

Belief & Mysticism in Indonesian Literature in Banyumas

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ABSTRACT: This study, entitled "*Belief & Mysticism in Indonesian Literature in Banyumas*," seeks to explore the dimensions of belief and mysticism that are present in the literary works of writers from Greater Banyumas. Literary works originating from this region not only capture the social realities of its people but also reflect belief systems, spiritual values, and mystical practices deeply rooted in everyday life. Through literary texts, local beliefs such as the tradition of seeking blessings, the relationship between humans and ancestral spirits, and the symbolism of the spiritual realm are articulated aesthetically and ideologically, demonstrating the distinctive syncretism of Javanese culture in Banyumas. This research uses a descriptive qualitative method, with steps including intensive reading of Banyumas literary texts, data reduction and classification based on themes of belief and mysticism, data presentation within the cultural context, and in-depth analysis of the meanings and symbolic functions that emerge within the works. This approach allows researchers to uncover the structures of meaning hidden behind the narrative, characters, and settings of the stories. The research findings show that elements of belief and mysticism in Banyumas literature serve as a medium for reflecting the cultural and spiritual identity of the community. Literature provides a space for writers to articulate local beliefs while simultaneously responding to modernity, which often shifts traditional values. Thus, this study confirms that Banyumas literature is not merely an aesthetic product, but also a representation of local wisdom and community spirituality, continually adapting to changing times.

KEYWORDS: Banyumas literature, beliefs, mysticism, local wisdom, spirituality.

I. INTRODUCTION

Literature, society, and social conditions are three inseparable elements. Literature emerges from the skills and cultural works of society in its social life. Literature develops amidst the cultural diversity of society. Therefore, literary works are always connected to social and cultural issues in community life. Thus, a close relationship is formed between the three elements: society, culture, and literature. If social and cultural development is a process, then literature is the product of that creative process (Wardianto, 2021).

Literary works, whatever their form, are cultural works and therefore they are a cultural text of a society. As a cultural text, literary works representing its society and all the systems that surround it: power, values, interests, class, economics, politics, and so on (Purnomo, 2017). In general, literary works Indonesia can be assumed to be a form of documentation/recording of symptoms and the development of Indonesian culture. This includes the issue of Cultural identity (Rahariyoso, 2023). This means that all forms of literary works are built on the basis of reflections of existing cultures, both traditional and contemporary.

The culture found in society is very diverse, including beliefs, customs, and socio-cultural values that bind the community. In addition, there are also religious elements or values that are traditions or ancestral heritage. Spiritual culture, customs, and values of beliefs that have become ancestral traditions and forefathers are forms of behavior that are carried out continuously and ultimately also carried out by society or subsequent generations (Hartati, 2016). Culture is the result of interactions in living together. Humans as members of society are constantly experiencing changes. A movement conjunction or change of rise and fall cultural waves of a society within a certain period of time is called cultural dynamics. In the process development, creativity and level civilization of society as its owner so that the existing culture progresses in a real society is a reflection of progress the civilization of the society (Teng, 2017).

Furthermore, Teng (2017) explains that the fundamental differences that place humans as the highest beings is a human being having intelligence or reason mind so that humans become the only one living creatures that have the ability to create things that useful for the continuation of life (cultured beings). Humans must adapt to its environment to develop behavioral patterns that will help his business in utilize the environment for the sake of survival. Humans also make plans for solve internal problems life. All that is produced and created by humans in fulfillment various necessities of life are called culture.

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It cannot be denied that literary works have a close relationship with socio-cultural system. As one of the cultural artifacts, literary works are related to reciprocity with other cultural artifacts such as language and various works of art. In addition, literary works are also reciprocally related to social system that includes the value system in society: traditions, thought patterns, philosophy of life, attitudes, behavior, and so on (Noor, 2019). In relation to the cultural function, every literary work is actually the result of the complex interrelationship of social and cultural factors, and indeed Also, literary works themselves are complex cultures.

Therefore, a literary work cannot be understood completely if separated from the environment culture and civilization that gave birth to it. It must be studied in the context as widely as possible (Noor, 2009). As Teeuw said, to understand a literary works require knowledge of various complex coding systems. In addition distinctive language codes and literary codes, no less important is the cultural code system. To understand Javanese literature, for example, apart from the Javanese language and the distinctive characteristics of Javanese literature knowledge of the Javanese cultural system is still needed: traditions, etiquette, symbols, beliefs, philosophy of life, and so on (Noor, 2009).

The relationship between literary works and socio-cultural systems can be further understood by studying the relationship between values in literary works and value systems in society (Noor, 2019). Values in literary works are a system of social norms that are applied in literary works, and the value system in society is a system of norms that applies in life everyday society. Values in literary works that are in accordance with the value system in society means not bringing innovation to the dynamics of culture, civilization, and patterns think society.

Literature and culture, as has been described above, both definitively etymologically and practically pragmatically, are closely related. Both terms are in a group of words that pay attention to spiritual aspects, as enlightenment of human reason. If in the following developments literature is necessary given a narrower definition, namely human activity in a beautiful form, more specifically, forms that utilize language, both spoken and written, This is not the case with culture (Kustyarini, 2014). This means that culture still has... a wider scope, even tending to be given the opportunity to expand because human activities are becoming wider and more diverse.

Given the breadth of the cultural field to explain the relationship between literature and culture need to be distinguished between culture, civilization and science knowledge. Broadly speaking, Koentjaraningrat (1974) distinguishes three forms culture, namely: (a) culture as a complex of ideas, concepts, values, norms, and regulations, (b) culture as a complex of patterned behavioral activities humans in society, and (c) culture as objects of human work humans. In relation to civilization, according to Huntington (2003) Human history is the history of civilization itself, not the history of culture In contrast to culture which is broadly defined as the whole human activities, since humans lived on this earth until now, civilization limited to cultural forms with high values, such as art and science. In other words, even though culture is considered as the complexity of human life but as values, it is civilization that has the most extensive entity.

Herskovits and Malinowski (1948) define culture as something passed down from generation to generation continuously. Based on several definitions, culture can be defined as a teaching created by humans and accepted by society to be taught from generation to generation to preserve life. In other words, it is a reliable way to live life in society. Simply put, an action acquired through learning is culture. Human culture consists of elements that are contained and are important to understand. Cultures that exist throughout the world, where the region is inhabited by human groups, have different systems ranging from urban to rural communities.

Banyumas (also known as Barlingmascakeb or commonly referred to as Greater Banyumas) is the cultural epicenter of the southwestern region of Central Java. Throughout its historical development, Banyumas has a distinct cultural identity. Unlike the social patterns of the western part of Central Java (the former Surakarta Residency and the Semarang region), Banyumas has its own distinct culture, including the use of the *Ngapak* dialect of Javanese, which tends to make its society egalitarian and non-feudal. This historical background has influenced the literary works that have emerged and developed in Banyumas.

Language as a cultural product that influences literature and its important elements is the main key that gives Banyumasan-themed literary works their own unique value. In the same expression, language become a reflection of a nation. Language *ngapak* clearly reflects the mentality the people and also show distinctive characteristics that is attached to the language. Along with As time goes by, understanding of *Ngapak* language has undergone changes and influence from other languages (Anggraeni, 2020). In today's era, the *Ngapak language* is undergo changes due to interaction with urban environment. Many individuals who living in the Banyumas area and surrounding areas looking for work in big cities. When they returned to their place of origin, they brought the influence of the new language emerged through the mixing of urban languages with the *Ngapak language* (Widyaningsih, 2014).

It must be acknowledged that Banyumasan literature is always related to "*ngapak-ngapak*" dialect. Literature cannot be separated from language. as the medium. Additionally, language is a subsystem of culture who have the mental patterns of their cultural actors. This means that society Those who speak the Banyumasan dialect will have a metallic way of behaving and behaving which is different from communities that speak other dialects (Suhardi, 2013). In In the general Javanese cultural context, Banyumas society is often considered a neglected or less important group. be noticed (Khasanah & Kurnia, 2023). Even though they feel proud of it their own cultural heritage, sometimes they feel less confident, one of them the cause of this change is the existence of stereotypes against the *Ngapak dialect*, in comparison with the culture of Yogyakarta and Surakarta which considered as an

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authentic embodiment of nature Javanese culture, Banyumas is often considered as an area located on the "outskirts" which is politically and culturally considered have a lower level of culture than the art in the Yogyakarta palace and Surakarta (Santoso, 2017). Cultural identity marked by language This *ngapak* is unfortunately often considered as the subject of jokes, so that the cultural values that represented by it experienced a decline.

From this linguistic aspect, Banyumas ultimately emerged as a marginalized region, far from the hustle and bustle of the palace. This identity then made the Banyumas people more open, egalitarian, and often viewed life in a straightforward manner. In many modern literary works that incorporate Banyumas-ness as a value, these values are characteristic of studies whose society is open, whose dialogues are without secrets or concealment, and whose characters' actions in literary works are considered more courageous despite facing complex life pressures.

Modern literature in Banyumas was pioneered by Ahmad Tohari, whose diverse works highlight village life and the egalitarian and candid culture of the Penginyongan community. Ahmad Tohari's pioneering work in incorporating Banyumasan culture into his literary works has made Banyumasan culture immortal in the documentation of works that can also be called the historical *landscape* of Banyumas literature.

Before Ahmad Tohari popularized Banyumasan as his literary breath, classical or traditional literature flourished in Banyumas among those considered older (both in terms of age and social standing). Classic Banyumas literature is found in songs sung in traditional performances or rituals. In these performances or rituals, such as *ebeg* or *cowongan*, these songs, which can be considered oral literature, serve as an oasis amidst the cultural thirst that exists in modern Banyumas society.

Besides being in the form of songs, classical Banyumas literature is also found in prose in the form of *babad*. A study of the Banyumas *Babad* shows that there are at least 101 texts. consists of 43 (forty-three) manuscript texts, 38 (thirty-eight) typed texts, and 20 (twenty) printed texts (Priyadi, 2019). If we refer to the last year of the reference used in the previous quote, it is proven that there are many recorded *babads* in Banyumas, which are famous in historical records and within the reach of public knowledge, starting from the *babad* Banyumas Mertadiredjan (although the content is poetry), *babad* Banyumas Wiraatmadjan in prose form which tells the origin of Banyumas, *babad* Kalibening which is believed to be the oldest *babad* in Banyumas because it still uses Javanese script and is estimated to originate from the 17th century. In addition to these three very well-established *babads*, there are also popular *babads* such as the *babad* Pasir Luhur, the *babad* which tells the story of Raden Joko Kaiman and the history of *Baturraden* which is popular among the national community.

In its development, literary works and Banyumas have their own historical background, starting from the *Kubah Novel* by Ahmad Tohari which tells the story of the second life of a communist figure after exile on Buru Island. This first novel that exploded in the world of Indonesian literature made Ahmad Tohari's name finally become a writer with the best reputation, even to this day. Furthermore, in the 2000-2010 era, many literary writers emerged from Banyumas, starting from Wanto Tirta who is now known as the President of *Geguritan*, Edi Romadhon, Jarot C. Setyoko, Hamidin Krazan, Teguh Trianton, to Heru Kurniawan and many other names. These names do indeed come from Banyumas, meaning that the writer was born and developed in the field of writing in Banyumas such as Wanto Tirta. There are also many writers who come from other cities whose names later developed into Banyumas writers such as Heru Kurniawan, Teguh Wage, and a series of other names.

The development of literary works in Banyumas is also questioned by the existence of a special column or rubric that serves as a forum for literary works written by Banyumas writers or writers with a Banyumas spirit who want to document their literary works in newspapers. In the *Bandrong Kulon column* in Radar Banyumas, fronted by Jarot C. Setyoko and friends, a multitude of literary works are published in it. Starting from short stories, poetry, to essays on the theme of literature and culture. From this column, young writers were born who were also active as students at universities in Banyumas. Such as Eri Setiawan and Achmad Sultoni from Muhammadiyah University of Purwokerto, Dimas Indianto, Wahyu Budiantoro, and Yanwi Mudrikah from IAIN Purwokerto which is now UIN Saizu Purwokerto, as well as other names spread in literary communities in Greater Banyumas. The success of the column in the newspaper then transformed into the *Kembang Glepang Anthology* which contains the best literary works in one year of its publication. As of 2025, the *Kembang Glepang* anthology has had 4 volumes, meaning that the best literary works of Greater Banyumas have been recorded over the past four years.

Based on the description above, this study aims to uncover and analyze how belief and mysticism are represented in literary works produced by writers from Greater Banyumas. Through intensive reading of literary texts, this study seeks to explore spiritual values, local belief systems, and forms of mysticism inherent in the narratives, characters, and symbols of Banyumas culture. Thus, this study not only aims to describe the elements of belief and mysticism in Banyumas literature, but also emphasizes the role of literature as a medium for reflecting the unique and dynamic culture and spirituality of the Banyumas people in facing changing times.

II. RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a descriptive qualitative method that focuses on the depiction and interpretation of cultural phenomena that appear in literary works. This method was chosen because it aligns with the research objective of seeking a deeper understanding of the values of belief and mysticism contained in the literary works of Banyumas Raya authors. The qualitative approach allows

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researchers to explore the symbolic meanings, spiritual values, and worldviews of the Banyumas people as represented in literary texts. Thus, this research not only reveals what appears on the surface of the text but also interprets the latent meanings behind literary representations related to the community's belief systems and mystical practices.

The qualitative research used is content analysis, which focuses on interpreting the content of literary works through in-depth reading of themes, characters, settings, and symbols. The primary data for this study are literary texts by Banyumas Raya authors, including short stories, novels, and poetry containing elements of belief and mysticism. The data sources were obtained from literary works published in books, anthologies, and local online media. Additionally, secondary data, including articles, previous research, and theoretical studies on regional literature and mysticism, were used to strengthen the analysis and broaden the context of meaning.

The research steps were carried out in several stages. First, intensive reading of literary works was conducted to identify elements related to the themes of belief and mysticism. Second, data reduction and classification were carried out, namely the process of sorting relevant parts of the text and grouping them based on aspects of belief, myth, and mystical symbols. Third, the data presentation stage was carried out by systematically describing the findings so that the relationships between elements could be clearly seen. Fourth, data analysis was carried out by interpreting the symbolic meaning, cultural function, and spiritual value of these elements of belief and mysticism in the context of Banyumas culture. Through these steps, the research is expected to provide a complete picture of how literature serves as a vehicle for expression and preservation of local beliefs in the Banyumas community.

III.RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Literature based on local culture is an important medium for depicting local social and cultural dynamics. These works not only express artistic beauty but also reflect the traditions, values, and challenges faced by the community. This aligns with Abrams's view that literature is a social product that can be a vital resource for understanding the social and cultural life of a community.

In the Banyumas context, literature that addresses Banyumas themes has specific characteristics and patterns that reflect local culture. Works from Ahmad Tohari to young Banyumas writers depict a distinctive social reality, distinguishing these works from other literature in general. The social culture in Indonesian literature in Banyumas (or based/set in Banyumas) contains important aspects, namely mysticism and beliefs that build local identity.

Mysticism is a spiritual journey aimed at achieving enlightenment and understanding through profound inner experiences. However, from an epistemological perspective, mysticism is highly subjective and difficult to substantiate scientifically.

According to Ariyadi, Javanese individuals who adhere to mystical principles, especially the kings, believe that mystical elements possess powerful cosmic powers and are connected to the universe. Furthermore, the community believes that those possessing such spiritual powers derive from mysterious (supernatural) forces, which are undoubtedly related to spirits.

Mystical theories were considered to be related to magical matters, making it difficult to clearly distinguish between what was permissible in a mystical context and what was considered sinful. In fact, Puritans and intellectuals warned forcefully against interfering with events outside of divine predestination, and forbade belief in the power of sacred objects or burial sites. (Santi, 2025) .

Banyumas culture is rich in mystical traditions and beliefs. These mystical elements are not only evident in the arts but also permeate various sacred rituals and social ceremonies, including weddings. One of the most famous art forms in Banyumas is wayang kulit (shadow puppetry). Wayang kulit performances serve not only as entertainment but also as a medium for conveying moral and spiritual values. The stories often relate to mythology, history, and religious teachings, with the characters representing various aspects of life, including supernatural powers. In these performances, the puppeteer (dalang) acts not only as a storyteller but also as an intermediary between the human world and the spirit world.

Sacred rituals in Banyumas, such as thanksgiving and earth offerings, are a form of respect for God and ancestors. For example, thanksgiving is held to celebrate important moments in life, such as births, weddings, or even just before the harvest. In each of these rituals, prayers are offered to ask for safety and blessings, as well as to ward off evil spirits thought to be causing harm. Earth offerings, on the other hand, are rituals performed to honor the land and nature. The Banyumas people believe that the land has a soul and must be respected for abundant agricultural yields. During this ceremony, people typically bring various agricultural products as offerings, which are then placed in designated areas as an expression of gratitude. (Ni'am et al., 2023) .

In the context of marriage, mystical elements are also very strong. Wedding ceremonies in Banyumas often involve a series of processions rich in symbolism. (Santi, 2025) One common tradition is the "ngunduh mantu," where both families visit each other and give their blessings. During this procession, prayers and rituals are performed to ensure that the married couple receives blessings and protection from undesirable events. Furthermore, there is also the "sungkeman" tradition, where the bride and groom ask for blessings from their parents and ancestors. This is a highly emotional and important moment, as it is believed that the parents' blessings will bring blessings to their married life.

Banyumas culture is a harmonious blend of tradition, art, and mystical beliefs. The people deeply value this cultural heritage and continue to preserve it through various ceremonies and arts. Thus, the mystical world inherent in Banyumas culture is not only a part of history but also remains alive and relevant in the daily lives of its people. This creates a strong and unique identity, a source of pride for the Banyumas people.

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Many Banyumas traditions possess mystical values, reflecting the depth of local culture and beliefs. These traditions often relate to the cycle of life, nature, and the relationship between humans and the supernatural. These include rituals such as " *nguri-uri* " (Mokoagouw, 2012) , performed to honor ancestors, as well as various ceremonies related to agriculture and harvesting, which are considered sacred.

Banyumas writers also play a crucial role in documenting and presenting these traditions through their literary works. They explore mystical themes and local wisdom in short stories, novels, and poetry, providing a deeper understanding of the lives of the Banyumas people. Through rich and imaginative narratives, these writers not only tell stories rooted in tradition but also invite readers to reflect on the meaning behind each ritual and belief.

These literary works often depict the interaction between humans and spirits, and how the Banyumas people attempt to understand and connect with the unseen world. For example, in some short stories, the author might describe a person's experience communicating with ancestral spirits through dreams or specific rituals, demonstrating the importance of this connection in everyday life.

Banyumas writers also often highlight the conflict between tradition and modernity, where the younger generation may feel alienated from inherited values. Through their works, these writers strive to bridge this gap, emphasizing the importance of preserving tradition while remaining open to changing times.

Mystical traditions in Banyumas are not only a part of daily life but also a source of inspiration for writers. Their works serve as a window into Banyumas' rich culture and a reminder of the importance of preserving and appreciating this heritage. Through literature, these mystical values can be preserved and passed on to future generations, thus preserving Banyumas' cultural identity and maintaining its relevance in a broader context.

This session will feature numerous works by Banyumas writers that explore mysticism in culture, along with explanations to help them understand. These works not only depict existing beliefs and traditions but also provide deeper insights into how the Banyumas people interact with the supernatural and the values they embody. Here are some examples of these works and their explanations:

So this is what my dream had hinted at, thought Kenthus. Yes, there's no mistake. A dream of riding a tiger. Isn't that great? The tiger is a symbol of power. I will ride that power. And now that reality has arrived. (*Kenthus' short story*) by Ahmad Tohari, Selected Short Stories Kompas 1981—1990, page 202).

dream of riding a tiger can be interpreted as a symbol rich in spiritual and cultural meaning. In many traditions, tigers are often considered creatures with supernatural powers and the ability to protect or bestow courage on those who can control them. This dream could be seen as a sign that Kenthus is being chosen by a higher power to undertake a challenging journey.

The presence of a tiger in his dream not only reflects ambition and a desire for dominance, but also indicates that Kenthus is interacting with the spiritual world. In many cultures, animals such as tigers are often seen as guardians or guides carrying messages from the supernatural. This dream could be a sign that Kenthus needs to be more sensitive to the signs given by the universe and that he needs to prepare to accept the responsibilities that come with them.

The statement "and now the reality has arrived" indicates that Kenthus is at a crucial turning point, where the real and mystical worlds meet. He senses that his dream is not merely an illusion, but a call from a higher power to action. In this context, Kenthus must realize that every step he takes impacts not only himself but also those around him. This creates a tension between hope and reality, where he must prepare to face the consequences of his ambitions and choices.

Kenthus' dream of riding a tiger can be seen as a spiritual journey that invites him to reflect on the meaning of power, responsibility, and the relationship between the physical and mystical worlds. He is faced with the challenge of not only pursuing power, but also understanding and respecting the forces that drive his life. This is a reminder that in every ambition, there is a spiritual dimension to be considered, and that true power comes with an awareness of the responsibilities that accompany it. For example, in the short story "*Syukuran Sutabawor*" by Ahmad Tohari, Kumpulan Cerpen *Senyum Karyamin* , p. 39.

"That's it! Kids these days are like that. They want things easily but give up quickly. Wait until Friday Kliwon: We will be faithful with mantras and srana. Who knows, your jengkol tree might bear fruit." (Short story: *Syukuran Sutabawor* by Ahmad Tohari, Karyamin's Smile Short Story Collection , page 39).

quote reflects a deeper perspective on the relationship between the younger generation and established traditions. Criticism of the younger generation's perceived instantaneous and quick-to-despair attitude can be seen as a reflection of the spiritual values inherited from previous generations. The phrase "kids these days are like that" suggests the speaker feels a loss of understanding of the deeper processes and meaning behind every endeavor.

The statement "Wait until Friday Kliwon" suggests a strong belief in time and the rhythms of nature. In many traditions, certain days are considered to possess special energies or powers that can influence the outcome of an endeavor. In this context, the speaker encourages the younger generation to value time and process more, and to understand that good results often require patience and

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perseverance. Using mantras and tools as part of an endeavor demonstrates a spiritual dimension to every action, where beliefs and rituals can help direct positive energy toward achieving goals.

This quote also reflects the relationship between the older and younger generations in the context of passing on spiritual values. The older generation feels a responsibility to teach the importance of respecting tradition and process, and to awaken the younger generation to the power behind mystical beliefs and practices. There's a sense of nostalgia, as the speaker longs for the slower, more meaningful, traditional ways, which focused not only on the outcome but also on the journey and experiences gained along the way.

This quote illustrates the importance of integrating mystical beliefs and practices into everyday life, as well as the need for younger generations to understand and appreciate the spiritual heritage that has existed. It serves as a reminder that in every endeavor, there is a deeper dimension to be considered, and that patience and perseverance are key to achieving desired results, both in the physical and spiritual realms. As found in the short story quote from *Warung Penajem Kami* Ahmad Tohari's work below.

So Kartawi sold two goats and cut down several trees, one of which was a zongzi tree. The zongzi tree was Jum's suggestion. Jum, who claimed to have mastered *the art* of warung (a small shop), said that there must be wood from fruit trees in the shop building. "Kang, the old people say that wood from fruit trees can attract customers," Jum used to say to her husband. (*Our Penajem Shop* by Ahmad Tohari, Collection of Short Stories Eyes that are Enjoyable to Look At, page 55).

This quote illustrates how everyday economic practices and decisions are influenced by spiritual values and inherited traditions. Kartawi's actions in selling two goats and cutting down a zongzi tree are not simply practical steps to meet his needs, but also part of a larger ritual associated with beliefs about good luck and success.

Jum suggested choosing the zongzi tree as the building material for their stall, reflecting the belief that wood from fruit trees possesses magical powers that can attract customers. In many cultures, fruit trees are often considered symbols of life, fertility, and good fortune. By using wood from these trees, Jum and Kartawi hoped to create an atmosphere that was not only physically appealing but also infused with positive energy that could influence the success of their business.

Jum's statement about "ngelmu perwarungan" reflects the mystical knowledge held by individuals in that community. This suggests a belief that knowledge of specific methods for building a business can influence desired outcomes. In this context, Jum acts as a bridge between the physical and spiritual worlds, encouraging her husband to consider deeper aspects of every decision he makes.

This quote also reflects the relationship between humans and nature, where natural elements are considered to have powers that can influence everyday life. The belief that "the wood can tempt the buyer's appetite" suggests that, in a mystical perspective, success is determined not only by physical effort, but also by the energy and aura generated by the materials used. This creates an awareness that every action has a spiritual dimension that must be considered. For example, in the following quote.

Who knows where it came from, but the neighbors spread the rumor that last week, without her husband's knowledge, Jum went to visit Pak Koyor, a wise man from the neighboring village . People said Jum went there to get a sales boost for his stall. Regarding the search for sales boost, Kartawi understood and even agreed. Yes, Kartawi believed that achieving goals was not enough with real effort. But the problem was, the neighbors' rumors spread further; that Jum had given *a penajem* to Pak Koyor. Kartawi knew about penajem, which is a condition that must be given to a shaman for a mystical endeavor to succeed. It could be money, a cemani chicken, or even the patient's own body. And the neighbors said, Jum had given the latter to the shaman. (*Our Penajem Stall short story* by Ahmad Tohari, Collection of Eye Short Stories that are Enjoyable to Look At, page 55).

This story demonstrates how people still believe in shamans as figures with the power to influence fate and luck. Pak Koyor, as a shaman, is believed to be able to boost Jum's stall's sales. This belief reflects the view that physical effort alone is not enough to achieve success; a spiritual element must be fulfilled.

Penajem , a requirement that must be given to a shaman, symbolizes the sacrifice deemed necessary to achieve the desired outcome. In this context, *the penajem* can be money, an animal, or even a person's body. This demonstrates the community's deep belief in the consequences of mystical practices, where they are willing to sacrifice something valuable to achieve their goals.

The rumors circulating among neighbors illustrate how social stigma can affect a person's reputation. When people began talking about Jum's mentoring, a negative stigma began to attach to him. This demonstrates that mystical beliefs impact not only the individuals involved, but also the perception of the community as a whole.

Kartawi, as Jum's husband, finds himself in a difficult position. He understands the community's beliefs and even agrees with the idea that genuine effort isn't always enough. However, he also feels uneasy about the rumors circulating. This creates a conflict between rationality and faith, as Kartawi must navigate between belief in mystical powers and the realities of everyday life.

Belief in mystical practices can have significant psychological impacts. For Jum, going to Pak Koyor may have been an attempt to cope with the uncertainty and stress of running a business. However, when rumors spread, he may have felt depressed and isolated from his community. This demonstrates how mystical beliefs can impact an individual's mental health.

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Furthermore, this belief in something considered mystical also occurs in other characters in Ahmad Tohari's short stories. As in the following quote from Ahmad Tohari's short story, "Kang Sarpin Minta Dikebriri."

As I turned around, a question suddenly popped into my head: is Kang Sarpin the man called *cucuk senthe*? In this village, *cucuk senthe* is a term for a man with such explosive and violent libido that he can't even control himself. Who knows? (Short story: *Kang Sarpin Asks for Castration* by Ahmad Tohari, Collection of Short Stories: Eyes that are Nice to Look at, page 83).

The term "cucuk senthe" is used to describe a man who has very strong sexual urges and is difficult to control. This term indicates local beliefs that associate sexual behavior with certain characteristics that are considered unnatural or excessive.

Belief in the term "cucuk senthe" reflects a societal view that a certain power or influence can influence a person's behavior. In this context, Kang Sarpin is seen as someone who may have fallen prey to this influence, making him unable to control his sexual urges. This suggests that society has a way of explaining perceived deviant behavior through a mystical lens, where strong sexual urges are perceived as something beyond an individual's control.

The use of this term also creates social stigma against individuals perceived to possess these traits. In society, labels like "cucuk senthe" can cause someone to feel isolated or judged, which in turn can impact their mental health and social relationships. In this case, mystical beliefs serve as a tool to regulate social norms and expected behaviors.

When the main character ponders whether Kang Sarpin is a cucuk senthe, this reflects the uncertainty and confusion that often accompany judgments about others' behavior. This question demonstrates that society not only observes behavior but also attempts to understand and categorize it within existing belief frameworks. In this regard, mystical beliefs play a role in shaping individuals' perspectives on others and themselves. In addition to short stories, this belief or mysticism is developed by Ahmad Tohari in his novel, *Orang-orang Proyek* (Project People), excerpted below.

The rumor said the project was demanding a young *rooster's comb* or rooster as a sacrifice. The offering was supposed to be given because the project's initial work was preceded by only the usual prayers, not a buffalo head-planting ceremony. "So, look! The results of the first month's work on the project were immediately washed away by the flood," said Wircumplung, a neighbor of Kang Martasatang (Novel *Orang-orang Proyek*, by Ahmad Tohari, p. 121).

Rumors about projects that "demand the sacrifice" of a comb or young rooster indicate a belief that the success of an undertaking, especially one as large-scale as a project, does not only depend on physical effort and ordinary prayers, but also requires symbolic sacrifice to obtain the blessing of a higher power.

The claim that the project failed after certain rituals, such as "planting a buffalo head," were omitted reflects the community's belief that there is a direct link between mystical actions and results. In this context, rituals are seen as a way to communicate with the supernatural, with sacrifices being seen as a form of respect and a request for the smooth running of the project. The project's failure, which was washed away by floods in the first month, serves as evidence to the community that neglected rituals can have fatal consequences.

This belief also reflects how communities attempt to explain natural phenomena and unexpected events through a mystical lens. When disasters such as floods occur, communities tend to look for deeper causes than simply natural factors. In this case, rituals and sacrifices become a way to understand and cope with the uncertainty faced.

Wircumplung, as the figure who conveyed this information, played a role in disseminating beliefs and stigmas within the community. His remarks demonstrate that there is a social consensus regarding the importance of ritual within the project context, and that failure can be seen as a result of violating established norms. This creates social pressure on individuals or groups involved in the project to adhere to these beliefs to avoid suffering a similar fate.

"People here believe that human corpses have eyes and great power. They believe that every bridge or other large structure, such as a reservoir or dam, must be sacrificed with a human corpse. And these sacrifices can be various. If they are called a jengger or young rooster, they mean a virgin. If they are called a babon or female chicken, they mean an adult woman. And if they are called a pitik, they mean a child." (Novel *Orang-orang Proyek* by Ahmad Tohari, p. 135).

An excerpt from Ahmad Tohari's novel "Project People" provides a detailed explanation of the community's belief in mystical practices related to the construction of large infrastructure projects, such as bridges, reservoirs, or dams. The belief that the human body possesses "eyes" and "great power" reflects the view that the human body is not merely a physical entity but also possesses a spiritual dimension that can influence the success of a project.

The belief that every major building must be accompanied by a human corpse as a sacrifice indicates a connection between the physical and the supernatural worlds. In this context, sacrifice is seen as a way to gain the blessing of a higher power, believed to

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protect and ensure the project's success. This practice reflects the understanding that a power oversees and influences the outcomes of human endeavors, making sacrificial rituals essential.

The description of the different types of sacrifices—a young rooster or rooster for a young man, a female rooster or hen for a young woman, and a female rooster or pitik for a child—shows that the community had a clear classification system regarding the value and meaning of each type of sacrifice. This reflects the belief that each category has different powers and influences, which can influence the outcome of the project at hand. Thus, sacrifice is seen not only as a physical act, but also as a symbol of hope and supplication to supernatural powers.

These beliefs also create a moral and ethical dimension within society. When human sacrifice is considered a prerequisite for success, it raises questions about the value of life and the consequences of such actions. Society is faced with the dilemma of fulfilling existing beliefs and upholding human values. In this context, mystical practices serve as a tool to regulate social norms and expected behaviors of individuals. There are also beliefs built on the awareness of the recommendation to return home before nightfall. For example, in the short story *Sejarah Tamba* by Agus Pribadi, published in the *Kembang Glepang Antologi 1*, the following excerpt is from it.

“What is *Kamiangga* ?” asked Dodo.

“You're not from here, so you don't know about *kamiangga*. *Kamiangga* are spirits that can lead you into the river. They'll invite you to live with them at the bottom of the river,” Rino replied. (Short story *Sejarah Tamba* by Agus Pribadi, *Antologi Kembang Glepang 1*, p. 21).

The dialogue between Dodo and Rino shows how belief in *kamiangga*, as spirits, is part of the local culture that is passed down from generation to generation.

Kamiangga are depicted as entities with the power to pull humans into rivers, indicating a belief in supernatural forces that can influence daily life. This belief reflects a fear and respect for spirits, where rivers are seen not only as sources of life but also as places of mystery and potential danger. In this context, *kamiangga* serve as symbols of the threats that individuals who fail to respect or understand the power of nature might face.

Rino's statement that Dodo, who is not from the region, doesn't know about *kamiangga* suggests a division of knowledge based on cultural background. This reflects how local beliefs are often perceived as knowledge understood only by those raised in a particular environment. In this case, belief in *kamiangga* becomes part of the cultural identity that distinguishes local communities from outsiders.

The existence of *kamiangga* also creates a moral dimension in society. Stories about spirits that can carry people to the bottom of rivers serve as a reminder for individuals to respect nature and understand its limitations. This demonstrates that mystical beliefs serve not only as explanations for incomprehensible phenomena but also as tools for teaching social values and norms. Beliefs in mystical matters that are difficult to explain logically are also found in other literary works, as excerpts from them are presented below.

“You are a native of this village, how come you don't know *Ganggong* ? *Ganggong* is a grave. That's why it's Eyang Karta. It's a custom for the people of Lebeng village, the day before the celebration, they have to clean *Ganggong* first, clean Eyang Karta's grave. It's a tradition to get rid of bad luck. Because, if it's not done, the family holding the celebration will have bad luck.” (Short story: *Grave* by Muharsyam Dwi Anantama, *Antologi Kembang Glepang 2*, p. 86).

The explanation of *Ganggong* as a grave and the importance of cleaning it before a celebration shows that the community has a strong belief in the spiritual influence of ancestors, in this case Eyang Karta.

The belief that cleaning graves is a crucial step to “ward off bad luck” before holding a celebration reflects the view that there is a direct link between ritual actions and good fortune. In this context, graves are not merely resting places for the deceased, but are also considered powerful entities that can influence the lives of the living. The ritual of cleaning graves symbolizes respect for ancestors and acknowledges their role in the community.

This tradition also reflects the collective values inherent in the community. By performing this ritual, Lebeng villagers demonstrate mutual respect and maintain good relationships with their ancestors. The belief that failing to perform this ritual can bring bad luck to the family hosting the celebration creates social pressure to adhere to established norms. This demonstrates that mystical beliefs serve as a tool to regulate behavior and maintain harmony within the community.

The statement that someone of village descent doesn't know about *Ganggong* indicates a division of knowledge related to cultural identity. This reflects that local beliefs and traditions are often considered part of an identity that must be understood and preserved by future generations. Ignorance of this ritual can be seen as a form of alienation from cultural roots, which can result in a loss of connection with inherited values and norms. Beliefs in mystical things that are difficult to explain logically are also found in other literary works, as excerpts from these are presented below.

According to the elders, our village has been cursed with seven years of famine. And stupidly, I and all the villagers here still insist on surviving and living in this hopeless village for no apparent reason. I don't know how much longer we can survive. This year is the seventh year our village has been hit by severe drought. According to the elders' predictions, we will have to face seven more famines. "Truly a cursed land," said the elder with hair like a sick chicken. (Short story " *Rain Even Reluctant to Fall in This Village*" by Juli Prasetya, anthology *Kembang Glepang* 4, p. 65).

The belief that their village had been "cursed" with seven years of famine indicates an understanding that natural phenomena were not only seen as physical events, but also as the result of supernatural or spiritual forces that influenced their lives.

The statement that they remain in the village without hope reflects the helplessness and despair felt by the residents. The community is trapped in a cycle of believing they cannot change their fate, which has been determined by the curse. This demonstrates how mystical beliefs can shape individuals' perspectives on situations, where they feel bound by an unchangeable destiny.

The elders' prophecy of the coming seven years of famine adds a fatalistic dimension to the narrative. Uncertainty and fear of the future create a pessimistic atmosphere among the villagers. In this context, the elders serve as guardians of local traditions and knowledge, but also as reminders of the limitations faced by the community. The presence of this prophecy creates a sense of dependence on a higher power, leaving the community feeling out of control over their fate.

The description of the elder with "hair like a sick chicken" adds a mystical and symbolic nuance to the story. The elder's physical appearance can be interpreted as a reflection of the village's difficult situation. This demonstrates how beliefs and social conditions can influence each other, where an individual's physical appearance can reflect the spiritual or emotional state of the community as a whole. Beliefs in mystical things that are difficult to explain logically are also found in other literary works, as excerpts from these are presented below.

The sapodilla tree in the corner of the village hall was cut down, even though it meant something untoward had to happen. Four of his subordinates—village head Dawin, village secretary Sarno, village treasurer Mulyati, and service head Darwad—were possessed. Sukir paid no attention to any of this, let alone the story of the spirit that haunted the old tree, which to him was simply superstition. (Short story: *The Old Tree and the Corona Spirit* by Sus Woyo, *Antologi Kembang Glepang* 4, p. 104)

There are elements of belief and mysticism that reflect the community's relationship with nature and spiritual entities. The felling of sapodilla trees, believed to harbor guardian spirits, demonstrates the community's belief that trees, especially old ones, serve not only as part of the ecosystem but also as a home for spirits. This belief reflects the view that nature has a spiritual dimension that must be respected and protected.

The trance experienced by four subordinates—the hamlet head, village secretary, village treasurer, and service head—illustrates how actions deemed harmful or disrespectful to spirits can result in spiritual disturbance. In this context, the trance symbolizes the consequences faced when mystical norms are ignored. The community believes that tree spirits have the power to retaliate against actions deemed disrespectful or harmful, so this trance can be seen as a warning or punishment from the supernatural world.

Sukir, who is unconcerned about possession and considers stories about spirits to be superstition, reflects the skepticism that often emerges in modern society. This attitude indicates a shift in perspectives on traditional beliefs, where individuals are more inclined to rely on logic and rationality rather than believing in mystical things. However, Sukir's indifference to the consequences of tree felling can be seen as a disregard for established values and norms within society.

This conflict between traditional beliefs and skepticism creates tension in the narrative. On the one hand, there is a strong belief in the power of spirits and the importance of maintaining a harmonious relationship with nature. On the other hand, there are individuals who refuse to believe in things that cannot be explained scientifically. This reflects a complex social dynamic, in which mystical beliefs and rationality interact and influence how individuals and communities behave.

Banyumas culture is rich in traditions and rituals that reflect the close relationship between the community and nature and the spiritual world. The mystical elements present in daily life serve not only as a means of honoring ancestors but also as a link between the physical and spiritual worlds.

Art forms such as shadow puppetry (*wayang kulit*) are an important medium for conveying moral and spiritual values. Through *wayang* performances, people can reflect on life's teachings and understand the conflicts inherent in life. Sacred rituals such as thanksgiving and earth almsgiving also demonstrate gratitude to God and nature, as well as ask for protection and blessings.

In the context of marriage, mystical elements are strongly embedded, with each ceremony and prayer possessing profound meaning. This demonstrates the importance of spirituality in building relationships between individuals and communities.

Banyumas writers act as guardians of tradition, documenting and conveying stories depicting the interactions between humans and spirits. These literary works not only reflect mystical beliefs and practices but also provide insight into how society adapts to changing times, including the challenges of modernity.

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The mystical beliefs prevalent in the Banyumas community create a strong cultural identity. Despite challenges from skepticism and modernity, these values and traditions remain relevant and a source of inspiration. Thus, mystical practices are not only a part of history but also live on in everyday life, creating harmony between tradition, art, and spirituality.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the analysis of Banyumas-themed literary works, it can be concluded that literature plays an important role as a medium for representing local culture, which is rich in mystical and spiritual values. The works of Banyumas writers such as Ahmad Tohari and other young writers illustrate that belief in supernatural powers, the relationship between humans and nature, and respect for ancestors are inseparable parts of Banyumas society. Through the narratives, symbols, and dialogues in these works, literature not only records local traditions and beliefs but also serves as a means of social reflection that shows how the Banyumas people interpret life, fate, and their relationship with unseen forces.

Furthermore, the mystical values emerging in Banyumas literary works demonstrate the integration of spiritual and rational aspects in community life. The community views the world not only through material and logical perspectives, but also through an inner dimension believed to have a significant influence on daily life. In the short stories and novels analyzed, practices such as "penglaris" (incentives), "tumbul" (sacrifice), or reverence for sacred sites symbolize the collective belief that the supernatural world contributes to the balance of human life. Through a literary approach, these beliefs are seen not as mere superstition, but as a system of local values and knowledge that structure the social relations, ethics, and worldview of the Banyumas people.

Ultimately, literary works rooted in Banyumas culture serve as an important bridge between tradition and modernity. They present a dialogue between older and younger generations, between inherited spiritual values and the challenges of contemporary rationality. Through themes of mysticism, Banyumas writers not only strive to preserve local wisdom but also revive it within a broader context, namely Indonesian cultural identity. Thus, Banyumas literature serves not merely as a documentation of tradition but also as a means of fostering cultural awareness, affirming that local culture possesses vitality, relevance, and universal significance in understanding the complexities of humankind and its life.

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