



Strengthening Cultural Literacy Through Cirebon Folk Tales Incorporating Religious Moderation Values

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Abstract

The limited integration of local cultural values and religious moderation in elementary education has hindered the development of students' character and their understanding of diversity. Although Indonesia possesses rich cultural heritage embedded in regional folklore, these stories are often underutilized as pedagogical resources for fostering tolerance, mutual respect, and harmonious interfaith relations. This study aims to describe the condition of cultural literacy in elementary schools, identify Cirebon folk tales that contain religious moderation values, and examine the implementation of cultural literacy strengthening. Using a qualitative descriptive design, data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation, then analyzed through data reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing. The findings show that cultural literacy is inconsistently introduced in schools, that Cirebon folk tales such as Azan Pitu, Klenteng Jamblang, Babad Cirebon, and Nadran contain strong moderation values, and that the strengthening of cultural literacy is implemented through the P3 framework, the School Literacy Movement, and Pancasila Student Profile activities. These results highlight the importance of utilizing local folklore as a culturally grounded medium for cultivating national commitment, tolerance, non-violence, and cultural accommodation among young learners.

Keywords: *folklore, cultural literacy, religious moderation.*

Abstrak

Integrasi nilai-nilai budaya lokal dan moderasi agama yang terbatas dalam pendidikan dasar telah menghambat perkembangan karakter siswa dan pemahaman mereka terhadap keragaman. Meskipun Indonesia memiliki warisan budaya yang kaya yang tertanam dalam folklore regional, cerita-cerita ini seringkali kurang dimanfaatkan sebagai sumber daya pedagogis untuk menumbuhkan toleransi, saling menghormati, dan hubungan antaragama yang harmonis. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menggambarkan kondisi literasi budaya di sekolah dasar, mengidentifikasi dongeng-dongeng Cirebon yang mengandung nilai-nilai moderasi agama, dan mengkaji implementasi penguatan literasi budaya. Dengan desain deskriptif kualitatif, data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara, observasi, dan dokumentasi, kemudian dianalisis melalui reduksi data, penyajian, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa literasi budaya diperkenalkan secara tidak konsisten di sekolah, bahwa dongeng-dongeng Cirebon seperti Azan Pitu, Klenteng Jamblang, Babad Cirebon, dan Nadran mengandung nilai-nilai moderasi yang kuat, serta bahwa penguatan literasi budaya dilaksanakan melalui kerangka kerja P3, Gerakan Literasi Sekolah, dan kegiatan Profil Siswa Pancasila. Hasil ini menyoroti pentingnya memanfaatkan folklore lokal sebagai media yang berakar pada budaya untuk menumbuhkan komitmen nasional, toleransi, non-kekerasan, dan akomodasi budaya di kalangan pelajar muda.

Kata kunci: *cerita rakyat, literasi budaya, moderasi agama.*

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia, as a multicultural country with diverse ethnicities, religions, languages, and cultures, requires its people to live in harmony. These differences can be a wealth if the foundation of *Bhineka Tunggal Ika* can be understood and implemented by society, especially by students in everyday life. However, if it is only considered as a slogan, it can sometimes cause racial conflict because the principles of tolerance and mutual respect are not applied (Suryanto, 2025). Thus, the idea of ancestral heritage, according to Hidayati et al. (2024), needs to be strengthened with the perspective of religious moderation in Indonesia that is relevant to the current conditions in Indonesia. Religious moderation is considered to be able to resolve the problem of intolerance along with the increasing conflict originating from the competition of ideological identities that tend to be extreme, both on the right and on the left (Anwar et al., 2024). The values of religious moderation must be instilled in students so that conflicts do not continue to occur in the next generation (Haris et al., 2024). One effort to prevent conflict between people is to strengthen the values of religious moderation at every level of society, for example, in elementary school children (Taubah et al., 2024).

In the context of this research, students who are in the childhood phase, aged 6-12 years, are an important element that must be introduced to the idea of religious moderation. During this period, students begin to show significant developments, including language skills, social skills, and religious interests (Hurlock, 1980). Therefore, stimulation from those around them is very important to help children make the right decisions about how to think, habits, and the future path they will take (Rahayu et al., 2024). Introducing and internalizing the principles of virtue contained in folklore is one thing that adults can do. Viewed from a functional perspective, folklore functions as entertainment for children (Kusnita et al., 2016). In fact, the stories that are told can function as a tool to spread social issues and equality (Al-

Khalaf, 2019). A student can learn about the concept of cause and effect, order, good and bad deeds, and empathy from the stories they tell or read. Students gain various things through characters and events that encourage them to develop new ideas and concepts (Rahim & Rahiem, 2012). In addition, the stories conveyed can be used to introduce local cultural wisdom and internalize moral principles (Arifuddin, 2020). One way is to introduce students to folk tales that grow in each region (Gusmayanti & Dimiyati, 2021).

It is very important for Indonesian students to be aware of multiculturalism and diversity. The goal is to give children an understanding of the importance of diversity of culture, ethnicity, language, and religion of its people. In its multicultural society, Indonesia recognizes various religions: Islam (87.2%), Christianity (6.9%), Catholicism (2.9%), Hinduism (1.7%), Buddhism (0.7%), and Confucianism (0.05%) (Rukiyanto et al., 2024). To prevent conflict or racism that is detrimental to one party, awareness of Indonesia's diversity, including religion, must continue to be increased. Tolerance can be instilled in a culture of religious moderation from childhood to minimize the potential for conflict (Manap, 2022). Diversity itself is a wealth that can be maintained in the context of awareness of religious moderation, namely national commitment, anti-violence, tolerance, and acceptance of tradition (Saefuddin, 2019). Implementation of the commitment to religious moderation can be carried out through schools. If schools in general do not implement diversity education concretely, it can result in a low tolerance index in students (Safdar et al., 2023).

Cultural literacy is a key foundation for developing students' awareness of diversity and national identity. It enables learners to understand cultural values and encourages mutual respect among people from different backgrounds (Helda & Rose, 2025). Implementation of strengthening cultural literacy is an important thing that must be done to instill a commitment to religious moderation in students. It is very important to master cultural and civic literacy in the 21st century (Safitri & Ramadan, 2022). Cultural and civic literacy means understanding various aspects of culture and values. citizenship values (Mursalim et al., 2025). This understanding helps people appreciate and respect the cultural diversity that exists in the surrounding environment. In other words, cultural literacy will help build an Indonesian society that embraces strong multiculturalism, namely a society that respects and appreciates differences (Marlina & Halidatunnisa, 2022).

Cultural literacy is very important to implement in schools. However, previous studies have shown that literacy programs, especially cultural and civic literacy, in senior high schools in Banda Aceh City have not been implemented optimally because teachers do not understand the substance and content. Teachers also believe that cultural and civic literacy is not important. Students do not have a deep understanding of the culture and citizenship in their environment. Students also do not have traits such as sensitivity, tolerance, collaboration, and others (Arditama & Lestari, 2020). According to Anggara (2020), instilling children's literacy skills will be successful if all parties other than teachers at school, parents, government, and private entities collaborate to support initiatives aimed at improving children's literacy. Similarly, Sholikhah (2022) found that teachers often consider cultural literacy merely as an abstract concept rather than a set of applicable competencies, resulting in its weak integration into learning activities. Prihatiningsih et al. (2025) also revealed that students' knowledge of local cultural values remains limited, leading to a low sense of identity, tolerance, and collaboration. Furthermore, Lestari & Ramadan (2023) showed that

cultural and citizenship literacy programs are frequently carried out only as formal activities without meaningful engagement, so students perceive them as less relevant. These studies collectively indicate that the main problems of cultural literacy in schools involve teachers' limited comprehension of content, students' lack of cultural awareness, and the absence of innovative pedagogical approaches and collaborative support from stakeholders to strengthen literacy practices.

The suboptimal role of formal education in preserving local stories that contain specific diversity was also revealed by Ryhfaldhi Wildan, S. Pd. (teacher at an elementary school in Cirebon City) on Monday, May 13, 2024. The teacher believes that through the habit of reading literacy and the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5), the introduction of folklore containing diversity can be taught comprehensively to elementary school students at all levels. Fifth grade elementary school students in phase C are also asked to understand, process, and interpret the information and values contained in literary works. One of the texts that can be given is Cirebon folklore. However, teachers often ignore these stories because they tend to teach popular stories such as *Bawang Merah-Bawang Putih*, *Malin Kundang*, and *Tangkuban Perahu*. In fact, students should also be introduced to various Cirebon folklore. However, unfortunately, local stories projected for elementary school students are difficult to find. In fact, Yuliani (2023) stated that the introduction and experience of finding values in a literary work can have an impact on students' understanding of the treasures of their local culture.

Referring to previous research and sources, ideally the Cirebon community, as the collective owners of stories containing values of tolerance towards diversity, do not have the assumption that recognizing and appreciating folklore is something old-fashioned. According to Iskandar et al. (2024), teaching folklore and local-based things is the same way to encourage students to master cultural literacy. Consistent cultural education can help children become more tolerant and open and socialize well in a multicultural society. Conversely, cultural literacy can be used in education to maintain local potential. Respecting diversity is one of them (Anggo et al., 2023).

Studies related to cultural literacy have been conducted by several researchers. Sudrajat & Sufiyana (2024), in their study "Cultural Literacy and the Spirit of Multiculturalism in Indonesia," examined the importance of cultural literacy in building students' multicultural awareness. The findings indicated that cultural literacy is crucial in fostering understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity across Indonesia. However, their research was limited to a theoretical discussion and did not apply cultural literacy in the form of folklore-based learning or integrate religious moderation values into the school curriculum. Lestari & Ramadan (2023), in "The Effectiveness of Cultural Literacy and Citizenship through Staging Creativity against Global Diversity Characters of Elementary School Students," implemented a quasi-experimental study to enhance students' global character through creative performance-based literacy activities. Their results showed a positive influence on students' multicultural understanding, yet the study did not focus on local folklore or religious moderation as part of its literacy framework.

Maula & Mukhlis (2025) explored "Moderate Character Values in Baturraden Folk Stories and Their Implementation in Literature Learning in High School." They found that the Baturraden folklore contains values of tolerance, non-violence, and cultural accommodation,

which could be used to teach moderation through literature. However, this study was limited to high school students and did not address literacy-based integration at the elementary level. Rosyadi et al. (2023), through their work “Internalization of Religious Moderation Education Through Culture Literacy with a National Insight,” analyzed how educators in Islamic schools (madrasahs) internalize moderation values through cultural literacy practices. Their research highlighted the importance of religious moderation in character education but did not utilize regional folklore or integrate literacy activities in non-religious public schools. Mandarani et al. (2025), in their study “Exploring Students’ Experiences and Perceptions in Adapting Folk Tales into Picture Books within Multiliteracies Pedagogy,” investigated students’ engagement in adapting folk tales into picture books. The study showed that the use of local stories could strengthen students’ creativity and cultural awareness. However, it did not focus on religious moderation or formal school-based literacy programs such as the School Literacy Movement or the Pancasila Student Profile.

Different from the previous studies, this research focuses on strengthening cultural literacy through Cirebon folk tales that incorporate religious moderation values—including national commitment, tolerance, anti-violence, and cultural accommodation—within the elementary school context. Unlike earlier works that were either theoretical, focused on higher education, or limited to religious institutions, this study emphasizes the integration of local wisdom from Cirebon folklore, such as Azan Pitu, Klenteng Jamblang, Babad Cirebon, and Nadran, into formal literacy practices. It also combines folklore-based cultural literacy with the School Literacy Movement (*Gerakan Literasi Sekolah*) and the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5). Thus, this research fills an important gap by presenting a practical model for integrating local cultural heritage and religious moderation values into elementary education, aiming to cultivate tolerant, reflective, and culturally grounded students.

Efforts to introduce cultural literacy to children in modern life are important so that the current generation continues to know and appreciate the wisdom of their regional culture. Making a habit of listening to and reading locally based storybooks are some of the efforts that can be made. The presence of media to introduce Cirebon folklore with moderate content to children needs to be considered wisely. Media with appropriate story visualization can help students’ understanding so that the values of virtue in it can be conveyed appropriately. Media that suits students’ characteristics will help them focus on following the storyline and interpreting the content (Cingel & Krcmar, 2020).

Optimally carried out habits will form insight, build critical thinking, and internalize positive values so that they can form the character of Indonesian students who are humanistic and civilized. In addition, literacy like this can provide experience and inspiration to children to appreciate their predecessors and do good things in real life. Referring to the previous explanation, the researcher’s goal is to implement cultural literacy based on Cirebon folklore containing religious moderation into formal educational environments, especially elementary schools.

METHODS

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive research design, which is appropriate for providing a factual and detailed account of a phenomenon based on participants' real experiences. Qualitative descriptive studies aim to stay close to the surface of the data and describe events or processes in a straightforward manner (Kim et al., 2017). Such an approach allows researchers to present findings using participants' own language with minimal abstraction, making it suitable for capturing classroom practices and educational program implementation (Colorafi & Evans, 2016).

The research procedure began with selecting Public Elementary School (SD Negeri) Kartini 1 (Grade 3) as the research site and conducting fieldwork on May 6–7 and 13, 2024. The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with teachers and the principal, followed by classroom observations during the implementation of the P3 program. The procedure also included systematic documentation through photos and videos. These staged procedures align with recommendations for qualitative descriptive studies, which emphasize clear sequencing of interview, observation, and documentation activities (Neergaard et al., 2009).

The data in this study were collected using interviews, observations, and documentation techniques. Interviews were used to capture participants' explanations and perspectives, while observations enabled the researcher to examine classroom practices and learning interactions in real time. Documentation data photos and videos served to support, clarify, and strengthen findings. Using multiple data sources is a characteristic of qualitative research because it increases data credibility and enables triangulation (Carter et al., 2014). This combination ensures that the researcher captures both verbal and nonverbal aspects of the program's implementation.

To gather these data effectively, the study utilized several research instruments, including an interview guide, an observation sheet or field notes template, and a documentation tool such as a camera. An interview guide helps maintain consistency during interviews, whereas observation sheets support systematic recording of behaviors and events. The use of flexible, context-appropriate instruments is common in qualitative descriptive research because it allows researchers to adapt tools to specific field conditions (Bradshaw et al., 2017).

The collected data were analyzed using qualitative data analysis techniques, involving data categorization, verification, interpretation, and the drawing of conclusions. The researcher compared interview data with observation notes and documentation to identify recurring patterns and describe the program's implementation. This process reflects qualitative content analysis, in which meaning is derived systematically from textual and visual data (Vaismoradi et al., 2013). To ensure trustworthiness, the study employed peer review as a validation strategy, allowing another knowledgeable party to examine and confirm the accuracy and logic of the findings, an established technique to enhance credibility in qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study are presented based on data collected through interviews, classroom observations, and documentation, all of which were analyzed to address the research questions. As a qualitative descriptive study, the findings are organized into thematic sub-topics that directly reflect the focus and categories emerging from the field. The results are further interpreted by linking them to established theories on cultural literacy, folklore-based learning, and religious moderation. This structure ensures that the findings not only answer the research questions but also situate them within the broader scholarly discourse on cultural literacy development in elementary education.

Condition of Cultural Literacy in Elementary Schools

Indonesian students who live in a multicultural society are constantly exposed to differences in ethnicity, religion, language, and cultural practices. This diversity becomes a source of richness and identity when framed through tolerance and mutual respect. However, without a strong foundational understanding of these values, such diversity has the potential to create social tensions and divisions among individuals and groups. Therefore, effective educational strategies are required to ensure that elementary school students develop awareness and appreciation of cultural diversity from an early age. In this context, examining the current condition of cultural literacy in elementary schools becomes essential. Understanding how cultural literacy is introduced, practiced, and supported in the learning environment provides important insight into the extent to which young learners are being prepared to recognize, value, and live harmoniously within Indonesia's multicultural landscape.

Limited and Inconsistent Introduction of Cultural Literacy

Data from interviews with teachers at Public Elementary School (SD Negeri) Kartini 1 show that cultural literacy has not been introduced continuously in the elementary school curriculum. Teachers reported that cultural literacy activities mainly occur during special programs such as the School Literacy Movement (GLS) or P5 projects rather than being integrated into daily instruction. This inconsistency reflects findings from previous studies showing that cultural and civic literacy programs often become formalistic activities rather than meaningful learning experiences (Lestari & Ramadan, 2023).

The observation data reinforce these interview findings: classroom sessions rarely utilize local cultural materials, and cultural content appears mainly during scheduled literacy events, not regular lessons. This supports Sholikhah (2022), who argues that teachers often view cultural literacy as an abstract concept, leading to weak integration in learning.

Dominance of Popular Folklore Over Local Cirebon Stories

Documentation and interview evidence show that teachers tend to rely on popular national folktales such as *Bawang Merah–Bawang Putih*, *Malin Kundang*, and *Tangkuban Perahu*, while local Cirebon folktales remain underutilized. This results in students having minimal exposure to regional cultural wisdom. Teachers explained that Cirebon folklore materials for the elementary level are “difficult to find,” which aligns with Yuliani (2023), who identified a scarcity of accessible local literary resources for young learners.

This situation limits students' opportunities to learn values of religious moderation embedded in local stories like *Azan Pitu*, *Klenteng Jamblang*, *Nadran*, and *Babad Cirebon*,

even though these tales contain strong messages of tolerance, anti-violence, and cultural accommodation. This finding supports Iskandar et al. (2024), stating that children's cultural literacy improves only when local wisdom is deliberately taught.

Teacher Capacity and Resource Limitations

Interviews with teachers reveal that many educators feel unprepared to teach cultural literacy, especially when the material involves regional culture or religious moderation (). Teachers mentioned lacking structured learning modules on Cirebon folklore, visual media suitable for children, training on integrating cultural values into lessons. These findings align with Prihatiningsih et al. (2025), who found that elementary students' low cultural knowledge is partly caused by teachers' limited mastery of cultural content. The absence of sufficient teaching materials further complicates integration, consistent with Anggara (2020), who emphasizes the need for collaborative development of literacy resources.

Inconsistent Community and Parental Support

The results also show that cultural literacy efforts are often hindered by the low involvement of parents and community members. Teachers stated that although Cirebon society possesses rich cultural heritage, parents seldom reinforce local stories at home. This weakens continuity between school-based literacy activities and home literacy practices. This condition mirrors previous findings that cultural literacy programs are more effective when supported by families and local communities (Marlina & Halidatunnisa, 2022). Without such collaboration, cultural learning becomes sporadic, reducing its long-term impact on students.

Emerging School-Based Initiatives

Observation data show that some schools have begun adopting innovative approaches such as traditional art performances, storytelling and folklore competitions, P5 projects incorporating local culture. These activities successfully increase student engagement and foster appreciation for local identity. However, the initiatives remain teacher-driven rather than system-driven, which means program sustainability is not yet guaranteed. These echoes Mursalim et al. (2025), who argue that cultural literacy grows optimally only when supported by a structured school-wide model.

Across interview, observation, and documentation data, the study reveals that the condition of cultural literacy in elementary schools remains uneven, characterized by high potential but low consistency. The findings confirm earlier studies that highlight recurring issues: teachers' limited understanding of cultural literacy, lack of local resource availability, students' low cultural awareness, and insufficient stakeholder collaboration.

The strong foundation of local wisdom in Cirebon, supported by emerging initiatives in schools, provides meaningful potential for strengthening cultural literacy among elementary students. When effectively integrated, Cirebon folklore can serve as a powerful medium for fostering cultural understanding and religious moderation, in line with Helda & Rose (2025), who emphasize the role of cultural literacy in shaping tolerant and culturally aware learners. However, significant challenges persist, particularly in enhancing teachers' capacity to deliver cultural content in engaging and contextually relevant ways. Strengthening teacher competencies through sustained training and targeted professional development is therefore essential. With improved educational resources, active community participation, and better-equipped teachers, cultural literacy in Cirebon's elementary schools can continue to grow and contribute to preserving the region's cultural heritage for future generations.

Cirebon Folk Tales Reflect Local Wisdom and Religious Moderation

Folklore is a cultural heritage that contains local wisdom, values, and moral teachings. In Cirebon, there are many folklores that reflect the richness of the culture and beliefs of the local community. These stories are not just entertainment for students but also contain important messages about life, peace, and tolerance that are relevant today. Through folklore, people can learn to appreciate diversity and maintain social harmony.

Azan Pitu: A Cirebon Sacred Tale Promoting Non-Violence Values and Strengthening Cultural Literacy in Schools

The *Azan Pitu* folk tale describes how the people of Cirebon in the past faced threats through spirituality, togetherness, and the power of prayer without violence. These values are very relevant for strengthening cultural literacy in elementary schools because they provide concrete examples of tolerance, anti-violence, peaceful conflict resolution, and belief in moral values.

- Anti-Violence and Peaceful Conflict Resolution

Story Excerpt:

“Mengetahui rakyat Cirebon terserang wabah, Panembahan Ratu Awal sebagai raja berdoa untuk memohon pertolongan kepada Allah SWT... Raja memperoleh petunjuk agar melakukan azan Pitu.”

The finding shows that the *Azan Pitu* story models peaceful conflict resolution rooted in Cirebonese cultural values. The king’s reliance on prayer instead of retaliation illustrates a local tradition of non-violence, supporting Hidayati et al. (2024), who note that religious moderation in local contexts emphasizes harmony and restraint. This aligns with Menna et al. (2020), who argue that narratives of non-aggression help young learners build ethical social understanding. As Safitri & Ramadan (2022) highlight, folktales effectively transmit intergenerational moral lessons, making *Azan Pitu* a relevant cultural medium for teaching moderation, patience, and anti-violence in primary-school literacy programs.

- Collective Spiritual Strength and Communal Solidarity

Story Excerpt:

“Sang raja meminta tujuh orang mengumandangkan azan secara bersamaan... Perlawanan Menjangan Wulung hampir saja membuat para muazin berhenti... namun dengan kekhusyukan dan adanya bantuan doa Panembahan Ratu Awal, akhirnya azan dapat diselesaikan”.

The story section illustrates strong communal unity, as shown through the coordinated effort of the seven *muazin* who continue the *azan* despite opposition. This collective strength aligns with Prasetya et al. (2023), who argue that 21st-century cultural literacy must include an understanding of cultural collectivism as part of local identity. Similarly, Kusumawati et al. (2021) highlight that folktales containing communal cooperation help students understand social relations within their cultural environment. Yuki (2020) further notes that introducing local stories nurtures a sense of belonging and reinforces learners’ collective identity. Therefore, the unity depicted in *Azan Pitu* contributes significantly to cultural literacy development by modeling cooperation, solidarity, and shared spiritual commitment.

- Moral Victory Over Evil and Symbolic Cultural Teaching

Story Excerpt:

“Ketika azan dikumandangkan... energi azan dari tujuh muazin sangat besar... Menjangan Wulung terpentak... wabah pun turut menghilang.”

This part of the story symbolizes a victory achieved not through physical power but through sincerity, prayer, and moral strength. The message reflects the view expressed by Sibarani et al. (2021), who state that local wisdom consistently carries *local moral values* conveyed through cultural symbols. This is consistent with Amponsah (2023), who describes folktales as effective moral education texts because they create clear behavioral contrasts between good and evil characters. Folklore, as an element of intangible cultural heritage, contains essential character-building elements such as patience, courage, and kindness. Thus, *Azan Pitu* offers powerful symbolic moral teachings that strengthen character education through cultural literacy.

- Religious Devotion and Cultural Ritual Identity

Story Excerpt:

“Raja berdoa memohon pertolongan... memperoleh petunjuk untuk melaksanakan Azan Pitu di masjid Sang Cipta Rasa.”

This portion of the narrative emphasizes *Azan Pitu* as part of Cirebon's distinctive religious and cultural identity, blending devotional practice with local tradition. Nuraini & Amaliyah (2024) argue that cultural literacy in schools must introduce students to local cultural practices that remain relevant and alive, such as the *Azan Pitu* ritual. The story also functions as a form of oral tradition, consistent with Michalopoulos & Xue (2021), who explain that such narratives shape and preserve collective cultural memory. Cultural identity will gradually diminish if folktales are not passed down to younger generations. Therefore, incorporating *Azan Pitu* into cultural literacy learning supports the preservation of cultural memory while enriching students' understanding of their local spiritual heritage.

Cirebon Folk Tale “Klenteng Jamblang” as Learning Material for Strengthening Cultural Literacy and Religious Moderation

The *Klenteng Jamblang* folktale presents several core values of religious moderation that can be used as cultural literacy material for elementary school students. The story illustrates how tolerance, cultural accommodation, and peaceful coexistence have long been practiced in Cirebon society.

- Tolerance as Cultural Literacy Content

Story Excerpt:

“Sunan mengizinkan Njo Kie Tjit membawa kayu yang diperoleh dari material pembangunan Masjid Agung Sang Cipta Rasa.”

This act shows active tolerance, where support is given across religious boundaries. As stated by Saifuddin (2019), tolerance in moderation involves practical cooperation and mutual openness. The folktale therefore provides students with an authentic example of how different religious communities can help one another, reinforcing literacy about local values of harmony. Sutrisno (2019) strengthens this by noting that cultural narratives are effective tools for internalizing interreligious understanding.

- National Commitment and Equal Rights to Worship

Story Excerpt:

“Bagaimana saudara kami yang bukan beragama Islam? Apakah boleh membangun tempat ibadah juga?” “Tentu saja, silakan,” jawab Sunan Gunung Jati.

This dialogue demonstrates the principle of equal citizenship, one of the core moderation indicators described by Saifuddin (2019). Students exposed to this story learn that all religious groups have equal rights, reflecting Indonesia’s pluralistic foundation. Manap (2022) emphasizes that introducing such values through local stories strengthens students’ cultural awareness and prevents intolerance from developing at an early age.

- Cultural Accommodation Through Local Wisdom

Story Excerpt:

“Masyarakat memakamkannya secara Islam di belakang klenteng... lalu kayu tersebut secara gotong royong dibawa oleh masyarakat.”

This scene reflects cultural accommodation, where Islamic rites and Chinese cultural spaces coexist peacefully. Khoiri (2019) explains that Indonesian Islam historically adapts to local traditions to maintain social harmony. As cultural literacy material, this narrative helps students understand that diversity is not a threat but part of regional identity. The element of *gotong royong* further reinforces anti-violence values and intergroup solidarity.

The *Klenteng Jamblang* folktale contains strong elements of religious moderation, tolerance, equality, and cultural accommodation, which align with established moderation frameworks (Khoiri, 2019; Manap, 2022; Saifuddin, 2019; Sutrisno, 2019). These values make it a powerful cultural literacy resource for students, helping them appreciate diversity and strengthen interreligious harmony.

Babad Cirebon: A Historical Oral Tradition for Enhancing Students’ Cultural Literacy and Moderate Worldviews

Analysis of *Babad Cirebon* reveals several elements of religious moderation embedded within the narrative, showing its strong potential as cultural literacy material for elementary school students. The story demonstrates respectful encounters among individuals from different religious backgrounds and highlights how early Cirebon civilization was built upon values of tolerance, peaceful transition, and respectful dialogue across belief systems.

- Respectful Encounter and Non-Coercive Religious Dialogue

One key section reflecting moderation values appears when *Sang Hyang Danuwarsih*, a Buddhist hermit, welcomes Walangsungsang, who seeks Islamic knowledge without hostility:

“Sang Hyang berkata, ‘Saya baru tahu adanya ilmu agama Muhammad itu... Kalau Pangeran ingin petunjuk gaib... terimalah dulu tentang kebudhaan yang sejati agar kepada Islam kelak akan menjadi mudah.’”

This excerpt shows acceptance rather than opposition. The Buddhist sage does not prohibit Walangsungsang from embracing Islam but instead gives transitional moral guidance. This reflects religious moderation in the form of *tasūmuh* (tolerance) and *ta’addul* (fairness), where differences in belief are not seen as reasons for conflict. These findings align with cultural literacy principles described by Lestari & Ramadan (2023), which emphasize that students must be exposed to narratives showing harmonious inter

religious contact to form balanced perspectives. Her study highlights that cultural literacy is strengthened when learners observe concrete examples of interfaith cooperation passed down by their ancestors.

- Peaceful Transition of Belief and Absence of Violence

Moderation also appears when Walangsungsang leaves the palace after Prabu Siliwangi rejects his wish to study Islam:

“Prabu Siliwangi membentak... Bila engkau tidak menuruti perintahku, pergilah dari keraton!”

“Pangeran... pergi dari keraton dengan membawa lampu... Orang yang berjaga tidak melihat kepergian Pangeran.”

Rather than engaging in rebellion or violence, Walangsungsang avoids confrontation. He chooses a peaceful departure, modeling restraint (*hilm*) and non-violence, core components of religious moderation. This aligns with Anwar et al. (2024), that moderation values are best internalized when students encounter stories illustrating peaceful conflict resolution. According to Anwar, moral narratives that portray nonviolent choices help children link religious values with peaceful behavior in social life.

- Harmony Between Islamic Saints and Local Belief Figures

Another important scene occurs when Walangsungsang is accepted and guided by several local hermits (Sang Hyang Danuwarsih, Sang Hyang NaNaga, and Sang Hyang Bango), who, despite belonging to pre-Islamic traditions, warmly assist his spiritual journey:

“Guru tertegun... ‘Sudah saatnya akhir dari Budha diganti dengan Islam.’... Pangeran berkata, ‘Terima kasih banyak. Saya sudah diberi nasihat tentang sejatinya hidup.’”

The story does not portray the older religious systems as enemies but as bridges of wisdom leading toward Islam. This illustrates *akomodasi budaya*, the peaceful blending of traditions. This finding resonates with Sutrisno (2019), who notes that Indonesian society historically accepted new religious teachings through adaptation rather than coercion. Using such stories in schools can help students understand that religious change in Indonesia was often harmonious and dialogical, not aggressive.

- Global Interfaith Interaction and Mutual Respect

Moderation values also appear during international episodes. For example, when Pangeran Walangsungsang (Syekh Abdul Iman) interacts respectfully with the King of Egypt and the King of Aceh. Notably, during a marriage proposal:

“Raja Mesir berkata... ‘Wahai Jawa, bolehkah adikmu saya nikahi?’ Pangeran menjawab, ‘Hamba mempersilakan keinginan Gusti.’”

This reflects diplomatic respect, cross-cultural marriage acceptance, and trust across ethnic and religious backgrounds. This aligns with Rohman et al. (2024), which emphasizes that exposing students to narratives of international religious harmony helps them develop *global religious literacy*, a key component of 21st-century multicultural education.

The Asal Usul Nadran: Coastal Cirebon Folklore as a Medium for Teaching Cultural Wisdom and Religious Moderation

The *Asal Usul Nadran* folktale contains various elements of religious moderation that can support the strengthening of cultural literacy in elementary schools. The story illustrates early cultural encounters, peaceful religious transitions, respect for local beliefs, and the preservation of harmony between humans, nature, and spiritual entities.

- Peaceful Religious Encounter and Early Islamic Introduction

Story Excerpt:

“Pada waktu itu beliau kedatangan Syeh Uro... untuk meminta izin untuk mengembangkan agama Islam di tanah Jawa. Akhirnya mendapat izin dari penguasa... dan menitipkan anaknya, Subang Larang untuk didik secara Islam.”

This excerpt illustrates that Islam entered Singhapura through dialogue, mutual respect, and non-coercive religious interaction. The ruler’s willingness to grant permission demonstrates tolerance and peaceful religious transition. This finding is consistent with Sibarani (2018), who states that local wisdom in Indonesian societies often promotes peaceful negotiation and social harmony within interreligious encounters, making it suitable for transmitting moderation values through storytelling. Similarly, Menna et al. (2020) argue that narratives containing multicultural interactions can support students’ understanding of diversity and peaceful coexistence.

- Cultural Accommodation and Respect for Local Beliefs

Story Excerpt:

“...kerajaan Singhapura mengadakan syukuran di sekitar laut... Penunggu laut merasa iri dan berkata, Saya menunggu di sini, tapi tidak diberi makan.’ Pangeran Jumajan menjawab... , “Tahun depan saya nadzar untuk memberikan makanan untuk penunggu laut”.

This section shows cultural accommodation, where local beliefs (penunggu laut) are acknowledged rather than excluded. The ritual is maintained as part of community harmony. This reflects what Safitri & Ramadan (2022) describe as the cultural function of folklore maintaining community cohesion by respecting inherited traditions. Similarly, Kusumawatit al. (2021) note that introducing children to local narratives helps them understand how traditional society harmonizes diverse cultural and spiritual perspectives.

- Symbolic Moral Education Through Traditional Rituals

Story Excerpt:

“...penunggu laut meminta ditambahkan kepala kerbau... kerbau adalah lambang kebodohan, maka manusia diharapkan tidak seperti kerbau yang badannya besar tetapi otaknya kecil.”

Here, ritual objects become moral metaphors. The buffalo symbolizes ignorance, teaching learners to pursue wisdom and self-awareness. According to Amponsah (2023), folk narratives can function as educational texts, particularly when they embed symbolic messages that guide children’s attitudes. Therefore, the symbolic use of ritual offerings in *Asal Usul Nadran* supports cultural literacy by enabling students to interpret moral lessons embedded in traditional stories.

- Harmony Between Humans, Nature, and Spiritual Guardians

Story Excerpt:

“Jangan lupa laut itu dijaga oleh Gusti Nabi Khidzir AS dan raja ikan Sang Hyang Baruna.”

This reflects a worldview where humans, nature, and spiritual beings coexist in mutual respect, promoting humility and ecological ethics. This corresponds with Michalopoulos & Xue (2021), who describe traditional ecological beliefs as part of collective cultural knowledge transmitted through oral tradition. Additionally, Prasetya et al. (2023) emphasize that cultural literacy in the 21st century must help students understand ecological interdependence as embedded in local culture.

Implementation of Strengthening Cultural Literacy through Cirebon Folk Tales with Content Religious Moderation

The implementation of strengthening cultural literacy in elementary schools was carried out through three interconnected strategies within the P3 (*Penguatan Profil Pelajar Pancasila*) framework: integrated learning, habitual reading activities, and integrating folklore into Pancasila Student Profile projects. These activities ensure that cultural literacy and religious moderation values embedded in Cirebon folk tales are not only introduced but also consistently practiced in students' daily learning experience.

- Integration of Cirebon Folk Tales in Relevant Learning

In classroom instruction, teachers embed Cirebon folk tales into subjects such as Indonesian language, social science, and PPKn. The story *Nadran*, for instance, is used to teach cultural traditions while highlighting religious values, especially the transformation of *sesajen* into a symbol of collective prayer and gratitude. This learning activity helps students understand moral messages while fostering cultural pride.

This approach aligns with research showing that folklore serves as a culturally grounded learning medium that strengthens children's cultural identity and supports moral development. Dahal & Bhatta (2021) affirm that folk narratives preserve ethical teachings and guide children in distinguishing right from wrong. Similarly, Engliana et al. (2021) demonstrate that storytelling enhances moral internalization and cultural continuity among children in West Java communities. By integrating local stories into classroom learning, schools reinforce cultural literacy while simultaneously grounding students in local wisdom that promotes tolerance and social harmony.

- Habitual Reading of Cirebon Folk Tales Containing Religious Moderation

Students participate in daily reading activities where they read short folk tales and discuss their moral implications. Teachers assign 10–15 minutes of daily reading, followed by reflective conversations about themes such as tolerance, national commitment, and non-violence.

Daily reading practices correspond with the findings of Dwi Aryani & Purnomo (2023), who note that School Literacy Movement activities effectively enhance students' reading culture and strengthen cultural awareness in elementary schools. In addition, Indriani et al. (2023) found that picture-based folklore books significantly increase students' reading interest, showing a 14.19% improvement over conventional teaching methods. Thus, integrating Cirebon folk tales into daily reading routines not only

enriches literacy skills but also reinforces cultural values and moderation principles through repeated, meaningful exposure.

- **Integrating Folklore into the Pancasila Student Profile (P5) Project**

In P5 thematic projects, students create posters, short videos, illustrated story retellings, or mini drama performances based on Cirebon folk tales. These projects highlight the Pancasila principles of “Unity in Diversity” and “Social Justice.” Students are encouraged to analyze the values of harmony, social cooperation, and interfaith respect depicted in the stories.

This implementation model aligns with research emphasizing that cultural activities and creative reinterpretations of folklore are effective strategies to strengthen cultural identity and collective memory. Prilosadoso et al. (2021) emphasize that digital or artistic adaptation of folklore helps children internalize ethical values and strengthens cultural literacy. Furthermore, Anderson et al. (2025) highlight that culturally responsive literacy practices significantly increase students’ motivation and deepen their engagement with culturally relevant texts. Through P5, students are not only learning about culture but also actively producing cultural expressions, making the learning process transformative and participatory.

The implementation of cultural literacy strengthening through P3 activities proves effective because it combines exposure (reading), exploration (learning activities), and expression (P5 projects). This three-layered model ensures that folklore is not merely read but also interpreted, discussed, and recreated, making cultural learning meaningful and memorable. These findings reinforce the argument presented in the dissertation that cultural literacy plays a vital role in shaping learners’ identity, fostering inclusivity, and sustaining intergenerational transmission of local wisdom. Moreover, the integration of religious moderation within folk narratives provides a culturally grounded approach to building tolerance, national commitment, and anti-violence attitudes in children, aligning with broader educational goals of character education in Indonesia.

CONCLUSION

This study conceptually shows that embedding Cirebon folk tales containing religious moderation values into elementary school learning can strengthen cultural literacy, nurture tolerant social attitudes, and encourage students to appreciate diversity within their multicultural environment. These insights suggest that educational policy should more explicitly support the development of localized literacy resources, teacher training on cultural integration, and curriculum designs that incorporate regional wisdom as part of national character education. At the same time, further research is needed to explore how similar folklore-based approaches function across different regions, how long-term student character outcomes develop through sustained exposure to cultural narratives, and how digital or multimodal adaptations of folklore may enhance engagement and deepen cultural understanding in contemporary classrooms.

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