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Revitalizing the Alam Roh Legend through Short Story Adaptation in Indonesian Language Learning: Cultural Memory, Religious Beliefs, and Nationalism

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ABSTRACT

Oral traditions preserve historical memories, religious beliefs, and cultural identities across generations, yet how oral legends are transformed into literary works for language learning remains underexplored. Drawing on Assmann's cultural memory, Ong's orality and literacy, and Hutcheon's theory of adaptation, this qualitative case study examines the revitalization of the Alam Roh Legend from South Kalimantan through short story adaptation in Indonesian language learning. The method involved interviews with five informants, observation, documentation, written sources, and expert review, together with a questionnaire completed by 36 Grade XI students and brief student interviews. The results show that the legend intertwines memories of the Physical Revolution with Banjar Islamic beliefs, including the authority of *ulama* (Islamic religious scholars), *wafak* associated with spiritual protection, and a bathing ritual for fighters. The adaptation retained key figures, places, events, and protective beliefs while unifying the setting, adding dialogue, and adopting third-person narration, presenting community beliefs as part of the community's worldview rather than as historical facts. Students' responses to seven nationalism values were positive (M = 3.91–4.24), highest for courage and lowest for national identity grounded in local culture. Literary adaptation can thus serve as an intermediary stage between community storytelling and classroom learning.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Oral traditions are an important component of intangible cultural heritage because they preserve historical knowledge, collective memories, beliefs, and values across generations. Vansina (1985) explains that oral traditions provide a means of understanding the past through orally transmitted testimonies, while Danandjaja (1997) situates legends within folklore that remains alive through social processes. Sustaining such traditions, however, becomes challenging when opportunities for intergenerational transmission decline. The 2003 UNESCO Convention identifies formal and non-formal education as important means of safeguarding intangible heritage (UNESCO, 2003), a mandate that resonates with Target 4.7 of Sustainable Development Goal 4 on appreciating cultural diversity (United Nations, 2015). In Indonesia, the *Kurikulum Merdeka* provides opportunities to connect learning with students' social and cultural contexts. Research on the Saprahan tradition in West Kalimantan (Putri et al., 2024) and on ethnopedagogy in early childhood education (Sakti et al., 2024) shows the educational relevance of local wisdom and culturally grounded approaches. However, the pedagogical potential of oral legends requires closer examination, particularly regarding how their historical memories, religious beliefs, and cultural values can be transformed into literary texts and integrated into Indonesian language learning.

Stories originating in students' own communities can help them understand experiences, values, and history through texts connected to their environments. Cahyati and Arifin (2021) demonstrate that local legends contain character-education values that can be incorporated into learning. Such stories are relevant to the Grade XI unit Exploring National History through Short Stories (Marwati & Waskitaningtyas, 2021), which guides students in understanding historically situated narratives and the constituent elements of short stories. Studies have also developed short-story teaching materials grounded in intrinsic elements and local wisdom (Damayanti et al., 2022; Saputro et al., 2021). However, using local traditions as learning materials requires careful consideration of how stories are transformed when traditions sustained through community storytelling are transferred into written texts.

Legends associated with figures, places, and past events can also serve as resources for introducing local history, provided that community accounts are examined in relation to written historical sources. Education offers one avenue for revitalizing oral traditions by bringing knowledge embedded in community life into learning activities (Luardini, 2023; Setiaji et al., 2026; Syahfitri et al., 2026). Community-based documentation can support heritage preservation and strengthen local identity (Tumnanchit et al., 2026), while youth participation remains crucial for the continuity of cultural knowledge (Khairani et al., 2025). In this study, revitalization is understood as the re-presentation of the Alam Roh Legend through the documentation of oral accounts, the identification of its historical and cultural elements, its adaptation into a short story, and its use as a learning resource in Grade XI Indonesian language instruction. The written text is not

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positioned as a replacement for the oral tradition but as a means of re-presenting cultural knowledge in an educational setting.

The Alam Roh Legend is an oral tradition from Paku Alam Village, Sungai Tabuk District, Banjar Regency, closely associated with collective memories of the people's struggle involving ALRI Division IV and Hasan Basry during the Physical Revolution in South Kalimantan. Regional historical sources document this struggle (Ideham et al., 2003), and Hendraswati (2010) records Alam Roh in the context of resistance against Dutch colonial rule. Assmann's (2011) theory of cultural memory explains how shared representations of the past contribute to collective identity, while Ong's (2012) account of orality and literacy highlights the role of interpersonal oral transmission in sustaining knowledge. Local stories may thus preserve distinctive versions of the past shaped by community memory (Syahrul et al., 2026). The legend should consequently be examined both in relation to corroborated historical records and as a cultural narrative through which the Banjar community interprets its past.

The legend also contains religious and cultural dimensions relevant to the study of Banjar Muslim society. Community accounts refer to the role of *ulama* (Islamic religious scholars), *wafak* or *rajah* associated with spiritual protection, objects believed to possess special powers, and a bathing ritual connected with the preparation of fighters. These elements can be examined as expressions of vernacular Islam, in which religious understandings interact with local cultural practices (Damayanti, 2025), and in light of the historical significance of Islamic scholars in South Kalimantan (Mujiburrahman, 2023). Heritage transmission, moreover, involves continuing interpretation and community participation rather than passive preservation (Chung, 2024; Moneta et al., 2025). The legend's association with the independence struggle also connects religious and cultural memory with nationalism, as studies of ALRI Division IV and the Physical Revolution in South Kalimantan have shown (Firdaus et al., 2025; Handy et al., 2022; Prawitasari et al., 2021; Sari et al., 2022).

Bringing legends into the classroom requires forms of presentation that bridge oral tradition and text-based learning. Hutcheon (2013) conceptualizes adaptation as both a creative process and a product with its own distinct form, and adaptation across media may change narrative structure, language, and storytelling techniques (Nurhasanah, 2022; Ramadhani & Hapsarani, 2025). Because not every element of an oral account can be transferred directly into a short story, adaptors must decide which elements to retain, develop, or rearrange. Traditions can also be adapted to learning objectives (Mahmudi & Rizal, 2025; Yusuf, 2023). The adaptation of the Alam Roh Legend is therefore understood as a transformation in the mode of cultural transmission: knowledge conveyed through community storytelling is recast as a short story for Indonesian language learning.

Previous studies show that the reconstruction of folktales can reintroduce cultural values through narrative forms adapted to readers' needs (Juansah et al., 2021; Susiati &

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Pratiwi, 2024), that cultural values are transmitted through social and educational practices (Khoiriyah et al., 2025; Putri et al., 2024), and that folkloric memory connects fragments of community knowledge into broader interpretations of the past (Gülüm, 2023). Despite these contributions, four issues remain insufficiently addressed. First, research on literary adaptation, or *alih wahana*, has often examined the transformation of existing literary works into other media (Nurhasanah, 2022; Ramadhani & Hapsarani, 2025), leaving the adaptation of orally transmitted legends into short stories specifically designed for classroom learning less explored. Second, studies of folklore in education have frequently emphasized the use of existing stories as teaching materials, particularly for character education (Amin, 2022; Cahyati & Arifin, 2021), rather than investigating how historical memories, cultural knowledge, and religious beliefs are selected, retained, and transformed during adaptation. Third, although memory studies emphasize that cultural memory must be actively transmitted rather than merely archived (Kennedy & Silverstein, 2023), and oral tradition stories are increasingly used as vehicles of collective memory in language education (Guarín, 2025), few studies have combined theories of cultural memory, orality and literacy, and adaptation to trace how a legend moves from community storytelling into a written text and then into the classroom. Fourth, studies of Indonesian folklore have documented mystical and supernatural elements and their relevance as learning resources (Rahmawati & Lestari, 2025), while research on Muslim communities shows that supernatural beliefs are continually negotiated with Islamic teachings (Izzuddin, 2022); however, little attention has been given to how such beliefs in local Muslim oral traditions can be presented and discussed in the classroom without being treated either as historical facts or as mere superstition. This study addresses these gaps by examining the cultural and historical elements retained in the adaptation, the changes made to narrative structure and literary form, and the integration of the resulting short story into Grade XI Indonesian language learning.

The novelty of this study lies in conceptualizing the revitalization of oral tradition as cultural transmission through literary adaptation and educational use. By connecting Assmann's (2011) cultural memory, Ong's (2012) orality and literacy, and Hutcheon's (2013) theory of adaptation, the study integrates three analytical dimensions—the transmission of collective memory, the shift from oral to written narrative, and the reinterpretation of cultural meanings—and extends them to classroom use and students' responses to the nationalism values represented in the text.

2. METHODS

Research Design and Procedures

This study employed a qualitative case study design incorporating a practice-based literary adaptation process and a supplementary descriptive quantitative component. The qualitative approach was used to interpret the historical knowledge, cultural meanings, religious beliefs, and narrative transformations associated with the legend in its

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community context (Creswell & Poth, 2024; Moleong, 2019), while descriptive statistics summarized students' responses to the nationalism values represented in the adapted short story.

Research Setting, Participants, and Ethics

The study was conducted from January to March 2026 at two sites in Banjar Regency, South Kalimantan. The first was the area surrounding the Tugu Perjuangan (Monument of Struggle) and the Alam Roh Museum in Paku Alam Village, Sungai Tabuk District. Five informants were purposively selected based on their knowledge of, involvement in, or professional connection with the Alam Roh Legend and its historical context: three legend bearers (P1–P3), the museum manager (P4), and a historian (P5) (Table 1). The legend bearers were selected for their knowledge of and experience in transmitting accounts of the legend, while the museum manager and historian were included because of their respective knowledge of the site's historical remains and the history of the struggle in South Kalimantan. Each informant participated in two interview sessions. The first interview focused on eliciting information about the legend, its narrative elements, and associated cultural and historical accounts. The second interview was conducted to clarify information, explore details that emerged during the initial interview, and confirm the accuracy of the researchers' understanding of the informants' accounts.

The second site was SMAN 1 Sungai Tabuk, where 36 Grade XI students from an intact class (XI-B) participated in a learning activity using the adapted short story. The class was selected based on the Indonesian language teacher's recommendation and the school's schedule. With the principal's permission and the assistance of the Indonesian language teacher, the students studied the adapted story and subsequently completed a questionnaire addressing the nationalism values represented in the text.

Verbal consent was obtained from all informants and participating students, and permission was obtained from the school and the students' parents or guardians. Interviews were recorded with the informants' permission, participants were informed of their right to withdraw, and identities were protected through participant codes. This study did not undergo formal review by an institutional ethics committee because such review was not required by Lambung Mangkurat University for low-risk educational and oral-history research at the time the study was conducted; the research was nonetheless conducted in accordance with general ethical principles for research involving human participants.

Table 1. Informant Categories and Their Contributions

Code	Informant Category	Contribution to the Study
P1	Legend bearer	Oral accounts of the Alam Roh Legend
P2	Legend bearer	Oral accounts of the Alam Roh Legend
P3	Legend bearer	Oral accounts of the Alam Roh Legend

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Code	Informant Category	Contribution to the Study
P4	Alam Roh Museum Manager	Information about the legend, its site, and its cultural or historical context
P5	Historian	Historical context concerning the people's struggle in South Kalimantan

As Table 1 shows, the legend bearers (P1–P3) provided community accounts, the museum manager (P4) contributed site-based knowledge, and the historian (P5) supplied the historical context against which these accounts were compared.

Data Collection and Literary Adaptation

Data were collected through interviews, observation, documentation, written sources, and a student questionnaire. These data were complemented by brief follow-up interviews with three students purposively selected based on their willingness and ability to provide detailed responses and insights into the adapted short story. The interviews were conducted after the lesson to explore their interpretations of the story, their understanding of the nationalism values represented in the text, and their learning experiences. Informant interviews were conducted in Banjar and explored the narrative of the legend, memories of the struggle, Banjar cultural practices, religious beliefs, and the meanings attached to the site. The recordings were transcribed and translated into Indonesian by the first author, and the translations were checked against the original recordings by Ridwan, a native Banjar speaker; discrepancies were discussed until agreement was reached. Culturally specific terms, such as *baju barajah* and *wafak*, were retained in the original language with explanatory glosses. Observation and documentation provided contextual information, while regional histories, archival materials, and scholarly studies were consulted to compare community accounts with historical documentation.

The first author then adapted the legend into a short story, retaining selected historical, cultural, and religious elements. Before classroom use, the manuscript was reviewed by two experts, one in history and one in literature, using a review rubric that covered historical and cultural consistency and literary quality. Their feedback led to corrections to historical details and refinements to dialogue. The story was then used in the Grade XI unit Exploring National History through Short Stories (Chapter 3 of Marwati & Waskitaningtyas, 2021) over two meetings of 90 minutes each, comprising guided reading and discussion of historical and cultural elements, after which 36 students completed the questionnaire.

Research Instruments

The research instruments comprised interview guides for informants and students, observation and documentation records, and a student questionnaire. The questionnaire statements were developed from seven nationalism values identified through field data and relevant previous studies: courage, love of country, unity, willingness to sacrifice, responsibility, appreciation of the contributions of freedom fighters, and national identity

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grounded in local culture. The questionnaire consisted of 24 statements distributed across seven dimensions of nationalism: courage (2 statements), love of country (4 statements), unity (6 statements), willingness to sacrifice (3 statements), responsibility (3 statements), appreciation of the contributions of freedom fighters (3 statements), and national identity grounded in local culture (3 statements). Responses were recorded on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Content validity was assessed through a review by two experts, one in language and the other in character education. However, the questionnaire was not piloted with students outside the study sample, and its internal consistency was not statistically assessed. Accordingly, the questionnaire results are presented and interpreted descriptively as students' reported responses.

Data Analysis and Trustworthiness

Qualitative data from informant and student interviews were transcribed, coded, and categorized according to historical knowledge, narrative elements, Banjar cultural practices, religious beliefs, and nationalism values, and then compared with observations, documentation, and written sources to identify differences between community narratives and documented history. Coding combined deductive and inductive procedures: initial categories were derived from the research focus and the theoretical framework (cultural memory, orality and literacy, and adaptation), while subcategories emerged inductively from the data. Comparative narrative analysis identified elements that were retained, elaborated, reorganized, or modified during adaptation, following the stages of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing (Miles et al., 2020).

Questionnaire responses were analyzed descriptively by calculating the mean and standard deviation for each of the seven nationalism-value categories. These statistics describe students' responses and were not interpreted as evidence of increased nationalism, character change, or the causal effectiveness of the learning activity.

Because the first author both wrote the adapted story and led the analysis, trustworthiness was addressed through source triangulation (comparing informants' accounts with written and historical sources) and method triangulation (comparing interviews, observations, and documentation), complemented by expert review of the adapted manuscript. The first author coded all interview transcripts by identifying relevant statements, assigning codes, and organizing them into categories based on the research objectives. Member checking was conducted during the second interview with all five informants. Summaries of key information and preliminary interpretations from the first interviews were presented to the informants so that they could confirm, correct, or elaborate on their accounts. The information obtained through this process was used to refine the researchers' understanding and interpretation of the interview data.

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Research Flowchart

Figure 1 summarizes the seven stages of the study, from preliminary fieldwork to expert review, classroom use, and triangulation, and shows how the output of each stage informed the next.

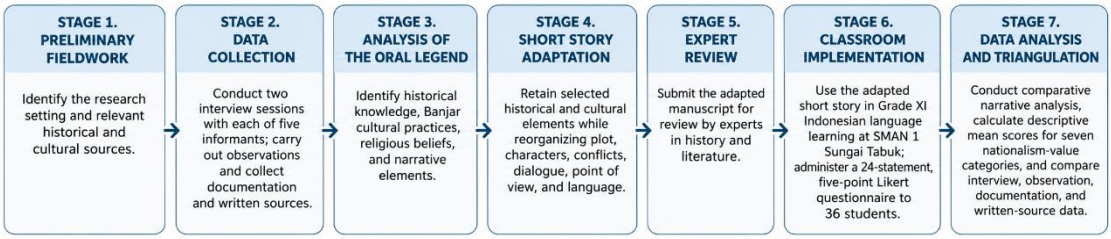


Figure 1. Research Flowchart

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Alam Roh Legend as Historical Memory and Cultural Knowledge

The Alam Roh Legend lives on in the collective memory of the people of Paku Alam Village as a narrative of the struggle against Dutch forces during the Physical Revolution in South Kalimantan, associated with ALRI Division IV. However, the term Alam Roh does not have a single, shared meaning. P5 identifies it as a resistance base within the organizational structure of the struggle.

> "The southern sector's code was RX 8. This base was called Alam Roh, under the leadership of Munir, also known as Pangeran Arya." (P5, interview, 2026)

By contrast, P1 describes Alam Roh as the name of a troop or organization rather than a village.

> "There was no village called Alam Roh. It was the name of a troop. It meant an organization." (P1, interview, 2026)

Alam Roh thus functions as a flexible designation in community memory, referring to both organizational and spatial dimensions of the struggle. P2, the child of a former fighter, associates it with a secluded forest area used for fighting and training.

> "That was where people fought in the past. It was called Alam Roh because it was a quiet forest area. They trained there." (P2, interview, 2026)

P2 further distinguishes a surveillance area from the base and training grounds farther inside the forest. Together, these accounts represent Alam Roh as a landscape of resistance with several functions. Their differences are analytically significant. In Ong's (2012) terms, these accounts retain the situational and participatory character of oral memory: they are anchored in the speakers' lived connections to people and places rather than organized as a single authoritative narrative.

Regional historical sources provide context for these narratives. Nawawi et al. (1991) document the struggle to defend independence in South Kalimantan during 1945–

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1949, Seman (2004) discusses the development of ALRI Division IV, and Wajidi (2008) records the establishment of Alam Roh Headquarters on 6 June 1949 as a center for military activities and the coordination of political, social, and economic forces. These sources establish the historical setting but do not verify every detail of the legend; accounts of supernatural protection, in particular, belong to community belief.

The legacy of the struggle is also preserved through places and material traces, including the Alam Roh Museum, which communicates local memories beyond the immediate community (Figure 2).



Figure 2. Alam Roh Museum
(Source: Authors' documentation, 2026)

Figure 2 shows the Alam Roh Museum in Paku Alam Village, where memories of the struggle are preserved and presented to visitors through the relationship between place, material remains, and narrative. Such relationships are central to safeguarding living heritage (Flores Mercado, 2022; Iswanto et al., 2023).

A central feature of the legend is the belief that the base was hidden from Dutch forces through supernatural protection. One informant recounted that Dutch aircraft bombarded the Sungai Tabuk area and ground troops searched it but failed to locate the base, an outcome attributed to the protection of *ulama*. The museum manager related this invisibility to stakes believed to have been installed at the four cardinal points by *ulama* associated with Hasan Basry's spiritual circle.

The four-corner stakes should be analyzed as elements of the community's religious imagination rather than as verified military practice; their narrative significance lies in explaining how fighters facing a materially powerful enemy survived.

This interpretation can be situated within Banjar Islamic traditions. Fauzi (2023) describes *ulama* as religious teachers, leaders, and guides in Banjar society, while Ahmad (2023) discusses *Ilmu Sabuku* as a locally rooted Sufi tradition. These studies help explain why community narratives assign spiritual authority to religious scholars, without proving that particular historical figures performed the practices described.

The accounts of protective objects reinforce this connection. P4 identifies the *baju barajah* (a garment bearing protective inscriptions), *wafak* (an inscribed talisman), *keris* (a traditional dagger), *camati* (an object believed to possess special powers), and bullets believed to have special properties, adding that every fighter was believed to wear a *baju barajah*.

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> "Each fighter wore one of these garments, making them strong, invulnerable, and resilient." (P4, interview, 2026)

Within the community narrative, the *baju barajah* and *wafak* connect the fighters' physical struggle with protection expressed through inscribed objects. These objects should not be treated as evidence of formal Islamic doctrine or of practices shared uniformly among Banjar Muslims, but as elements of locally situated religious life. Research on *rajah* as an Islamic talisman provides a comparative perspective on such objects (Maola & Al-Hasani, 2023), while Huriyah and Normuliati (2022) show the continuity of Banjar cultural expressions within changing religious contexts.

The legend also associates supernatural protection with graves in the Alam Roh area. One informant recounted that a grave was discovered after a fence was dismantled and described a belief that a mass grave had disappeared through supernatural means.

> "There is a mass grave here, but it has been made to disappear. I walked around the area, but it was nowhere to be found." (P4, interview, 2026)

This testimony expresses a belief that some traces of the struggle are inaccessible to ordinary perception, linking the deaths of fighters with an unseen realm; the existence and location of any burial site would require independent verification. A similar meaning is attached to a tree believed to have served as a flagpole, which, according to P3, remained standing long after it died and was associated with the raising of a flag in 1949. The area also contains a monument commemorating the struggle (Figure 3).



Figure 3. Monument Commemorating the Struggle
(Source: Authors' documentation, 2026)

Figure 3 shows the Monument Commemorating the Struggle to Uphold the Independence of the Republic of Indonesia. According to local community accounts, the site is believed to have served as the main headquarters of Alam Roh during the Physical Revolution in South Kalimantan. The museum, monument, tree, and reported graves constitute material reference points through which community members connect the present landscape with memories of the struggle, consistent with research showing that identities may be sustained through the reinterpretation of local narratives and material heritage (Purwani et al., 2022). In Assmann's (2011) terms, these sites function as figures

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of memory, fixed points in the landscape to which the community's recollection of the struggle is attached and through which it can be renewed.

Religious practices form another dimension of the legend. One informant recalled that, before a military operation, his father's company was taken to a religious scholar in Dalam Pagar Village, Martapura, where they underwent a bathing ritual intended to ensure their safe return. The remembered relationship between fighters and *ulama* thus extended to ritual preparation for the risks of combat.

Dalam Pagar is historically associated with Banjar Islamic scholarship and the legacy of Sheikh Muhammad Arsyad al-Banjari, and the ritual can be read as an expression of the fighters' search for spiritual reassurance from religious authority (Ahmad, 2023; Fauzi, 2023). The interview alone, however, does not establish the ritual's religious basis or whether it was practiced by all fighter groups.

These narratives are rooted in the development of ALRI Division IV as an armed resistance organization. Seman (2009) records the formation of its Secret Battalion under Hasan Basry's command in 1946, Usman (1982) documents the consolidation of armed groups under ALRI Division IV/A on 10 November 1946, and Sari et al. (2022) discuss the Proclamation of 17 May 1949, read by Hasan Basry in Mandapai, as an expression of the Banjar people's commitment to the Republic of Indonesia.

Together, these materials show that the legend is transmitted through overlapping forms of memory: one concerning the resistance organization, its leaders, and the forest landscape, and another concerning religious authority, protective objects, rituals, and beliefs about the unseen. Similar research shows that spiritual narratives contribute to how communities interpret historical experience (Koopman, 2023). Following Assmann (2011), the legend currently occupies a transitional position between communicative memory, which is carried by living witnesses and their descendants and spans roughly three generations, and cultural memory, which depends on institutionalized forms such as monuments, museums, rituals, and texts. As the generation that experienced the revolution passes, accounts such as those of P2, the child of a former fighter, represent a late stage of communicative memory, which makes their documentation and transformation timely. The museum and monument thus provide visible points of reference, while oral accounts preserve meanings that material remains cannot convey.

For the adaptation, this distinction is essential. Documented events and figures establish the historical setting, while oral accounts provide character perspectives and local interpretations. Community beliefs can thus be retained as part of the community's worldview without being presented as verified facts. The main elements are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Constituent Elements of the Alam Roh Legend

No.	Aspect	Findings in the Alam Roh Legend
1	Historical context	The people's struggle in South Kalimantan during the Physical Revolution, part of the Indonesian National Revolution, and its connection with ALRI Division IV

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No.	Aspect	Findings in the Alam Roh Legend
2	Figures	Hasan Basry, Pangeran Arya/Munir, ulama, and fighters
3	Space and location	Alam Roh in the Paku Alam–Sungai Tabuk area and surrounding locations associated with the resistance
4	Functions of space	Reported headquarters, training ground, surveillance area, hiding place, and site for strategic planning
5	Events of the struggle	Resistance against Dutch forces, fighter training, surveillance, and efforts to secure the base
6	Religious beliefs and spiritual protection	Beliefs concerning the four-corner stakes (pasak empat penjuru), protection attributed to ulama, and objects believed to possess special powers
7	Historical remains and commemorative sites	Alam Roh Museum, the monument commemorating the struggle, the tree associated with the flagpole, and graves mentioned in community accounts
8	Religious and cultural practices	The reported bathing ritual before military operations and the use of yellow cloth

Source: Field interviews with informants P1–P5 (2026), author observations and documentation (2026), and historical sources cited in the text.

Table 2 shows that the legend combines documented history (the historical context, figures, locations, and events of the struggle) with community belief and practice (spiritual protection, commemorative sites, and religious rituals). The first group provided the historical framework for the adaptation, whereas the second supplied the cultural and religious meanings through which the community interprets that history.

Short Story Adaptation as a Transformation of Cultural Knowledge

The Alam Roh Legend was adapted into a short story entitled *Jejak Merdeka di Alam Roh* (approximately 1,200 words), drawing on interview data, observations, documentation, and historical sources. Table 3 illustrates how interview data were transformed into literary elements.

Table 3. Comparison of Interview Data and the Adapted Short Story

Narrative aspect	Interview data	Excerpt from Jejak Merdeka di Alam Roh	Nature of transformation
Setting and the function of Alam Roh	P2 described the area as follows: "That was where people fought in the past. It was called Alam Roh because it was a quiet forest area. They trained there." (P2, interview, 2026)	"Hutan di Desa Paku Alam," jawabnya mantap. "Tersembunyi, penuh semak belukar, jauh dari jangkauan mata-mata. Di sanalah kita akan membuat markas." ("The forest in Paku Alam Village," he replied firmly. "Hidden, full of undergrowth, far from the reach of spies. That is where we will establish our base.")	Information about the landscape and its use for struggle and training is developed into a specific setting connected to the characters' decisions and subsequent actions.
Leadership and characterization	P5 stated: "The southern sector's code was RX 8. This base was called Alam Roh, under the leadership of Munir, also known as Pangeran Arya." (P5, interview, 2026)	"Seorang pejuang muda bernama Munir yang oleh kawan-kawannya dipanggil Pangeran Arya menunduk, lalu bersuara lirih. 'Tapi di mana, Hasan? Semua jalan dijaga.'" ("A young fighter named Munir, whom his companions called	The name and leadership association reported by the informant are incorporated into a scene in which Munir participates in a strategic discussion.

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Narrative aspect	Interview data	Excerpt from Jejak Merdeka di Alam Roh	Nature of transformation
		Pangeran Arya, lowered his head and spoke softly. 'But where, Hasan? Every road is guarded.'")	The character is developed through dialogue and interaction rather than introduced solely through historical information.
Protective beliefs and characterization	P4 associated baju barajah with the fighters' protection: "Each fighter wore one of these garments, making them strong, invulnerable, and resilient." (P4, interview, 2026)	"Para pejuang memperkuat diri dengan doa dan rajah. Agar kebal dari peluru. Ada juga yang menggantung camati di senjata yang digunakan untuk melawan penjajah." ("The fighters strengthened themselves through prayers and rajah, seeking protection from bullets. Some also hung camati on the weapons they used against the colonial forces.")	The community's protective beliefs are represented through descriptions of the fighters' practices. The narrative incorporates these beliefs into the fictional world without establishing supernatural protection as a verified historical fact.
Religious authority and ritual preparation	One informant recalled that, before a military operation, his father's company was taken to a religious scholar in Dalam Pagar Village, Martapura, for a bathing ritual intended to ensure their safe return. (P2, interview, 2026)	"Besok, kita ke Desa Dalam Pagar untuk dimandikan oleh Kiai Haji agar selamat dalam peperangan." ("Tomorrow, we will go to Dalam Pagar Village to undergo *mandi* (a ritual bathing ceremony) performed by Kiai Haji to ensure our safety in battle.")	The remembered ritual is developed into a scene that links the fighters' preparation for combat with religious authority. It is presented from the characters' perspective rather than as an established historical practice.
Conflict and climax	Informants recounted that Dutch aircraft bombarded the Sungai Tabuk area and that ground troops searched it but failed to locate the base. (P5, interview, 2026)	"Menjelang sore beberapa pesawat terbang di langit Desa Paku Alam. Para pejuang waspada dan mempersiapkan diri. Namun, pesawat tersebut melewati markas dan membombardir tembakan di hutan Sungai Tabuk Keramat." ("Toward late afternoon, several aircraft flew across the sky above Paku Alam Village. The fighters remained alert and prepared themselves for a possible attack. However, the aircraft passed over the headquarters and opened fire on the forest of Sungai Tabuk Keramat.")	A brief account of an unsuccessful search is expanded into the story's central conflict and climax, creating suspense through the characters' responses to danger.

Source: Interview data and the adapted short story.

The comparisons in Table 3 show that the forest, described by informants as a quiet area associated with the struggle, becomes a setting that motivates the establishment of a resistance base; Munir (Pangeran Arya) is incorporated into dialogue about surveillance and security; and protective beliefs are represented through the fighters' actions. Characterization emerges through dialogue, decisions, and responses to danger, conveying courage, unity, responsibility, and love of country without explicit moral instruction, while selected local terms retain the cultural context.

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Not all elements of the oral accounts were retained in the adaptation. Accounts of the vanished mass grave and the flagpole tree were omitted because they relate to events and beliefs associated with the period after the Physical Revolution had ended, whereas the short story focuses primarily on the struggle during the revolution. Their omission was therefore intended to maintain the chronological focus and narrative coherence of the story. Detailed historical information, such as the organizational structure of ALRI Division IV and the code RX 8, was condensed and conveyed through dialogue rather than exposition.

Conversely, several elements were added to meet the demands of narrative fiction. Three additional characters—Abbas, Adul, and Aliaung—were introduced, along with fictional scenes and dialogue, to develop the interactions among the characters, dramatize events, and create a more coherent narrative. These additions were intended to expand the narrative details that were only briefly mentioned or summarized in the informants' accounts. Historical figures such as Hasan Basry and Munir (Pangeran Arya) were retained by name, whereas their dialogue and inner responses were fictionalized as part of the literary adaptation. This distinction between historical references and literary invention was explained to students during the lesson.

The adaptation also restructured the narrative. The informants' accounts were largely episodic rather than sequential. The short story reorganizes these fragments into a linear causal plot consisting of exposition, rising action, climax, and resolution. Whereas the oral accounts are told from the informants' positions as descendants, witnesses, or custodians of memory, the story employs omniscient third-person narration, which allows the narrator to move between characters and to present protective beliefs through the characters' perceptions rather than as the narrator's own claims.

These changes correspond to Ong's (2012) distinction between oral and written modes of expression: the additive, situational, and participatory character of the oral accounts gives way to a written narrative organized by plot, causality, and a consistent narrative voice. In terms of Assmann's (2011) theory, the adaptation moves the memory of Alam Roh from communicative memory sustained by living informants toward a fixed textual form that can circulate in institutional settings such as schools.

This process reflects Hutcheon's (2013) view of adaptation as a creative transformation involving choices about what to retain, omit, develop, and rearrange, and aligns with research on *alih wahana* (Nurhasanah, 2022; Ramadhani & Hapsarani, 2025). Because informants differ in describing Alam Roh as an organization or a place, the story adopts a more unified setting to meet the conventions of short fiction; it therefore represents one literary interpretation rather than a definitive version of the oral tradition.

Nationalism Values as Part of the Legend's Content

The nationalism values embedded in the legend are rooted in the experiences of the people of South Kalimantan in defending independence. Seven values were identified (Table 4). Five of them—love of country, courage, unity, willingness to sacrifice, and

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responsibility—are directly associated with the fighters' actions under armed resistance. The remaining two, appreciation of the contributions of freedom fighters and national identity grounded in local culture, concern how the community remembers and transmits its history, for example through the preservation of graves, museums, and monuments, and through respect for *ulama*, the use of yellow cloth, and objects such as *baju barajah*, *wafak*, and *camati*.

The yellow cloth used in the Alam Roh tradition symbolizes sacredness and serves to mark places or objects regarded by the community as possessing particular significance. This interpretation is consistent with Salma and Budhi's (2025) ethnographic findings, which identify yellow cloth as a sacred cultural object associated with protection, spiritual connections, and inherited beliefs in Banjar society.

Table 4. Nationalism Values in the Alam Roh Legend

No.	Nationalism value	Representation in the Alam Roh Legend
1	Love of country	The struggle to defend the territory and independence against Dutch rule
2	Courage	Willingness to confront threats, conduct surveillance, participate in training, and carry out duties in the struggle
3	Unity	Cooperation among groups and the consolidation of forces within ALRI Division IV
4	Willingness to sacrifice	Readiness to participate in training, undertake duties, and carry out operations despite risks to personal safety
5	Responsibility	Protection of the base, group security, and confidentiality in the conduct of the struggle
6	Appreciation of the contributions of freedom fighters	Transmission of stories and preservation of graves, museums, monuments, and other historical remains associated with the struggle
7	National identity grounded in local culture	Transmission of the history of the struggle in connection with elements of Banjar culture

Source: Analysis of interview data, observations, documentation, and written sources.

Table 4 indicates that the nationalism values in the legend are embedded in historical experiences transmitted through community memory. Previous studies associate folk narratives and histories of struggle with local identity, nationalism, character education, and culturally grounded education (Amin, 2022; Handy et al., 2022; Manggau et al., 2025; Musaddad et al., 2025; Novianti, 2022; Riani et al., 2025; Sari et al., 2022; Youpika et al., 2024).

The Alam Roh Legend extends this discussion by showing how nationalism intersects with local historical memory, religious beliefs, and Banjar cultural identity, resonating with Jabbarli's (2024) analysis of how religious rituals shape national identification in context-dependent ways.

Nevertheless, interpreting the legend primarily as a vehicle for national character education risks romanticizing the struggle and subordinating local and religious meanings to a state-centered narrative (Novianti, 2022). The legend is better understood as a site where national belonging intersects with Banjar cultural identity and religious interpretations of the past; its educational value lies in enabling students to critically

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examine how such memories are narrated and transmitted. From Assmann's (2011) perspective, cultural memory is always selective and serves to construct collective identity; the nationalism values identified here should therefore be read as products of how the community, and subsequently the school, chooses to remember the struggle.

Implementing the Short Story in the Classroom and Student Responses

The lesson began with an introduction to the legend and its historical context; students then read the story, identified its characters, plot, setting, and conflict, and discussed the values represented through the characters' actions (Figure 4).



Figure 4. Grade XI Indonesian Language Learning Using a Short Story Adapted from the Alam Roh Legend
(Source: Authors' documentation, 2026)

Figure 4 shows the teacher introducing the story with the aid of projected slides while students follow the lesson in the classroom. Through these activities, students were encouraged to approach the story both as a literary text and as a means of transmitting cultural memory, and to distinguish historical information supported by written sources from community beliefs that form part of the legend. Classroom observations indicated that students were able to identify and distinguish historical information from community beliefs presented in the adapted short story. During the learning activity, students examined historical accounts of the struggle in South Kalimantan and cultural beliefs associated with the Alam Roh Legend. This observation suggests that students engaged with the different types of knowledge represented in the narrative. However, no specific group worksheet was used to systematically assess their ability to distinguish historically grounded information from community beliefs. Although three students were interviewed after the lesson to explore their responses to the adapted story, these interviews were not specifically designed to assess this distinction. Therefore, the findings provide observational evidence of students' ability to recognize the distinction during classroom discussions, rather than a systematic assessment of this ability across all students.

The mean scores of the 36 students' questionnaire responses for the seven nationalism values are presented in Figure 5.

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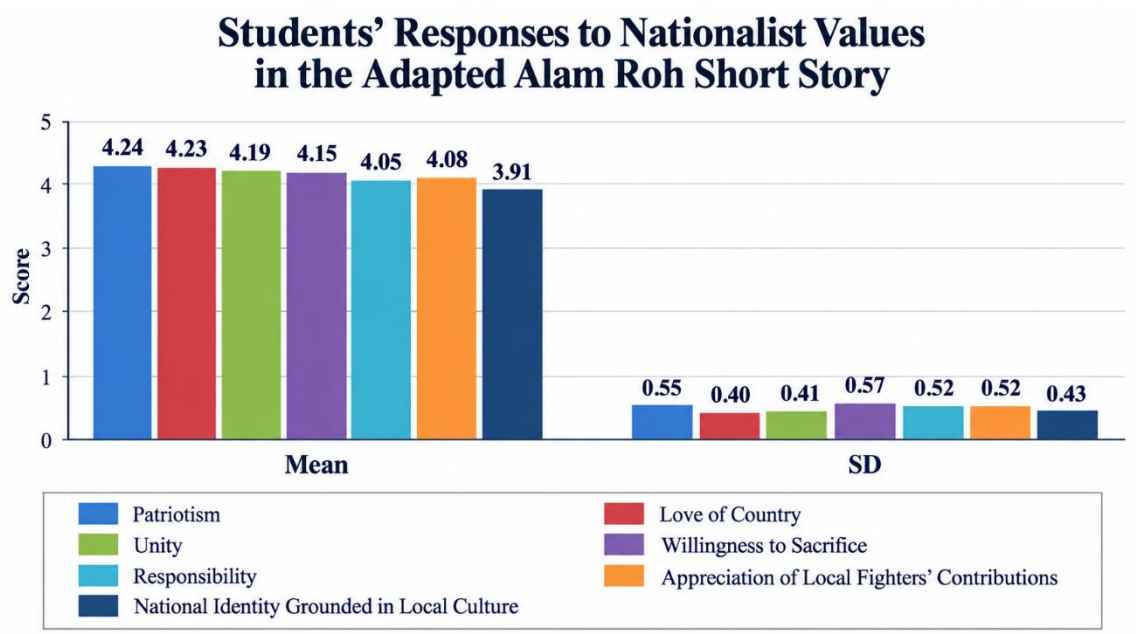


Figure 5. Mean Student Responses to Nationalism Values in the Short Story Adapted from the Alam Roh Legend

As shown in Figure 5, mean response scores ranged from 3.91 to 4.24. Courage received the highest score (M = 4.24, SD = 0.55), followed by love of country (M = 4.23, SD = 0.40), unity (M = 4.19, SD = 0.41), willingness to sacrifice (M = 4.15, SD = 0.57), appreciation of the contributions of freedom fighters (M = 4.08, SD = 0.52), and responsibility (M = 4.05, SD = 0.52), while national identity grounded in local culture was lowest (M = 3.91, SD = 0.43). All means were above the scale midpoint, indicating generally positive responses; these descriptive results do not establish statistically significant differences between categories.

The high scores for courage and love of country are consistent with the story's representation of the struggle against Dutch colonial rule. One student stated, "The story *Jejak Merdeka di Alam Roh* makes me appreciate the struggle of the heroes of South Kalimantan because they sacrificed for independence. Although their weapons were simple, their spirit, courage, and continuous prayers bore fruit, and now we enjoy the results of their struggle" (Student 1).

Responses on willingness to sacrifice and appreciation of the contributions of freedom fighters were similarly positive. A second student explained, "This story makes me appreciate the struggle of the heroes more. They were all willing to sacrifice and risk their lives for independence" (Student 2), emphasizing the perceived cost of the struggle. Such individual accounts illustrate rather than generalize students' interpretations.

National identity grounded in local culture received the lowest score, although it remained above the midpoint. Its items concerned preserving and retelling local legends, suggesting that turning the reading of a local narrative into a commitment to cultural preservation may require further engagement rather than indicating weak cultural

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identity. A third student stated, "The younger generation must continue to preserve and introduce stories of the struggle in South Kalimantan. We should also follow the fighters' example by remaining persistent, studying diligently, and achieving success at school" (Student 3), connecting the transmission of local stories with present-day responsibilities.

The religious elements of the story required particular care in the classroom. The teacher explicitly explained that the four-corner stakes, baju barajah, wafak, and bathing ritual represented beliefs held by the fighters during the Physical Revolution in South Kalimantan. These elements were presented as part of the community's religious and cultural beliefs rather than as independently verified historical facts. This approach enabled students to understand the cultural and religious context of the legend while maintaining a distinction between community beliefs and documented historical information. It also allowed local religious practices to be discussed respectfully without presenting supernatural accounts as established historical facts.

Students' responses reflected an awareness of the religious dimension of the legend. Student 1 emphasized that the fighters' success was associated with their courage, determination, and continuous prayers, highlighting the connection between physical struggle and religious devotion. This response illustrates how the student interpreted the fighters' efforts in relation to spiritual commitment. It also suggests that the story provided an opportunity to reflect on the relationship between faith, perseverance, and the struggle for independence. However, this interpretation represents an individual student's response and should not be generalized to the entire class. Within the context of Banjar cultural traditions, the legend offers an opportunity to explore how religious beliefs and practices are represented in community narratives of historical struggle.

Literary Adaptation as an Intermediary Stage of Cultural Transmission

The adaptation thus represents a shift in the mode of cultural transmission, from community-based oral storytelling to a written narrative suited to classroom analysis. This aligns with research on adapting cultural heritage and oral tradition for education (Aral, 2022; Hasan et al., 2025; Rustina et al., 2026). Read through Ong (2012), this shift does not fully replace orality: students encounter the legend as a written text, but classroom discussion and retelling reintroduce elements of the interactive, communal mode through which it was originally transmitted. In Assmann's (2011) terms, the school functions as an institutional carrier of cultural memory, extending the legend beyond the circle of community members who remember it directly. The specific contribution of this study lies in positioning literary adaptation as an intermediary stage between community storytelling and classroom use.

This study has several limitations. The classroom implementation involved one Grade XI class of 36 students, so the responses cannot be generalized. The first author both wrote the story and analyzed the data, which may have shaped the analysis despite triangulation and expert review. Without pre- and post-test measurements or a comparison group, the findings describe students' responses rather than demonstrate

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increased nationalist character. Translation from Banjar may have lost some cultural nuances, and the study did not examine whether the adaptation sustains oral transmission in the community.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the cultural elements of the Alam Roh Legend, its adaptation into a short story, and its use in Indonesian language learning. First, the legend combines historical memory of ALRI Division IV's struggle under Hasan Basry with Banjar Islamic beliefs concerning the spiritual authority of *ulama*, protective objects such as the *baju barajah* and *wafak*, and a bathing ritual performed before combat. Second, the adaptation into *Jejak Merdeka di Alam Roh* retained key figures, the forest base, the Dutch search, and the fighters' protective beliefs, while transforming episodic and differing accounts into a unified setting, a linear plot, fictional dialogue, and third-person narration. Crucially, community beliefs were represented as part of the community's worldview rather than as verified historical facts. Third, in Grade XI learning, students' responses were positive across all seven nationalism values (M = 3.91–4.24), with courage rated highest and national identity grounded in local culture lowest, and classroom discussion showed that the religious elements could be explored as expressions of faith and reliance on God without requiring students to accept or reject them as historical facts.

The study contributes to research on oral tradition and education by positioning literary adaptation as an intermediary stage between community storytelling and classroom use. By combining Assmann's theory of cultural memory, Ong's account of orality and literacy, and Hutcheon's theory of adaptation, it shows that adaptation does not merely preserve a legend but selects, reorganizes, and reframes its historical and religious meanings as memory moves from living informants into institutional settings such as schools. Because the study involved a single class without pre- and post-test measurements, the findings describe students' responses rather than demonstrate changes in nationalist character.

Several practical recommendations follow. Indonesian language teachers can pair the short story with written historical sources, guide students to distinguish documented events from community beliefs, and discuss religious elements in terms of their meaning for the fighters rather than their efficacy. Because national identity grounded in local culture received the lowest score, teachers may strengthen this value through retelling activities, interviews with local elders, or projects in which students document local stories of the struggle. The Alam Roh Museum and the local government could provide the short story as reading material for visitors and incorporate it into school visits and heritage programs. Future research should involve multiple schools and regions, employ pre- and post-test or comparative designs to assess learning outcomes, examine how the Paku Alam community receives the adapted story, and explore digital storytelling adaptations.

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DECLARATIONS

Author Contributions: The first author conceptualized the study, designed the methodology, conducted the investigation, wrote the adapted short story, performed the formal analysis, and prepared the original draft. The second author contributed to the conceptualization, supervised the research, validated the findings, interpreted the results, and revised and edited the manuscript. The third author contributed to the methodology, supervised the research, validated and interpreted the findings, and revised the manuscript. The fourth author supervised the research, validated and interpreted the findings, and revised and edited the manuscript. The fifth and sixth authors collected and documented the data, analyzed the data, and revised the manuscript. The seventh author edited the substantive content, analyzed the revision results, and checked the manuscript for language errors. All authors read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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Generative Artificial Intelligence Use Statement: The authors used ChatGPT (OpenAI) solely for language editing. The authors reviewed and edited the output and take full responsibility for the content of this manuscript.

Ethics Approval and Informed Consent: This study did not undergo formal review by an institutional ethics committee because such review was not required by Lambung Mangkurat University for low-risk educational and oral-history research at the time the study was conducted; the research was nonetheless conducted in accordance with general ethical principles for research involving human participants. Verbal informed consent was obtained from all informants and participating students prior to data collection, and permission was obtained from the school and the students' parents or guardians before the classroom implementation and questionnaire administration. Participants' identities were anonymized using codes. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any time.

Data Availability: The data supporting the findings of this study, including interview transcripts, observation notes, and questionnaire responses, are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request. These data are not publicly available because they contain information that could compromise the privacy of research participants.

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