

**Moral Values and Cultural Preservation in the Buttu Kabobong Legend: A
Comparative Study of Oral Traditions in South Sulawesi and Tamil Nadu**

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Abstract:

The study *Moral Values and Cultural Preservation in the Buttu Kabobong Legend: A Comparative Study of Oral Traditions in South Sulawesi and Tamil Nadu* explores the moral teachings embedded in the Buttu Kabobong legend of Bamba Puang, Enrekang Regency, South Sulawesi, Indonesia, and compares them with similar traditions in Tamil Nadu, India. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, the research involved interviews with native speakers, traditional leaders, and community members. Findings highlight that the Buttu Kabobong legend imparts lessons on individual accountability, social harmony, and spiritual devotion, with key moral values including patience, honesty, communal cooperation, and respect for divine commandments. The narrative warns against moral failings, such as disobedience and selfishness, stressing the consequences of these actions. This study emphasizes the role of folklore in preserving cultural identity, guiding ethical behavior, and offering a unique educational tool for fostering moral awareness. Additionally, it underscores the global significance of oral traditions in transmitting values across generations, drawing parallels between the traditions of South Sulawesi in Indonesia and Tamil Nadu in India.

Keywords: Moral Values, Folklore, Buttu Kabobong Legend, Bamba Puang, Tamil, Cultural Heritage

1. Introduction

In comparison to Indonesia's rich cultural diversity, Tamil Nadu in India also holds a deep cultural heritage, rich in traditions, folklore, and historical significance. Tamil Nadu, like Indonesia, is home to various folklore, legends, and oral traditions that have been passed down through generations, preserving the values of society.

One example of Tamil Nadu's folklore is the legend of *Kannagi*, from the Tamil epic *Silappatikaram*, which imparts lessons of justice, loyalty, and the consequences of moral actions. Similarly to the legend of Buttu Kabobong in South Sulawesi, this Tamil legend emphasizes the importance of adhering to ethical behavior and respect for societal norms. In Tamil Nadu, traditional art forms, like Bharatanatyam (dance) and Carnatic music, also play a vital role in sustaining cultural identity, much like the varied traditional practices across Indonesia. However, like Indonesia, modern technological and global influences have caused shifts in the way these traditions are perceived and practiced, raising the need for a balance between progress and cultural preservation. Thus, both regions share the challenge of preserving their folklore and cultural practices in a rapidly changing world, while recognizing their vital role in education and societal values.

1.1 South Sulawesi and Tamil Nadu Cultural Diversity

Both regions South Sulawesi and Tamil Nadu emphasize oral traditions, using storytelling to pass down moral values and social norms. While Indonesia treasures legends like the Buttu Kabobong, India takes pride in epics and texts like the Thirukkural, which underline universal themes of ethics, harmony, and spirituality. Their shared history and mutual influence highlight the power of cultural exchange and foster a greater understanding of humanity's collective heritage.

1.2 The Role of Folklore in Preserving Culture

Folklore is a prominent medium for preserving Indonesia's cultural heritage. Legends, myths, and oral traditions, passed down through generations, serve as both entertainment and a means of imparting values. These narratives offer deep insights into the beliefs and moral principles upheld by local communities.

1.3 Legends as Semi-Historical Narratives

Legends occupy a unique space in folklore as semi-historical accounts that blend fact and fiction. They often convey profound ethical messages while maintaining their cultural and historical significance.

1.4 Introducing the Buttu Kabobong Legend

One notable example is the Buttu Kabobong legend from Bamba Puang in Enrekang Regency, South Sulawesi. Renowned for its compelling narrative and moral depth, this legend is an integral part of the local culture and continues to influence the values of its people.

1.5 Symbolism of Buttu Kabobong

The name Buttu Kabobong translates to "hidden mountain," while its popular reference, Gunung Nona (Virgin Mountain), describes its unique topographical resemblance to a woman's form. Beyond its visual appeal, the mountain is intertwined with a story rich in moral lessons, addressing:

- Community behavior
- Respect for divine authority
- Consequences of moral degradation

1.6 Modern Challenges to Oral Tradition

Despite its significance, oral traditions like the Buttu Kabobong legend face challenges in modern times. Technological advancements and the dominance of global media have led younger generations to view the mountain primarily as a tourist attraction rather than a cultural or moral symbol. This underscores the urgent need for documentation and analysis to preserve its educational value.

1.7 Oral Traditions in Cultural and Moral Preservation in Universal

Oral traditions play a crucial role in cultural preservation and moral instruction, preserving community values and social norms. These traditions reflect the collective wisdom of societies, ensuring that ethical principles and cultural identity are passed down through generations. Folklore, not only as entertainment but also as a repository of knowledge, shapes individual and communal behavior. This study examines the role of oral traditions, focusing on the Buttu Kabobong legend of South Sulawesi and comparable narratives from Tamil Nadu, India.

The Buttu Kabobong legend is a cornerstone of cultural heritage in Bamba Puang, Enrekang Regency, South Sulawesi, illustrating the consequences of moral failings while emphasizing values like honesty, patience, and social harmony. It also serves as a tool for moral education, offering lessons relevant in both traditional and modern contexts.

Tamil Nadu's rich oral traditions, including the Thirukkural and stories from the Mahabharata and Ramayana, serve as moral and cultural cornerstones in South India, integrating spiritual, social, and ethical dimensions. Both cultures share a common reliance on storytelling to transmit moral values, fostering a sense of identity, community cohesion, and respect for ethical principles. This comparison highlights the universal role of folklore in shaping human values and the adaptability of oral traditions in addressing contemporary moral and social challenges.

2. Objectives

- To explore the narrative structure and moral teachings of the Buttu Kabobong legend.
- To identify and document the cultural values within the legend for character education.
- To preserve and promote Indonesia's oral traditions for future generations.

3. Literature Review

Bascom (1965) emphasizes that folklore serves not only as entertainment but also as a vehicle for moral and ethical instruction. Stories like the *Buttu Kabobong* legend are designed to teach the consequences of moral failings, encouraging adherence to social norms and ethical principles. In South Sulawesi, the narrative structure of the *Buttu Kabobong* legend reinforces the cultural emphasis on communal unity and respect for divine authority, echoing findings by Dundes (1980) on the didactic nature of folk narratives.

Similarly, Tamil Nadu's oral traditions, as studied by Blackburn (1988), demonstrate how folklore integrates spiritual, moral, and social dimensions. Stories from Tamil classics like

the *Thirukkural* highlight values like righteousness, patience, and justice, which align closely with the moral lessons conveyed by the *Buttu Kabobong* legend.

Folklore represents the collective cultural expressions of a community, passed down orally or through practice over generations. According to Dundes (in Bronner, 2007), folklore encompasses traditions, beliefs, customs, and narratives that form the identity of a group. It serves as a medium for transmitting cultural knowledge, values, and social norms. William R. Bascom identifies four primary functions of folklore: as a projection of collective imagination, a means of cultural validation, an educational tool, and a mechanism for social control. These characteristics make folklore an integral part of cultural preservation and character building, particularly in societies like Indonesia, where oral traditions are deeply embedded in the community fabric.

Folklore can be categorized into three main types: verbal, partially verbal, and non-verbal. Verbal folklore includes myths, legends, proverbs, and folktales, which are purely oral in nature. Partially verbal folklore combines oral and non-verbal elements, such as rituals, traditional dances, and customs. Non-verbal folklore, on the other hand, includes material culture like architecture, crafts, and traditional attire. Legends, as a subtype of verbal folklore, stand out due to their blend of historical and fictional elements, often reflecting a community's moral and ethical values.

Legends are stories that are often considered historical, though they may not be entirely factual. They narrate significant events, places, or individuals and are imbued with cultural values and moral lessons. According to Danandjaja (2007), legends typically feature human protagonists, though they may occasionally include supernatural elements. Legends serve as a reflection of societal norms and act as a medium for teaching ethics and behavior. The *Buttu Kabobong* legend, for example, illustrates themes of responsibility, obedience, and morality, making it a valuable resource for cultural education.

Moral values are an essential component of folklore, guiding individual and communal behavior. According to Nurgiyantoro (2000), moral values in literature can be categorized into three types: individual, social, and religious. Individual moral values focus on personal virtues such as patience, honesty, and responsibility. Social moral values emphasize communal harmony through cooperation, tolerance, and love.

Religious moral values, meanwhile, underscore faith, repentance, and adherence to divine commandments. These dimensions make folklore a powerful tool for instilling ethical principles across generations. Oral literature faces significant challenges in the modern era, where technological advancements and global media influence dominate cultural narratives. Studies by Wiguna (2018) highlight that younger generations often neglect oral traditions, favoring digital entertainment over cultural storytelling. This phenomenon poses a threat to the survival of folklore, as it risks being displaced by foreign cultural elements. Preserving legends like *Buttu Kabobong* is crucial to maintaining cultural identity and passing on moral teachings to future generations.

Several studies have explored the significance of folklore and legends in preserving cultural heritage. For example, Maca Sudirman (2020) analyzed the symbolic meanings of *Buttu*

Kabobong and *Gunung Nona* in Enrekang, focusing on their representation of moral consequences and divine justice. Meanwhile, Lamria Turnip (2019) investigated the moral values in the *Batu Gantung* legend from Toba Batak, emphasizing its educational potential in teaching ethics. These studies demonstrate the diverse ways folklore can be interpreted and applied to address contemporary moral and educational issues.

Folklore serves as an effective medium for character education, providing lessons on ethical behavior, responsibility, and respect for tradition. Studies by Esma Junaini et al. (2017) emphasize the value of folklore in shaping moral character from an early age. They argue that the stories of courage, fairness, and communal care found in folklore are particularly relevant in addressing modern societal challenges. Integrating these narratives into educational curricula can help reinforce positive values among young learners.

This study adopts a modern folklore approach, combining ethnographic, semiotic, and structural analysis to examine the *Buttu Kabobong* legend. The ethnographic approach helps contextualize the legend within the community's culture and traditions. Semiotics is used to decode the symbolic meanings and moral messages embedded in the narrative. Structural analysis provides insights into the narrative form, enabling a comprehensive understanding of its content and function. This multi-faceted approach ensures a holistic exploration of the legend's significance.

While numerous studies have documented Indonesian folklore, few have focused specifically on the *Buttu Kabobong* legend and its moral teachings. Existing research often overlooks the potential of this legend as a resource for character education and cultural preservation. By analyzing the moral values and messages within this legend, this study aims to fill the gap and contribute to the broader discourse on the role of folklore in contemporary society.

Recent studies suggest that incorporating folklore into educational curricula can enhance cultural pride and ethical understanding. Narratives like the *Buttu Kabobong* legend and Tamil Nadu's *Thirukkural* teach universal moral principles while fostering cultural heritage. Folklore serves as a moral compass and preserves cultural identity. Comparative studies of these legends and traditions demonstrate how diverse cultures use storytelling to maintain ethical and cultural continuity.

4. Research Method

The study investigates cultural and moral values in Bamba Puang Village, South Sulawesi, Indonesia, using a qualitative descriptive approach. Data was collected through interviews, observations, and documents, and analyzed using Miles and Huberman's model. The research was conducted near the iconic *Gunung Nona*, a repository of oral traditions and narratives. Primary data was obtained from traditional storytellers, elders, and practitioners, while secondary data included documents and online sources. The study adhered to ethical guidelines and used data solely for academic purposes. A similar study could be conducted in Tamil Nadu, India, to explore cultural and moral values in the region's folklore and traditions.

5. Results and Discussion

This section presents the findings of the study, analyzing the moral values and cultural significance embedded in the Buttu Kabobong legend of South Sulawesi and comparable oral traditions from Tamil Nadu, India. The discussion highlights the shared themes of moral instruction, cultural preservation, and societal norms, offering insights into how these traditions shape individual and communal behavior. By comparing these narratives, the study emphasizes their universal relevance and adaptability in addressing contemporary moral and social challenges

5.1 Introduction to the Buttu Kabobong Legend

The Buttu Kabobong legend is an oral tradition passed down through generations in Bamba Puang Village, Enrekang Regency. Based on interviews with local elders and cultural practitioners, the legend exists in multiple versions. Despite variations in detail, the core narrative remains consistent: it tells the story of a community cursed due to moral failings, such as disobedience and immoral behavior, which led to the formation of the mountain known as Gunung Nona.

5.2 Individual Moral Values in the Legend

The legend emphasizes individual moral values, including patience, honesty, responsibility, and self-control.

- It warns against selfish desires and stresses personal accountability for one's actions.
- Characters who fail to uphold these values face severe consequences, highlighting the importance of self-discipline and moral integrity. These lessons remain relevant in promoting individual character building in contemporary society.

5.3 Social Moral Values Conveyed by the Legend

The narrative also emphasizes social moral values such as cooperation, respect, and adherence to community norms.

- It underscores the communal belief in harmony and mutual support.
- The downfall of characters who disregard societal rules symbolizes the importance of social cohesion and collective responsibility for a community's prosperity.

5.4 Religious Dimensions of the Legend

The legend underscores faith and obedience to divine authority.

- It portrays a community blessed with prosperity but later punished for arrogance and neglect of divine obligations.
- This aspect highlights the deeply spiritual worldview of the Enrekang people, emphasizing the importance of respecting religious principles and divine justice.

5.5 Symbolism and Moral Teachings

The moral messages of the Buttu Kabobong legend are delivered indirectly through symbolic elements.

- The mountain serves as a visual reminder of the consequences of moral failure.
- The legend teaches that actions have repercussions and emphasizes ethical behavior both individually and collectively.

5.6 Modern Relevance of the Legend

In a modern context, the legend's lessons address challenges such as the erosion of communal values, the rise of individualism, and declining moral and spiritual awareness.

- Revisiting and preserving such narratives reinforces cultural identity and promotes values like harmony, respect, and accountability.
- The legend provides guidance for addressing contemporary social issues.

5.7 Educational Potential of Oral Traditions

The study highlights the potential of oral traditions, such as the Buttu Kabobong legend, as a medium for education.

- Integrating these stories into school curricula can make learning about values engaging and culturally relevant.
- Themes of morality, social responsibility, and spirituality resonate with students, enriching character education and fostering cultural pride.

5.8 Adaptability of the Legend

One notable finding is the variability in the narrative across different informants.

- This reflects the adaptive nature of oral traditions, which evolve based on the storyteller's perspective and audience context.
- Despite these variations, the shared core values and themes preserve the legend's integrity, underscoring its dynamic and living quality.

5.9 Preservation of Cultural Heritage

Documenting and analyzing the Buttu Kabobong legend contributes to preserving Indonesia's rich oral traditions.

- Folklore encapsulates a community's history, values, and identity.
- Recording and sharing these narratives safeguard intangible cultural heritage and ensure its transmission to future generations.

5.10 Moral Values in the Buttu Kabobong Legend and Tamil Nadu's Cultural Narratives

The exploration of moral values in the *Buttu Kabobong* legend from Bamba Puang, Enrekang Regency, South Sulawesi, Indonesia, draws parallels with cultural narratives from Tamil Nadu, India. Like the rich oral traditions of Tamil Nadu, which preserve moral teachings through folklore, songs, and stories, the Buttu Kabobong legend in Bamba Puang functions as a repository of local wisdom, passing down cultural and ethical values to future generations.

In Tamil Nadu, moral values embedded in legends, such as the *Thirukkural* or stories from epics like the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*, influence social behavior and personal conduct. Similarly, the *Buttu Kabobong* legend serves as a cultural heritage that highlights the importance of virtues like respect, courage, and justice within the community.

Both regions share a common thread of using storytelling as a tool for cultural preservation and moral instruction, emphasizing the universal role of folklore in shaping community ethics. The comparative study of these cultural forms from South Sulawesi and Tamil Nadu

underscores the role of traditional narratives in sustaining moral education across diverse cultures.

Folklore plays a crucial role in moral education across various cultures. In Tamil Nadu, India, stories from the Ramayana, Mahabharata, and Thirukkural are deeply embedded in everyday life, shaping individuals' understanding of right and wrong and guiding them in living harmoniously within their communities. These narratives reflect the community's collective identity and societal norms, passing down moral lessons through oral storytelling, songs, and theatrical performances.

5.11 Folklore in Preserving Moral Values , Cultural Identity in Indonesia and Tamil Nadu

In South Sulawesi, Indonesia, the Buttu Kabobong legend is a central piece of cultural heritage, reinforcing indigenous moral values like respect for elders, justice, and communal unity. This legend serves as an entertainment medium and a tool for moral education, guiding individuals in their roles within society. The interconnectedness between culture and moral education in rural Indonesia highlights the importance of storytelling in fostering a deep sense of community and ethical responsibility.

In Java, Indonesia, the Babad Tanah Jawi epic serves as a cultural and historical repository, reflecting moral values of justice, loyalty, and leadership. Both narratives guide individuals on how to act in harmony with cultural norms, illustrating the importance of leadership in maintaining social balance.

Global oral traditions share a common thread in using folklore to transmit cultural and moral teachings. Indigenous cultures, like Tamil Nadu and South Sulawesi, use storytelling as a key tool for preserving identity and passing down values related to social cohesion, respect for nature, and ethical conduct. This connection between folklore and moral values reflects the broader role of culture in defining ethical standards and preserving community identity through generations. Through the shared practice of storytelling, these cultures ensure that their moral foundations remain strong, guiding future generations in their personal and communal lives.

6.Future Research Opportunities

This study lays the foundation for further exploration of the Buttu Kabobong legend and similar oral traditions.

- Future research could examine the legend's impact on contemporary community practices, its reception among younger generations, and its potential adaptation in modern media.
- Comparative studies with other Indonesian legends could reveal shared cultural patterns and unique regional characteristics, enriching understanding of Indonesia's diverse folklore.

7. Conclusion

The Buttu Kabobong legend, a cultural and moral tale from Bamba Puang, Enrekang Regency, South Sulawesi, Indonesia, is a timeless reminder of the consequences of moral degradation. It emphasizes the importance of adhering to ethical and spiritual principles,

such as truthfulness, respect, and integrity. This story resonates with modern societal needs for ethical behavior and social cohesion.

The Buttu Kabobong legend remains relevant in modern society, as it reinforces values like patience, honesty, cooperation, and respect for divine authority, strengthening individual character and promoting social cohesion. Tamil Nadu's folklore, on the other hand, serves as a bridge between the past and present, fostering community ties and individual responsibility. The Buttu Kabobong legend plays a crucial role in preserving the cultural identity of the Enrekang community, as it has adapted over time to reflect the community's evolving values while maintaining its core messages. Tamil Nadu's oral traditions, including tales of gods and historical figures, can be incorporated into educational curricula to impart ethical and cultural values, helping students form strong, rooted identities.

The preservation and documentation of folklore like the Buttu Kabobong legend are essential for safeguarding Indonesia's rich cultural heritage. By continuing to explore and share these stories, moral messages remain accessible to future generations. In Tamil Nadu, the preservation of folklore, whether through traditional arts or oral histories, is equally crucial in maintaining the region's cultural wealth. Follow-up research could further explore the adaptability of the Buttu Kabobong legend in contemporary contexts and its potential for fostering a renewed appreciation of Indonesia's and Tamil Nadu's oral literary traditions.

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