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# Maintaining Culture-Specific Items in the English Translation of *Asal Usul Nama Cirebon*: A Comparison Between ChatGPT and Human Translation

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**ABSTRACT**

This study investigates the maintenance of Culture-Specific Items (CSIs), translation strategies, cultural meanings, and contextual nuances in Indonesian folklore *Asal Usul Nama Cirebon*, by comparing translations generated by ChatGPT and a human translation. Employing a qualitative descriptive approach with comparative translation analysis, the study examined CSIs using Newmark's (1999) classification and Baker's (1992) translation strategies. The research data consisted of clauses containing CSIs derived from the literacy e-book of six legends in Cirebon. Data were collected through documentation and analyzed using Miles *et al* (2014), such as encompassing data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. The findings identified 11 CSI categories into material culture, social organization and social culture, with material culture emerging as the dominant category. Both ChatGPT and human translation predominantly employ translation by a more neutral word, a loan word, and a paraphrase unrelated word. Although both translations generally preserved denotative meanings, the human translation more effectively conveyed contextual and cultural nuances. In contrast, ChatGPT occasionally encountered difficulties in rendering culturally loaded expressions. The study concludes that ChatGPT serves as a valuable supplementary tool; however, human intervention remains essential to preserve cultural identity and contextual meaning in literary translation practices across diverse cultural contexts.



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Folklore serves as an important medium for preserving the history, beliefs, traditions, and identity of a society. Indonesian folklore as a form of cultural heritage contains numerous culture-specific items (CSIs) that reflect local knowledge, customs, social

institutions, material objects, and religious values unique to particular communities. These elements are deeply embedded in the source culture and often lack direct equivalents in other languages, so their translation presents significant challenges. Recent developments in artificial intelligence (AI), particularly Large Language Models such as ChatGPT, have transformed translation practices by enabling more fluent and contextually appropriate translations. Comparative studies have shown that ChatGPT performs better than conventional machine translation systems in terms of fluency and contextual relevance. However, it still exhibits limitations in preserving cultural accuracy compared with human translators [1]. This issue becomes particularly critical in folklore translation, where the preservation of CSIs is essential for maintaining the authenticity and cultural identity embedded in the source text.

The translation of culture-specific items has become one of the most significant concerns in translation studies. classifies CSIs into categories such as ecology, material culture, social culture, social organization, gestures and habits, emphasizing that these elements require special treatment because literal transfer alone may fail to communicate their cultural meanings [2]. In literary texts, especially folklore, the preservation of CSIs is crucial because they represent the cultural identity and historical memory of the source community. If these items are omitted, generalized, or mistranslated, the translation text may lose much of its authenticity and educational value.

Previous studies on culture-specific items (CSIs) have primarily examined translation strategies and cultural preservation in literary and audiovisual texts. Employing qualitative descriptive and comparative approaches, [3], [4], [5], [6], and [7] consistently analyzed CSIs using frameworks such as Newmark's classification, foreignization and domestication, or subtitling strategies. Although their data ranged from novels, films, fantasy literature, and television series, they concluded that successful CSI translation depends on selecting appropriate strategies to balance cultural preservation with readability. More recent work by [1] further demonstrates that ChatGPT produces fluent and contextual translations but still falls short of human translators in preserving cultural accuracy across literary and scientific texts. Likewise, [8] argues that AI improves translation efficiency but continues to struggle with idiomatic expressions, cultural sensitivity, and ethical concerns, reinforcing the need for hybrid human–AI translation models.

Research comparing AI-assisted translation with human translation has expanded rapidly across literary genres. Studies by [9], [10], [11], [12], [13], [14], [15], [16] and [17] consistently report that AI generates fluent and grammatically acceptable translations while struggling with culturally embedded meanings. Similar conclusions are reported by Al [18], whose MQM-based evaluation of Arabic literary translation showed that ChatGPT achieved high fluency but lower accuracy and weaker preservation of literary and cultural nuances than human translation. [19] likewise, found that GPT-4, GPT-4o, Gemini, and other LLMs still produced cultural mistranslations, omissions, and discourse-level errors despite improvements in overall quality, indicating that human post-editing remains essential.

More recently, research has expanded beyond translation products toward AI-assisted translation practice and education. [20], [21], [22], [23], and [24] report that AI enhances translation efficiency, learner autonomy, and immediate linguistic support while raising

concerns regarding overdependence, reduced critical thinking, and limited translator agency. Supporting these findings, [25] demonstrated that ChatGPT-4 could achieve translation quality comparable to human translators in medical questionnaires only after rigorous human quality control and face validation. From a theoretical perspective, [26] introduces the concept of AI-textuality, emphasizing that AI-generated texts should be viewed as products of collaborative meaning-making between humans and generative AI rather than autonomous linguistic outputs.

Despite these valuable contributions, several important research gaps remain. First, previous studies have predominantly investigated novels, poetry, films, subtitles, medical questionnaires, scientific texts, and educational contexts, whereas Indonesian regional folklore, rich in culture-specific items, has received limited scholarly attention. Second, although earlier research has examined CSIs, AI performance, translation quality, or educational applications separately, few studies integrate Newmark's classification of culture-specific items with Baker's translation strategies while simultaneously evaluating the preservation of cultural meanings and contextual nuances. Third, comparative studies rarely explain how translation strategies influence the maintenance of local cultural identity embedded in Indonesian folklore. Therefore, the present study compares ChatGPT-generated and human translations of Asal Usul Nama Cirebon using Newmark's CSI classification and Baker's translation strategies to investigate the maintenance of culture-specific items, translation strategies, cultural meanings, and contextual nuances, thereby extending current scholarship on AI-assisted literary translation.

Despite these valuable contributions, several important research gaps remain. First, previous studies have predominantly investigated novels, poetry, films, subtitles, religious texts, scientific texts, and educational contexts, whereas Indonesian folklore, particularly regional folklore rich in culture-specific items, has received very limited scholarly attention. Second, although previous research has examined CSIs, translation strategies, AI performance, or translation quality separately, few studies integrate [21] classification of culture-specific items with [27] translation strategies while simultaneously evaluating the preservation of cultural meanings and contextual nuances within a single analytical framework. Third, comparative studies generally evaluate overall translation quality or AI performance without systematically investigating how translation strategies influence the maintenance of local cultural identity embedded in Indonesian folklore. Therefore, the present study addresses these gaps by comparing ChatGPT-generated and human translations of *Asal Usul Nama Cirebon* using Newmark's CSI classification and Baker's translation strategies. By examining the maintenance of culture-specific items, translation strategies, cultural meanings, and contextual nuances in a regional Indonesian folklore, this study extends existing scholarship. It provides new empirical evidence regarding the capability of generative AI to translate culturally sensitive literary texts.

Furthermore, *Asal Usul Nama Cirebon* constitutes a valuable corpus because it contains numerous culture-specific elements related to material culture, social organization, religious practices, historical references, and local customs that are deeply rooted in Cirebonese culture. Culturally bound expressions often lack direct equivalents in English, so it makes translation particularly challenging. Therefore, this study aims to fill these gaps by

comparatively analyzing the maintenance of the original term and cultural nuance, *Asal Usul Nama Cirebon*, translated by ChatGPT and a human translator using Newmark's categorization of CSIs and Baker's translation strategies. This study is expected to contribute to the growing discussion on AI-assisted literary translation and cultural preservation in Indonesian folklore. Thus, the research questions are: 1) what types of culture-specific items are found in the Indonesian version of *Asal Usul Nama* Cirebon, 2) what translation strategies are used by ChatGPT and the human translation in rendering CSIs into English, and 3) how do ChatGPT and human translation differ in maintaining cultural meaning and contextual nuance.

## 2. METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach with a comparative translation analysis to investigate the maintenance of culture-specific items (CSIs) in the English translations of the Cirebon folklore *Asal Usul Nama Cirebon*. Qualitative research was considered appropriate because the study focuses on interpreting linguistic and cultural phenomena rather than measuring statistical relationships. Qualitative approach to research is concerned with subjective assessment of attitudes, opinions and behavior. Research in such a situation is a function of researchers' insights and impressions. Such an approach to research generates results either in non-quantitative form or in the form which are not subjected to rigorous quantitative analysis [28]. The research specifically compares translations generated by ChatGPT and a human translation to identify similarities and differences in preserving cultural meanings.

The source language text of Indonesian folklore, *Asal Usul Nama Cirebon* obtained from the literacy e-book of six legends in Cirebon (https://anyflip.com/ulwwl/kyff/basic). The folklore was selected because it contains numerous culturally bound expressions reflecting the historical, religious, and sociocultural identity of the Cirebon community. Then, the source language text was guided by Newmark's classification of culture-specific items, which categorizes cultural elements into ecology, material culture, social culture, organizations, customs and activities, and gestures or habits. This framework was selected because it provides a comprehensive basis for identifying and analyzing culturally bound expressions in literary texts. Next, Baker's theory will be added to examine translation strategies for the translation in between ChatGPT and humans. The last, this research does not examine translation quality (accuracy, acceptability and readability) due to the limitations and duration of the research. However, the meaning can be seen based on the accuracy of the dictionary meaning and contextual.

The primary data consisted of words and expressions identified as culture-specific items in the source language text. A lexical item was categorized as a CSI when it represented concepts, objects, institutions, beliefs, customs, or sociocultural practices specific to the source culture and lacked direct equivalence in the target language. The identification process followed Newmark's criteria and was further verified through contextual analysis of each item within the folklore narrative.

Data collection was conducted through document analysis using the following procedures: (1) reading the folklore text thoroughly, (2) identifying lexical items and

expressions potentially representing CSIs, (3) classifying each identified CSI according to Newmark's (1999) taxonomy, (4) translating the identified CSIs using ChatGPT, (5) compiling the corresponding human translation and (6) organizing both translations into a comparative corpus. In addition, documentation was used as the data collection, which allows for the interpretation of data based on its context and meaning [29]. After that, human translation was produced by the researcher, who is a lecturer and also a professional translator. The translator possessed a Master's degree in Linguistics and Translation, more than five years of professional translation experience and demonstrated competence in both Indonesian and English translation. The translator's qualifications were considered important to ensure the reliability of the comparison. The last, the machine translation data were generated using ChatGPT version GPT-5.5 and accessed in May 2026. Each identified CSI was translated by providing the following prompt design: "*What are the culture-specific items based on Newmark (1999), what are the translation strategies according to Baker (1992), translate this sentence from Indonesian folklore into English*". ChatGPT was prompted once for each excerpt to ensure consistency across the dataset. The outputs generated by ChatGPT were used directly without post-editing to maintain the authenticity of the AI translation performance. However, human translation undergoes further editing to ensure that it is maintained in the cultural meaning and contextual nuances.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, several validation procedures were employed. First, all identified culture-specific items and their classifications based on Newmark's framework were independently reviewed by an expert in Translation Studies. Second, the classification of translation strategies based on Baker's framework was also subjected to peer checking by another researcher with expertise in translation analysis. Any discrepancies in categorization were discussed until consensus was achieved. This intercoder agreement process enhanced the reliability and consistency of the data analysis. Furthermore, methodological triangulation was applied by comparing findings derived from different analytical frameworks, namely Newmark's classification of culture-specific items and Baker's translation strategies. The use of multiple theoretical perspectives strengthened the credibility and interpretative validity of the study.

The next data analysis followed [30] interactive model consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. First, all identified CSIs were categorized according to Newmark's taxonomy. Second, ChatGPT and human translation were compared item by item to identify the translation strategies employed based on Baker's framework. Third, the extent to which cultural meanings and identities were maintained in both translations was analyzed. Finally, similarities and differences between ChatGPT and human translation were interpreted to determine their respective strengths and limitations in maintaining culture-specific items in literary translation.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1. The Types of Culture-Specific Items in *Asal Usul Nama Cirebon Folklore*

The analysis of *Asal Usul Nama Cirebon folklore* suggests that there are 11 clauses contains CSIs category by [2]. The distribution of each category is presented in Table 1:

Table 1. Culture Specific Items Categories

| No | Category | Number of Items | Frequency |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Material Culture | 9 | |
| 2 | Social Organization | 1 | |
| 3 | Social Culture | 1 | |
| | Total | 11 | 100% |

It can be seen from Table 1 that it presents the distribution of Culture Specific Items (CSIs) found in the folklore of *Asal Usul Nama Cirebon* based on Newmark's theory categorization. There are six categories, i.e., Ecology, Material Culture, Social Organization, Social Culture, Gestures and Habits. What stands out in this table is the dominance of the material culture category with 9 frequencies out of the total data. In this case, the author talks about the history of Cirebon that represent from the food, clothing, houses and towns, transportation, and artefacts. Then, the folklore heavily represents the tangible cultural heritage of the Cirebon community through traditional objects. From both linguistic and translation perspectives, this dominance carries several important implications.

### 3.2 Comparing Translation Strategies Between ChatGPT & Human Translation and Its maintenance in Culture-Specific Items

Table 2 presents the complete list of identified CSIs, their categories, translations produced by ChatGPT and the human translation, translation strategies and the extent to which cultural meanings were maintained.

Table 2 Translation Strategies and Their Maintenance in Culture-Specific Items

| No | Source Language Item | CSIs Category | ChatGPT Translation | Translation Strategy (ChatGPT) | Human Translation | Translation Strategy (Human) | Cultural Maintenence |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | *negeri Pajajaran* | Social organization | the kingdom of Pajajaran/ the land of Pajajaran | More neutral words, fewer expressive words | The Kingdom of Pajajaran | More neutral word | Fully maintained |
| 2 | *cincin batu ampal* | Material culture | ampal stone ring | More neutral word | ampal stone ring | More neutral word | Fully maintained |
| 3 | *baju kemenyan* | Material culture | the incense garment | Less expressive word | *baju kemenyan* (invisible garment) | Loan word, Cultural substitution | Partially maintained |
| 4 | *baju pengabaran* | Material culture | the proclamation garment for courage | Paraphrase using an unrelated word | *baju pengabaran* | Loan word | Partially maintained |
| 5 | *baju pengasihan* | Material culture | the charm garment to | Paraphrase using an | *baju pengasihan* | Loan word | Partially maintained |

| No | Source Language Item | CSIs Category | ChatGPT Translation | Translation Strategy (ChatGPT) | Human Translation | Translation Strategy (Human) | Cultural Maintenence |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | inspire affection | unrelated word | | | |
| 6 | *senjata golok cabang* | Material culture | *golok cabang* weapon | Loan word | *golok cabang* weapon | Loan word | Fully maintained |
| 7 | *Aji Dipa* | Social culture | *Aji Dipa* | Loan word | *Aji Dipa* | Loan word | Fully maintained |
| 8 | *badong batok* | Material culture | *Badong batok* | Loan word | *Badong batok* | Loan word | Fully maintained |
| 9 | *umbul-umbul waring* | Material culture | *umbul-umbul waring* | Loan word | *umbul-umbul waring* | Loan word | Fully maintained |
| 10 | *pendil* | Material culture | *pendil* (earthenware cooking pot) | Loan word explanation | *pendil* (clay pot) | Loan word explanation | Partially maintained |
| 11 | *benda (genderang)* | Material culture | *benda* (drum) | Loan word, more neutral word | *drum (genderang)* | A more neutral word, a loan word | Partially maintained |

## Material Culture

Material culture (artefacts), which includes tangible cultural products such as clothing, food, buildings, tools, and modes of transport [2]. The researcher found 9 data points of 13 in material culture, and the data analysis is presented below:

Table 3. ChatGPT and Human Translation

| No | Source Language Text | ChatGPT Translation | Human Translation |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2a | *Dan terimalah pusaka* ***cincin batu ampal*** *yang khasiatnya bisa mengeringkan air samudra, baju kemenyan untuk mengagalkan niat jahat orang, baju pengabaran untuk keberanian dan baju pengasihan* | And receive these heirlooms: the **ampal-stone ring**, whose power can dry up the ocean; the incense garment to thwart others' evil intentions; the proclamation garment for courage; and the charm garment to inspire affection | Take these heirlooms: **ampal stone ring** with powerful to desiccate the ocean, *baju kemenyan* (incense/invisible garment) to thwart the evil intentions of others, *baju pengabaran* for courage and *baju pengasihan* |

In SL, the word '*cincin batu ampal'* accommodates material culture so that the machine and translator role (human) to maintain it into the target language with accurately. The word '*cincin'* is a ring, '*batu'* is the stone and '*ampal'* is the name of the ring, or it can be called as one type of *batu akik*. *Cincin batu ampal* is believed to gain knowledge of the unseen and to be able to handle anything safely and to achieve one's goals promptly. Contextually, Raden Walangsungsang, the son of *Maha Prabu Siliwangi*, wants to find and learn about Islamic teachings when he meets Sang Hyang Danuwarsih. Sang Hyang Danuwarsih gave him a gift (*cincin batu ampal*) as one of the protective pieces of equipment,

as long as he seeks Islamic teachings. So, *cincin batu ampal* refers to the thing, artefact or equipment which it is in the form of a ring and stone with the name of *ampal*.

From excerpt (2), both the human translation and ChatGPT employed a more neutral word in rendering the culture-specific item '*cincin batu ampal*'. The translator transferred the expression into the more general and familiar terms "*ring* and *stone"* in the target language. According to Baker, translation by a more neutral word is used when the expressive or culture-bound meaning of a source-language item cannot be fully represented in the target language. In this case, the strategy enables target readers to understand the denotative meaning of the item without encountering unfamiliar cultural terminology. The use of this strategy by the human translator suggests an intention to prioritize readability and comprehensibility for target readers. Since the term '*batu ampal'* is culturally specific and lacks a direct equivalent in English, the translator chose to neutralize the expression while maintaining its basic referential meaning. However, this strategy inevitably reduces some of the items' cultural specificity because the symbolic and historical significance associated with '*batu ampal'* in the source culture is not fully conveyed.

Similarly, ChatGPT produced a translation that closely resembles the human translation by rendering the item through common lexical equivalents. This finding indicates that ChatGPT performs effectively when translating culture-specific items whose meanings can be inferred from their constituent lexical elements. Nevertheless, ChatGPT appears to rely primarily on semantic equivalence at the lexical level rather than on deeper cultural interpretation. Consequently, although the denotative meaning of '*cincin batu ampal'* is successfully transferred, the cultural and symbolic values embedded in the item may remain implicit or be partially lost.

Nevertheless, it is efficient, fast and capable of translating CSI fairly accurately, so machine translation still requires the instructions or prompts to guide it in translating text with culture-specific items. The machine will record the instructions and theories then it will read every single word related to the instructions. For instance, the instruction or prompt is "*What are culture-specific items based on Newmark's (1999) theory*?" "*Translate this sentence* "*Dan terimalah pusaka cincin batu ampal …"*. Automatically, ChatGPT will translate the sentence of CSI directly in the TL, which looks like the common human translation.

The finding on the translation of '*cincin batu ampal'* as a culture-specific item (CSI) supports previous studies emphasizing the importance of selecting appropriate translation strategies in literary translation. [4] argue that the successful translation of CSIs depends on the use of suitable strategies such as literal translation, functional equivalent, and descriptive equivalent, to preserve meaning and cultural value. In the present study, both the human translator and ChatGPT employed a strategy of translation by a more general word by rendering '*cincin batu ampal'* into more familiar lexical items in the target language. This finding is also consistent with [5], who found that literal translation and generalization are dominant techniques in translating CSIs because they facilitate readers' comprehension when exact cultural equivalence is unavailable. Furthermore, [3] assertion that literary translators act as cultural mediators between the source and target cultures and may employ domestication or foreignization strategies depending on the translation context. In this case,

the translation tends to reflect a domestication strategy because the culturally specific term is rendered through universal expressions that are more accessible to target readers.

Table 4. ChatGPT and Human Translation

| No | Source Language Text | ChatGPT Translation | Human Translation |
|---|---|---|---|
| b | *Dan terimalah pusaka cincin batu ampal yang khasiatnya bisa mengeringkan air samudra,* ***baju kemenyan*** *untuk mengagalkan niat jahat orang, baju pengabaran untuk keberanian dan baju pengasihan* | And receive these heirlooms: the ampal-stone ring, whose power can dry up the ocean; **the incense garment** to thwart others' evil intentions; the proclamation garment for courage; and the charm garment to inspire affection | Take these heirlooms: ampal stone ring with powerful to desiccate the ocean, ***baju kemenyan*** (**invisible garment**) to thwart the evil intentions of others, *baju pengabaran* for courage and *baju pengasihan* |

As we can see in the SL, the word '*baju kemenyan'* represents material culture, which refers to the clothing. The word meaning '*baju'* is clothes, and '*kemenyan*' is incense made from the styrax benzoin plant, which gives off a pleasant scent when burned (https://kbbi.web.id/kemenyan). *Baju Kemenyan* is worn; the person wearing it becomes invisible and is protected from any ill intentions directed at them. Embedded in the robe is a painting of a flower. Contextually, Sang Hyang Danuwarsih gave Raden Walangsungsang a gift in the form of a *baju kemenyan* as the equipment to seek Islamic teachings.

The data 2b above shows that the human translation employed a combination of loan words and cultural substitution in translating the culture-specific item '*baju kemenyan'*. The translator retained the original expression '*baju kemenyan'* to introduce the Indonesian cultural term to target readers while adding the phrase "*invisible garment"* to convey its function in the story. This strategy indicates that the translator recognized that the significance of '*baju kemenyan'* lies not in its literal lexical meaning but in its cultural and narrative function as a magical garment that enables the wearer to become invisible and protects them from danger. In contrast, ChatGPT translated '*kemenyan'* as "*incense"*, applying a less expressive and more general lexical equivalent. This choice suggests that ChatGPT primarily relied on the denotative meaning of *kemenyan* as a fragrant substance burned in rituals, rather than interpreting its contextual role within the folklore. Consequently, the translation becomes out of context because '*baju kemenyan'* in the story does not refer to clothing made from incense or aromatic plants but rather to a supernatural object possessing magical powers. The finding demonstrates that ChatGPT tends to prioritize surface-level semantic equivalence, which may lead to a loss of cultural and symbolic meanings embedded in literary texts.

Regarding machine translation, the present finding [11] argues that ChatGPT can generate accurate and fluent translations for general texts but still requires human intervention when translating literary and culturally bound expressions. Similarly, [23] found that although AI tools improve translation efficiency and facilitate comprehension of literary texts, human post-editing remains essential to preserve cultural nuances, symbolism, and literary qualities. In the case of *baju kemenyan*, ChatGPT successfully conveyed a general lexical meaning; however, the preservation of its cultural and symbolic significance depended heavily on human cultural competence. Therefore, the findings suggest that AI-

based translation should function as a complementary tool rather than a substitute for human translators in translating culture-specific items in literary texts.

Table 5. ChatGPT and Human Translation

| No | Source Language Text | ChatGPT Translation | Human Translation |
|---|---|---|---|
| 3 | *Dari Sang Hyang Naga, ia hanya memperoleh ilmu menghilang, kekuatan, kekebalan dan* ***senjata golok cabang*** | From Sang Hyang Naga, he only acquired the arts of invisibility, strength, invulnerability, and the ***golok cabang*** **weapon** | From Sang Hyang Naga, he only gets the art of invisibility, strength, invulnerability and ***golok cabang*** **weapon** |

From the data above, the word '*senjata golok cabang'* interprets the CSI of material culture, which belongs to artefacts, equipment or tools. The lexical meaning '*senjata'* is weapon, and '*golok cabang*' is a machete whose blade is not straight but branches out like a snake's tongue (https://portalmajalengka.pikiran-rakyat.com/). So, it is the real branch-shaped weapon or equipment. Contextually, Raden Walangsungsang is still looking for Islamic teaching, and he met Sang Hyang Naga in the middle of the way. He asked Sang Hyang Naga about Islamic teaching, but it was nothing. However, Sang Hyang Naga gave Raden Walangsungsang *'senjata golok cabang'* as a weapon to protect himself.

In the target language, ChatGPT employed a loan word strategy by retaining the culture-specific term '*golok cabang'* from the source text while translating the accompanying word '*senjata*' as "*weapon"*. Similarly, the human translation applied the same strategy and rendered the expression as '*golok cabang weapon'*. The retention of '*golok cabang'* suggests that both translators recognized the absence of a direct lexical equivalent in English and therefore preserved the original term to maintain its cultural identity. The use of loan words in both translations indicates an attempt to maintain the source culture while ensuring target readers understand the general function of the item through the addition of the word *weapon*. According to Baker (1992), a loan is often employed when a culture-specific concept is unknown in the target culture and when preserving the original term is considered important for maintaining cultural authenticity. In this case, translating '*golok cabang'* into a generic English term such as "*machete* or *knife"* would risk reducing its cultural specificity and obscuring its significance within the folklore.

The similarity between the human and ChatGPT translations demonstrates that ChatGPT can effectively preserve culture-bound terms when no direct equivalent exists in the target language. However, this similarity does not necessarily indicate that machine translation interprets culture in the same way as human translators. Rather, ChatGPT generates translations based on linguistic patterns learned from large datasets and on the prompts provided by users. Consequently, while ChatGPT is capable of preserving culture-specific terms through borrowing, the selection of an appropriate strategy may still depend on human guidance and cultural knowledge, particularly in literary texts where cultural meanings extend beyond lexical equivalence.

This finding supports previous studies suggesting that AI-assisted translation can successfully transfer explicit cultural references but still requires human intervention to

ensure that deeper cultural meanings and contextual nuances are adequately represented in the target text.

Table 6. ChatGPT and Human Translation

| No | Source Language Text | ChatGPT Translation | Human Translation |
|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | *Terimalah juga peci waring,* ***badong batok*** *untuk menaklukan jin, dan umbul-umbul waring untuk terhindar dari bahaya senjata lawan* | Also receive the *peci waring*, the ***badong batok*** to subdue jinn, and the *umbul-umbul* waring to protect yourself from the dangers of your enemies' weapons | And also receive peci waring, ***badong batok*** to conquer jin, then the *umbul-umbul* waring to protect from the danger of enemies' weapons |

The source language text above contains material culture in the word '*badong batok'*. The word meaning of *'badong'* is *wayang* props, *badung*, a shield mounted on a warhorse in *wayang kulit* (leather puppet) (https://kbbi.kemendikdasmen.go.id/entri/badong), while '*batok'* means coconut shell, bulled rice measurement and so on (https://kbbi.web.id/batok). It can be inferred that *badong batok* is a shield or protector equipment made from a coconut shell with bulled rice measurement. In the story, Raden Walangsungsang was given gifts again and again by Sang Hyang Naga as the foundation for seeking Islamic teaching. This *badong batok* was used to subdue jinn by Raden Walangsungsang.

In this case, both ChatGPT and the human translation employed the same translation strategy, namely loan word [27] by retaining the culture-specific term '*badong batok'* in the target language. The preservation of the original term indicates that both translations recognized the absence of an equivalent expression in English and considered the cultural value of the item important to maintain. By borrowing (loan) the source language term, the translators preserved the authenticity and cultural identity embedded in the folklore. The use of the same strategy suggests that '*badong batok'* carries a strong source culture association that would be difficult to convey through substitution or paraphrase without losing its cultural specificity. Replacing the term with a more general English equivalent could reduce the uniqueness of the cultural artifact and obscure its significance within the narrative. Therefore, retaining the original expression allows target readers to encounter the cultural distinctiveness of the source text directly.

The similarity between ChatGPT and human translation demonstrates that ChatGPT is capable of preserving explicit culture-bound terms through borrowing when no direct equivalent exists in the target language. However, this does not imply that ChatGPT interprets cultural meanings in the same manner as human translation. Instead, ChatGPT generates translations based on patterns learned from large linguistic datasets and the contextual information provided in prompts. Although ChatGPT can effectively maintain the formal representation of culture-specific items, human cultural competence remains essential to ensure that the broader cultural meanings and functions of such items are adequately conveyed.

**Social Organization**

Newmark (1999) referred organizations to various formal standards that indicate certain hierarchies applied in culture. A social organization consists of a custom, concept, organization, activity, or procedure related to politics, arts, religion, and administration. The research data on social organization is about 2 of the 13 data points. The following is an analysis of the data:

Table 7. Source Language Text and Target Language Text

| No | Source Language Text (SL) | Target Language Text (TL) | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | ChatGPT Translation | Human Translation |
| 1 | *Pagi itu **negeri Pajajaran** geger* | That morning, **the kingdom of Pajajaran** was in turmoil<br><br>That morning, **the land of Pajajaran** was in turmoil | That morning, **the kingdom of Pajajaran** was in chaos |

The word '*negeri Pajajaran'* of the SL indicated social organization as one of the parts in culture-specific items. Based on the dictionary, *negeri* means "country" (https://www.xamux.com/online-translator.php) and *Pajajaran* (*Pakwan Pajajaran*), commonly known as *Pakuan* or *Pajajaran*, is the capital of the Sunda kingdom. It existed from 932-1579 AD in the Pasundan region, the western part of Java Island (https://id.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pakuan_Pajajaran). In the context of Sundanese history, *Pajajaran* is indeed known as the kingdom.

ChatGPT translated the culture-specific item '*negeri Pajajaran*' using two different strategies. First, it employed more neutral words by rendering the expression as "*the Kingdom of Pajajaran"*. Second, it used a less expressive word by translating the term as "*the land of Pajajaran"* [27]. These alternatives reflect different interpretations of the source term '*negeri'*. The expression "*Kingdom of Pajajaran"* emphasizes the political and historical status of Pajajaran as a monarchy ruled by a king, whereas "*the land of Pajajaran*" refers more generally to a geographical territory or homeland without explicitly conveying its political structure. The generation of multiple translation options suggests that ChatGPT recognizes the semantic ambiguity of the Indonesian term '*negeri*', which may denote either a political entity or a geographical area depending on the context. However, the historical context of the folklore indicates that Pajajaran refers specifically to a traditional Sundanese monarchy. Therefore, the translation "*Kingdom of Pajajaran"* more accurately preserves the historical and cultural meaning embedded in the source text. Although "*the land of Pajajaran*" is semantically acceptable but weakens the historical specificity of the reference by omitting its monarchical dimension.

Similarly, the human translation employed a more neutral word by translating '*negeri Pajajaran'* as "*the Kingdom of Pajajaran"*. This choice demonstrates an awareness of the historical context and an intention to preserve the political and cultural identity of Pajajaran for target readers. Although the literal meaning of *negeri* may correspond to *country* or *state*, such renderings would be less appropriate because they do not adequately represent the

traditional monarchical system associated with Pajajaran. This finding indicates that ChatGPT can generate contextually plausible alternatives for culture-specific items; the selection of the most appropriate translation still depends on contextual interpretation and historical knowledge. Human translation draws on cultural and historical competence to determine which translation most accurately conveys the intended meaning in literary texts.

Furthermore, [3] argument that literary translators function as cultural mediators who bridge the source and target cultures through appropriate translation decisions. Kuleli also argues that translators may employ both foreignization and domestication strategies in translating CSIs rather than relying exclusively on one strategy. In the case of '*negeri Pajajaran'*, the translation tends to adopt a foreignization-oriented approach because the term item is rendered into the name of a country or administrative region (*Pajajaran*) that is familiar and special in SL culture. However, the cultural uniqueness embedded in the term *"*kingdom" becomes as similar as between SL and TL. In English, the word '*negeri*' means "country", but the context of the story refers to the kingdom, not a general country.

**Social Culture**

Social culture, which involves the day-to-day social practices and institutions of a society, including entertainment, sports, and professions. The research data on social culture is only 1 of 13 data.

Table 8. Social Culture

| No | Source Language Text | ChatGPT Translation | Human Translation |
|---|---|---|---|
| 4 | *Sekarang, terimalah **Aji Dipa** untuk memahami bahasa binatang, keperwiraan dan kesaktian* | Now, receive the ***Aji Dipa***, so that you may understand the language of animals and be endowed with bravery and supernatural powers | Now, receive ***Aji Dipa*** to understand animals' language, chivalry and supernatural powers |

The word '*Aji Dipa'* is a part of social culture which *Aji Dipa* is derived from two words: *Aji* (knowledge) and *Dipa* (level or even). Technically, *Aji Dipa* is defined as "level knowledge or equality, humility and affection knowledge (*Ilmu Papak*)". This definition refers to a spiritual teaching that discusses the origins of humanity and the existence of the One and only God (*Tuhan Yang Maha Esa*). Then, emphasize the common essence of all human beings. In the context of the story, Sang Hyang Naga gave a gift in the form of *Aji Dipa* to Raden Walangsungsang, which *Aji Dipa* is a knowledge or spiritual science to learn about animal language, bravery/heroism and supernatural.

It can be observed that both ChatGPT and the human translation closely produced a translation to the source language meaning by retaining the original term '*Aji Dipa'* in the target text. In both cases, the translation employed the loan word strategy [27]. The use of this strategy indicates that '*Aji Dipa'* represents a highly culture-bound concept that has no direct equivalent in English. Translating the term into a more general expression, such as "*spiritual knowledge* or *sacred teaching",* would only convey part of its meaning and could diminish its cultural and philosophical significance.

By preserving the original expression, both translations maintain the cultural authenticity and spiritual values embedded in the folklore. The retention of '*Aji Dipa'* also

introduces target readers to an indigenous Sundanese concept while preserving its cultural distinctiveness. The similarity between ChatGPT and the human translation suggests that ChatGPT is capable of recognizing certain culture-specific items that are better preserved through borrowing (loan) rather than substitution. However, retaining the original form alone may not be sufficient for intercultural understanding, as target readers may still require additional contextual explanation to fully comprehend the philosophical and spiritual dimensions of the term.

From a translation perspective, the dominance of material culture presents significant challenges because many of these items lack direct lexical equivalents in English. Consequently, both ChatGPT and the human translator employed various strategies, such as more neutral words, loan words, paraphrasing using unrelated word and cultural substitution to maintainence the cultural meanings embedded in the source text. However, the extent of cultural maintenance varied depending on the strategy employed.

## 4. CONCLUSION

This study examined the maintenance of Culture-Specific Items (CSIs) in the Indonesian folklore *Asal Usul Nama Cirebon* by comparing translations produced by ChatGPT and human translation using Newmark's classification of CSIs and Baker's translation strategies. The findings identified 11 CSIs categorized into material culture, social organization, and social culture, with material culture emerging as the dominant category. Both ChatGPT and the human translation predominantly employed translation by a more neutral word, loan words, and paraphrase or cultural substitution strategies in rendering culture-specific expressions. The findings further revealed that both translations were generally successful in preserving the denotative meanings of CSIs. However, the human translation demonstrated greater sensitivity in maintaining contextual, symbolic, and cultural nuances, whereas ChatGPT occasionally produced literal or generalized translations that reduced cultural meanings. The results indicate that ChatGPT can function as an effective supplementary tool in literary translation; nevertheless, human intervention remains essential to ensure cultural authenticity and contextual appropriateness in folklore translation.

This study has several limitations. First, the analysis was based on a relatively small number of CSIs derived from a single folklore text, limiting the generalizability of the findings. Second, ChatGPT translations were generated using only one prompt design; therefore, the influence of different prompting procedures on translation outcomes was not systematically examined. Third, although the human translator's qualifications were described, a more detailed account of the translator's background and translation decision-making process could strengthen the analysis. Finally, despite expert review being conducted, broader independent validation involving multiple experts or raters in CSI identification and classification was limited.

Future research is recommended to analyze a larger corpus of Indonesian folklore from various regions and compare the performance of different AI translation tools such as ChatGPT, Gemini, and Google Translate. Further studies should also involve professional translators and target readers to assess translation quality in terms of accuracy, acceptability,

and readability. Next, foreignization and domestication are translation methods that help to compare the source language text and the target language text. Additionally, investigating the effects of different prompt designs on ChatGPT's translation of culture-specific items would provide deeper insights into optimizing AI-assisted literary translation.

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