation not only reflects reality but also constructs and reconstructs identity. In this context, Jamal T. Suryanata's works function as a tool for reconstructing Banjar ethnic identity in the face of social changes. His narratives demonstrate how literature serves as a medium to reimagine and sustain cultural identity amidst external pressures.

Additionally, the results reinforce the argument of Damono (2002), who emphasizes the vital role of local literature in preserving cultural values and ethnic identity. By embedding Banjar traditions, values, and struggles into his stories, Suryanata contributes to safeguarding the cultural heritage of the Banjar people.

However, this study also highlights the vulnerabilities of Banjar ethnic identity, particularly concerning the influence of globalization. Suryanata's works frequently depict the younger generation's tendency to abandon traditional practices, reflecting a broader identity crisis within the community.

This underscores the tension between preserving cultural traditions and adapting to modernity.

To address this, greater efforts are needed to utilize literature as an educational and cultural preservation tool among younger generations. Literature can bridge the gap between tradition and modernity, fostering an understanding and appreciation of cultural identity while preparing individuals to navigate contemporary challenges.

CONCLUSION

This study successfully identified the representation of Banjar ethnic identity in the fiction works of Jamal T. Suryanata through the analysis of characters, themes, and symbols that depict the social and cultural life of the Banjar community. The findings show that Suryanata's works depict the search for and shift in identity, both on an individual and collective level, influenced by social dynamics and globalization. The Banjar language and customary values play an important role in reinforcing the understanding of ethnic identity that is preserved amidst the currents of modernization and social change. Central themes such as unity, social change, and the challenges of modernization emerge in portraying Banjar ethnic identity.

This study demonstrates that literature, particularly regional literature like Banjar fiction, plays a crucial role in preserving and conveying profound cultural values. The representation of ethnic identity in Banjar literature provides a deeper understanding of how the Banjar community faces the challenges of modern times while maintaining their cultural roots. Therefore, regional literature serves not only as entertainment but also as an effective tool for maintaining cultural diversity amid globalization.

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