

THE STUDY OF TRADITION AND MODERNITY IN THE NOVEL GADIS KRETEK BY RATIH KUMALA

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ABSTRACT

The novel "Gadis Kretek" by Ratih Kumala explored the rich tapestry of Indonesian culture, blended traditional values with the nuances of modernity. This study aimed to examine the interplay between tradition and modernity in "Gadis Kretek." It sought to understand how Ratih Kumala portrayed the tension between these two forces and how this portrayal reflected the broader socio-cultural context of Indonesia. The research employed a qualitative approach, utilizing literary analysis to dissect the novel's themes, characters, and narrative structure. Key elements such as cultural representation, character development, and the historical backdrop of the kretek industry are analyzed to uncover the underlying messages about tradition and modernity. The analysis revealed that "Gadis Kretek" juxtaposes traditional Javanese cultural elements with the encroachment of modern values and economic practices. Characters in the novel navigated these conflicting forces, showcasing the resilience of tradition amidst inevitable change. The kretek industry served as a symbol of this duality, representing both heritage and progress. Ratih Kumala's "Gadis Kretek" effectively captured the dynamic interplay between tradition and modernity in Indonesian society. The novel highlights the challenges and adaptations faced by individuals and communities in preserving cultural identity while embracing modern advancements. This study underscored the importance of literary works in reflecting and shaping societal values and transitions.

Keywords: gadis kretek, traditional, modernity

INTRODUCTION

Novels are one of the most extensive forms of literary works in terms of story development. Unlike other types of literary

works such as poetry or drama, novels usually had long and detailed narratives (Solaß et al., 2022). In general, novels are written in the form of narrative

prose which allowed the author to convey the story in a more free and complete way. As a result, novels were often able to cover various aspects of human life, ranging from the emotional journey of the main character to an in-depth description of the setting and era in which the story took place (Zheng et al., 2020).

The novel contained several key elements that distinguished it from other literary works. One of them was the plot that organized the course of events from the beginning to the end of the story, providing clarity to the reader about the development and resolution of the conflicts faced by the characters (Sakulpimolrat, 2019). In addition, characters in novels are usually portrayed in depth and complexity, shaped by detailed backgrounds that influence their personalities and the course of the story. For example, in Charles Dickens' "Great Expectations," Pip's troubled childhood and interactions with key characters like Miss Havisham mold his ambitions and moral struggles. The themes explored in novels, such as love, personal conflict, and social injustices, reflect a broad spectrum of human experience. In Jane Austen's "Pride and Prejudice," the theme of social class and marital expectations are woven into the narrative, revealing the societal pressures of the time. The author's language style significantly impacts the story's atmosphere, for instance, F. Scott Fitzgerald's lush, evocative prose in "The Great Gatsby" creates a vivid depiction of the jazz age, enhancing the reader's immersion in the world of the novel. (Adietya et al., 2024).

The novel "Gadis Kretek" by Ratih Kumala was one of the works of Indonesian literature that raised historical and cultural themes that are thick with traditional nuances and modernity. The novel not only

told the development of the kretek industry from the colonial era to the independence period, but also described the conflicts and social changes that occurred in Indonesian society at that time (Yuniarta, 2020). The combination of traditional and modern elements in this novel reflected the dynamics of cultural change in Indonesia that deserves to be studied more deeply (Windiarti, 2014).

Ratih Kumala, through her magnificent novel "Gadis Kretek", built an unforgettable world from the Dutch colonial era. With a deep and evocative language style, she explored the nuances of history that framed the struggles of her main characters. Kumala did not simply write, but wove a carefully structured storyline, allowing us to witness the social changes taking place in this complex society. The characters, from the main to the supporting ones, were etched with touching details, filling the narrative with rich and meaningful moral colors (Andini et al., 2024).

More than just a story, "Gadis Kretek" tackled important themes such as women's struggle, social conflict, and cultural change (Widyastuti, 2020). With skillful prose, Kumala plumbed the depths of emotion and reality, exploring rarely-exposed perspectives on life during that time. The literary approaches she used, including genetic structuralism and social criticism analysis, provided deep insights into how the prose in this novel not only narrated, but also conveyed important messages about society and its history (Rizki & Sm, 2024).

This research adopted a qualitative approach that aimed to understand and explore the depth of meaning in the text. The qualitative approach emphasized interpretation and understanding of

complex contexts, which suited the characteristics of literary novels such as “Gadis Kretek”. The text analysis method was chosen to explore the narrative structure and language style used by Ratih Kumala in describing the fusion of tradition and modernity in her story. The data collected came from the text of the novel itself, which was then systematically analyzed to identify certain patterns that reflected the representation of both cultural values (Arissa et al., 2023).

Through this approach, the researcher explored the hidden meaning behind the interaction between tradition and modernity revealed in “Gadis Kretek”. Discourse analysis not only focuses on what was said in the text, but also how it was said and its social, cultural or political implications. Thus, this study not only presented a literary interpretation, but also revealed the relevance and impact of the narrative that described the changes in culture and values in Indonesian colonial society presented by Ratih Kumala (Suwito, 2017).

Previous research by Suhendraa, Tri Mahajania, Aam Nurjamana, Stella Talithaa *, Ruyatul Hilal M.a, Tania Lestari with the title “*Image Of Women In Gadis Kretek Novel By Ratih Kumala Based On Feminism Perspective*” in 2021 which contains Research showed that this novel presented a complex social construction related to the roles and expectations of women in traditional and modern society (Suhendra et al., 2021). This included views on the strengths and weaknesses of women in the face of social pressure. The analysis highlighted how the physical and psychological identities of women in this novel were shaped and represented. The author explored how images of women can depict their physical

and psychological transformations (Adietya et al., 2024).

This study aimed to analyze how tradition and modernity are portrayed in the novel “Gadis Kretek”. The significance of this research was to better understand how elements of tradition and modernity interacted and influenced each other in the context of Indonesian literature. Example element on daily life: social and family life, education and career, personal relationships in the context of personal relationship, traditions often involve arranged marriages or marriages arranged by the family. Meanwhile, modernization allows individuals choose their relationships in a freer way, creating tension between family expectations and personal desires. The novel “Gadis Kretek” illustrates how tradition and modernization interact and influence everyday life, creating complex and often challenging dynamics. (Annisa et al., 2023). This research was also expected to contribute to the study of Indonesian literature and culture and enrich the understanding of the impact of modernity on local traditions.

METHOD

In exploring the theme of tradition and modernity in the novel “Gadis Kretek” by Ratih Kumala, a qualitative approach is the main foundation. This research aims to explore the depth of the narrative that describes the dynamics of Indonesian social and cultural life (Ridha, 2017).

The qualitative analysis of “Gadis Kretek” by Ratih Kumala reveals a complex interplay between tradition and modernity within Indonesian social and cultural contexts. The novel intricately portrays how traditional values and practices confront



and adapt to modern influences, reflecting broader societal shifts. Through its narrative, the novel offers a rich depiction of the challenges faced by individuals as they navigate between preserving cultural heritage and embracing contemporary changes. The research underscores that Kumala's work not only illustrates the tension between these forces but also highlights the transformative impact of modernization on personal and communal identities in Indonesia.

The research object of this article is the novel *Gadis Kretek* by Ratih Kumala. The study of the narrative structure and themes in this novel provides a deeper understanding of how Ratih Kumala uses stories to raise relevant social and cultural issues (Adlini et al., 2022). The research has highlighted an in-depth analysis of the characters in the novel and their social conflicts, which reflect the dynamics of Indonesian society in the past.

The approach used is an in-depth description that unravels how traditional values blend with the challenges of modernization. Contextual analysis highlights the complex interaction between the local cultural background and the fast-flowing global currents (Amelia Simanungkalit, 2020).

The in depth descriptive approach used in analyzing "*Gadis Kretek*" reveals that the novel effectively captures the nuanced interplay between traditional values and the pressures of modernization. Through contextual analysis, it becomes clear how local cultural elements blend with global influences, illustrating the complexities of navigating these intersecting forces. The research underscores that Kumala's narrative vividly

portrays the impact of modernization on traditional practices, highlighting the dynamic process of cultural adaptation and transformation in the face of a rapidly changing world.

In collecting data, focus is given to text analysis that pays attention to every important quote that enlightens the *Gadis Kretek* theme discussed. Potential interviews with readers or literary observers are also a valuable addition to gain diverse viewpoints. Collecting data for literary analysis, a thorough approach involves meticulous examination of key quotes that illuminate the central themes of the text. This process requires not only identifying and analyzing significant passages but also understanding their broader context and thematic relevance. By isolating pivotal quotes, researchers can map out how these elements contribute to the overarching narrative or argument. Complementing this textual analysis with interviews of readers, literary critics, or scholars adds a valuable dimension of diverse perspectives. Such interviews can offer personal interpretations, emotional reactions, and expert insights, enriching the analysis with varied viewpoints. Integrating these perspectives with the textual data allows for a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the text's thematic depth and significance. This combined approach ensures that the analysis captures both the intrinsic detail of the text and the broader interpretive context.

The collected data analyzed thematically to explore patterns related to the conflict and harmony between tradition and modernity. The use of theoretical frameworks from the literary and cultural domains also supports in-depth interpretation of the analysis results (Nurdiani, n.d.). This qualitative

method is expected to provide a deeper understanding of how Ratih Kumala depicts the changing times and cultural complexities in the novel “Gadis Kretek”, a work that reflects the dynamic social reality in Indonesia.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

1. The results of the traditional study of the novel *Gadis Kretek* by Ratih Kumala

The novel “Gadis Kretek” by Ratih Kumala, the traditional study reveals that the preservation of cultural heritage and traditional values plays a significant role in shaping the identities and life choices of the characters. The novel illustrates how adherence to cultural practices and familial expectations influences personal and social dynamics, showcasing both the strength and limitations of tradition in a rapidly modernizing society.

The novel “Gadis Kretek” by Ratih Kumala presented a painting that showed the life of Javanese society during the Dutch colonial period with its depth. More than a historical narrative, this work plumbed the depths of Java's rich socio-cultural landscape. In addition to reviewing the development of the kretek industry that marked the era, the novel also depicted the cultural values that had long been preserved in Javanese society. The main focus lay on the traditional livelihood system, where agriculture was not only a source of livelihood but also the core of the community's socio-economic life. Gotong royong, as one of the fundamental values, was reflected in the way people helped each other and collaborated to achieve success together. Local wisdom was also an integral part of how Javanese people managed the changing times that continued to move

forward. Thus, “Gadis Kretek” was not just a novel, but also a window into the life and values of a sustainable Javanese society(Annisa et al., 2023).

An in-depth study of the novel “Gadis Kretek” revealed that this literary work went beyond mere narrative to become a deep reflection on Javanese cultural values. It contained values that were the cornerstone of Javanese life, such as courage in the face of change and a spiritual life rich in symbols. These values were not only reflected in the main characters such as Dasiyah, but were also exposed through the complex storyline(Virtianti et al., 2024).

The presence of the value of courage in the face of change illustrated how the characters in this novel responded to the challenges of the Dutch colonial era with integrity and determination. This reflected the spirit and persistence of the Javanese people in maintaining their cultural identity in the midst of continuous change. On the other hand, the spiritual life rich in symbols illustrated the depth of thought and meaning implied in every action and decision of the characters, creating a deeper and more meaningful cultural dimension in this literary narrative. Thus, “Gadis Kretek” was not just a story novel, but also a work that brings to life and permeates cultural values that were still relevant today(Nurmalasari¹ & Rizkia², 2024).

The study of the image of women in this novel highlighted their role in the family, where they were not only the guardians of household harmony but also agents of change in facing the challenges of the times. Dasiyah, the main character in the novel, was a strong representation of how Javanese women at that time faced social and cultural pressures with unique strength



and wisdom. This sentence illustrated the importance of studying the representation of women in the novel “Gadis Kretek” by Ratih Kumala, especially in the context of their roles in family and society during the Dutch colonial period. In the traditional Javanese society depicted in this novel, women not only acted as the guardians of household harmony, but also as active agents of change in facing the challenges of the times.

Dasiyah, as the main character, symbolizes the strength and wisdom of Javanese women at that time. She was not just a character in the story, but also a powerful representation of how women managed social and cultural pressures in unique ways. Through Dasiyah's character, readers could see how a woman could have a significant influence in the dynamics of her family and community. Dasiyah not only deals with the social changes that occurred around her, but also actively played a role in shaping the direction of her family and community life.

2. Results of the modern study of the novel *Gadis Kretek* by Ratih Kumala

The modern study of “Gadis Kretek” by Ratih Kumala highlights how contemporary themes such as technological advancement, individualism, and changing social norms challenge traditional structures. The novel reflects the impact of modernization on characters' lives, revealing tensions between preserving cultural identity and adapting to new societal realities.

Ratih Kumala's “Gadis Kretek” was a literary work that offered more than just a narrative story; it served as a mirror reflecting deep layers of meaning in social, structural and feminist contexts. Socially,

the novel not only described the daily life of Javanese society during the Dutch colonial period, but also explored complex issues such as social hierarchy, injustice, and internal conflicts. The conflicts that occurred were not only limited to physical conflicts, but also involve social tensions rooted in differences in status and values adopted by each character. Additionally, the structure of novel also highlights how interactions between characters are crucial in describing the social dynamics of Javanese society at that time. Through her characters, Ratih Kumala is able to depict significant social change and how it affects everyday life (Kamal et al., 2024).

In a feminist context, the novel provided an evocative perspective on the role of women in traditional Javanese society. The female characters in this novel, such as Dasiyah, were not only faced with conventional domestic roles, but also showed courage and resilience in the face of social and cultural challenges they encountered (Aguusani et al., 2022). Dasiyah symbolized Javanese women who had strong characters, were able to adapt to the changing times, and were not constrained by the dominant patriarchal norms of the time. Thus, “Gadis Kretek” is not just a story, but also an in-depth study of the complexity of social life, structural changes, and gender struggles in the context of Indonesia's rich history.

The genetic structuralism research on the novel “Gadis Kretek” by Ratih Kumala opened a deeper look into the internal structure of the literary work. Genetic structuralism referred to an analysis that examined how elements in the novel interacted and related to each other, and how they developed throughout the story. In this context, the research showed that it was not only the plot that is important in the



narrative, but also how the characters in the novel grew and changed as events unfolded. This not only created a continuous storyline, but also generated complexity that deepened the understanding of the themes raised in the novel (Julita & Oktarina, 2024).

Genetic structuralism analysis also highlighted that the interactions between the story and the events in “Gadis Kretek” did not simply exist in the same time and space, but influenced each other to form a cohesive and deep narrative. This showed that every element in a literary work has an important role in creating the overall meaning, whether in depicting the complex historical background or in exploring the psychology of the main characters. Thus, genetic structuralism research not only revealed structural intelligence from a technical point of view, but also invited readers to appreciate the depth of the story and the human complexity presented in this novel.

In the feminist study of the novel “Gadis Kretek” by Ratih Kumala, the focus was on the way female characters, especially Dasiyah, are represented. Dasiyah was not only an individually strong main character, but also represented the evolution of gender roles in the context of a traditional Javanese society bound by rigid social norms. As a woman, Dasiyah faces various social and cultural challenges with strength and wisdom, showing that Javanese women were not only able to survive, but also able to influence and shape the course of events in everyday life (Dewiyanti, 2023).

More than just a character in a novel, Dasiyah represented a symbol of an independent and influential Javanese woman. Through her life story, readers could see how Dasiyah played an active role

in maintaining the stability of her family and surrounding community (Nurmalasari & Rizkia, 2024). Her representation as a character who was able to adapt and defy patriarchal norms inspired readers to appreciate the complexity and strength of women in facing the challenges of the Dutch colonial era. Thus, Dasiyah was not only an interesting literary character, but also an image that highlighted the struggle of women in the face of changing times and influenced the course of Javanese cultural history (Janattaka et al., 2024).

Key Findings from the Research

1. In the novel “Gadis Kretek” by Ratih Kumala, cultural shift became a central theme that illustrates the complexity of Javanese society's adaptation to modernization during the Dutch colonial period. The story not only highlighted the economic and social changes brought about by the tobacco industry, but also showed how this shift affected the long-established traditional cultural order. The Javanese people in this novel were portrayed as struggling to maintain their identity and values amidst the globalization that had begun to penetrate their daily lives.

This transitional process also included the community's response to the growing pressure of modernization. Some characters in the novel showed resistance to new values imported from the West, while others tried to adopt modern elements to achieve economic success. In this conflict, the reader was presented with an in-depth picture of how external changes such as the industrialization of tobacco could alter the internal dynamics of culture, questioning and testing the social

cohesion and values that the Javanese community has upheld.

2. Character Dynamics in the novel “Gadis Kretek” by Ratih Kumala reflected the complexity in the representation of conflicting ideologies between traditional and modern. Characters such as Raja and Jeng Yah not only played a role in the story, but also symbolize the struggle between old culturally inherited values and the aspiration to accept the changing times. Raja, who may represent the traditional aspect, sought to maintain long-established cultural values, while Jeng Yah, as the modern representative, embodied the spirit of progress and adaptation to social change. The social conflict that arose from their interaction highlighted the deep tension between preserving cultural heritage and accepting progress. The conflict between these characters not only affected the narrative individually, but also reflected broader conflicts within Javanese society at the time. It illustrated how conflicting ideologies could clash, resulting in complex and ongoing social dynamics in the novel. Thus, the characterization of Raja and Jeng Yah was not only a tool to develop the plot, but also a reflection of the struggle between tradition and modernity that continued to be relevant in the context of Indonesian history and culture.
3. “Ethical and Moral Dilemmas” in Ratih Kumala's ‘Gadis Kretek’ presented a complex depiction of the internal conflicts faced by the characters. It was not simply about the conflict between obvious good and bad choices, but rather their adjustment to the pressing socio-economic changes. The characters in the novel were forced to navigate an increasingly changing terrain in the

Dutch colonial context of Indonesia. The ethical dilemmas they faced included considerations of how to maintain personal integrity and social justice in an increasingly uncertain and sometimes economically depressing situation.

The narrative also highlights how economic pressures could influence one's moral choices. When the characters in “Gadis Kretek” were faced with difficult choices, such as facing poverty or succumbing to moral compromise, they must make decisions that often require great sacrifice. This reflects the reality of life during that time where not only physical survival was a challenge, but also maintaining moral integrity in the face of strong economic temptations became the true test. Thus, the ethical and moral dilemmas in this novel not only evoked empathy for the characters, but also invited readers to reflect on the complexities of human life in the face of fundamental social transformation.

4. The research emphasized an overview of traditional cigarette business practices, providing insight into economic strategies and challenges in the local industry. This sentence referred to the focus of research which revealed the economic reality behind the traditional cigarette industry, especially in the context of the novel "Gadis Kretek" by Ratih Kumala. The traditional cigarette industry in Indonesia not only included cultural and historical aspects, but also complex economics. The research explored business practices in the industry, highlighting the strategies used by traditional cigarette manufacturers to survive and compete in an increasingly changing local market. This strategy included the use of local raw materials, traditional production techniques, and

marketing strategies that adapted to local values and consumer habits.

The economic challenges faced by the traditional cigarette industry were also the main focus of research. This includes challenges from government regulations, fluctuating raw material prices, and competition with the modern cigarette industry. This research provided in-depth insight into how the traditional cigarette industry adapted to changing economic dynamics, and how this affected the long-term sustainability of the industry. Apart from that, this research also illustrated how the traditional cigarette industry not only maintained cultural heritage, but also played an important role in the local economy by creating jobs and supporting the economic sustainability of local communities.

Discussion

The novel "The Gadis Kretek" by Ratih Kumala is not just a narrative story, but also a literary work that describes the evolution of Indonesian culture in depth. Through its thematic depth, this novel provides a deep commentary on how Indonesia's cultural identity changes with changing times. Scholars who study this novel highlight how literature is able to reflect and record the social and cultural transformations that occur in society. Analysis of the depiction of characters in the novel also provides a window for understanding how individuals face the challenges of modernization and globalization that affect their identity.

"Gadis Kretek" not only serves as a reminder of history, but also as a critique of the impact of modernization on cultural identity and community dynamics. This novel depicts internal conflicts in society that arise as a result of economic, social and political changes that hit Indonesia in a

certain period. In this context, the criticism conveyed through narration and dialogue in the novel reflects concerns about the loss of traditional values in a society that is increasingly exposed to external influences.

The qualitative methodology used in this study offers an in-depth approach to understanding the textual nuances in the novel "Gadis Kretek" by Ratih Kumala. This approach does not only limit the analysis to narrative aspects and literary style, but also considers the cultural and historical context that is the background of the literary work. By integrating literary analysis with cultural and historical context, this study reveals how this novel reflects social dynamics, cultural values, and changing times that occurred during the Dutch colonial period in Java. An interdisciplinary approach like this enriches scientific discourse on Indonesian literature by providing a more comprehensive and multidimensional perspective.

This study also directs attention to the ongoing tension between tradition and modernity presented in the novel. Tradition, as an integral part of Javanese life at that time, continued to interact with modern ideas brought by the Dutch colonial era. This research not only identifies the conflict between traditional values and modern assimilation, but also looks at how this interaction shapes the characters, story plots, and moral messages conveyed by the author. Thus, this study not only highlights the aesthetic aspects of the novel textually, but also explores the deeper meaning of social change, cultural dynamics, and the evolution of thought in Javanese society in critical historical periods.



CONCLUSION

The novel "Cretek Girl" is not just an ordinary narrative story; it goes beyond that to become a profound literary work that reflects the evolution of Indonesian culture. In this context, this novel criticizes the impact of modernization on cultural identity and community dynamics. Ratih Kumala through her work offers deep insight into the transformation of society in the face of globalization. The qualitative methodology used in this literary research not only produces a deeper understanding of the novel's aesthetics, but also enriches the scientific discourse on Indonesian literature by providing a comprehensive perspective on the cultural, historical context and values contained in this novel.

The study of "Cretek Girl" highlights the tension between tradition and modernity which is a central theme in this novel. The complex interactions between these two

worlds shape the main characters, develop the plot, and convey deep moral messages. Readers are invited to reflect on how each character faces the challenges of modernization without losing their cultural roots. In this context, Ratih Kumala succeeds in presenting a story that is not only entertaining, but also invites readers to explore the complexity of human life in the face of fundamental social change.

Thus, "Gadis Kretek" is not just a novel, but also a mirror that reflects the dynamics of Indonesian culture in an ever-changing era. He encourages appreciating cultural heritage in the context of globalization, emphasizing that cultural identity is a strong foundation in facing the current of global modernization that continues to move forward.

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