

The Representation of Mothers as Bearers of Culture in Three Short Stories from Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Mothers occupy an important place in the smallest scale of the society, namely, the family. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to examine the representation of mothers as bearers of culture from three Indonesian short stories by finding out: 1) how the Indonesian mothers are portrayed in the three short stories; and, 2) how the Indonesian mothers in the three short stories are portrayed as bearers of culture. The approach employed in this research is literary descriptive analysis while applying the theory of motherhood and culture to answer the first and second research objective. The result shows that the Indonesian mothers are portrayed as individuals who are self-sacrificing, and those with the capacity to act as a bridge between individuals. Furthermore, the Indonesian mothers are portrayed as bearers of culture through their association with the process of baby-naming in accordance with their cultural identity, through their process of traditional or religious burial rites, and through language.



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I. INTRODUCTION

Mothers occupy an important place in the smallest scale of the society, namely, the family. Generally, mothers are often considered as the nurturer of the family; mothers are commonly the ones taking care of their children, especially when a married couple went through a divorce or when they decided to live separately (Zagel & Iancker, 2022). Furthermore, mothers' roles are crucial for the education of the children; for instance, in the Covid-19 pandemic, mothers have to embrace the role of a teacher as well (Addi-Racchah & Tamir, 2022).

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In the cultural scope, specifically in the Asian community, the roles of mothers are central to the preservation of a society and a family's culture, traditions and values. For instance, according to Erel, Reynolds, & Kaptani (2018), migrant mothers uphold a significant process in transmitting the family's origin culture to the children, or assist the children in adjusting to living in a new country with a new cultural identity. Another example of mothers' close association with culture is shown by the role of Korean immigrant fathers and mothers to support and guide their children in making decisions in pursuit of well-being; this action is in accordance with the Confucian value of emotional restraint underlying Korean culture where parents should support and sacrifice for their children by providing food, housing and education (Floyd & Mormon, 1998 as cited in Yoon et al., 2021).

The central roles of mothers in relation to culture are also represented in various literary studies as well. Qasim and Khan (2023) look into two of Toni Morrison's novels, *The Bluest Eye* and *Sula*, presenting the marginalized experience of black mothers which have been lacking in the discussion of European patriarchal narrative of motherhood through the lens of gender and race. The discussion of a mother's position in the intersection of culture continues, as shown in the research done by Ray and Karmakar (2022), highlighting the intergenerational relationships and struggles of mothers and daughters in Ashnapura Debi's trilogy, within the backdrop of a Bengali Hindu lower and middle class community in *Pratham Pratisruti* or *The First Promise* (1965), *Subarnalata* (1967) and *Bakul Katha* or *Bakul's Story* (1974). Another study done by Babu and Sakunthala (2021) looks into the aspect of 'otherness' of motherhood in the selected African novels of Buchi Emecheta, underscoring the oppression of women derived from a patriarchal society. The next research which discusses the relation of mother and culture is done by Setri & Setiawan (2020) through socio-historical perspective to look into the depiction of matriarchal society in the novel *The Secret Life of Bees* by Sue Monk Kidd, where there are instances of matriarchal society activities such as the worship of Black Mary by the female characters. Lastly, Allagbe and Akinola (2021) discovered how African women in four novels are redefined and represented by two male and female writers; it is unveiled that a matriarchal and patriarchal society complements each other. It can be implied that the literary study revolving around the topic of motherhood and culture is an ongoing discussion. Yet, there is still insufficient examination towards how mothers are bearers of culture in a certain society through their general portrayal as a self-sacrificing individual who can connect diverse individuals as they are placed between the intersection of society and culture. Therefore, this gap is seen as an opportunity to enrich the knowledge of this particular research avenue. Hence, to enrich the existing studies, the researcher proposes an analysis of the representation of mothers as bearers of culture in three short stories from Indonesia taken from Dalang Publishing in accordance with the aforementioned research gap. In order to achieve the research objective, there are two research questions which become the starting points of analysis: first, how are the Indonesian mothers portrayed in the three short stories? (1); second, how are the Indonesian mothers in the three short stories portrayed as bearers of culture? (2).

Motherhood

The role of motherhood also varies from one culture to another. In the African culture, women are synonymous with being a mother, child bearer and nurturer (Walker, 1984 as

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cited in Triwahana & Angelinawati, 2020). For instance, in Tanzania, motherhood is considered an essential aspect of a woman's respectability, and that an unmarried woman is expected to be asexual while monogamous when married (Beckham et al, 2015). On the other part of the world, Jasjit K. Sangha in "Contextualizing South Asian Motherhood" explains how mothers in South Asian context cultivate and express identity and selfhood while keeping in line with culture and norm (O'Reilly, 2014). Sangha explains that South Asian mothers have to negotiate culture, family and selfhood while carrying out their role as a mother. In Indonesia, located in South East Asia, mothers are seen as a companion for her husband, children and manager of the family in accordance with the dictation of the society, culture and religious belief; in other words, mothers are inseparable from the realm of religion and culture (Suryakusuma, 2011 and Margaretha, 2019 as cited in Triwahana & Angelinawati, 2020). Thus, a mother is expected to prioritize others' need first, especially when she is living in a patriarchal society which dictates her what to do and how to identify herself. Furthermore, a mother's world is not a solitary place, but rather a sphere which intersects with the cultural and religious realm, making her a bridge between these worlds and the individuals living in it. To summarize, mothers are expected to bear the identity of their society and culture. This idea would be illustrated later in the analysis of the selected short stories set in Indonesia, a part of Asia.

Culture

The representation of mothers in the selected short stories is examined in relation to culture. The researchers argue that the portrayal of mothers in these stories is inextricably linked to the culture in which they exist, as demonstrated through their words, actions, ways of thinking, and the people and communities with whom they interact. In order to gain a deeper understanding of this connection, the authors posit that a comprehensive examination of culture and its various dimensions is necessary. Culture is defined as a way of life that encompasses all social dimensions and facilitates interaction and understanding among individuals, shaped by collective beliefs and behaviors (Edara, 2017). Furthermore, culture also shapes an individual's perspective and influences how they think, act, feel, and value; to demonstrate, Edara (2017) explains how Western and Eastern culture (in general scope, without casting an Orientalist or Occidental perspective) views the concept of 'self' differently: "the Eastern self makes a healthy development by dependency on others and through the feeling of fusion, while the Western self develops through the process of separation" (Okonogi as cited in Edara, 2017, p. 279).

II. METHODOLOGY

Qualitative study is the disposition of this research. According to Manyak & Manyak (2021), literary analysis aims to uncover the deeper meanings contained within literary texts and enables one to understand how a literary piece is thought-provoking, revealing or enjoyable, hence leading the reader to contemplate about literature's meaning and purpose (Simanjuntak, 2023). To narrow the scope of literary analysis, the researcher would also employ a descriptive way viable to analyze and observe the storylines, where multiple variables are allowed to be the part of analysis (Mulia & Pardi, 2020; Usman et al, 2020) since qualitative research allows various individuals' point of view and focuses on description

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and interpretation (Juniardi & Nafisah, 2015). The data of this study is collected from three short stories taken from Dalang Publishing website. The first one is "Jejak" or "Traces" written by Wina Bojonegoro in Bahasa Indonesia and translated by Alvin Steviro (Bojonegoro, 2022). The second one is titled "Horas, Ibu!" or "Rest in Peace, Mother!" in English, with Reni Renatawati as the writer and Novita Dewi as the translator (Renatawati, 2022). Finally, the last object of the study is "Semayamkan Mamak" by Lintang Amartya Padmarini and translated into English by Umar Thamrin as "Mother's Footsteps" (Henderson, Sandra, & Newman, 2015). Hence, there are several steps required to achieve the two research objectives in accordance with the research questions. First, the representation of Indonesian mothers in the three short stories would be examined by the theory of motherhood. Departing from the first research objective, the theory of culture is utilized to unravel the portrayal of Indonesian mothers as bearers of culture.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The result and discussion is divided into three parts. The first and second part elaborates on the discussion of the first research question, namely, to find how the Indonesian mothers in the three short stories are portrayed as bearers of culture. From the analysis, the results show that the mothers are portrayed as a self-sacrificing figure. Moreover, a mother is also someone who becomes a bridge of communication between individuals. Then, the third part of the result and discussion uncovers how the Indonesian mothers are portrayed as bearers of culture.

Self-Sacrificing

The first mother figure examined is Respati, the mother of Palupi and wife of Wibowo in the short story "Traces" written by Wina Bojonegoro. Respati is depicted as self-sacrificing, as she does not have a positive experience regarding choosing a name for her daughter. She goes along with her husband's decision, as exemplified in her flashback where she disagreed with her husband's suggestion to use the name 'Palupi Retnaningrum Hapsari' for their daughter but eventually agreed due to his determination and cultural underpinnings.

In her flashback, Respati argued with her husband when she was pregnant of her daughter, remarking that the name 'Palupi Retnaningrum Hapsari' was too long. She argued that a two-word name for her daughter is sufficient; for instance, Respati's full name was 'Respati Rahayu' and her husband's name was 'Wibowo Besari'. Respati came to understand the existence of unspoken regulations for naming within the Javanese community. She observed that individuals with only a single-word name were considered to have origins from low-class, working, or farming families. In contrast, individuals occupying positions such as civil servants, educators, and merchants typically had two-word names. Meanwhile, a three-word name indicates an individual's aristocratic heritage or high-ranking status. Despite this outdated trend of these name rankings in contemporary Indonesian society, Wibowo was firm in his beliefs. He thought that it necessary for his children and grandchildren to possess three-word Javanese names that reflected the elevated status of their ancestry

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Palupi, a new mother, had a similar experience where she had to sacrifice her ideals. Wibowo could not conceal his satisfaction when he questioned Palupi's opinion about the name he chose for his future grandchild, and fully believed that his chosen name was magnificent. However, Palupi stated that this choice of name was already decided by her and her husband; in other words, she refused her father's name suggestion. Wibowo was momentarily stunned and rigid, and his expression dropped as he gazed at his wife. Respati, noticing the rising tension rising between the two, she acted as the mediator by asking what will be the baby's name. Palupi responded by explaining her preference for the name of 'Alexa Caroline Andromeda', derived from Greek: 'Alexa' originates from a Greek term meaning a woman who fights for humanity; 'Caroline' stands for strong and remarkable; while 'Andromeda' is the name of a galaxy surpassing the Milky Way. Wibowo's response was furious as shown in the excerpt below:

"It seems that this younger generation no longer respects their ancestors." Wibowo's voice rose again. "Why do you have to use foreign words for something as essential as a name? A name should be used to preserve one's sense of self, so that the young won't forget where they came from!" (Bojonegoro, 2022)

Here, it can be seen that Palupi is portrayed as a self-sacrificing mother in order to comply with her parents' wish to preserve cultural identity, as she gives up her initial determination to name her child on her own. Her experience is similar to her mother's, as if Respati unconsciously reproduces her own experience with her daughter.

Palupi's obedience towards her parents came with a cost, leading to a subsequent argument with her husband Syarif. Palupi gently begged for Syarif to agree to the Javanese name and traditional *tingkeban* ceremony requested by her mother, yet Syarif firmly believed that it is the parents' non-negotiable decision to name their child without any intervention:

Syarif held his wife's eyes. He was done with this discussion. The naming issue was non-negotiable. *It's the parents' right to name their children without anyone's interference.* (Bojonegoro, 2022)

Another description of a mother as a self-sacrificing individual is exemplified in the figure Jakob's mother in the story "Rest in Peace, Mother!" by Reni Renatawati. One passage in the story describes Jakob's dream of encountering his late mother after an argument with his brothers. Jakob was furious towards his brothers for arriving very late after their mother's passing, as if they had deserted their family. In his dream, Jakob's mother reminded him of an incident from fourteen years prior, in which he defended his family. He remembered the occurrence in the market when he physically struck a shop keeper, he was familiar with. The shopkeeper had exclaimed to Jakob, saying how could Jakob forget his family, and did his mother fail to instil this value in his brothers; or has his family abandoned tradition, permitting his brothers to abandon their roots and forget their homeland. Jakob had not intended to create a disturbance; however, he had lost his temper after the shopkeeper insulted his family. To make amends to everyone, Jakob's mother repeatedly knelt, offering apologies to those in the market for Jakob's immature outburst. Hence, it can be inferred that this passage illustrates

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that Jakob's mother is portrayed as an individual who is willing to sacrifice her own self-esteem for the sake of her son.

The third case of a self-sacrificing mother can be found in "Mother's Footsteps" by Lintang Amartya Padmarini. Man Beta was a Japanese-Indonesian boy living in Buru Island (in Maluku) among the native Alfuru tribes. The story centres around the character of Man Beta, a Japanese-Indonesian boy living in the native Alfuru tribe on Buru Island in Maluku. His mother, Maryati, originated from a respectable family in Semarang, Java but was kidnapped as a comfort woman during World War II and brought to Buru Island. After Japan lost the war against Indonesia, the soldiers left and the pregnant women and young mothers were forced to marry the native Alfuru men. Maryati, who did not love her husband, had to marry him for the sake of survival and protecting her child. Despite her husband's abusive behavior, she had to stay with him for the sake of her child. This passage illustrates that Maryati is depicted as a mother who sacrifices her own happiness for the well-being of her child.

Man Beta's mother would curse the soldiers who had used the girls as sexual slaves, then abandoned them once Japan lost the war. The mother would recount tales of the Japanese soldiers' cruelty, which made Man Beta anguished to imagine his mother's condition. The mother also spoke of the challenges they faced on the nearly uninhabited desert island, such as giving birth without medical assistance, malnutrition, and malaria. In the end, only she and one other girl survived. They later married members of the Alfuru tribe on Buru Island. Man Beta's mother revealed that her reason for marrying her stepfather was to ensure their survival. As a result, the protagonist's relationship with her stepfather was strained, characterized by coldness and apathy, verging on hatred. Whenever the stepfather would yell at the protagonist due to failed fishing or unsuccessful hunting, the mother would whisper to the Man Beta in Indonesian, "Run! Run before he hits you!" (Padmarini, 2022)

From the three excerpts above, it can be understood that society and culture dictate the lives of women and mothers, unconsciously restraining women and mothers' freedom to make their own decisions because women are expected to receive the limited roles of being a wife and also a mother. This point is further elaborated by Henderson et al.: "many scholars around the globe have identified that this hegemonic ideology of motherhood is based on what Freidan (1963) first called the feminine mystique – women's passive acceptance of the limited roles of wife and mother" (Allen et al., 2013 as cited in Henderson et al., 2015, p. 512). Quoting from Maithreyi Krishnara, Sangha wrote: "it is not the fact of mothering that makes women vulnerable, but their social construction, the implications for women owing from the meaning attached to the idea of motherhood, and the terms and conditions under which it is allowed to express itself" (O'Reilly, 2014, p.414); motherhood is glorified yet patriarchally defined and based on certain criteria. According to Widyaningsih et al. (2020), Javanese women (such as Respati and Maryati) serve as representations of perseverance and determination in promoting ethical values, personal autonomy, nurturing, discipline, empathy, sacrifice, endurance, genuineness, and accountability; within the household, the female figure takes on the responsibility of embodying an idealized standard.

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Meanwhile, research on the role of Batak women shown in Batak songs done by Girsang, Nasution & Surbakti (2014) discovered that Batak women (such as Jakob's mother) exhibit unwavering dedication and affection towards their children's education, regardless of the nature of their occupation, as long as it is deemed positive even if it requires working long hours from early morning to late at night, enduring harsh weather conditions such as rain and sun, they are willing to sacrifice their own lives for the betterment of their children's future; this value of a mother's sacrificial love is reflected in Nahum Situmorang's (2013) composition "Anakhon Hi Do Hamoraon Di Au (Children Are My Wealth)," singing of the profound love and devotion of Batak women towards their children. Hence, the basic understanding of being a mother in Asia (including in Indonesia) means to devote her entire life to the family even up to the point of sacrifice, have a strong sense of duty and obligation, and even neglecting her selfhood (O'Reilly, 2014). This case is seen in Respati, Palupi, Jakob's mother and Man Beta's mother – all of them sacrificed themselves for various reasons, yet all leads to the (society's expectation) of a family-devoted mother.

A Bridge between Individuals

In "Traces", Respati (the mother) maintains the role as a mediator between the father and daughter. After a conflict between Wibowo and Palupi over the phone, Respati attempted to reach out to her daughter and persuade her to adopt a Javanese baby name. Ultimately, at the end of the story, Palupi acceded to her parents' request due to Respati's gentle persuasion and her own sense of cultural identity.

After a certain day, Wibowo ceased communication with Palupi, who he had previously displayed immense pride in. In an attempt to reconcile the relationship between father and daughter, Respati initiated contact with Palupi without informing Wibowo. She advised her daughter to take the first step in reaching out to her father:

Just like any mother would, Respati tried to repair the rift between father and daughter. The soon-to-be grandmother called her daughter without telling Wibowo. "Dear, shouldn't you reach out to your father first?" (Bojonegoro, 2002)

If a mother has a role to connect father and child, she also has a role as a communication bridge between siblings as shown in "Horas, Ibu!" ("Rest in Peace, Mother!"). Jakob is the youngest son who had taken care of his mother until her death, while his brothers arrived late to her passing. Jakob was resentful towards his brothers for their perceived lack of care and concern. Despite his wife's advice to open his heart to his siblings, Jakob was initially unwilling to do so. However, in a dream that night, Jakob's late mother advised him to listen to his wife and reconcile with his brothers. This illustrates the powerful influence that the memory of Jakob's mother, even in the absence of her physical presence, has on the unity of her children. Furthermore, it should be noted that Jakob's mother's persuasion could not be done in his dreams if his wife had not asked him to forgive his brothers. Without her counsel, Jakob's mother could not convince her son to follow his wife's advice which adheres to harmony between siblings.

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In his dream, Jakob's mother spoke to him about a conversation that his wife had with him a few days prior to forgive his brothers. His mother then advised him to listen to her, adding that she believed Jakob's brothers came with good intentions. Jakob, feeling relieved, began to cry, causing his mother to comfort him and remind him that it was never too late to make amends. His mother then left, with Jakob watching her frail back slowly fade away in the wind.

In "Mother's Footsteps", Maryati taught her son Man Beta Bahasa Indonesia. The language serves as a secret mode of communication between Maryati and her son, Man Beta, since Maryati's Alfuru husband did not understand it. Through Maryati's knowledge of Bahasa Indonesia, passed down to her son, Man Beta was able to communicate with a wide range of individuals, including his mother, a prisoner on Buru Island named Karman, and Maryati's relatives in Semarang. In this way, Maryati became an indirect mediator of communication between her son and the people he encountered as shown in the following paragraph.

According to Man Beta, his only companion on the island of Buru was his mother, who was highly intelligent and taught him how to speak Indonesian, and Karman (a Buru prisoner) whom he developed a close friendship with. Man Beta later revealed to some men in Semarang that he was the grandson of Raden Projowinoto, which surprised them. The group of men inquired who his mother was. Man Beta replied that his mother was Sumaryati. They were stunned, as one of them exclaimed, "Oh, my Lord!" This exclamation was in reference to their realization that the individual's mother was the Sumaryati who had been taken away by the Japanese.

All of the portrayal of mothers above shows that a mother stands at the intersection of society; directly and indirectly, the mothers are portrayed as a bridge between individuals in society. This aspect is in line with the concept that motherhood is maintained through the overlapping aspects of economy, society, politics and religion in Indonesian context (Triwahana & Angelinawati, 2020). This notion is also strengthened by research done by Prinds et al. (2014) on the experience of motherhood and the four interdependent dimensions of life proposed by Emmy Van Deurzen (an existentialist psychotherapist and philosopher) which is pertinent to the role of mothers as a bridge between individuals in society. It is discovered that during the transition to motherhood, women create meaning in their lives by navigating the *mitwelt* dimension, or the social dimension, which involves a shift in focus from the self to the public realm (Prinds et al, 2014). Mothers prioritize the needs of their infants and experience intense emotions of love, sacrifice, and devotion, as well as a deep sense of connectedness and reverence for older women from previous generations (Prinds et al, 2014). In other words, mothers are gifted with power to express their societal agency in connective ways.

Mother, Bearer of Culture

This part of the result and discussion explores how the Indonesian mothers are portrayed as bearers of culture. The mothers in the selected three stories are deeply connected to culture,

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as shown through their association with the process of baby name-choosing in accordance with their Javanese cultural identity in "Traces". Meanwhile, in "Rest in Peace, Mother!" and "Mother's Footsteps", the mothers' cultural connection are exemplified through their process of traditional or religious burial rites and through language as well.

In "Jejak", Respati and Palupi's figures are deeply connected with their Javanese culture demonstrated through actions, speech, and thoughts. On one hand, Respati's clear association with Javanese culture is evident through her parenting practices, her conversations with her husband, and her reflections on the choice of a name for her baby. It can be inferred that Respati willingly embraces her Javanese culture, although her perspective on it may differ slightly from that of her husband. On the other hand, Palupi's relationship with her Javanese culture is depicted as ambivalent, particularly in regards to the selection of a name for her baby. Defying her culture, in this context, would mean going against her parents' wish to name her child in the Javanese tradition. This ambivalence is shown through her initial resistance to her parents' wish, as she expressed her preference for a Greek name by purchasing baby furniture using that name. However, her mother was able to persuade her through a secret phone call, emphasizing that a Javanese baby name preserves one's Javanese identity and ensures that the uniqueness of being Indonesian, specifically Javanese, is forever stamped in the name.

In that phone call, Respati expressed her hope that one day her daughter and her husband would understand that one of the ways to preserve one's Javanese identity is through the naming of a child. Respati believed that someday the children would trace back their cultural and ancestral origins by questioning the meaning of their names. Furthermore, Respati asserted her thought by remarking that the uniqueness of a place will be emanated in the child's name wherever they are; if someday Palupi's daughter travel abroad, people would recognize that she was not only an Indonesian but of Javanese blood.

Respati perceived her daughter's choking sobs through the phone. Despite the emotionally charged atmosphere, Respati maintained her composure. She recognizes that in a globalized world with rapidly evolving circumstances, the conservation of national identity is an arduous and idealistic challenge. For Respati, foreign names are perceived as more contemporary, whereas the preservation of Javanese names can be equated to the maintenance of a wet thread in an upright position.

As a result, Palupi who initially resisted the idea of using a Javanese name for her child ultimately decided to change her stance. However, this decision led to a heated argument with her husband, Syarif, who disagreed with her request to reconsider the name of her child and the associated *tingkeban* ceremony. The husband believed that upon marriage, a woman's identity, including the naming of her offspring, should be fully subsumed by that of her husband. Syarif made a statement regarding the transfer of ownership of a woman from her parents to her husband in a wedding ceremony. This statement elicited a strong response from Palupi, who argued that a dowry did not equate to the purchase of a woman. She explained that the expenses incurred by her parents in raising her far exceeded the value of

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the dowry presented by her husband. Palupi also emphasized that she surrendered herself to Syarif out of love and not as a result of a purchase; she felt as if she was reduced to an object. The discussion then shifted to the naming of their child, where Palupi requested that their baby be named according to her father's gift, a Javanese name. Syarif initially opposed the request, citing religious reasons, but eventually conceded. Her husband ultimately agreed to use a Javanese name for their first child, but argued that their religion did not recognize the *tingkeban* ceremony. Palupi, on the other hand, believed that tradition and religion should be mutually harmonious.

Next, the representation of mother as a bearer of culture which is examined in the short story "Rest in Peace, Mother!" is shown through her indirect presence during relocation of her burial. Jakob's mother did not explicitly express her thoughts on the Batak culture. However, her association with it is undeniable as demonstrated through the reasons for her son's return to relocate her burial to a more appropriate place and through the process of the burial itself – her indirect presence is able to be identified through her sons' way of addressing and talking about her, as if she were alive, as shown in the paragraph below.

Lamsihar informed the family that they wished to move the remains of their mother to a more appropriate location, which was the reason behind their return home. Ruhut stated that although it was too late to see their mother, relocating her remains was the only gesture they could make to provide her with a better final resting place. Jakob's sudden outpouring of emotion surprised his two brothers.

"We would like to ask your family to participate in moving Mother's remains to a more suitable place," replied Lamsihar. "That's why we all came home together."

"We knew that it was too late for us to see Mother," Ruhut added, with a sad smile. "But this is the only thing we can do at least Mother can have a better resting place."

Jakob began to sob. (Renatawati, 2022)

Jakob confessed to having been consumed by anger and apologized to his family by kowtowing repeatedly. Yet, Ruhut reassured Jakob that they were equally responsible and suggested that they start by relocating their mother's grave. During the relocation process, the gravediggers signaled that they had found the bones of Jakob's mother. Jakob joined his brothers in responding to the call and all three stood holding white cloths, ready to receive their mother's remains.

The last example of the representation of a mother as bearer of culture is found in "Mother's Footsteps". This aspect is linked to Maryati's description as a self-sacrificing mother and a communication bridge between her son and the rest of the Indonesian-speaking world shown through her teachings of Indonesian language. Without the aforementioned two points, life would not be a choice for Man Beta, let alone to trace his origin of culture to regain his identity and mother's footsteps. In the story's finale, Man Beta ultimately succeeded in his journey to Semarang, meeting his mother's relatives and experienced the proper Islamic burial of his mother, which is a cultural practice unfamiliar to him.

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Man Beta reflected on the funeral of his mother, expressing that the priest led a prayer for the deceased, although he was unsure if his mother practiced any faith.

She was buried in a way that even I did not understand. Here, she was wrapped in a cloth, her bones were prayed over with a prayer different from that of the elders on Buru Island. Here, they dug her grave with shovels and hoes; while in Buru, only wooden tools were allowed to dig her grave. In Buru, she was allowed to be buried with her favorite kebaya; here, this was not allowed. (Padmarini, 2022)

Man Beta noted that the manner in which the mother was buried was different from the traditional methods of their hometown on Buru Island. Despite this, he became emotional and screamed at the gravedigger, demanding to bury the mother himself. After receiving the white bag containing his mother's remains from Aunt Marni, Man Beta fell silent and the wind blew quietly. In the end, Man Beta said his last goodbye to the mother and believed that she had finally arrived in a place of peace, with him burying her in Semarang according to her wishes.

From the excerpts of the three stories above, it can be inferred that the world of a mother, who is seen as a self-sacrificing female figure and loyal to their family, overlaps intensely with the cultural sphere. This is shown through the cases of Respati, Palupi, Jakob's mother and Sumaryati: Respati and Palupi were inseparable from their Javanese culture as shown through their perception and action toward Javanese names; Jakob's mother's burial procession is deeply associated with Batak tradition; and, Sumaryati opens up a path for Man Beta towards her world in Java through her teaching of Bahasa Indonesia, allowing her son to witness the other side of her life apart from Buru Island, including introducing Man Beta to her religion through her burial rites. It can be proposed that through the figures of mothers in the three short stories, their children are able to understand the world around them in a more comprehensive way – be it cultural identity, sibling relationships or language and religion. Implicitly saying, a mother emanates a powerful influence on their children's lives, including in the aspect of culture as she willingly becomes a self-sacrificing nurturer and a bridge between individuals in society. As Edara (2017) states, "cultures or cultural values, which are described as constructively created behaviors based on collective beliefs, are omnipresent at multiple levels in every human behavior and interaction" (Edara, 2017, p. 273); in other words, culture and the transmission of cultural values are also present in level of family interaction, specifically in this context, a mother-child interaction as shown in the three short stories.

IV. CONCLUSION

An implication can be drawn from the results and discussion presented above. Whether dead or alive, the omnipresence of a mother as bearer of culture still radiates a strong influence in the lives of the children. The Indonesian mothers in "Traces", "Rest in Peace, Mother!" and "Mother's Footsteps" are portrayed as individuals who are self-sacrificing and those with the capacity to act as a bridge between individuals. Lastly, they are portrayed as bearers of culture through their association with the process of baby name-choosing in

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accordance with their Javanese cultural identity, through their process of traditional or religious burial rites, and through language.

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