

Representation of Javanese Culture in the Character of Jeng Yah in the Novel *Gadis Kretek* by Ratih Kumala



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ABSTRACT: Culture has a core position and role in human life. This study aims to analyze the representation of Javanese culture through the character Jeng Yah in the novel *Gadis Kretek* by Ratih Kumala. The novel portrays the lives of Javanese people with traditional values such as politeness, local wisdom, strong spirituality, and the dilemma of preserving tradition. This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach, with data collected through reading and note-taking. The data collection procedure in this study follows the model developed by Miles and Huberman: (1) data collection, (2) selection to focus and refine the information, and (3) conclusion drawing. The study examines how the character Jeng Yah reflects social norms, communication ethics, and roles within Javanese culture. The results reveal that Jeng Yah not only represents Javanese women who uphold customs and manners but also shows an adaptation to social changes without losing her cultural identity. These findings illustrate that Javanese culture in this novel remains relevant and continues to evolve amidst modernization challenges while maintaining values that shape societal life. This journal is expected to provide new insights into how literature can play a role in reflecting and preserving local cultural values in the era of globalization.

KEYWORDS: representation, Javanese culture, novel

I. INTRODUCTION

Culture plays a fundamental role in human life, serving as an inseparable element of a nation's identity. Every culture radiates unique values that mirror the characteristics of its people, as seen in Javanese culture, rich in traditions, customs, courtesy, and profound spirituality. Over time, this culture has adapted to remain relevant in modern life; however, many traditional values persist, continuing to guide society today. The advances of modern times have influenced the visibility of Javanese culture in contemporary life. Many people are beginning to overlook the philosophical teachings embedded in Javanese cultural practices. Endraswara (2003:111) states that philosophy can help individuals better understand themselves. This is reflected in the meanings and values found in literature, as the Javanese community highly values aesthetics and societal norms. In efforts to understand a nation's culture, literature often becomes an effective medium, capable of representing, documenting, and preserving these cultural values across generations.

According to Tarigan (2015), literature is a work that presents a storyline depicting life imaginatively. In this context, cultural representation in literature is significant because it connects traditional values to a broader social context. Hall & Open University (1997) describe representation as the process of creating meaning through language, enabling culture to be understood and communicated. One literary work that illustrates this concept is *Gadis Kretek* by Ratih Kumala, which offers a narrative set in Indonesia's historical background, from the early post-independence period through the 1960s. The novel addresses various aspects of culture, including the interaction between Javanese and Dutch cultures, reflecting the social diversity and dynamics of that era (Ridwan, 2016; Barker, 2003). Culture in literature represents the values, traditions, and norms of society, captured within literary works. Literature serves as a medium for cultural representation through themes.

Through literature, cultural values can be passed down across generations, serving as a bridge for cross-cultural dialogue. According to Andre Hardjana (1991), literature emerges as a product of society, driven by the writer's rational thoughts. Literature does not develop in a social vacuum but is shaped through interactions with its social environment.

Koentjoroningrat (1987) emphasizes that every culture has essential elements, such as religious systems, social organization, knowledge, language, and the arts, which form the social identity of a society. In this regard, Javanese culture stands out for its traditional values, rooted in etiquette, customs, and a worldview that respects harmony and balance in social

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relationships. Muarifin (2021) underlines that Javanese culture remains relevant in modern life, requiring preservation and development as part of the national culture, contributing to nation-building. The novel *Gadis Kretek* by Ratih Kumala is a contemporary literary work rich in representations of Javanese culture, particularly through the character Jeng Yah. This character portrays someone deeply embedded in Javanese culture. Jeng Yah is depicted as someone who preserves tradition while adapting to changing times, reflecting the dynamics of Javanese culture in facing modernization. Jeng Yah symbolizes the Javanese woman who upholds traditional values such as courtesy, a love for tradition, local wisdom, and a high level of spirituality. Through Jeng Yah, Ratih Kumala, the author of *Gadis Kretek*, successfully highlights the conflict and harmony between tradition and modernity in Javanese society. Through the novel *Gadis Kretek*, Jeng Yah becomes a compelling representation of Javanese culture, warranting further analysis. Jeng Yah is one of the female characters considered to reflect the complex and multidimensional values of Javanese culture. However, how Javanese culture is embodied through Jeng Yah's character requires a deeper exploration, especially concerning cultural aspects tied to tradition, social values, and existing gender norms.

This research aims to analyze how Javanese culture is represented through the character of Jeng Yah in the novel *Gadis Kretek* and to explore the extent to which these cultural values remain relevant and adaptable in a modern social context. This study is crucial for understanding whether the representation of Javanese culture through Jeng Yah enhances the comprehension of local culture or creates stereotypes that may hinder cultural identity development in a global context. This journal seeks to provide insights into how literature not only reflects social reality but also actively contributes to preserving and developing cultural values in the midst of globalization. Through this background, the study will examine the representation of Javanese culture through the character Jeng Yah in the novel *Gadis Kretek*, the role of Javanese culture in shaping societal behavior, and its relevance in facing modern challenges.

II. METHODOLOGY

The journal titled "*Representation of Javanese Culture in the Character of Jeng Yah in the Novel Gadis Kretek by Ratih Kumala*" employs a qualitative research method. This study uses a descriptive approach. Moleong (2017) states that descriptive research aims to depict phenomena within their natural context. This method enables researchers to explore and understand the context comprehensively and in depth. The data in this research consist of linguistic units such as words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs containing ideas that illustrate the representation of Javanese culture in the female character Jeng Yah, as portrayed in the novel *Gadis Kretek* by Ratih Kumala. The primary data source is the novel *Gadis Kretek* by Ratih Kumala. Based on the research focus, this novel was selected as the data source for the following reasons: (a) it highlights cultural themes, (b) it provides insights into cultural activities through the main character, and (c) it presents the challenges, roles, and efforts undertaken by the main character within Javanese culture.

This study applies Stuart Hall's representation theory, which uses language to convey meanings that resonate with others. The concept incorporates Roland Barthes' semiotics theory. The study implements the concepts of denotation, connotation, and myth as introduced by Barthes (1977). Barthes explains that there are two levels of signification: the first level, or denotation, involves descriptive meaning. The second level, or connotation, connects the literal meaning to broader cultural contexts.

The data collection process was carried out through the following steps. First, the researcher carefully and thoroughly read all data sources based on their knowledge and insight. During the reading process, the researcher adopted a critical, meticulous, and attentive approach to deeply comprehend and internalize the meaning in an adequate and sufficient manner. Second, after completing the initial reading, the researcher re-read the data sources to identify specific sections to be used as data by coding them according to the research focus. This second step was followed by recording the selected data for further analysis.

The data analysis process was carried out through the following steps. First, the researcher conducted an in-depth reading of the novel to thoroughly understand all data sources, selecting and marking words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs, and discourses containing information related to Javanese culture in the novel *Gadis Kretek*. Second, the researcher systematically classified all data based on the predetermined research focus, which includes: (a) highlighting cultural themes in the novel, (b) exploring cultural activities of the main character, and (c) presenting the challenges, roles, and efforts undertaken by the main character within Javanese culture. Third, the researcher reinterpreted all identified and classified data to uncover coherence, unity, and relationships between the data. This process provided a comprehensive and holistic understanding of Javanese culture as depicted in the novel *Gadis Kretek*.

Data analysis was conducted simultaneously with data collection. The process focused on collecting and analyzing data related to the representation of Javanese culture in the character Jeng Yah. This study employed the qualitative data analysis

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technique proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2020), which includes data condensation, data display, and drawing inferences in the form of meanings and conclusions. This selection process involved not only discarding irrelevant data but also grouping data based on the sub-focus of the research and the concepts of comparative literature. Finally, the researcher drew conclusions based on the analysis performed (Siswantoro, 2005).

The validity of the research data was tested using two methods. First, by repeatedly reading and reviewing the research data sources to gain a deep appreciation and understanding of their meaning. This process also involved re-examining various references relevant to the study to strengthen comprehension. Second, by consulting with colleagues who possess expertise related to the research focus, engaging in discussions, and exchanging ideas about the issues central to the study.

III. RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In accordance with the focus of the problem studied, the results of the study are associated with the representation of Javanese culture in the characters in the novel. The complete results of the study are presented in the following discussion. The character of Jeng Yah in the novel *Gadis Kretek* exhibits signs that can be understood through denotative and connotative meanings. The term 'Javanese woman' represents a social identity ingrained both individually and collectively. This identity reflects how the concept of a Javanese woman is viewed as an embodiment of a social image aimed at achieving a full understanding of femininity in alignment with the standards of life in Javanese culture (Pudjianto, 2017). Jeng Yah is one of the main characters in *Gadis Kretek* by Ratih Kumala. She is portrayed as a Javanese woman whose life is filled with conflict and love, closely related to the development of the kretek industry in Indonesia. Jeng Yah's story takes readers on a journey through the history and culture of kretek, while also illustrating her emotional struggles in relationships with other characters in the narrative, set within the traditional Javanese community. These findings pertain to the representation of Javanese culture through Jeng Yah's character and explore Javanese culture in *Gadis Kretek* by Ratih Kumala, which continues to endure to this day.

Data (1)

"Dasiyah berbeda dengan Roemaisa muda. Dasiyah muncul dengan senyum mengembang, dan tak takut menatap mata lawan bicaranya, wajahnya menyimpan segala pengetahuan, semua tahu ia perempuan cerdas. Ia memesonakan seisi ruangan dengan cara yang berbeda namun menimbulkan kekaguman yang sama." (Kumala, 2023: 142)

Data (1) provides both denotative and connotative meanings for the portrayal of the character Jeng Yah in the novel *Gadis Kretek* by Ratih Kumala. The denotative meaning in the quote depicts Jeng Yah with a broad smile and a sense of boldness in facing her conversation partner. Her face emanates vast knowledge, giving the impression that she is intelligent and experienced. The connotative meaning that arises in this quote, with Jeng Yah's face "radiating all knowledge," reinforces the connotation that she is a woman who breaks stereotypes. Javanese women who are knowledgeable or intelligent are sometimes considered at odds with domestic roles. However, Jeng Yah symbolizes that, despite embracing values of knowledge and strength, she still maintains the essence of softness and grace, which are also part of Javanese culture. Thus, Jeng Yah represents a modern, courageous, and educated Javanese woman who does not lose the grace expected of a woman within this cultural context.

Data (2)

"Kretek Gadis, Mas?" sapa Jeng Yah ramah." (Kumala, 2023: 154)

Data (2) provides denotative and connotative meanings for the portrayal of Jeng Yah in *Gadis Kretek*. The denotative meaning in the quote is Jeng Yah greeting a man warmly and offering him a kretek, a traditional Indonesian cigarette. Her greeting is delivered with warmth, indicating a lighthearted and friendly interaction. The connotative meaning in the quote reflects the association in Javanese culture of women with warmth in their interactions, particularly in communication. Jeng Yah's warm greeting reflects the friendliness of Javanese women, conveying a social elegance where polite speech and a smile are essential social norms. Moreover, offering kretek also has cultural connotations, as kretek is often considered part of local identity and tradition, especially in Java. This offer is not merely an act of offering an item but reflects the closeness found in everyday Javanese interactions. Therefore, this quote reflects the friendliness of Javanese society, manifested in simple acts like greeting and offering something to others.

Data (3)

"Ndak apa-apa. Ambil saja, anggap saja Mas menang lempar gelang tadi." (Kumala, 2023: 155)

Data (3) conveys both denotative and connotative meanings in portraying Jeng Yah in *Gadis Kretek*. The denotative meaning here is Jeng Yah generously offering something without hesitation, even using the game of "ring toss" as a lighthearted excuse to give something willingly. This phrase creates a relaxed and warm atmosphere in the interaction.

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Connotatively, this phrase can be seen as a representation of generosity in Javanese culture. The phrase "tidak apa-apa" or "It's okay" embodies friendliness and acceptance, reflecting a Javanese value that prioritizes harmony in social relationships. In Javanese culture, generosity often has a subtle approach, focused not on formalities but rather on maintaining others' comfort, so they do not feel guilty when receiving something. The "ring toss" game mentioned in the quote also carries a symbolic element. In Javanese culture, traditional games embody values of friendship and togetherness. Overall, this quote reflects humility, generosity, and simplicity—values closely tied to Javanese culture, where social interactions are carefully maintained with subtlety, indirectness, and regard for others' feelings.

Data (4)

"Ia adalah gadis ceria yang selalu ramah pada siapa pun yang ditemuinya. Senyumnya tak pernah hilang dari wajah ayunya, seolah senyum itu memang sengaja dipasang sebagai perhiasan, seumpama kalung atau anting-anting." (Kumala, 2023: 176)

Data (4) provides both denotative and connotative meanings in the portrayal of the character Jeng Yah in the novel *Gadis Kretek* by Ratih Kumala. Denotatively, this quotation depicts a young woman who is always friendly to everyone she meets. Her constant smile, never fading from her face, is described as an ornament that continuously adorns her appearance. Connotatively, this smile can be seen as a symbol of gentleness, friendliness, and cheerfulness, often associated with the stereotype of Javanese girls. Women in Javanese culture are often idealized as gentle, graceful, and polite figures. The smile, described as an ornament, suggests that her friendliness is not only a natural trait but also part of the self-image she wishes to present to the world. This reflects the importance of maintaining a pleasant appearance and demeanor in Javanese culture. A smile is considered part of a woman's charm, not only seen in physical beauty but also in inner beauty. This view implies that a cheerful and friendly girl is valued not just for her appearance but also for how she interacts with her social environment. These quotations highlight the idealization of the perfect Javanese woman in terms of cheerfulness, gentleness, and politeness, in line with the social norms embedded in this culture.

Data (5)

"Ketika pemilik Kretek Boekit Klapa itu datang lagi bersama Sentot, putranya, untuk meminta jawaban, Jeng Yah menolaknya dengan halus dan bilang kalau dia sudah punya tambatan hati." (Kumala, 2023: 205)

Data (5) provides both denotative and connotative meanings in the portrayal of Jeng Yah in the novel *Gadis Kretek* by Ratih Kumala. This quotation denotes Jeng Yah's polite rejection of the request from the owner of Kretek Boekit Klapa and Sentot, stating that she already has a partner. Jeng Yah makes a firm decision to refuse the offer to marry Sentot. Connotatively, Jeng Yah's polite rejection reflects a gentle manner of refusal, showing that she values social etiquette and the principles upheld in Javanese culture. Additionally, it portrays Jeng Yah's independence and courage in making decisions about her life without relying on others. It is evident that Jeng Yah has a strong commitment to her partner, showing loyalty and highlighting the importance of a sincere relationship in her life. In a cultural context, this statement indicates that Jeng Yah not only chooses to decline but also emphasizes deep values of love and loyalty. Overall, this quotation portrays Jeng Yah as a woman with integrity and a deep understanding of emotional and social values, aligning with the norms in Javanese culture that respect politeness, commitment, and independence.

Data (6)

"Jeng Yah begitu bersemangat mengatur pesta pernikahannya. Ia ingin mengenakan kebaya Jawa beludru hitam, dengan sanggul sasakan serta selop penuh berhiasan manik-manik." (Kumala, 2023: 223)

Data (6) provides both denotative and connotative meanings in the depiction of Jeng Yah in the novel *Gadis Kretek* by Ratih Kumala. Denotatively, this quotation shows Jeng Yah's high enthusiasm as she prepares for her wedding. She has specific plans regarding the arrangements and pays attention to the details she desires for her special day. Connotatively, this quotation reflects Javanese cultural values closely related to marriage. In Javanese culture, a wedding is not merely an event but a celebration rich in tradition. The black velvet kebaya symbolizes elegance and formality. In Javanese culture, black can also be associated with strength and maturity, suggesting that Jeng Yah is a confident and mature woman in choosing her appearance. The traditional hairstyle 'sanggul' symbolizes elegance and feminine beauty in Javanese culture, reflecting Jeng Yah's desire to present herself in the best light on her special day. The beaded slippers also indicate her attention to detail and her artistic taste while remaining culturally rooted. Overall, this quotation not only portrays Jeng Yah's wedding preparations but also highlights her appreciation for Javanese cultural traditions.

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Data (7)

“Ia telah meminta dengan sopan, agar rias manten berpuasa tujuh hari sebelum hari-H, agar segalanya berjalan lancar, dan agar aura pengantin yang didandannya memancar keluar.” (Kumala, 2023: 224)

Data (7) provides both denotative and connotative meanings in the depiction of Jeng Yah in the novel *Gadis Kretek* by Ratih Kumala. Denotatively, the quotation reflects Jeng Yah’s politeness as she asks the wedding makeup team to observe a seven-day fast before her wedding day with Raja. The purpose of this request is to ensure that the wedding preparations proceed smoothly and that the positive aura of the bride shines. Connotatively, the fast requested by Jeng Yah reflects deep spiritual and cultural traditions within Javanese society. In Javanese culture, fasting is often seen as a form of spiritual preparation needed for significant moments, such as weddings. This shows that Jeng Yah is not only focused on the physical aspects of wedding preparation but also on the spiritual aspect. Jeng Yah’s polite request also reflects the values of courtesy in Javanese culture. Maintaining decorum in communication, especially when asking for assistance, is highly valued. This illustrates Jeng Yah’s character as a woman who respects others and is sensitive to social norms. Overall, this quotation depicts how Jeng Yah combines elements of spirituality, courtesy, and attention to detail in her wedding preparations, reflecting the values and traditions of Javanese culture.

Data (8)

“Dia bilang, dia tak ingin melakukan apa pun. Dia hanya ingin Mas Raja selamat, dan lebih dari itu dia ingin Mas Raja bahagia. Yu Yah lalu berusaha tersenyum di tengah tangisnya.” (Kumala, 2023: 260)

Data (8) provides both denotative and connotative meanings in the portrayal of Jeng Yah in the novel *Gadis Kretek* by Ratih Kumala. Denotatively, the quotation shows Jeng Yah’s sincerity in expressing her desire for Mas Raja not only to be safe but also to be happy. Although Jeng Yah is feeling sad, she still tries to smile. Connotatively, this quotation reflects Jeng Yah’s sacrifice and deep love for Mas Raja. Her desire for Mas Raja’s safety and happiness illustrates the value of love in which the happiness of her loved one is more important than her own. Jeng Yah’s attempt to smile even as she cries reveals her emotional strength. Despite her sadness, she tries to stay positive for the sake of the person she loves. This mirrors the Javanese concept of ‘strength,’ where people are taught to remain resilient in the face of life’s challenges. Overall, this quotation not only conveys Jeng Yah’s feelings but also implies strong interpersonal values within the cultural context. It reflects the emotional strength and resilience that often lie at the core of loving relationships in everyday life.

Javanese Culture Then and Now

Gadis Kretek by Ratih Kumala is not only a novel that stirs emotions but also a reflection of the enduring richness of Javanese culture. Through the story presented, readers are invited to witness the lives of the characters, particularly Jeng Yah, who is deeply rooted in the traditions and values passed down through generations. The rich symbolism and meaning of Javanese culture are vividly displayed in various aspects of daily life within the novel. Many elements of Javanese culture remain relevant and cherished by society even in today’s modern era. This shows that, although times continue to change, the noble values of Javanese culture still hold a significant place in everyday life. The novel serves as an effective medium to explore how this culture and its traditions are preserved and adapted in contemporary times. This analysis will explore various elements of Javanese culture as depicted in *Gadis Kretek* and their relevance to modern society. This illustrates that these traditions and values act as guides for navigating modern life. Several aspects of Javanese culture highlighted in this novel include the following.

a. Traditional Marriage

Javanese culture is rich in traditions and values that have been passed down through generations. One enduring tradition is the Javanese wedding custom. In the past, Javanese weddings were performed with meaningful rituals that involved various processes. The wedding rituals depicted in *Gadis Kretek* by Ratih Kumala reflect the rich symbolism and rituals of Javanese marriage customs. These wedding rituals include the use of kebaya (traditional attire), makeup arrangements, and sacred ceremonies involving family. This tradition is still widely observed in various regions in Java. Javanese weddings have endured, maintaining values of family and kinship that remain highly respected. According to Ambarwati (2018), wedding ceremonies carry a sense of sacredness and deep meaning.

The traditional Javanese wedding includes several stages, such as *nontoni*, *petung*, *pasang tarub*, *srah-srahan*, *siraman*, *kembar mayang*, *midodareni*, *panggih*, and *ngidak tigan*. *Nontoni* is the viewing of the prospective bride and groom; *petung* is the calculation of the wedding date based on the couple’s birth dates; *pasang tarub* involves the family placing signs to announce the upcoming wedding event to the community (Bratawijaya, 2006: 47); *srah-srahan* is where the groom presents the bride with items such as clothing, jewelry, household items, money, rice, and livestock (Endah, 2006: 146); *siraman* is a ritual

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bath for the bride and groom, believed to cleanse their hearts for purity; *kembar mayang* is a decorative arrangement of young coconut leaves symbolizing a hopeful future for the couple; *midodareni* night is a ritual where the couple and their families pray for safety and blessings for the wedding day ahead (Kamal, 2014); *panggih* is the peak of the ceremony, a meeting of the bride and groom in front of all guests; and *ngidak tigan* is a ritual where the groom steps on an egg and the bride cleans his feet as a gesture of respect.

To this day, several of these rituals are still preserved and adapted in modern Javanese weddings. The values of sacredness, respect for ancestors, and symbols representing the hope for a harmonious life remain central to this tradition. Although modernization and outside cultural influences may have altered some aspects of the rituals, the essence of the Javanese wedding tradition continues to be embedded in society. In the context of *Gadis Kretek*, Jeng Yah is portrayed as a strong symbol of a Javanese woman who holds tightly to Javanese traditional values amid changing times. Through Jeng Yah, the Javanese wedding ceremony is seen not merely as a tradition handed down over generations but also as a part of cultural identity and pride that withstands the test of time. This tradition symbolizes the strength of Javanese women who are capable of preserving, upholding, and simultaneously adapting their ancestral culture to modern realities.

b. Politeness and Communication Etiquette

The characters in *Gadis Kretek* by Ratih Kumala emphasize the importance of politeness in interactions, a core value in Javanese culture. This is evident in various situations within the novel, where, for instance, when asking for help or declining offers, they prioritize respectful and courteous communication etiquette. This value remains preserved in Javanese society today. Sudartini (2010) explains that certain factors drive the tendency for Javanese women to use expressions of politeness, whether through positive or negative politeness strategies, which ties into the stereotype of women in Javanese culture. The ideal woman in Javanese culture is often portrayed as gentle, patient, loving, submissive, obedient, and loyal to men.

Javanese culture is known for its high level of politeness and communication etiquette. Since ancient times, values such as manners, respect for others, and refined language have been distinctive traits of Javanese society. In Javanese culture, communication is not only about the message conveyed but also about the manner of delivery, which emphasizes friendliness, politeness, and respect for the interlocutor. The use of the Javanese language with its levels—*ngoko*, *krama madya*, and *krama inggil*—reflects a social hierarchy highly regarded in daily interactions. Although times have changed and society is increasingly open to modern culture, the foundational values of Javanese politeness and communication etiquette remain upheld to this day. Despite the influence of external cultures that has led to a more relaxed and direct communication style, many Javanese people still maintain these politeness principles as part of their cultural identity.

Through the story in *Gadis Kretek*, the character Jeng Yah represents a Javanese woman who upholds the values of politeness and communication etiquette. Jeng Yah is portrayed as a gentle speaker, full of respect, and always prioritizing manners in each of her interactions. Her presence reflects how Javanese cultural values continue to live within her. Jeng Yah symbolizes a Javanese woman who not only adheres to traditional standards of polite communication but also adapts to the demands of the times without abandoning her cultural roots. Jeng Yah's character illustrates how the values of polite, friendly, and respectful communication remain relevant and well-preserved, even as the world around her evolves and changes.

c. Spirituality and Rituals

The story in *Gadis Kretek* by Ratih Kumala presents several aspects of spirituality. A simple example appears in Jeng Yah's practice of fasting and praying before her wedding, highlighting how many Javanese people still connect their daily activities with spiritual aspects. Many Javanese families continue to perform certain rituals to ensure blessings in their lives, especially during significant events like weddings. From a cultural perspective, the religious life of the Javanese people embodies local wisdom and rituals that hold unique significance for them. As Geertz (2003) stated, each community has its own local wisdom and knowledge that differs from modern society.

Javanese culture is rich in spirituality and deeply embedded rituals. Spirituality and rituals are often passed down through generations. Historically, Javanese society has engaged in various rituals tied to spirituality, such as *selamatan* (communal meals for blessings), *sesajen* (offerings), and other traditional ceremonies aimed at seeking blessings and protection from God. These practices are filled with symbolism and deep meanings that reflect a harmonious relationship between humans, nature, and the divine. Belief in the power of ancestors and guardian spirits is often also part of their spiritual practices, illustrating the importance of balance and respect for the universe in their daily lives.

While modern Javanese society has become increasingly open to external influences and changing times, spiritual values and certain traditional rituals remain preserved. Many Javanese people continue to practice traditions such as *selamatan* or *kenduri* as expressions of gratitude and requests for protection. They maintain respect for ancestral beliefs, even if the forms

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and methods of practice have been adapted to contemporary developments. Spirituality in Javanese culture is not merely a set of rituals but is also integrated into their values and worldview, which emphasize harmony, balance, and wisdom.

Through the narrative in *Gadis Kretek*, the character Jeng Yah embodies someone who remains devoted to Javanese spiritual values and traditional rituals despite changing times. Jeng Yah is portrayed as a woman who holds firm to her spiritual beliefs and practices, demonstrated by her commitment to fasting before marriage. Through her character, the novel shows the importance of preserving tradition and reviving the spiritual values of Javanese culture. Jeng Yah's presence in *Gadis Kretek* reflects that Javanese spirituality and rituals are not merely relics of the past but something relevant and crucial to preserve today. All traditions related to spirituality symbolize a cultural resilience that can adapt to modern times without losing its spiritual roots and the deep meanings embedded in each ritual.

Javanese culture has a rich and profound heritage that endures to this day through various traditional aspects, such as traditional weddings, politeness, and communication etiquette. Historically, Javanese wedding ceremonies are known for their meaningful and symbolic processes that reflect sacredness and hope for a harmonious family life. Additionally, the politeness and communication etiquette characteristic of Javanese society continue to be highly valued. Manners, refined language, and respect in interactions apply not only within the family but also in social life more broadly. These values help shape the character of Javanese society as friendly, polite, and respectful in every situation.

IV. CONCLUSION

The representation of the character Jeng Yah in *Gadis Kretek* by Ratih Kumala reflects a figure embodying many profound Javanese cultural values. Jeng Yah is portrayed as a friendly and educated individual who consistently demonstrates politeness in her actions. She is depicted as someone who deeply respects and values traditional Javanese culture and exhibits strong spirituality, as seen through her reverence for rituals and ancestral values. Through the character of Jeng Yah, the novel emphasizes the importance of preserving cultural traditions and values as part of the Javanese identity.

Overall, the Javanese culture depicted in *Gadis Kretek* illustrates various aspects that continue to be preserved in modern society. Traditions and values such as wedding customs, polite communication, and spiritual rituals are not only part of cultural identity but also play a significant role in the everyday lives of the Javanese people today. The effort to maintain and revive these traditions highlights the importance of honoring ancestral heritage. Although influenced by modernity, many Javanese people still practice these rituals with relevant adaptations, ensuring that the essence of these traditions remains alive.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The novel *Gadis Kretek* by Ratih Kumala presents learning through Javanese culture that exists in everyday life. The main character named Jeng Yah is a woman who has an important role in her stories. This study describes the role of culture, insight into cultural activities, and the main character's efforts in responding to Javanese culture as revealed in literary works.

A. culture is an important aspect of life. Culture has a broader role and position in the sustainability of community life.

B. the problems faced by society, the roles, and efforts made to maintain culture in this modern era are real manifestations of community resilience in facing today's globalization.

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