


The Transformation of Traditional Values in Lawomaru Folklore in the Oral Traditions of Nias Ethnic in the Modern Era

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A B S T R A C T

The rapid development of globalization and digital technology has significantly altered the way traditional cultural values are transmitted and understood, creating challenges for the sustainability of oral traditions among younger generations. Therefore, research on the transformation of traditional values in folklore is essential to understand how local wisdom can remain relevant in contemporary society. This study aims to analyze the transformation of traditional values contained in the folklore Laowomaru within the oral tradition of the Nias ethnic community in the modern era, identify the factors influencing these transformations, and examine their implications for cultural literacy and value transmission. The research employed a qualitative approach using a literature study method. Data were collected from books, scientific journals, theses, dissertations, and digital documents related to folklore, oral traditions, cultural values, and cultural transformation. The findings reveal that Laowomaru embodies traditional values such as family harmony, simplicity, obedience to rules, moral causality, trust, loyalty, and the consequences of betrayal. In the modern era, these values have undergone transformations in their forms, functions, and modes of application due to globalization, technological advancement, and changing social perspectives. Nevertheless, the core values remain preserved and continue to be adapted to contemporary contexts. This study contributes to cultural studies and literacy research by demonstrating that folklore serves not only as a cultural heritage but also as an educational medium for strengthening cultural literacy, character formation, and the preservation of local wisdom in the digital age.

Keywords: *Laowomaru Folklore, Oral Tradition, Nias Culture, Traditional Values Transformation, Cultural Literacy, Local Wisdom Preservation*

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INTRODUCTION

The development of globalization and the advancement of digital technology have brought significant changes in various aspects of people's lives, including in the field of culture. One of the most obvious impacts is the shift in the way people access, understand, and pass on traditional cultural values. Oral traditions, which were previously the main means of transmitting value, are now starting to be displaced by digital media that are more practical and fast. These changes not only affect the form of delivery, but also have implications for the meaning of the values contained in it. In this context, folklore as part of the oral tradition faces the challenge of staying relevant amid the currents of modernization.

According to Koentjaraningrat, (2021), culture is the entire system of ideas, actions, and human works in people's lives that are obtained through the learning process. Culture is dynamic so that it is constantly undergoing changes and adjustments in accordance with the social development of society. These changes can occur through the process of cultural transformation, namely changes in the form, function, and meaning of cultural elements due to interaction with the development of the times without eliminating the essence of the values contained in them. Therefore, the changes that occur in oral traditions in the digital era can be

understood as part of a process of cultural transformation that takes place in a sustainable manner.

Folklore has an important function as a medium of value education, entertainment, and a means of forming community character. Each folklore contains moral and social values that reflect the local wisdom of a community. In folklore studies, (Danandjaja, 2007) explained that folklore is a part of collective culture that is inherited from generation to generation, either orally or through examples accompanied by gestures or reminder aids. Folklore is characterized by traditional spread, is anonymous, and belongs to a group of people. Folklore as a form of folklore functions as a means of inheriting cultural values, social norms, and people's views on life. One of the folklore that has rich cultural value is the story of Lawomaru from the Nias ethnicity. This story contains values such as family harmony, simplicity, obedience to rules, beliefs, and the consequences of moral deviance. These values are inherited from generation to generation through oral traditions and become guidelines in people's lives.

As part of the oral tradition, folklore lives and develops through the process of intergenerational storytelling. (Ngo, 2002) states that oral society maintains collective knowledge and experience through oral speech that is inherited from generation to generation. Oral traditions not only function as a medium of communication, but also as a means of forming cultural identity and conveying social values. Therefore, the existence of folklore has a strategic role in maintaining the sustainability of the collective memory of a society. However, the development of digital technology has changed the pattern of inheritance of oral traditions from those that originally took place directly and communally to more flexible through various digital media.

From the perspective of character education, folklore also has an educational function because it contains moral values that can be used as a guideline for behavior. Values such as honesty, responsibility, loyalty, obedience to rules, and respect for others contained in folklore can be a means of character learning for the younger generation. Through folklore, people not only pass on the stories of the past, but also transmit the norms and values that shape the character of individuals in social life.

However, in the modern era, there has been a change in the way the younger generation understands and internalizes folklore. The adaptation of folklore into digital media, such as video, social media, and online texts, often leads to a simplification of the flow and a shift in the meaning of the values contained in it. This phenomenon is in line with research findings that cultural digitalization can lead to changes in the structure and function of oral traditions, from being communal to more individual and consumptive. In addition, other research shows that the low interest of the younger generation in oral traditions is due to the dominance of popular culture and a lack of innovation in the process of local cultural inheritance.

This transformation can be understood through the theory of cultural representation put forward by (Hall, 1997). Hall explains that cultural meanings are not fixed, but are constantly produced and reproduced through the process of representation in different social contexts. Thus, the traditional values contained in folklore can undergo reinterpretation according to the needs and realities of modern society. Cultural transformation does not mean the loss of old values, but the process of adjusting meaning to remain relevant in the life of a society that continues to change.

A number of previous studies have examined oral traditions and the transformation of cultural values. Research by (Sibarani, 2021) It shows that oral traditions have an important role in maintaining cultural identity and local values, but have undergone changes in function in the modern era. Research (Irawati et al., 2023) reveals that the transformation of cultural values occurs in response to technological developments and social changes that lead to the reinterpretation of traditional values. Meanwhile, (Rizqiya, 2024) emphasizing that the digitization of folklore can expand the reach of culture, but it has the potential to reduce the depth of the meaning of the value conveyed. However, studies that specifically discuss the transformation of traditional values in Lawomaru folklore in the people of Nias are still limited. In addition, previous research has generally focused on the structure, function, or

preservation of folklore, while studies on the change in the form and meaning of traditional values in Lawomaru stories in the modern era have not been widely done. Therefore, this research has an important position as an effort to fill the research gap while strengthening understanding of the dynamics of cultural value transformation in the oral tradition of the Nias people.

Based on this background, the problems in this study are focused on how the transformation of traditional values in Lawomaru folklore in the modern era, the factors that influence these changes, and their impact on the understanding of the younger generation. In line with that, the purpose of this study is to describe the form of transformation of traditional values in Lawomaru folklore, analyze the factors that influence these changes in values, and examine their impact on the understanding and acceptance of the younger generation of folklore. Thus, this research is expected to contribute to the development of the study of folklore, oral traditions, and cultural transformation, as well as being one of the efforts to preserve local cultural values and strengthen cultural literacy in the midst of the times.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a literature study method (*library research*). The qualitative approach was chosen because this research focuses on understanding the meanings, values, and cultural phenomena contained in Lawomaru folklore as part of the Nias ethnic oral tradition. The literature study method is used to examine various relevant written sources in order to obtain comprehensive and in-depth data on the transformation of traditional values in the modern era. According to (Rizqiya, 2024), literature study is a research method that is carried out through searching, studying, and analyzing various scientific sources related to research topics.

The data sources in this study are in the form of secondary data obtained from various written sources that are relevant to the study of oral traditions, folklore, cultural values, and cultural transformation. Specifically, the secondary data sources in this study are classified into five main categories. First, scientific books that discuss cultural anthropology, folklore, oral traditions, character education, and cultural transformation. Second, national and international journal articles that examine folklore, local wisdom, cultural values, and socio-cultural changes in the modern era. Third, cultural documents in the form of research results, cultural reports, theses, dissertations, and official publications that discuss the regional cultural heritage and social system of the Nias community. Fourth, digital archives such as scientific articles accessed through the Google Scholar academic database, Garuda Portal, university repositories, and other trusted digital sources. Fifth, various references that contain Nias folklore, especially Lawomuru folklore, both in the form of folklore collections, scientific articles, and digital documentation that explain the content of the story, cultural values, and social context. The selection of data sources is carried out selectively based on the level of relevance, credibility, authorial authority, and novelty of publications, especially those published in the last ten years to ensure the validity of the research data (Sihombing, 2024).

The data collection technique is carried out through documentation studies with systematic steps, namely literature search through academic databases such as Google Scholar, Garuda Portal, and university repositories; selection and classification of data based on topic suitability and scientific quality; recording and coding of data to facilitate the analysis process; and critical review of the content of the source to identify concepts, theories, and findings relevant to the research (Rizqiya, 2024). This process aims to obtain structured data and support comprehensive analysis.

The data analysis in this study uses descriptive-analytical techniques. The data that has been collected is then reduced by selecting information that is relevant to the research focus, namely the transformation of traditional values in Lawomaru folklore. Furthermore, the data is presented in the form of a systematic narrative description in accordance with the research theme, such as the type of traditional value and its form of transformation. The next stage is data interpretation by relating the findings to the theories used, such as literary anthropology,

folklore, and cultural transformation. In addition, a comparative analysis was carried out to compare various sources to obtain a more objective and in-depth understanding. The final stage is the drawing of conclusions based on the results of the analysis that has been carried out (Irawati et al., 2023). Thus, this research method is designed to produce an in-depth and systematic analysis of the transformation of traditional values in Lawomaru folklore in the context of cultural developments in the modern era.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Laowomaru folklore is a legend from the people of Nias that tells the story of a human figure with extraordinary power that comes from the wire hair on his head. This story uses a forward plot, starting from his family background who come from the ancestral descendants of Nias to his life journey full of conflicts due to the abuse of power. In the beginning, Laowomaru is depicted as living in a harmonious family and upholding modesty. However, when he grows up, he turns into a violent figure, fond of stealing, and torturing others. The conflict reaches its peak when the secret of his power is revealed to his wife, so he loses his power and eventually dies.

Laowomaru folklore has an important function in the life of the Nias people, namely as entertainment, a means of education, and cultural preservation. On the other hand, this story plays a role in maintaining cultural sustainability, because through retelling, the values and identity of the Nias people are still passed on to the next generation. This is in line with the opinion (Hulu et al., 2025) which states that folklore such as Laowomaru plays a role in reintroducing local legends so that cultural values are maintained. Based on the results of the analysis of the folklore "Laowomaru" as part of the oral tradition of the Nias ethnicity, it was found that the story contains various traditional values that reflect the social, moral, and cultural systems of the Nias people in the past.

The traditional values in Laowomaru folklore show that oral literature not only serves as entertainment but also serves as a tool to disseminate cultural ideologies, social norms, and the collective identity of the community. Laowomaru folklore is considered to be part of a collective culture that is passed down from generation to generation. According to folklore studies, Laowomaru folklore functions as a tool of social control and the inheritance of cultural values (Danandjaja, 2007). Therefore, the story of Laowomaru is closely linked to the social context of the Nias people, who used oral traditions to provide moral education and strengthen cultural solidarity.

However, the rise of modernization and globalization is changing the way people see cultural values. Cultural change does not mean the loss of traditional values but rather a change in the way those values are represented and applied in a new social context. According to (Hall, 1997) Cultural meanings are always created and replicated through a process of representation that is tailored to the social context of society. In situations like this, the legend of Laowomaru undergoes a reinterpretation, so that traditional values remain, but they are adapted to the perspective of the current generation. The traditional values found are as follows:

The Value of Harmony and Politeness in the Family

The value of family harmony in the story of Laowomaru is clearly illustrated in the early life of the family which was built on mutual respect, politeness, and mutual agreement. In traditional societies, the family is the main social unit that becomes a place for the internalization of cultural values.

"Their lives are harmonious and peaceful, never mentioning each other's names. They never curse each other, always respect, and are equal..."

The quote shows that the traditional Nias people uphold communication ethics and politeness in family relationships. Not mentioning names directly is a form of social respect that shows that there is cultural control over individual behavior. Thus, the family harmony in the story of Laowomaru not only shows an emotional connection, but also represents the collective cultural values of the Nias people. In the modern context, the value of harmony has

undergone a transformation because family communication patterns are increasingly influenced by digital technology. Family interaction no longer takes place entirely in person, but through virtual communication media. However, the essence of harmony is maintained through open communication and appreciation between family members.

The Value of Simplicity and Anti-Greed

The value of simplicity in the story is shown through the attitude of Laowomaru's parents who do not have greed or envy of others. This value is a representation of the traditional people's view of life that emphasizes the balance between material and spiritual needs.

"They are not greedy for wealth or envious of the beauty of others. Their souls and bodies are clean from all greed..."

The quote shows that traditional societies view simplicity as a form of self-control and life balance. This value serves as a moral guideline to prevent humans from being dominated by material desires. Due to the growing consumptive culture and the influence of digital media, the value of simplicity faces challenges in the modern era. Modern societies tend to judge success based on material possessions and social status. Nonetheless, the value of simplicity is not completely lost. Instead, it turns into a minimalist lifestyle and a simple life consciousness.

The Value of Moral Deviance (Abuse of Power)

Laowomaru's behavior abusing his strength and immunity reflects a moral deviation. In a cultural context, force is supposed to be used to protect, not to harm others.

"He abused his power and immunity by doing evil to others... robbing, stealing, and torturing others."

The quote suggests that the main characters use their powers to prevent society, not to protect it. Traditional cultures believe that force should be used to maintain social balance. As a result, Laowomaru's actions were considered morally violative. Although the form of power has changed from physical power to economic, political, and technological power in the modern era, moral deviations such as exploitation and abuse of authority continue to occur. This shows that the moral principles contained in folklore can still be used as a social critique of modern life.

Rules Compliance Values

The value of obedience to the rules is illustrated through the conditions that Laowomaru gives to his son in the process of inheriting immunity. These rules are absolute and must not be violated.

"The child cannot turn left or right... because every violation of the conditions means death."

The quote shows that the rules of traditional societies are absolute and have clear consequences. Rules are considered a social responsibility to maintain safety and order in living together. The rules in the Laowomaru story serve as a symbol and moral lesson for the community. However, compliance with the rules has undergone a transformation in the current era because society prioritizes rationality and individual freedom. However, the principle of compliance is still very important to build discipline and social responsibility.

The Value of Moral Causality (Cause-Effect)

Laowomaru's story places great emphasis on cause-and-effect relationships as part of moral values. Every action taken by the character will produce certain consequences.

"At that time his neck was immediately broken... The child died..."

The quote shows that every action has consequences that must be accepted. Causal relationships are considered to be the moral laws that govern human life in traditional societies. Violating norms will result in suffering or punishment, either directly or indirectly.

The death of Laowomaru's child in the story is not only part of the plot, but also an illustration that breaking the rules will have bad consequences.

The value of cause-and-effect, although the consequences are more complex, is still relevant in the modern world. In the digital and social world, individual actions can have a huge impact that isn't always directly visible. This suggests that the value of moral causality in folklore can still teach people about social responsibility.

The Value of Trust and Loyalty

Trust is one of the important values in social relationships. In this story, this value is seen in the relationship between Laowomaru and his wife, Sihoi.

"His wife promised not to divulge it."

The quote shows that the relationship between husband and wife is built on trust and moral responsibility. In traditional societies, promises are not only understood as ordinary speech, but have sacred values that must be maintained. Trust is the basis for creating harmonious and stable social relationships. In Laowomaru's story, the value of loyalty shows the importance of maintaining trust and loyalty in family relationships.

The value of trust has undergone a transformation in the modern era because social relationships no longer only take place directly, but also through digital media. The increasing spread of false information, online fraud, and privacy violations shows that the crisis of trust is becoming a modern social problem. Therefore, the value of belief in folklore remains relevant as the basis for the formation of social ethics of society.

The Value of Betrayal and Its Impact

The violation of trust becomes a turning point in the story that leads to the destruction of Laowomaru.

"Finally Sihoi unlocked her husband's power... Sihoi forgot his promise..."

The quote shows that the breach of trust has a significant effect on the main character's life. In this story, betrayal results in destruction and death and the loss of Laowomaru's power. This shows that traditional societies consider treason to be a very bad moral offense. Betrayal is described in Laowomaru's story as an act that destroys social relationships and life balance. Data leaks, information manipulation, and violations of professional ethics are some examples of betrayal in the modern era. Therefore, the story of Laowomaru is still relevant as a moral reflection on the importance of maintaining integrity, loyalty, and social responsibility in contemporary life.

Discussion

The traditional values in Laowomaru folklore show that oral literature serves not only as entertainment, but also as a medium for internalizing complex cultural values. These values basically represent the social system of traditional Nias society which is collective, normative, and belief-based. However, along with the times, these values have undergone transformation due to the influence of modernization, globalization, and technological developments. This transformation does not necessarily lead to the loss of value, but rather to a change in its form, function, and way of application in the life of modern society.

The Value of Harmony and Politeness in the Family

The value of family harmony in Laowomaru's story is built on the basis of strong collective norms, where relationships between family members are colored by politeness, respect, and mutual agreement. In Koentjaraningrat's view, culture functions as a value system that regulates human behavior in social life. Family relationships are hierarchical, but they are still based on affection and togetherness as the main foundation. In the context of traditional society, harmony is maintained through adherence to norms and self-control in interaction. However, in the modern era, this value has undergone a transformation towards a more dialogical and egalitarian pattern of relations. This change is marked by a shift from traditional authority towards relational equality, as well as from ethical symbolic communication to more open and expressive communication. In addition, the development of communication

technology has also changed the pattern of interaction in the family, where communication no longer takes place directly, but through digital media. Nevertheless, the essence of harmony is still maintained as a basic need, it's just that the way to maintain it is adapted through open communication, negotiation, and emotional awareness between family members.

The Value of Simplicity and Anti-Greed

The value of simplicity in Laowomaru's story reflects the spiritual ethics of traditional societies that reject greedy and materialistic attitudes, and place balance in life as the main principle. In the traditional context, simplicity is a collective value that binds and becomes a guideline in living life. However, in the modern era, this value has shifted due to the development of a consumptive culture that tends to judge success based on material ownership and social status. The transformation that has occurred shows a change from collective moral obligations to individual choices that are reflective. Despite the pressure, the value of simplicity is not completely lost, but has been reconstructed in new forms, such as a minimalist lifestyle, financial awareness, and concern for the environment. Thus, the transformation of the value of simplicity is adaptive and reconstructive, where the value remains, but is realized through personal awareness that is more contextual with modern life.

The Value of Moral Deviance (Abuse of Power)

The character of Laowomaru represents power in the form of extraordinary physical strength, but it is not balanced with morality, so it is used to deprive and oppress. In traditional society, power actually has a social function, namely to protect and maintain the balance of people's lives. The deviations committed by Laowomaru show a violation of these moral values. In the modern context, this value undergoes a transformation along with the change in the form of power from physical to structural and symbolic, such as power in the economic, political, and technological fields. Although the form of power is changing, the pattern of deviations remains the same, namely abuse of authority, exploitation, and social injustice. This shows that transformation occurs in the medium of power, not in its moral value. Therefore, moral values in the use of power remain relevant and even more important to be strengthened through public ethics, transparency, and accountability in modern life.

Rules Compliance Values

In Laowomaru's story, obedience to rules is absolute and non-negotiable, as rules are seen as part of the order of life that must be obeyed in order to maintain balance and safety. This can be seen from the fatal consequences that occur when the rules are broken, such as the death of Laowomaru's child. However, in the modern era, the value of obedience has undergone a transformation to be more rational and contextual. Individuals are no longer obedient solely because of norms, but because of an understanding and awareness of the function of these rules. This transformation represents a shift from external authority-based compliance to internal control-based compliance. However, this flexibility also brings challenges in the form of increasing value relativism and the potential for rule violations. Therefore, in modern life, the value of obedience needs to be strengthened through character education, legal awareness, and social responsibility in order to maintain its function as a regulator of common life.

The Value of Moral Causality (Cause-Effect)

The concept of causation in Laowomaru's story shows that every action has direct and tangible consequences, thus serving as a mechanism of social control in traditional societies. This value instills an awareness that violations of norms will have inevitable consequences. In the modern era, the value of moral causality has undergone a more complex transformation, where the relationship between action and effect is not always seen directly, but rather is long-term and systemic. For example, individual actions in the digital space can have far-reaching impacts that are not immediately felt. This transformation shows that the principle of causation remains valid, but requires a higher level of consciousness to understand it.

Therefore, the value of moral causality remains relevant and needs to be internalized as a basis for responsible decision-making.

The Value of Trust and Loyalty

The value of trust in Laowomaru's story is personal and sacred, especially in family relationships, where trust is the main foundation that binds social relationships. Violations of trust, such as those committed by Sihoi, lead to fatal destruction, thus demonstrating how important loyalty values are in traditional societies. In the modern era, this value has undergone a transformation to become more complex because it involves various forms of social relations, both directly and through digital media. Trust is no longer just personal, but also systemic, encompassing institutions, technology, and social networks. This transformation increases vulnerability to breaches, such as information manipulation and betrayal in a variety of contexts. Nevertheless, the essence of the value of trust remains a fundamental aspect of human life. Therefore, this value needs to be strengthened through integrity, social literacy, and ethical awareness in facing the dynamics of modern society.

The Value of Betrayal and Its Impact

In Laowomaru's story, the betrayal committed by Sihoi is a turning point in the main character's destruction. A violation of trust led to Laowomaru's loss of power and led to his death. This shows that betrayal has a huge impact, both individually and socially. In the modern context, this value undergoes a transformation in a more complex form, where betrayal occurs not only in personal relationships, but also in various aspects of social life, such as information leaks, data manipulation, and violations of trust in professional relationships. The impact of betrayal is no longer immediate, but can be widespread and lasts for a long time. Therefore, this value remains relevant as a reminder of the importance of maintaining trust and integrity in modern life.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that the Lawomaru folklore embodies traditional values reflecting the social and cultural life of the Nias community, including family harmony, simplicity, obedience, loyalty, moral responsibility, and belief. These values serve as moral guidance and contribute to character development. Although globalization, modernization, and digital technology have transformed the way these values are expressed and transmitted, their cultural essence remains preserved through adaptation to contemporary society. The findings demonstrate that Lawomaru folklore functions not only as cultural heritage but also as a medium for cultural value transmission, character education, and cultural literacy. Its continued relevance highlights the important role of oral traditions in preserving cultural identity amid social change. The study also suggests that digital media can effectively support the preservation and dissemination of folklore among younger generations. However, this research is limited to a literature review and does not explore how contemporary Nias communities interpret these values. Future studies should involve field research, comparative analyses, and digital adaptation to strengthen the preservation and understanding of Indonesia's rich oral traditions.

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