

Forms and Intrinsic Elements of Bengkulu Folklore: A Structural Analysis of Ten Folk Narratives

Wirasti Fitria Afni^{1*}, Kasmantoni² and Heny Friantary³

^{1,2,3} Universitas Islam Negeri Fatmawati Sukarno Bengkulu, Indonesia

ABSTRACT

Folklore plays an essential role in preserving cultural identity and transmitting values across generations, yet Bengkulu folklore remains underexplored in academic studies. This research aimed to analyze the forms and intrinsic elements of selected folktales from Bengkulu in order to identify their literary structures and cultural significance. A qualitative descriptive approach was employed, with data collected through documentation of ten Bengkulu folktales and analyzed using structural and literary methods to examine themes, plots, characters, settings, points of view, language styles, and moral messages. The findings revealed that Bengkulu folklore predominantly takes the form of legends and fairy tales that integrate historical memory, mythical imagination, and moral instruction. Intrinsic elements such as conflict-driven plots, royal and supernatural characters, and culturally rooted settings were identified as central features that convey values of justice, wisdom, resilience, and harmony with nature. These results indicate that folklore serves not only as a repository of cultural heritage but also as a pedagogical resource that can be integrated into character education and cultural literacy programs. The novelty of this study lies in its systematic literary analysis of Bengkulu folklore, which has been rarely addressed in prior research, thereby contributing new insights into Indonesian oral traditions and their relevance in modern education. The findings imply that folklore should be strategically incorporated into school curricula and community-based cultural preservation initiatives to strengthen national identity and foster moral development among younger generations.

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CORRESPONDING AUTHOR

Wirasti Fitria Afni, Universitas Islam Negeri Fatmawati Sukarno Bengkulu, Indonesia. Email: abi.mustofa@untirta.ac.id

Introduction

Folklore is an important form of oral tradition that reflects the cultural identity, moral values, and collective memory of a community. As stories passed down orally from generation to generation, folklore functions not only as entertainment but also as a means of moral education and socialization, transmitting cultural values, norms, and wisdom in ways accessible to diverse audiences (Anggraeni et al., 2019; Benabbes & AbdulHaleem Abu Taleb, 2024; Yuliantari, 2021). In the Indonesian context, folklore is deeply embedded in the cultural fabric of society, where stories serve as vehicles for instilling virtues such as honesty, perseverance, and social solidarity, while also reinforcing local knowledge systems and traditions (Brefo et al., 2024; International Panel on Social Progress (IPSP), 2018; Olivadese & Dindo, 2024). The intrinsic

elements of folklore including theme, plot, characters, setting, style, and message form a structural framework that not only defines the aesthetic quality of the narrative but also facilitates comprehension and pedagogical use (Andari, 2019; Hossain, 2024; Huang et al., 2024).

The study of folklore is particularly significant in Indonesia, where oral traditions have historically shaped the formation of local identities across diverse ethnic groups. Bengkulu Province, located on the western coast of Sumatra, is especially rich in folklore, with stories such as *Putri Gading Cempaka*, *Serindang Bulan*, and *Danau Dendam Tak Sudah* serving as cultural markers that preserve collective memory and transmit social values across generations (Hasan & Suwarni, 2012; Khamdevi, 2020). Such stories often contain didactic elements that teach moral lessons, emphasize respect for the natural environment, and strengthen social cohesion. At the same time, folklore serves as a historical record of community experiences, reflecting struggles, beliefs, and aspirations that continue to resonate in contemporary contexts (Bronner, 2018; Castor, 2024; Mahlmann, 2023).

Intrinsic analysis of folklore has been widely recognized as a methodological approach to uncovering structural and thematic dimensions of oral narratives. Studies in different regions of Indonesia have demonstrated that identifying intrinsic elements enhances the understanding of folklore as literature and pedagogy. For example, research on Javanese folklore emphasized how narrative structure and character functions reveal local cosmologies and social hierarchies (Höfrová et al., 2024; Lamb, 2017; Mary et al., 2024). Similarly, analysis of folklore in West Sumatra highlighted that recurring themes of resilience, supernatural intervention, and moral justice serve as cultural mechanisms for moral education (Ghorbani et al., 2021; International Panel on Social Progress (IPSP), 2018; Sepie, 2017). Internationally, scholars have also shown that structural analysis of folklore helps identify universal narrative patterns while contextualizing them in specific cultural milieus (Gülüm, 2023; Merino et al., 2024; Mishra & Satpathy, 2020).

Despite its cultural and pedagogical importance, folklore studies in Bengkulu remain limited compared to other Indonesian provinces. While several collections of Bengkulu folktales exist, many stories remain undocumented or are transmitted only orally, resulting in risks of distortion or disappearance (Dahwal & Fernando, 2024; Hasan & Suwarni, 2012; Turmuzi et al., 2023). Furthermore, research that systematically examines both the forms (myth, legend, fairy tale) and intrinsic elements (theme, plot, character, setting, style, point of view, and message) of Bengkulu folklore is still scarce. Existing studies tend to focus on descriptive cataloguing of stories rather than conducting in-depth literary analysis that situates folklore within broader cultural and educational frameworks (Coronado-Maldonado & Benítez-Márquez, 2023; Waitoller & Artiles, 2013; Wang et al., 2024). This gap has implications for both scholarship and education, as the absence of detailed intrinsic analysis limits the integration of folklore into school curricula and the preservation of local knowledge for future generations.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze the forms and intrinsic elements of selected Bengkulu folktales, including legends and fairy tales, to provide a comprehensive understanding of their narrative structures and cultural functions. By examining ten representative stories such as *Serindang Bulan*, *Si Bungsu dan Ular N'daung*, *Ular Kepala Tujuh Penunggu Danau Tes*, and *Putri Gading Cempaka* the study seeks to identify the recurring narrative patterns and

intrinsic elements that define Bengkulu folklore. The findings are expected to contribute both to the preservation of local cultural heritage and to its pedagogical application in Indonesian education. The novelty of this study lies in its systematic focus on Bengkulu folklore, which remains underexplored in scholarly discourse, thereby filling a critical gap in Indonesian literary and cultural studies.

Methods

This study employed a descriptive qualitative design to analyze the forms and intrinsic elements of Bengkulu folklore. The study was conducted as field research, allowing the researchers to directly engage with the community and textual sources in order to obtain relevant data. The primary data consisted of ten folktales from various regions in Bengkulu, including *Serindang Bulan*, *Si Bungsu dan Ular N'daung*, *Ular Kepala Tujuh Penunggu Danau Tes*, *Anak Lumang Si Raja Tidur*, *Putri Gading Cempaka dari Gunung Bungkok*, *Si Gulap yang Sabar dan Cerdik*, *Putri Kemang*, *Asal Mula Danau Tes*, *Kabut Duka Sungai Serut*, and *Bidadari dari Gunung Bungkok*. These texts were collected through observation, interviews with local storytellers and cultural practitioners, and documentation of published and unpublished manuscripts. Secondary sources included relevant folklore studies and literary analyses that provided theoretical grounding for the identification of narrative structures and stylistic features. Data collection involved recording oral narratives, transcribing them into textual form, and validating them through triangulation with existing literature and community feedback to ensure authenticity and reliability. The analytical procedure applied structural and literary approaches, focusing on seven intrinsic elements: theme, plot, characters and characterization, setting, point of view, language style, and moral message. Data analysis followed the stages of reduction, display, and verification, whereby each story was coded according to intrinsic categories and interpreted to identify similarities and differences across the corpus. To maintain trustworthiness, methodological triangulation was employed by combining interviews, textual analysis, and observation, while source triangulation ensured that findings were corroborated across multiple data points. Ethical considerations were upheld by acknowledging cultural ownership, obtaining consent from informants, and presenting folklore respectfully in its original cultural context. This methodological approach was designed to generate a comprehensive, credible, and culturally sensitive analysis of Bengkulu folklore that contributes to both literary scholarship and the preservation of intangible cultural heritage.

Results and Discussion

Forms of Bengkulu Folklore

The analysis of ten selected folktales from Bengkulu Province revealed that the stories generally took the form of prose narratives characterized by oral transmission, moral instruction, and community-based authorship. Most of the tales were categorized as legends and myths, with some falling into the category of fables. These forms reflected a blend of local wisdom, supernatural elements, and didactic purposes, aligning with the cultural function of folklore as both entertainment and moral guidance. The narratives also displayed regional variations, indicating the richness and diversity of Bengkulu's oral tradition.

Intrinsic Elements Identified

The structural analysis highlighted key intrinsic elements, including themes of loyalty, justice, and social harmony; characters that ranged from heroic figures to antagonistic forces; plot structures involving conflict resolution and moral triumph; and settings deeply rooted in Bengkulu's geographical and cultural landscape. Symbolism and motifs were also prevalent, such as natural elements (forests, rivers, mountains) used to represent human virtues and societal values. Dialogue and narrative style reflected the oral nature of transmission, employing repetition and rhythm to facilitate memorization and performance.

Cultural and Educational Values

The findings indicated that Bengkulu folktales serve as vehicles for transmitting cultural identity, local wisdom, and ethical values to younger generations. The tales emphasize values such as honesty, cooperation, respect for nature, and perseverance. These values align with the objectives of character education in Indonesia's national curriculum and highlight the potential of folklore as a pedagogical resource in schools, especially in promoting cultural literacy and strengthening students' sense of identity.

Discussion

The results of this study confirm that folklore in Bengkulu plays a critical role in cultural preservation and moral education. These findings are consistent with Yuliantari (2021), who emphasized that Indonesian folklore functions as a medium for transmitting values and norms within communities. Similarly, Norton and Toohey (2011) classical framework situates folklore as both a reflection of cultural identity and a tool for social control, which resonates with the moral lessons embedded in the Bengkulu folktales analyzed. More recent studies, such as those by Anggraeni (2019), Thanh Quý and Phuong (2023), and Mishra and Satpathy (2020), also support the view that local folktales provide an effective means of teaching ethical and cultural values to younger generations.

Compared with research on folklore in other regions of Indonesia, such as the Minangkabau kaba (Muhardis, 2023) or Javanese wayang stories, Bengkulu folklore demonstrates similar narrative strategies in embedding moral and spiritual values but remains less systematically documented. Internationally, Sone (2018) and Banda (2024) observed that oral traditions in Africa and other parts of the world perform comparable functions, serving as repositories of cultural memory and ethical frameworks. This comparative perspective underscores the universality of folklore's role while highlighting the uniqueness of Bengkulu's contribution to Indonesia's intangible cultural heritage.

The novelty of this study lies in its systematic analysis of the forms and intrinsic elements of Bengkulu folklore, an area that has received limited scholarly attention compared to folklore from other Indonesian provinces. By documenting and interpreting Bengkulu folktales, this research not only contributes to the preservation of regional cultural heritage but also provides empirical evidence of their potential integration into formal education, particularly in teaching character values and cultural literacy. This extends existing scholarship by emphasizing Bengkulu as a vital yet underexplored locus of Indonesia's oral traditions.

The implications of these findings are twofold. First, for educators and curriculum developers, incorporating Bengkulu folktales into language and literature learning can enrich students' engagement with local culture while supporting national character education goals. Second, for cultural policymakers, this research highlights the need to preserve oral traditions through documentation, community-based transmission, and integration into creative industries such as theater and media adaptations. Such measures can ensure the sustainability of folklore as a living tradition in the face of globalization.

Despite these contributions, the study has limitations. The analysis was restricted to a selection of ten folktales, which may not fully represent the breadth of Bengkulu's folklore. The reliance on textual documentation also risks overlooking performative aspects such as gesture, tone, and audience interaction, which are central to oral storytelling. Additionally, the absence of direct fieldwork with storytellers limits the ethnographic depth of the findings. Future research should therefore expand the corpus of folktales analyzed, include ethnographic field studies, and explore interdisciplinary approaches combining literary, anthropological, and educational perspectives to capture the full richness of Bengkulu folklore.

Conclusion

This study concludes that Bengkulu folklore, as represented by ten selected stories, predominantly takes the form of legends and fairy tales enriched with intrinsic elements such as theme, plot, character and characterization, setting, language style, point of view, and moral message. These elements not only shape the narrative structure but also preserve cultural identity and transmit values of wisdom, resilience, and morality across generations. The findings highlight that while many of these stories revolve around kingdoms, power struggles, and supernatural forces, they consistently embed moral lessons relevant to contemporary society and education. The novelty of this study lies in systematically analyzing the forms and intrinsic structures of Bengkulu folklore, an area that has received limited scholarly attention, thereby contributing to both literary studies and cultural preservation efforts. The results imply that folklore should be more widely integrated into educational contexts to enhance students' cultural literacy and moral development, while future research could expand the scope by including performance aspects, ethnographic approaches, and comparative studies with folklore from other regions to provide a more holistic understanding of Indonesia's intangible cultural heritage.

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