

Moral Teachings in Bugis Folktales

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ABSTRACT

One important effort in developing character education based on local wisdom is the rediscovery and exploration of folktales that are scattered and preserved among ethnic groups throughout the Indonesian archipelago. The Bugis ethnic group is one of the communities that possesses a rich collection of folktales. Bugis folktales are traditional literary works born from the spiritual experiences and imagination of their creators. Nevertheless, these stories have also played a significant role in shaping the life journey of the Bugis people and humanity in general. More importantly, Bugis folktales are not merely traditional literary works but also serve as a source of moral teachings. Moral values such as honesty, perseverance, obedience, mutual respect and appreciation, mutual reminder, compassion, patience, and others can be found in various folktales. These moral messages have the potential to serve as references for character formation within the Bugis community and even for national character development. This study is expected to be beneficial for both the Bugis ethnic community and Indonesian society in general, particularly in the context of character formation based on local wisdom. Revealing the meanings and values embedded in each folktale is expected to contribute significantly to the development of character education.

Keywords: Character Formation; Folktales; Bugis Ethnic Group; Local Wisdom

INTRODUCTION

Basically, character formation begins with the fitrah bestowed by God, which subsequently shapes one's identity and behavior. In its process, this divine fitrah is strongly influenced by environmental conditions; therefore, the environment plays a significant role in shaping identity and behavior (Ali Harsojo, 2013). One medium that can be utilized in character formation is culture, particularly local culture. In efforts to develop national character based on local wisdom, it is essential to listen to, read, and critically analyze folktales. This is because stories are one form of traditional literary works that are inseparable from human life.

Folktales do not emerge spontaneously; rather, they are born from long contemplation, spiritual journeys, and the imagination of their creators. In Indonesia, every ethnic group or region possesses a rich collection of folktales, including the Bugis ethnic group in South Sulawesi. Bugis folktales that continue to survive and are recognized by their supporting community are not merely literary works that function as entertainment for emotional satisfaction, but also contain moral messages.

The moral messages embedded in folktales are sometimes buried like diamonds hidden in mud. A diamond with brilliant luster will not emit light if it remains buried in mud. Similarly, folktales contain moral values that can serve as guidance for humanity, but these values will not function optimally if they are not revealed through research and scholarly analysis. Moral messages in the form of life principles, child-rearing patterns, honesty, simplicity, mutual respect and appreciation, mutual reminders, and other values are intrinsic elements of folktales that need to be brought to the surface. By doing so, both the Bugis ethnic community and Indonesian society in general can recognize and utilize these values. It is also possible that such moral messages may serve as references for character formation based on local wisdom.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Damono (1984:37), the main characteristic of structuralism lies in its attention to wholeness and totality. A literary work is constructed through language as its medium, possessing formal, content-related, and meaningful characteristics that are autonomous in nature. Nevertheless, a researcher must be capable of interrelating the intrinsic elements that construct the literary work itself. The early view of formalists, who assumed that a literary work was merely its construction or the sum of its devices, was eventually considered unsatisfactory. A literary work is not an accumulation of its devices, but rather an organized whole formed by various factors with different levels of importance. Consequently, formalists came to view literature as a system characterized by interdependence among its elements, and this concept became the foundation of structuralism (Fokkema, 1998:26).

Zoest (1980:3) states that a systematic and more accessible approach for literary scholars is semiotics. Literary works, as linguistic constructions, are essentially semiotic facts, functioning as sign systems (Abdullah, 1991:8). A literary work is a structure (system) of meaningful signs. A text is considered a sign formed by a number of other signs, which play a role in the communication process (Van Zoest, 1980:3). These signs possess meanings in accordance with semiotic conventions (Preminger in Pradopo, 1995:108). In relation to the various elements involved in the use of signs, Van Zoest (1980:3) divides semiotics into three areas of study: (1) syntax, which examines the relationships among signs; (2) semantics, which examines the relationship between signs and their denotations; and (3) pragmatics, which examines the relationship between signs and their users. This concept is also articulated in Charles Morris's theory of the three aspects of semiotics. According

to Morris (in O.K.S. Zaimar, 2014:32), there are three important semiotic levels: pragmatics, semantics, and syntactics. Pragmatics refers to the study of the relationship between signs and their interpreters; semantics concerns the relationship between signs and the objects they refer to; and syntactics focuses on the relationships among signs themselves.

Furthermore, Lotman (in Fokkema, 1998:57) introduced a semiotic method for analyzing both the internal and external aspects of literature, particularly the relationship between text and sociocultural context. He argued that signs in art are not based solely on arbitrary conventions but also possess iconic and symbolic characteristics. This view aligns with Ruqaiyah-Holliday (1992:6), who asserts that text and context should be considered simultaneously as aspects of the same process. A text is always accompanied by another text, namely context. Context is not limited to spoken or written language but includes all non-verbal events and the entire environment surrounding the text. According to Hoed (2011:57), a text is a linguistic (verbal) unit that has both form and content, or expression and meaning.

METHOD

Design and Sample

This study employs a qualitative research design. According to Bogdan and Taylor (as cited in Moleong, 2006:4), qualitative research refers to research procedures that produce descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from people and observable behaviors. Qualitative research generates analytical procedures that do not rely on statistical analysis or other forms of quantification. Instead, it is based on efforts to construct detailed perspectives of the participants under study, expressed through words. Data collection was carried out through field research activities by dividing tasks among team members. Each team member conducted observations in one regency. Field data collection constituted the most essential element of this study, as it served as the primary source of data for analysis.

Instrument and Procedure

To obtain valid and comprehensive data, several supporting techniques were employed in the field. The data collection techniques included observation, interviews, and audio recording. Observation was conducted as a preliminary activity to enable researchers to become more closely acquainted with the object of study. Through observation, researchers gained initial understanding of the social and cultural context related to the folktales being studied. Interviews were used to obtain more in-depth data and information related to the research object. The type of interview applied was unstructured interviews. These interviews were not guided by a predetermined list of questions; instead, the interview guide consisted only of broad outlines of the issues to be explored. Informants were given the freedom to respond based on their personal feelings, experiences, and perspectives. Audio recordings were conducted during interviews or when informants were narrating

folktales in order to accurately capture oral data and ensure data accuracy during transcription and analysis.

Data Analysis

Triangulation was employed as a supporting technique to verify data validity, ensure the accuracy of the analytical process, and confirm the correctness of the research findings (Sibarani, 2012). Data from observations, interviews, and audio recordings were cross-checked to strengthen credibility and reduce bias in interpretation.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Solidarity

A sense of solidarity is found in several Bugis folktales. One example can be seen in the story of *Nenek Pakande*, where solidarity emerges through the actions of a young man from an ordinary social background. Although the community initially doubted his ability to defeat Nenek Pakande using his own strategy, after he provided a clear explanation, the villagers eventually believed in him. Subsequently, the community worked together to assist the young man by preparing all the necessary materials and equipment. Collective support continued until the task was successfully completed, demonstrating strong communal solidarity.

Patience

Patience that yields positive outcomes is clearly illustrated in the folktale *I Daramatasia*. As a wife, I Daramatasia patiently accepted all decisions made by her husband and parents. When she was expelled by her husband due to the issue of her hair being cut and used as a lamp wick, she accepted the decision sincerely despite her deep sadness. Similarly, when she sought refuge at her parents' house after being expelled by her husband, she was also rejected; nevertheless, she accepted this hardship with an open heart. Through her continuous patience and prayers, she was eventually reunited with her beloved family. As a result of her perseverance and faith, Allah sent the angel Jibril to assist her.

The value of patience is also evident in the story of *La Sabbaraq*, who consistently remained silent when insulted by his in-laws due to his occupation. La Sabbaraq worked as a farmer, bringing home only the produce from his fields, while his brother-in-law was a merchant who traveled far and earned significantly higher income. Despite this disparity, La Sabbaraq endured the humiliation patiently. His wife also exemplified patience and gratitude for whatever they earned. Due to their patience and diligence, divine assistance came to their family, and eventually La Sabbaraq became wealthy, even surpassing La Muhammaq.

Patience is further reflected in the story of *We Taddampaliq*, the daughter of the King of Luwu, who was exiled due to the illness she suffered. She accepted her father's decision to send her away to an uncertain place. Living far from the palace and its luxuries, she endured hardship patiently, though she was still accompanied by loyal guards. Through her patience, she was eventually destined to meet her future husband, the crown prince of the Kingdom of Bone.

Firmness

The value of firmness is found in the folktale *We Taddampaliq*, particularly in the character of the King of Luwu. This trait is evident when the king faced a dilemma between his deep love for his daughter and his responsibility to protect his people. His daughter's incurable skin disease posed a threat to public safety. Ultimately, the king chose to safeguard his people by exiling his beloved daughter. Although the decision was emotionally painful, it reflects the firmness and leadership required of a ruler.

Intelligence

The notion that strength can be defeated by intelligence is a key message in the story of *Nenek Pakande*. Nenek Pakande, a creature known for devouring humans especially children possessed extraordinary strength that no ordinary human could overcome, except Raja Bangkung, who preyed only on individuals with immoral behavior. Nenek Pakande's power terrorized the community until La Beddu, an ordinary young man endowed with intelligence and strategic thinking, appeared. His idea for defeating Nenek Pakande was simple yet effective, ultimately rendering her powerless. This story conveys the message that brute force does not always need to be confronted with force, but can be overcome through intellect and strategy.

Intelligence is also strongly represented in the character of *La Mellong*, a well-known advisor to the sixth and seventh Kings of Bone. Many Bugis folktales revolve around his wisdom and clever thinking. One such story recounts how La Mellong was instructed by the King of Bone to gather one hundred blind people in a single night. After contemplating the task, La Mellong walked around the village carrying a bamboo pole. Anyone who asked what he was carrying was classified by him as "blind." By the next morning, he had gathered one hundred people. When presented before the king, the king became angry upon realizing that the people were not physically blind. La Mellong calmly explained that, in his view, they were blind because they failed to see the bamboo he was carrying around the village. His reasoning was ultimately accepted by the king. This story emphasizes that tasks seemingly beyond human capability can be accomplished through creativity and intellectual insight.

Laziness

In contrast to patience, which often leads to positive outcomes, laziness tends to result in misfortune. The folktale *Matu Memmana* illustrates how laziness can bring about negative consequences. In this story, a young woman's reluctance to stand up and go downstairs to retrieve a fallen weaving tool leads her to order her pet dog to fetch it instead. The dog unexpectedly obeys and returns the tool while speaking like a human.

This unnatural event, however, results in severe consequences. The young woman is suddenly transformed into stone. Not only she, but also her mother and all the villagers who reprimand her are likewise turned into stone. The moral lesson conveyed by this story is that laziness does not only endanger oneself, but can also bring harm to one's family and even the wider community. Therefore, tasks that can be completed independently should not be neglected or delegated out of sheer laziness.

CONCLUSION

Bugis folktales constitute an important cultural heritage that embodies moral teachings and local wisdom deeply rooted in the life of the Bugis people. These folktales are not merely traditional literary works intended for entertainment, but also function as a medium for transmitting ethical values and shaping character across generations. The findings of this study reveal that Bugis folktales consistently convey moral values such as solidarity, patience, perseverance, wisdom, intelligence, and diligence, as well as warnings against negative traits such as laziness. These moral teachings are presented through symbolic narratives and character experiences that reflect social, religious, and cultural norms upheld by the Bugis community. Positive traits are often rewarded with happiness and success, while negative behaviors lead to suffering or misfortune, reinforcing clear moral lessons for the audience. Furthermore, the moral values embedded in Bugis folktales have strong relevance to contemporary character education. They offer a local wisdom-based framework that can contribute significantly to character development, not only among the Bugis people but also within Indonesian society more broadly. Therefore, documenting, preserving, and integrating Bugis folktales into educational and cultural discourse is essential to ensure that these moral teachings continue to guide future generations in fostering ethical, responsible, and culturally grounded individuals.

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